

Dismantling Of Iconic Adirondack Dam Begins

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Student Conservation Association Adirondack Program workers deconstruct Marcys Dam. NYS DEC REGION 5



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View from Marcy Dam on August 15, 2011 before Hurricane Irene. NYS DEC REGION 5



View from Marcy Dam on September 26, 2011 after Hurricane Irene. NYS DEC REGION 5

A dam that provided an iconic view of the Adirondack High Peaks is being dismantled. While some environmentalists say removal of the Marcy Dam will be good for the ecosystem, others are disappointed to see it go.

The Marcy Dam on Marcy Brook was a popular stop for hikers and campers making their way to and from the Adirondack High Peaks. The wooden dam built during the logging era created a pond whose backdrop includes Avalanche Mountain and Mount Colden.

But Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 damaged the dam. The Department of Environmental Conservation decided in 2014 to remove the structure and the work began this week. NYS DEC Region 5 Spokesman Dave Winchell: "What we looked at is the fact that we have a man-made structure – the dam – in the

middle of a wilderness that was not functioning properly, that could in fact fail completely during the next storm and so we just decided because of our policy on wilderness that we want to minimize human structures, because it would be too costly to rebuild the dam and meet the current dam safety regulations, that it just wasn't worth the cost."

Adirondack Council Spokesman John Sheehan is pleased it's being dismantled. "This is in a wilderness area where the dam really was a non-conforming structure but had been there for so long that people had gotten used to it and it remained. But I think everybody agreed that as it started to fall apart long term that rebuilding it wasn't a good idea. This will not be seen as a drastic or unwelcome change by nature. I think that people once they get a chance to soak in the scenery they'll realize that it's just as healthy and beautiful a spot as it ever was."

The DEC has warned hikers to avoid the work area. Because motors are not allowed in the area, much of the work will be done seasonally and workers will use hand tools.

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve Partner Dan Plumley says it will take five years, but is the right thing to do. "Hurricane Irene basically began the dismantling of the dam. The views of the peaks will still be there. You'll see them from a trail. And in its place, once the dismantling is complete, you'll see a natural wild trout stream. And very hopefully wild trout will be able to reach their former headwaters, which is really an exciting prospect."

Some of the best known and iconic photographs taken from the dam were been taken by Carl Heilman II. He is disappointed the DEC is dismantling rather than rebuilding it. "There are really very few places with public access that people can get to at a body of water like this where you have the highest peaks in the Adirondacks reflecting in the water of the pond. It's a real shame. I mean it's been such a stopping off place for anybody going in from the north. It was just one of those really iconic locations in the Adirondacks, just kind of incomparable. And it was such a nice stable structure. I understand the issues but it's going to be a real loss to the backcountry to have the dam gone."

The deconstruction of Marcy Dam is expected to be completed by 2020.