



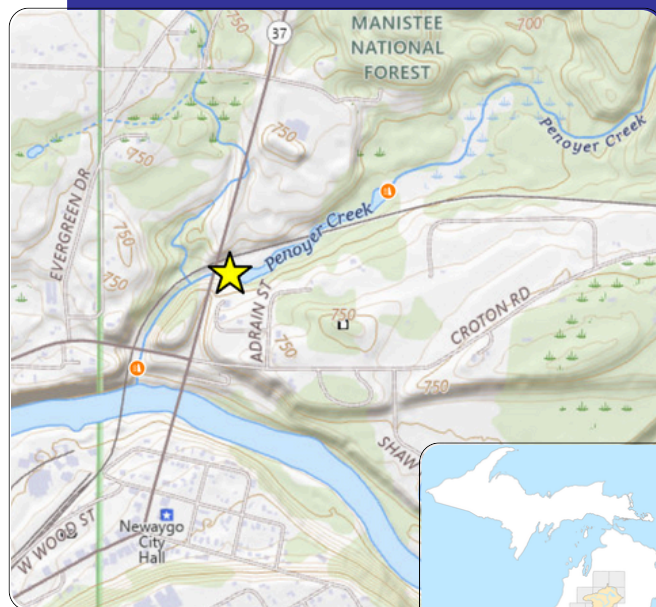
Rowe Dam #1 Removal

Penoyer Creek, Newaygo, Michigan

Penoyer Creek is an iconic feature of the landscape and history of the Newaygo area. The steep slope, many groundwater inputs, and healthy brook trout population make it a regionally unique and wondrous system. Sadly, the natural wonder of Penoyer Creek has been heavily impacted and fragmented by years of impoundment, habitat modification, and industrial use — the stream helped to build the community of Newaygo, but now it is in urgent need of restoration.

Why This Project Matters

- Fish passage and habitat, reconnecting and restoring a unique cold-water stream
- Conservation and restoration of an over 80-year-old wild brook trout fishery
- Restoration of habitat, connectivity, and natural stream function to >0.5 miles of Penoyer Creek.
- Retire the need for ongoing maintenance of the neglected and hazardous dam and water diversion structures
- Recreational opportunity and enjoyment - fishing, hiking, birdwatching, and more



Project Goals

- Removal of the outdated dam structure.
- Re-establishment of a natural stream channel and gradient
- Restoration of habitat, connectivity, and natural stream function to >0.5 miles of Penoyer Creek.



About the Project

Rowe Dam #1 has impaired natural stream function since its construction in 1888. The structure generated hydroelectric power for many years, but neglect and the failure of irreplaceable components has rendered it a nonfunctional and impactful hazard. In March of 2019, a high water event threatened to breach the upstream Rowe Dam #2, requiring an emergency drawdown of the impoundment, which released excessive amounts of sediment downstream filling the channel and impoundment behind Rowe Dam #1. MRWA and partners immediately began work, Contacting landowners, visiting the site, organizing with local and state agencies, collecting data, and developing plans and funding to evaluate, prioritize, and address the hazardous impoundments on Penoyer Creek and other tributaries of the Muskegon River Watershed.

Lack of landowner support prohibited further action until 2024, when Resonate Church purchased the properties, expressing interest and approval for the removal of both Rowe Dam #1 and Rowe Dam #2 and restoration of Penoyer Creek. MRWA and its partners secured funds from the EGLE for the assessment, engineering, and design of the Rowe #1 dam removal the same year. MRWA and partners are restoring Penoyer Creek with science-based, low-impact methods—managing sediment, protecting sensitive habitats, re-establishing the natural stream channel and planting native vegetation for long-term resiliency, and continuously monitoring to ensure lasting success.



The large hydraulic drop of the structure, naturally steep stream slope, and over a century of sediment build up present many technical challenges to restoration. MRWA is raising \$1.1 million for dam removal and habitat restoration. The project is in the Engineering and design phase, and fundraising currently underway. Construction is expected to begin in summer of 2026.

Committed Funding

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	\$40,000
EGLE – Dam Safety Unit	\$384,000
MI DNR Fisheries Division	\$310,000

Pending Funding

National Fish & Wildlife Fdn. (NFWF)	\$350,000
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Remaining to be Raised

\$26,000



How can you help?

The Muskegon River Watershed Assembly has been dedicated to the protection, conservation, and restoration of the Muskegon River Watershed since 1998. Our work relies on the help and support of the people!

- **Volunteer & Participate** – Join us for monitoring, educational workshops, citizen science projects, and other fun events!
- **Donate** – Fund restoration, education, and community projects.
- **Share** – Spread the word and grow our support.



For more information or to make a donation of support today, contact the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly.

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