

Below are excerpted positions or statements of four organizations supporting the removal of both of Yarmouth's dams, compiled May 2018: Trout Unlimited (Sebago Chapter), Royal River Conservation Trust, Maine Rivers, and the Earth Stewardship Team of Yarmouth First Parish Congregational Church.

Trout Unlimited (Sebago Chapter): *"In order to improve in-stream habitat and watershed-wide migration opportunities for trout in the Royal River watershed, the Sebago Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) favors removal of both the Bridge Street and the Elm Street dams in Yarmouth. Fishways are limited in their effectiveness and do little or nothing to improve the ecological health of the river. Sebago TU is committed to advocate, raise funds and coordinate logistics for removal of both Yarmouth town dams, including a solution to mitigate any problems caused by stored sediments in the impoundments. If there are costs having to do with the stored sediments, they should be borne as part of the project, and not imposed on the Yarmouth Harbor marinas. As long as removal of both dams is on the table, Sebago TU will make this goal one of our top conservation priorities."*

Royal River Conservation Trust: *"As an organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of all natural resources in the Royal River watershed, Royal River Conservation Trust stands firmly for the restoration the Royal River to a free-running stream by the removal of both the Bridge Street dam and the East Elm Street dam in Yarmouth, and offers its support to the Town of Yarmouth and others to work thoughtfully but deliberately towards that goal."*

Maine Rivers: *"The river would say yes.*

As the first two dams in the watershed, these break the river-to-ocean connection for sea-run fish such as salmon, shad, alewives and eel that must move between salt water and fresh water to survive. The town's decisions will have a direct impact on 22 miles of river habitat above these dams and many more miles of tributaries.

Science tells us that rivers are very resilient and respond well to restoration. It's not just fishermen, kayakers and joggers in Royal River Park who are interested in a free-flowing river. A whole host of creatures from insects to birds to whales benefit from restoration.

Scientists and communities are working throughout the Gulf of Maine to reconnect freshwater and marine ecosystems and to halt the precipitous decline of migratory sea-run fish populations and rebuild the collapsed fisheries. Recent news about the further decline of cod stocks makes it imperative that we continue to use sound science to determine the pros and cons of dam removal.

The Royal River is valuable. We all agree on this. A recent study released by The Nature Conservancy looked at dams in 13 Northeastern states. The dams in Yarmouth ranked in the top 5 percent of more than 14,000 dams surveyed as being restoration priorities for migratory fish. This is remarkable.

Yarmouth's two dams are relics of an industrial age. The small amount of hydropower produced at the Bridge Street Dam does not generate enough revenue to justify keeping it. Both dams have broken fishways.

Federal agencies have indicated an interest in funding river restoration work but won't fund fixing fishways.

Over time, gravity and weather will dislodge and breach dams, but whether this happens in a severe weather event next year or slowly over decades, we can't know.

More work needs to be done on hydrology and sediments. Neither Maine Rivers nor others would support dam removal that presents risks of release of toxic sediments. Completed studies on the Bridge Street Dam show no connection between contamination and dam removal.

If the Royal River could talk, what would the river say about removing the dams? The river would say yes. Remove the dams and restore the natural flow of the river.”

Earth Stewardship Team of the Yarmouth First Parish Congregational Church: *“In the name of Life it is time.*

In days gone by a free-flowing Royal River was natural and life forms thrived. The ecological health of the entire up- stream watershed benefitted as well as Casco Bay, the Gulf of Maine and the Atlantic Ocean.

That was before the Royal River was industrialized, dedicated to purposes other than the river’s life.

Life forms don’t thrive on the Royal River today even though the industries have left. Their skeletons remain and block fish passage, trap sediment flow and inhibit life forms such as birds, insects and plant life.

Is the answer the removal of Yarmouth’s two dams? That is the best answer for the life of the whole watershed, from New Gloucester through Casco Bay and beyond. But it is a difficult answer for many who work and live along what the river has become with dams.

There are options short of dam removal, expensive options that help, but don’t allow for the river to restore itself fully. All stakeholders who care about the river deserve to learn more and to be heard in a community process of decision making. If steps taken to improve the health of the river negatively impact some, assistance in coping needs be taken by the whole community.

The Town of Yarmouth holds the key to aiding the river revive itself. It owns the dams. But the river isn’t Yarmouth’s any more than the sky over us is one Town’s. Yarmouth’s stewardship of the portion of the Royal that runs through it is on behalf of all people who live along its entirety and for all life forms that are in it, along its shores and in the waters into which it flows.

In the name of Life it is time for Yarmouth and all communities along the river to identify as stewards of the river. We charge you to learn of the present health of the river, to learn what is needed to restore the river to health and to take action to accomplish it. Let us come together with the goals of a healthy river and a civil community guiding us. A healthy river nurtures life in and around it. A civil community works together for the greater good of itself and the web of civic and natural life in which it exists.”

