

February 20, 2019



To: City of Ypsilanti, Michigan
Re: Pen. Dam disposition discussions

Dear Mayor, City Manager and City Council Members,

Michigan Trout Unlimited is a 501C3 organization, dedicated to the conservation of Michigan's coldwater fisheries and the watersheds that support them. We have 20 local chapters throughout the state, and 8,000 active members. In your area, our interests are supported by the Ann Arbor Area Chapter of TU and its local members.

Our organization is a strong proponent of removing dams, as this antiquated form of energy production is no longer our best option for energy needs, and because over 50 years of science has proven that they cause fundamental and significant detriments to river systems. Rivers are intricate balances of water, sediment, energy, nutrients and living organisms, and dams at a fundamental level alter every component of these systems. Removing dams also pose incredible opportunities for communities to re-envision possibilities for their people and to purposefully forge new values and assets for their local quality of life (in the same way the past residents did at a different time, when they needed the benefits of dams and chose to reshape their local landscape to benefit themselves).

Locally, in Dexter, such a dam was removed from Mill Creek not that many years ago. The removal there, gave residents an opportunity to create a beautiful new park and recreational and aesthetic opportunities to improve their community. That removal led our AAATU chapter to take a closer look at the untapped potential of the river. In the years that have followed, citizen scientists found the river to be colder than previously predicted, which led to the creation of a brand new, urban, brown trout fishery. This fishery is now a source of pride for the area, and a welcomed enhancement to quality of life in the area. Use and enjoyment of the river has increased dramatically, and residents now know that they have a quality natural river where once they only saw signs of historic use, abuse and neglect. The power of dam removal can be truly transformative for a community's place-making goals.

We have reviewed your engineering and feasibility study report, and are excited to see that so many factors are aligned for a feasible and successful dam removal project at the Pen Dam site. Every dam has a long list of variables that determine the difficulty of removing it. Your report shows that while you have several infrastructure issues to manage, that the removal is very feasible. Having participated in dozens of dam removal projects in Michigan, yours appears to be as smooth a path to success as anyone can hope to have, especially when the size of the dam and river are considered. We see no fundamentally challenging or limiting impediments or obstacles to removing this dam.

Each time a dam owner grapples with the costs of repairing and maintaining a dam, two important considerations emerge; change & funding. Its human nature for people to be uncomfortable with change, and changing a landscape from a reservoir people are used to, to a natural flowing river setting is no different. Our historic predecessors who created this dam were not afraid to change the local landscape in order to gain the historic

benefits of the dam, for the betterment of the community at the time. Now, this dam has long ceased providing those benefits, and the community can benefit in new ways by removing it. In all of the dam removals we have participated in, we have always seen some reluctance for the change, yet following the dam removals we have never seen a community who didn't very quickly embrace the new flowing waterfront and come to enjoy it more than ever before. We wish all of you the vision and courage to embrace the change and benefits that your citizens will enjoy if you decide to remove this dam.

Of all the questions and considerations that arise with deciding to remove a dam, inevitably, the financial side of it ultimately becomes one of the most significant. On your balance sheets, you now understand the immediate costs of repairing your dam to conditions that render it publically safe. You also understand that these costs (~\$800,000), are not one-time, but represent only your necessary investment today. All dams age, and as they do, just like older automobiles, more and more problems arise, and more and more maintenance costs become necessary. Additionally, financing for dam repairs, always falls squarely on the dam owner, in this case, the taxpayers of Ypsilanti. However, when dam removal is pursued, the costs to remove the dam has always come from a mix of sources. In the case of your dam removal project, you should expect to receive funding support from state, federal and private sources to help your City with the costs. The State of Michigan has two grant programs currently to help provide financial assistance for dam removals (the state Dam Grant and the Aquatic Habitat Grant). Federal grants for dam removal are available through several different programs ranging from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative programs to the Fish Passage program. We also always see a variety of private donors contribute, from individuals to various forms of foundations. If you decide to pursue dam removal, you will have the assistance from us and many other groups to pursue funding support for this project. In this, the one-time costs of dam removal for the dam owner, are usually equivalent or less than the costs of repairing dams, even before the ongoing future repair costs are considered.

Our organization believes you have an incredible opportunity to remove this dam, improve the Huron River, and benefit the residents of Ypsilanti (as well as residents from all of the greater Ann Arbor area). We encourage you to embrace this opportunity, and support you pursuing dam removal. If you would like to discuss this with us further, we are at your service. We have great experience with all facets of dam removal projects, and would be glad to support and assist you in any way possible. Thank you for considering our comments to you in support of removing Pen Dam.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Burroughs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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