

Groundswell of support challenges plans to repair Springbank Dam

The Thames River Anglers Association, with the support of the Ontario Rivers Alliance, has rallied the support of over 20 organizations representing more than 200,000 members to encourage the City of London to fully decommission Springbank Dam and protect the recovering riverine ecosystem.

The Thames River is a nationally designated Heritage River, and a highly productive ecosystem that supports one of the most diverse ranges of freshwater fish, mussel, turtle and bird populations, including many species identified by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Springbank Dam was built in 1930 as a stop-log structure that created a summer reservoir to support recreational rowing use of the river. After a flood damaged the structure in the summer of 2000 it was rebuilt, but subsequently suffered mechanical failure in 2008. While the parties engaged in litigation the doors remained open, and free from seasonal impoundment for 8 years, allowing the river system to thrive and recover.

In the United States, hundreds of aging dams are being removed to allow rivers to flow freely and to recover. Dam removal brings a variety of benefits to communities, including restoring river health and improved water quality. Migratory fish are able to return to their spawning areas and fisheries improve. This draws people back to the river for a number of recreational, fishing and paddling opportunities. Over the last 8 years, residents and visitors to the City of London, and the communities that rely on the river, including the Chippewas of The Thames First Nation, have had the rare opportunity to experience how amazing the river can be when left to flow freely year round.

We ask our elected Council to listen to the community and to make a decision that serves the best interests of not just the City of London, but also those downstream communities in Lake St. Claire and Lake Erie that rely on clean water. We ask that Council consider whether seasonally destroying habitat and jeopardizing endangered species between Springbank Dam and the Forks of the river is a feasible trade-off for recreational uses of the reservoir. Initiatives like the Back to the River project, the West London Dyke Replacement and the Clear Water Revival are not dependant on a functional Springbank Dam, and in fact would be enhanced with a healthy riverine ecosystem.

"People like to live, work and play in and around healthy rivers. The social, economic and environmental benefits provided by healthy free flowing rivers would encourage recreation and tourism, and are absolutely worth protecting", says Robert Huber, President of the Thames River Anglers Association.

Robert Huber,
President TRAA
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The Thames River Anglers Association is a dedicated organization of volunteers that have worked diligently since 1986 to improve the overall health of the Thames River and its tributaries. We accomplish this through stream rehabilitation projects, educational programs and actively working with landowners, agencies and various levels of government to protect and sustain a diverse multi-species fishery.



ORA is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for several stewardships, associations, and private and First Nation citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems. ORA has formed a strong network of environmental, stewards to share, communicate, collaborate, and join our voices, experience and strengths in a coordinated effort to address policy, risky or threatening developments, and unhealthy river ecosystems.