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There are currently over 70 dams on the Ipswich River and its tributary streams. Many of these dams no longer serve their intended purpose, but they continue to block the movement of fish and drown riffles and natural rapids.

The Curtis Pond Dam in Middleton is a dam owned by the Town of Danvers. Originally built to power a now-defunct sawmill, the pond formed by the dam is not part of the municipal water supply. The dam is in extremely poor condition and is under a Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety Order to be removed or completely rebuilt. Over the last year, Danvers has been investigating the feasibility of removing the dam in order to restore the natural flows of Boston Brook, a tributary of the Ipswich River, and to address the requirements of the Order in a cost effective manner. In 2009, Danvers initiated a study of the site’s hydrology, topography and environmental health as the first step towards removal. The study was conducted by Kleinfeld/S E A Consultants and funded jointly by the Town of Danvers and Gulf of Maine Council/NOAA Habitat Restoration Partnership. The Ipswich River Watershed Association assisted with water quality monitoring and public outreach. Based on the study’s findings, the Town of Danvers has made the formal decision to begin the design and permitting process to remove the dam.

The removal of the Curtis Pond Dam would be the first within the Ipswich River watershed and could represent a significant advance towards river and ecosystem restoration. It will be a multi-year process; now that the dam, pond and surrounding site have been studied to see what effects removal will have on safety, infrastructure, and the health of the river, the project is expected to enter the project design and permitting stage. Only after the plan is approved by local, state and federal agencies, will dam removal and site restoration actually begin.

The draft feasibility study was completed in June. To download a slideshow of the study’s major findings please visit The Ipswich River Watershed Associations Dam Removal Page <http://ipswichriver.org/our-work/dam-removal/>.