



July 7, 2025

Saline River Dam

Common Misconceptions

Misconception: The river will be unusable if the dam was removed

The proposed hydraulic model simulates a full dam removal and reestablishment of a naturalized river channel with a constant slope through Mill Pond Park. The existing Saline River conditions were used as a baseline to create the proposed conditions model.

As part of the stream modeling analysis the bankfull width, floodplain width, bankfull channel depth and stream slope were determined as shown in the table.

Bankfull Width	50 ft	The river width and depth will vary throughout the year as it currently does. On average it is assumed the river through Mill Pond Park would have a width at 50-feet and a depth of 2.5-feet.
Bankfull Depth	2.5 ft	
Floodplain Shelf Width	120 ft	The floodplain shelf width provides extra storage for high capacity weather events.
Channel Slope	0.35%	In order to achieve this desired channel slope, the project would require significant cut through the existing impoundment area on the south side of the park.

Misconception: Flooding events will get worse

The Saline River Dam was not built for flood control, as such, it does little in the way of flood attenuation. Preliminary hydraulic modeling completed as part of this study indicate that removal of the dam would have negligible impacts to the water surface elevation downstream, even following runoff events. Although removal of the dam does eliminate the impoundments, storage is gained by shaping floodplain shelf as part of river restoration efforts.



Misconception: My property value will decrease if the dam is removed

The following studies evaluate the impact of dam removal on property values. In general, there is a net increase in property value after dam removal is complete.

- Provencher, Bill & Sarakinos, Helen & Meyer, Tanya, 2006. "Does Small Dam Removal Affect Local Property Values? An Empirical Analysis" Staff Papers 10280, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.
- Guilfoos, Todd & Walsh, Jason, 2023. "A hedonic study of New England dam removals" Ecological Economics, Elsevier, vol. 203(C).

Misconception: Mill Pond Park will go away

"The City is not selling or developing any portion of Mill Pond Park - per a Charter Amendment, this would require a vote of the electorate" - Mayor Brian Marl

Mill Pond Park will remain a park in perpetuity as indicated in the Future Land Use map in our City of Saline Master Plan. We would be able to create additional aesthetic and park amenities with additional land gained if the dam were to be removed.



Potential safe pedestrian crossing under US-12 connecting Mill Pond and Curtiss Parks. The above image is from Dundee Michigan,, the below image is a rendering of Mill Pond Park if the dam was removed.





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Misconception: We cannot remove the dam because it is a historic landmark.

In 1996 the City of Saline registered 13 components of the historic mill and dam with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Of the 13 contributing components in the historic registry, 3 are owned by the city - the dam spillway, mill race and downstream footdam in Curtiss Park. The tail race, located on private property, would also be impacted by dam removal. For a copy of the SHPO documents visit <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25340700>. While the SHPO designation may require additional steps during removal, it is unlikely the SHPO designation would prevent removal of the dam spillway, millrace, and footdam.

Spillway



The dam spillway was constructed in 1935. A picture of the new spillway from the year it was constructed is shown on the left. The picture on the right was taken in 2021 as part of the recent structural inspection.



As outlined in the 2021 structural report, the concrete is deteriorating and needs repairs.

Mill Race

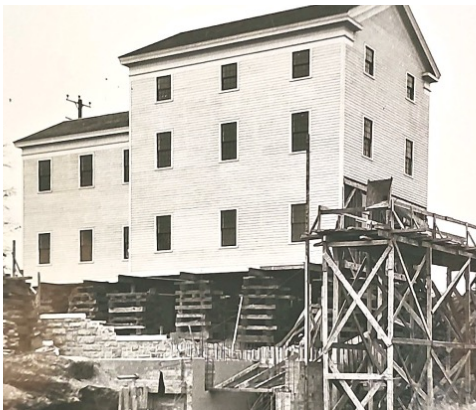


The mill race was constructed in 1935 and historically routed water under Michigan Avenue to turn a turbine at the mill to produce electricity.

A picture of the mill race while under its initial construction is shown on the left. On the right is a photo of the existing safety railing at the top of the mill race on the south west portion of Mill Pond Park.



Mill & Tail Race



The photo on the right shows the tail race downstream of the historic turbine and mill. The photo on the left shows construction of the turbine over the mill race at Wellers in the 1930s.

Dam removal could result in removal of the tail race also. The City is looking at options to keep the tail race functioning should the dam be removed. The tail race currently feeds a stream of water through the Wellers property.

