



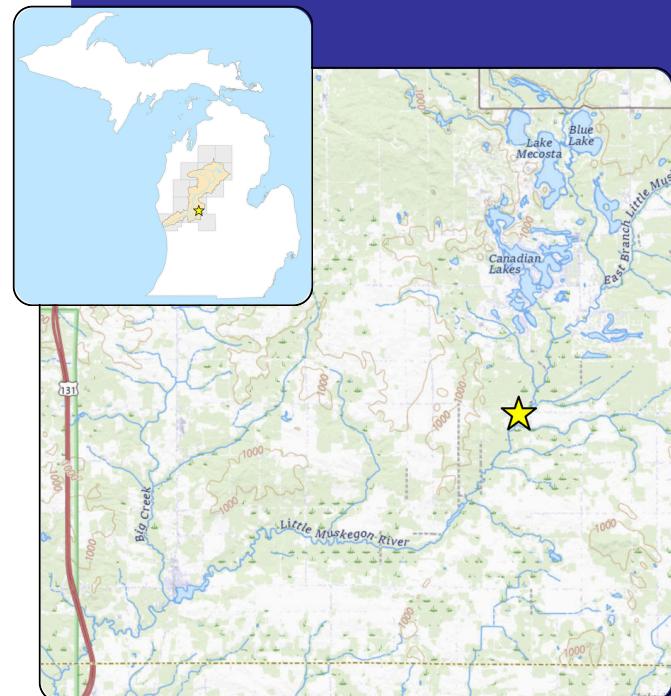
Altona Dam Removal

Little Muskegon River (Hinton Township)

Why This Project Matters

- Fish passage and stream connectivity. Eighteen miles of stream and 98 miles of tributaries reconnected.
- Conservation and restoration of habitat supporting wild-reproducing brook trout, stocked brown and rainbow trout, and numerous native species.
- Restored natural stream function and fish habitat.
- Elimination of an unsightly and hazardous dam.
- Recreational opportunity and enjoyment. Access to fishing, kayaking, picnicking, birdwatching, and more.

The Little Muskegon River is forty-four miles long and is the largest Muskegon River tributary. It originates near the village of Mecosta, then combines with the Canadian Lakes drainage, before traveling downstream through Morley to converge with the Muskegon River at Croton Pond. Its cool waters have been impacted by years of logging, damming, and agriculture, yet it remains a hidden gem that supports healthy populations of trout and native species. MRWA is working with local communities and partners to protect and improve the health of the Little Muskegon River and its tributaries.



Project Goals

- Removal of a hazardous dam structure.
- Re-establishment of a natural stream channel and gradient.
- Installation of an accessible canoe/kayak launch.
- Restoration of habitat, connectivity, and natural stream function.



About the Project

The Altona Dam was originally constructed in the late 1860's to power a sawmill and flourmill. The mill helped the community of Altona develop. Eventually the mill fell out of use and the derelict structure presented a public safety hazard and adversely impacted the health of the river. The mill dam altered stream flow, increased water temperature, and diminished habitat quality in the Little Muskegon River. Most critically, the remnant dam blocked upstream movement of small fish and reduced streamflow velocity. Sediment deposit, both upstream and downstream of the dam, widened the stream channel and covered gravel substrate that is important for fish habitat.



The Muskegon River Watershed Assembly started working with partners in 2020 to secure funding. Engineering and removal followed. The project was completed in 2025 at a cost of \$615,000. Funding partners included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Mecosta County Road Commission provided critical in-kind support.



How can you help?

The Muskegon River Watershed Assembly is 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 like you.

- Volunteer & Participate** – Join monitoring, educational workshops, citizen science projects, and other fun events.
- Donate** – Fund restoration, education, and community projects.
- Share** – Spread the word about river restoration.



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

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