

Contract for Largest Dam Removal in US History to be Awarded Today

Washington's Elwha River is on the path to restoration

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August 26, 2010

Seattle – The effort to restore a free-flowing Elwha River will reach a critical milestone today, as the National Park Service awards the contract for construction work to remove two outdated dams. Deconstruction will begin in 2011.

Brett Swift, Northwest Regional Director for American Rivers, made the following statement:

"This is a critical milestone in the effort to restore a healthy, free-flowing Elwha River. We are closer than ever before. When the dams come down on the Elwha, we will witness a river coming back to life. The entire nation will be watching."

"2011 will be the year of river restoration. In addition to the Elwha, major dam removals are taking place on rivers like Washington's White Salmon, Maine's Penobscot, and Maryland's Patapsco. The benefits to communities, culture, businesses, and fish and wildlife will be extraordinary. American Rivers is proud to have played a role in these efforts."

The 45 mile long Elwha River has been blocked by the Elwha Dam and Glines Canyon Dam for 100 years. The dams decimated the river's once-legendary salmon runs. Most of the river and its 200,000 acre watershed are protected within Olympic National Park. Removing the dams will restore access for salmon and steelhead to historic habitat and revitalize the web of life from mountains to sea. At 210 feet tall, Glines Canyon Dam will be the tallest dam ever removed.

American Rivers has long been an advocate of restoring a free-flowing Elwha River. Most recently, American Rivers helped secure more than \$50 million in federal funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the Elwha River, to ensure dam removal can begin in 2011, as opposed to 2012.

More than 600 dams have been removed in the United States over the last 50 years for reasons including environmental restoration, elimination of public safety hazards, saving taxpayer dollars, and improving recreation.

American Rivers recently launched an interactive map of key dam removal and river restoration projects. The map is available at <http://www.americanrivers.org/our-work/restoring-rivers/dam-removal-map/>

For more information on dam removal and river restoration, visit <http://www.americanrivers.org/our-work/restoring-rivers/dams/>

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American Rivers is the leading conservation organization fighting for healthy rivers so communities can thrive. American Rivers protects and restores America's rivers for the benefit of people, wildlife and nature. Founded in 1973, American Rivers has more than 65,000 members and supporters, with offices in Washington, DC and nationwide.

<http://www.americanrivers.org/newsroom/press-releases/2010/contract-for-largest-dam-removal-in-us-history-to-be-awarded-today-8-26-2010.html>