

# A Project Managers Guide to Undamming Rivers

## Collaboration, Communication, Coordination, and Regulation



[FreeVermontRivers.org](http://FreeVermontRivers.org)

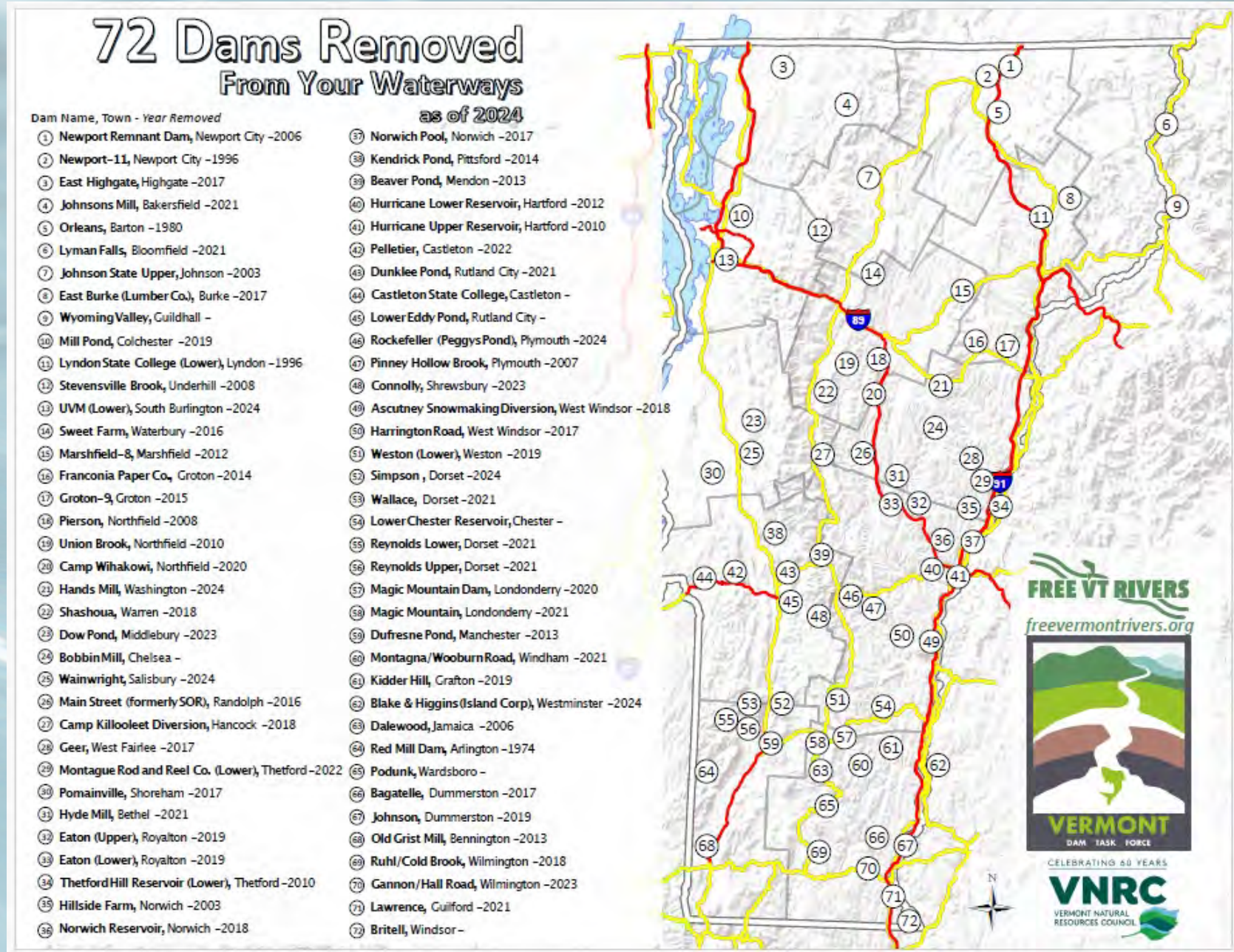




“Vermont has removed more dams per capita than any other state” American Rivers, 2024

# Collaborate: The Vermont Dam Task Force:

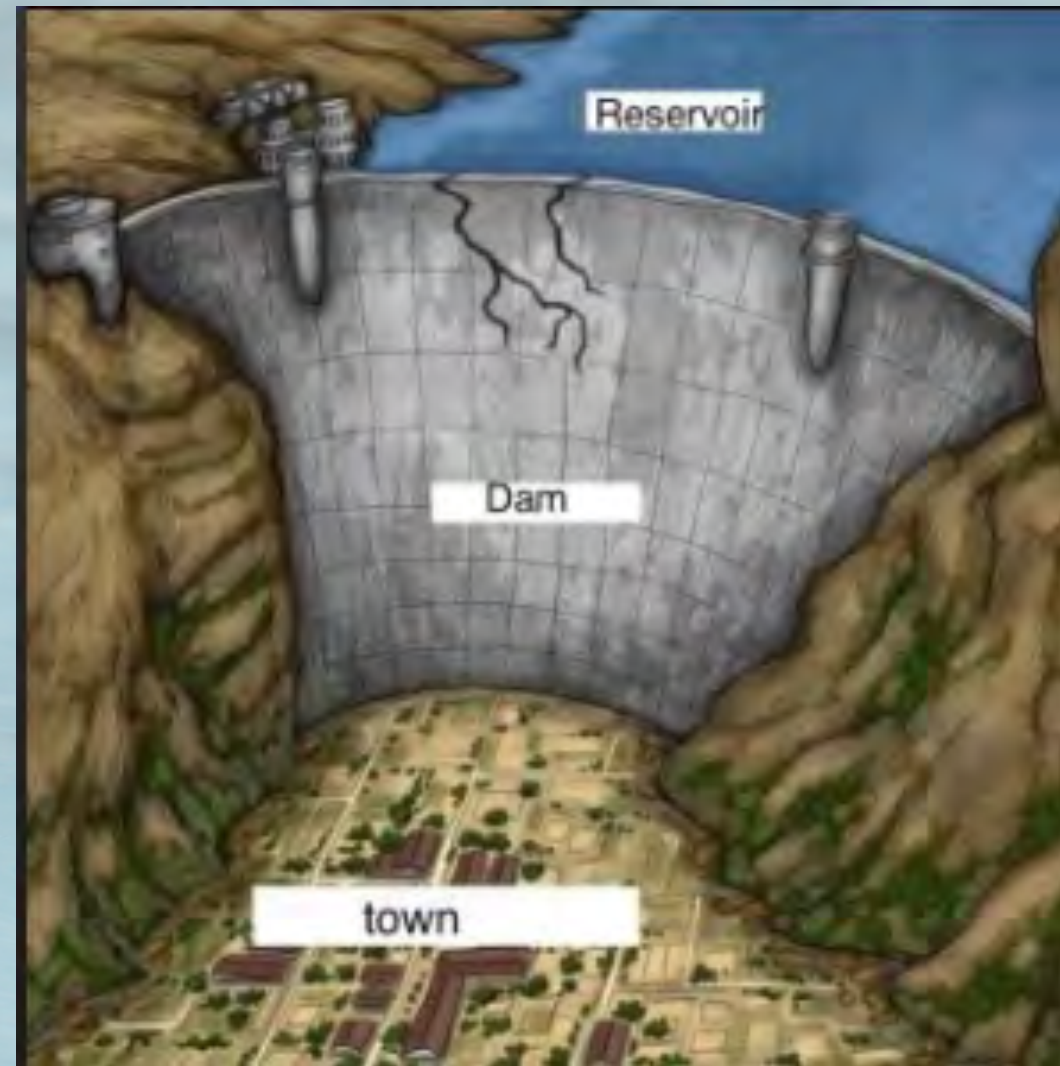
- Collaborate
- Raise awareness
- Identify derelict dams
- Prioritize projects





# Collaborate: Project Selection

- Ecological impact (AOP, Flood Mitigation, Wetland Restoration, Water Quality benefits)
- Hazard Potential Classification and Condition of the Dam
- Owner interest
- Partner support
- Timing is critical



“Unstable dam has town on edge”  
[Times Argus, July 18, 2023](#) – Rouleau Pond Dam

“Dam Scary: Intense Storms Push Vermont’s Aging Structures to the Brink” [Seven Days, July 26, 2023](#)



# Collaborate: Define Project Goals Wainwright Dam Removal Case Study





# Collaborate: Partners...the more the merrier!

Salisbury, Vermont  
In the Land of Milk and Honey





# Communicate: Develop Project Support

- Outreach (local community, regulators, funders, and scientists)
- Neighbors are almost as important as landowners
- Explain project goals
- Educate on river function and restoration
- Listen
- Lots of inclusive meetings
- Engage early and often





# Communicate: Address Concerns

- What about the Beavers?
- We love our pond and don't want a mud pit
- The dam is historic
- We don't believe the dam will fail
- There is a waterfall upstream
- We will lose our swimming hole
- What about the Invasive species?
- We love our manicured lawn

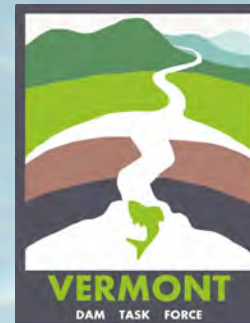




# Communicate: Outcomes

- Reconnected rivers allows for increased species resilience, diversity and habitat
- Restores natural stream process
- Reconnects river to wetlands & floodplains
- Improves water quality
- Provides public safety and removes liability
- Improves recreational opportunities
- Provides community outreach and education – improved understanding of how rivers function
- Strengthens Partnerships

May the Force be with you!





# Coordinate: Dam Removal Process

- So many moving parts (funding, phased project, regulatory review, site constraints, timing, budget)
- Keep them all rolling concurrently...
- Consistent reporting and tracking
- Delegate
- Use the media
- Local volunteers are good!



Photo Credit, Corrie Miller, LCBP



# Regulations: Know the Rules and Play by Them

- Engage regulators early
- Host multiple meeting platforms
- Don't make assumptions
- Document everything
- Apply for permits early
- Allowed uses are a thing...
- Restoration vs. Development
- Spell it out (report and plans)





# Regulations: Permits at a Glance

- Army Corps (401 WQ certification) and Section 106 (Historic Review) and RTE species
- VT DEC Wetlands (allowed use review)
- Construction General Stormwater Permits (CGP)
- Stream Alteration Permit (General or IP)
- Floodplain Permit (FEMA floodplain- SFHA)
- Local Zoning Permit
- Dam Order (Dam Safety Program)
- Act 250 (may require riparian buffer review)
- Vtrans ROW permit
- Flow Determination (rare)
- Sediment stockpile location
- Invasive species compliance





A River Reconnected:  
Collaboration,  
Communication,  
Coordination,  
and Regulation = Project Success!

