Batavians For A Healthy River

THE FUTURE OF THE NORTH BATAVIA DAM:
What's At Stake for Batavia, and For Our Fox River?

The North Batavia Dam is in disrepair. For the past three years, the City of Batavia has worked with Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR, the owners of the dam) to develop a plan to fix this threat to public safety and environmental quality. Discussions, engineering studies, public meetings, and review of the options culminated last summer in a 11-2 vote by the Batavia City Council recommending complete removal of the North Batavia Dam.

Should the North Batavia Dam be removed?

☒ **YES**

A non-binding referendum question has been placed on the April 1 ballot – "Should the North Batavia Dam be removed?" The citizens of Batavia should confirm the City Council's recommendation and vote **YES** for dam removal.

WHY VOTE YES TO DAM REMOVAL?

Because we have no other relevant choice. We simply do not have the option to 'do nothing' with the current dam. The structure is failing. The City and IDNR together determined it is not feasible to fix it. Without fixing it, the city and state would be risking complete failure of the dam, possible flooding downstream, uncontrolled sediment release, and loss of Depot Pond. Therefore, the dam must either be completely removed or replaced. The replacement option called for a half-height dam 900 feet upstream of where the current dam is located.

Because water quality matters. The Fox River is the centerpiece of Batavia and other towns along its shores. Water quality has been improved in recent decades - a major accomplishment. However, scientists tell us the Fox River is still impaired by two major factors – pollution from rapidly growing communities, and the many dams on the Fox that compound these problems. Because the North Batavia Dam is in disrepair, we now have the opportunity to restore our section of the Fox to a more natural, free-flowing river.

Experience around the nation with dam removal projects has shown that removing even one dam will improve a river's water quality and fish populations, reduce sediment accumulation, and improve animal habitat. Batavia now has the opportunity to do this for our Fox River.

Removing the North Batavia Dam would:

Save Batavia Taxpayers Money

Because the dam is crumbling, it must be either removed or replaced. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), either option (removal or replacement) would each cost approximately $8 million. ***Included in the costs of removal are enhancements to Depot Pond and riverside plantings upstream of the current dam***. A completely new dam would only last approximately 50 years. A new dam burdens Batavians with maintenance costs and we would again have to decide what to do with the 'new' dam once it reached the end of its expected life. If the dam is removed, these maintenance costs are not an issue.

Enhance Depot Pond and the Riverwalk

Our beautiful Riverwalk and Depot Pond are very important to Batavians and they would be enhanced as a result of dam removal. To stop sediment from accumulating in Depot Pond, a berm from the northeast side to the west riverbank will close off the north end of Depot Pond. A pump and aerator will be installed in the Depot Pond to maintain the pond water level. Aerating the pond water will keep it cleaner and clearer than it is today, and support a healthy fish population. Native vegetation will be planted on the banks.

Because of the current dam, sediments accumulate in Depot Pond. These must be dredged every 20 years, at a cost of approximately $1,000,000, paid by Batavia taxpayers. ***Without the dam, this would no longer be required***.

Improve Water Quality in the Fox River

Currently, the North Batavia Dam and Depot Pond trap organic matter and nutrients originating upstream. Water remains stagnant behind the dam and this limits the river's natural ability to cleanse itself of nutrients and other pollution. This also causes excessive algae growth which depletes the oxygen in the water at night, creating unsuitable fish habitat. A free-flowing river will have improved oxygen levels, providing better fish habitat.

Improve Fishing and Canoeing Opportunities

Removing the dam will improve fishing. Studies by IDNR and Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation biologists indicate fish diversity is highest in the free-flowing areas away from dam influence. Few fish can live in the degraded water upstream of a dam. Removing the dam will improve fish diversity in 1.5 miles of the Fox River. If the dam is removed, IDNR has committed to revegetating newly exposed river edges. Aquatic plants will serve as spawning areas, nursery locations, and food for young fish. Fish populations will benefit from these plantings for years to come.

Additionally, removal of the dam will have the obvious benefit to canoeists and kayakers who will have unobstructed access from Geneva through to North Aurora with the removal of the North and South Batavia Dams. (The removal of the deteriorated South Batavia dam, owned by Kane County Forest Preserve, is currently in process.)

Recreate a Natural, Beautiful Riverfront

After removal of the dam, restoration will include native flower, grass and shrub plantings on the river banks. Deep-rooted native plants will stabilize the new bank areas. Native plantings will create important habitat for declining songbirds. Aquatic vegetation will benefit fish population. These plants will be both food and shelter for fish & their insect prey. Wildflowers will add color and diversity to the area. Today's river edges are barren or covered by brush.

ANSWERS TO COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DAM REMOVAL

"The banks of the Fox will dry up and become an unsightly mud flat." After the dam is removed, the Fox will revert to its natural channel. The plan for removal includes funds for restoration, including native landscaping on the riverbanks to ensure rapid establishment of beautiful native wildflowers and other deep-rooted plants.

"The water level in the Fox will reduce to a trickle." Removing the dam does not change the volume of water in the river. After dam removal, the width and depth of water below the dam will remain the same. The width and depth immediately above the dam will decrease, but a channel will be created to provide adequate depth for canoeing and fishing during even the lowest flows. The reduction in depth and width above the dam will gradually decrease until approximately 1 mile above the dam, at the location of the Kane County Government Center, where the river will again be unaffected by the dam removal.

"The fishing won't be as good." Fisheries biologists from the IDNR, the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, and various fishing clubs around the Chicago area have produced strong evidence that dams on the Fox River are terrible for fish populations. A healthier river will produce a healthier fish population.

"We should keep the sediments trapped behind the dam." The sediment accumulated behind the dam has been tested for chemicals contaminants, and none were found in levels exceeding Illinois Environmental Protection Agency standards. Funds have been allocated for sediment management during the dam removal process. Even if the dam is replaced, the sediment behind the current dam will be disrupted during construction.

Batavia voters:

Vote **YES** April 1 **to improve the quality and character of our Fox River**
Vote **YES** April 1 **to avoid future unnecessary costs** to the City of Batavia
Vote **YES** April 1 **to remove the North Batavia Dam**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit our website: bataviansforahealthyriver.org

Our four-fold mission is to:
To inspire a conservation ethic in Batavia, Illinois;
to inform citizens about the negative consequences of dams along the Fox River;
to respond to concerns citizens have regarding dam removal; and
to inform residents & businesses about ways to reduce non-point & point sources of pollution entering the Fox River.