

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 7/16/2024 12:57pm**

## **Trout River Dam Decision**

### ***Conservation District Votes to Remove Dam***

[ROGERS CITY, MICHIGAN, July 15, 2024] Following years of consultation, consideration and public comment, the Directors of Presque Isle Conservation District (PICD) voted unanimously at their monthly meeting July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, to remove the Trout River Dam located at the Herman Vogler Conservation Area.

PICD requested assistance from conservation nonprofit Huron Pines in 2020 with this project, and in 2022 signed a partnership agreement to investigate replacement and removal options. Since then, Huron Pines has assisted PICD with hosting public events and getting stakeholder input and guidance from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Lamprey Control Program, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, Barr Engineering, the City of Rogers City, the Tribes, and the county community.

After a wing wall of the 80-year-old dam collapsed during spring flows in 2022, a mandatory dam safety inspection led to emergency temporary repairs in March 2023. Mandated by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), repair work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Sea Lamprey Control Program and Rogers City Public Works Department temporarily stabilized the dam.

The 270-acre Herman Vogler Conservation Area, located just outside Rogers City was transferred to PICD in 1989. The dam, originally constructed to create a trout pond in the 1940's, now serves as a physical barrier to invasive sea lamprey.

The dam was not built for flood control and Barr Engineering's feasibility study revealed the safest option to mitigate a potential future flood would be dam removal.

According to fisheries biologists and local anglers, the current dam concentrates salmon below the dam and this blockage provides a localized fishing opportunity. It is important to note that this structure keeps fish and other aquatic organisms from accessing the upper reaches of the Trout River. Natural sediment transport, also blocked by the dam, causes sediment to build up in the impoundment upstream, creating a muddy shallow pond and raising water temperatures.

"This would be an easy decision for the Conservation District if it were just based upon sea lamprey. Sea lamprey control is aided by the current structure, yet this structure is not

fundamental in any strategic sense to sea lamprey management. Lampricide is still required with the current dam. Though more lampricide treatment sites would be required with dam removal, the cost between a build scenario with lampricide versus a removal scenario with increased lampricide treatment sites over 50 years is essentially the same,” said Chairman Frank Sapio. “It is also important to note that the dam does nothing to sustain summer river flows.”

Per Sapio, “The mission of Presque Isle Conservation District is “to plan, protect and enhance the wise use of our natural resources” and ecosystem restoration is part of that mission. In keeping with its vision for sustainable forests and farms, high-quality water resources and wildlife, and a community committed to their protection, the Directors of PICD have decided to remove the Trout River Dam to restore natural flow to the Trout River.”

“Not only will dam removal prevent future generations from having to make this same economically difficult decision again in 50 years, but it will also restore passage to approximately 10 miles of upstream habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms in this designated cold-water stream,” said PICD Treasurer Hilary McLennan. According to PICD Secretary Lawrence Anderson, “I see only opportunity in this decision.”

“Instead of a focal point where sportfishing is concentrated in an artificial habitat and the loudest sound is heard from the water flowing over the dam’s spillway, Rogers City will be able to boast an example of prime river restoration. The directors of Presque Isle Conservation District intend to fully restore the upper reaches of the river turning it back to what it once was. PICD is committed to supporting recreation and access and will work with the community as those opportunities evolve. After the dam is removed and the river restored, it will be possible to enjoy the sounds of flowing water throughout the riparian channel, where fish can have access during higher flows, and a former impoundment graced by a multitude of wildflowers and wetland species,” related PICD Vice-Chair Gary Wregglesworth.

“Each PICD Director has taken an oath of office swearing to faithfully discharge their duties through conservation of healthy native ecosystems, and it is in this spirit that this decision has been made,” reports PICD Director Leann Hopp.