

## Yarmouth begins dam discussions

By [Amy Anderson](#)

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Photo: Amy Anderson / The Forecaster

Merrie Woodworth of the Royal River Conservation Trust and Landis Hudson of Maine Rivers examine the Bridge Street dam in Yarmouth. Their organizations are teaming up to present the public with information on rivers and how they are affected by dams, and by dam removal. The future of the East Elm Street and Bridge Street dams will be evaluated in the sessions.

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YARMOUTH — Residents have the opportunity to help decide the fate of two dams along the lower Royal River.

In a program called "Dams and the Royal River: Films and Forum," members of [Maine Rivers](#) and the [Royal River Conservation Trust](#) have joined forces to prompt the public discussion. They hosted a film night on Tuesday and will have a moderated panel discussion on Tuesday, Nov. 1.

The Bridge Street dam is 275-foot-long and is licensed to produce electricity through a facility in the Sparhawk Mill. The East Elm Street dam is 250 feet long, and has no power production capacity.

Town Manager Nat Tupper said the discussion of what to do with the dams comes from the [Royal River Corridor Study](#).

If the choice is to remove the dams, Tupper said the town must consider the cost and how it would impact recreation, hydro power, groundwater levels and fish migration. If the decision is to keep the dams in place, the cost of repair and maintenance will be an issue.

Although there have been dams along the river since the 1700s, Landis Hudson, executive director of Maine Rivers, said they are aging structures that were a part of an industrial history, created for a purpose that no longer exists. She said the mills and factories that used the dams are gone and it is time to consider what to do now.

"The Royal River today is very, very different from the river it was 30, 50 and 100 years ago," she said. "As we learn more about the changes to the waterway, it makes sense to ask how we can be a part of changing it for the better."

Merrie Woodworth of the Royal River Conservation Trust said as an organization, they also need more information and have many questions concerning the future of the dams.

The forum on Nov. 1 will begin at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall. Panelists will include Andrew Goode, vice president of the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and Mike Chelminski, a senior associate at Stantec Consulting Services. Tupper will also participate in the forum and Curtis Bohlen of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership will be the moderator.

Residents will have an opportunity to view the short films if they missed the presentation on Tuesday. For more information, contact Hudson at 847-9277 or [landis@mainerivers.org](mailto:landis@mainerivers.org).

**Amy Anderson can be reached at 781-3661 ext. 110 or [aanderson@theforecaster.net](mailto:aanderson@theforecaster.net).  
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