



Wisner Daylighting

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 wonderous system. Sadly, the natural wonder of Penoyer Creek has been heavily impacted and fragmented by years of impoundment, habitat modification, and industrial use. Penoyer Creek helped to build the community of Newaygo, but now it is in urgent need of restoration.

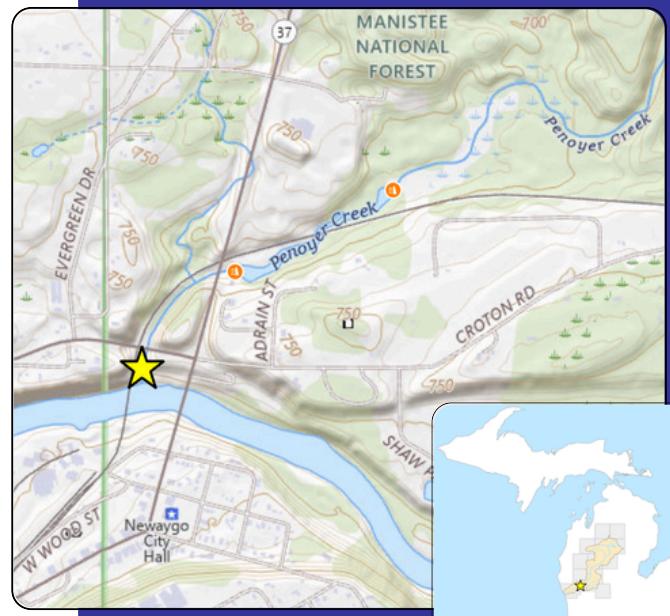
Why This Project Matters

- Daylighting of the stream channel and restoration of over 0.15 miles of cold-water stream habitat.
- Reconnection of 5.25 miles of continuous stream habitat in Penoyer Creek to the Muskegon River and Great Lakes for the first time in 188 years.
- Reduction/elimination of environmental and safety risks imposed by derelict dam infrastructure.
- Long-term resiliency and community stewardship
- Recreational opportunity and enjoyment – fishing, birdwatching, and more.

Robert A.
Wisner &
Carol Blair
Family

EGLE

ENCOMPASS
Socio-ecological Consulting



Project Goals

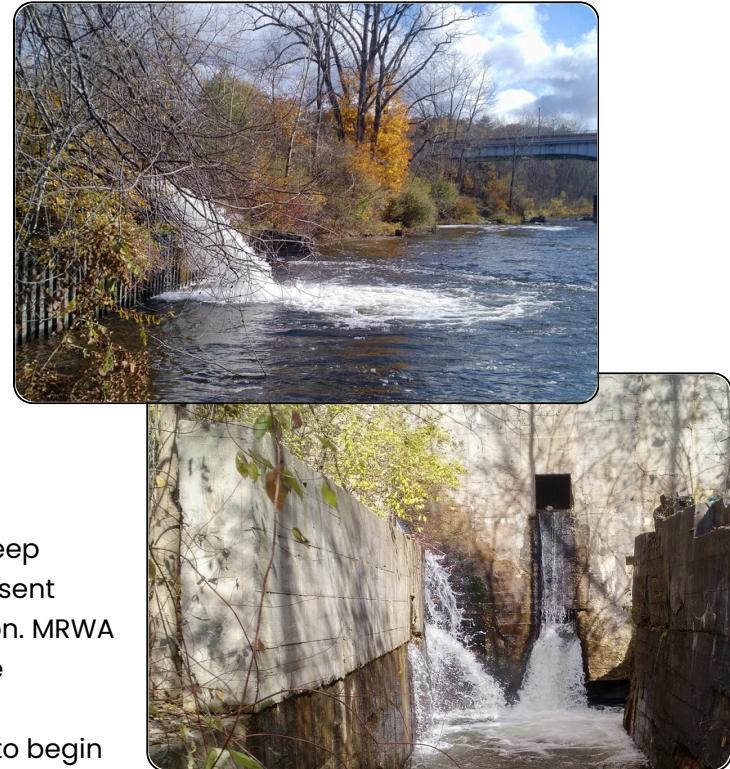
- Daylight the stream from the impoundment and re-establish a natural channel.
- Address the large hydraulic drop obstructing fish passage while maintaining a sea lamprey barrier.
- Restoration of habitat, connectivity, and natural stream function to >0.15 miles of Penoyer Creek.

About the Project

The mouth of Penoyer Creek has changed much since Augustus Penoyer and company established the first sawmill in the watershed in 1837. Today, the Wisner Impoundment is most recognizable feature of the mouth of Penoyer Creek, a massive chunk of concrete with water bursting from its seams, hidden below M-37. The structure largely known as "the chute" in reference to large pipe which discharges a portion of the stream's cold water into the Muskegon River north of the City Newaygo. Originally built in 1884 as the Newaygo Furniture Company, purchased and expanded by Rowe Manufacturing in 1905, the former factory structure utilized the power of Penoyer Creek for decades to manufacture wooden goods, until a catastrophic fire in 1967 rendered it completely inoperable. Robert A. Wisner recognizing the importance of Penoyer Creek to the community of Newaygo, purchased the property in 1976 with many dreams of restoration.

Robert never was able to see those dreams come to fruition. The structure has since sat derelict, it is a general safety risk and imposes significant environmental impact, acting as a complete barrier to healthy stream flow and fish passage. Following the breach of Rowe Dam #2 in 2019, The Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA) began working towards the removal of the three impoundments and restoration of Penoyer Creek. When MRWA approached current landowners, Robert Wisner's loving wife; Carol Blair, daughter; Rachel Wisner, and family they were ecstatic to restore the natural wonder to Penoyer Creek and carry out Robert's dream. In 2025, MRWA secured funds through the EGLE dam risk reduction program for engineering and design of the removal.

The large size and hydraulic drop of structure, naturally steep stream slope, and over a century of sediment build up present many technical challenges and increase cost of restoration. MRWA is raising funds for daylighting and habitat restoration. Site assessment, engineering and design will begin soon, and fundraising currently underway. Construction is expected to begin in summer of 2027.



- Planning
- Pre-development

- Begin Fund-Raising
- Begin Site Assessment, Engineering & Design.

- Continue Fundraising
- Complete Engineering & Design
- Permitting

- **Construction**
- Monitoring & Impact Evaluation

Before 2025

2025

2026

Future

A healthy, free-flowing Penoyer Creek is restored

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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