

DNR Response to Public Comments

The Patapsco River Restoration Project partners--Maryland DNR, American Rivers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Interfluve, and many others—continue to engage the public as part of the design process for removing the Bloede Dam and restoring this section of the Patapsco River. This effort began in June 2012 with a public open house geared toward presenting the findings from the alternatives analysis conducted on the dam and continued into 2013 with the formation of the Bloede Dam Removal Citizen Advisory Group (BCAG). This group was formed to engage community leaders and allow for the fluid exchange of ideas and other feedback pertaining to the design of the removal of the Bloede Dam. Ideas and comments focused on commemorating the historic and cultural aspects of the site, recreational recommendations, and other social issues related to the dam's removal.

The group met throughout 2013/2014 and included participation by: Jim Palmer, Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park; Lisa Wingate, Patapsco Heritage Greenway; John Slater, Patapsco Heritage Greenway; Charles Wagandt (via email), Patapsco Heritage Greenway; Ken Clark, Sierra Club, Howard County; Ken Lewis, Coastal Conservation Association; Jim Boehm, citizen, avid park user; Steve McCoy, MD DNR PVSP; Jim Thompson, MD DNR Fisheries; Tony Redman, MD DNR; Lee Schnappinger, MD DNR MPS; and Serena McClain, American Rivers. Key recommendations from this group (reflected in the design documents) include preservation of a portion of the dam for interpretation and the addition of an overlook.

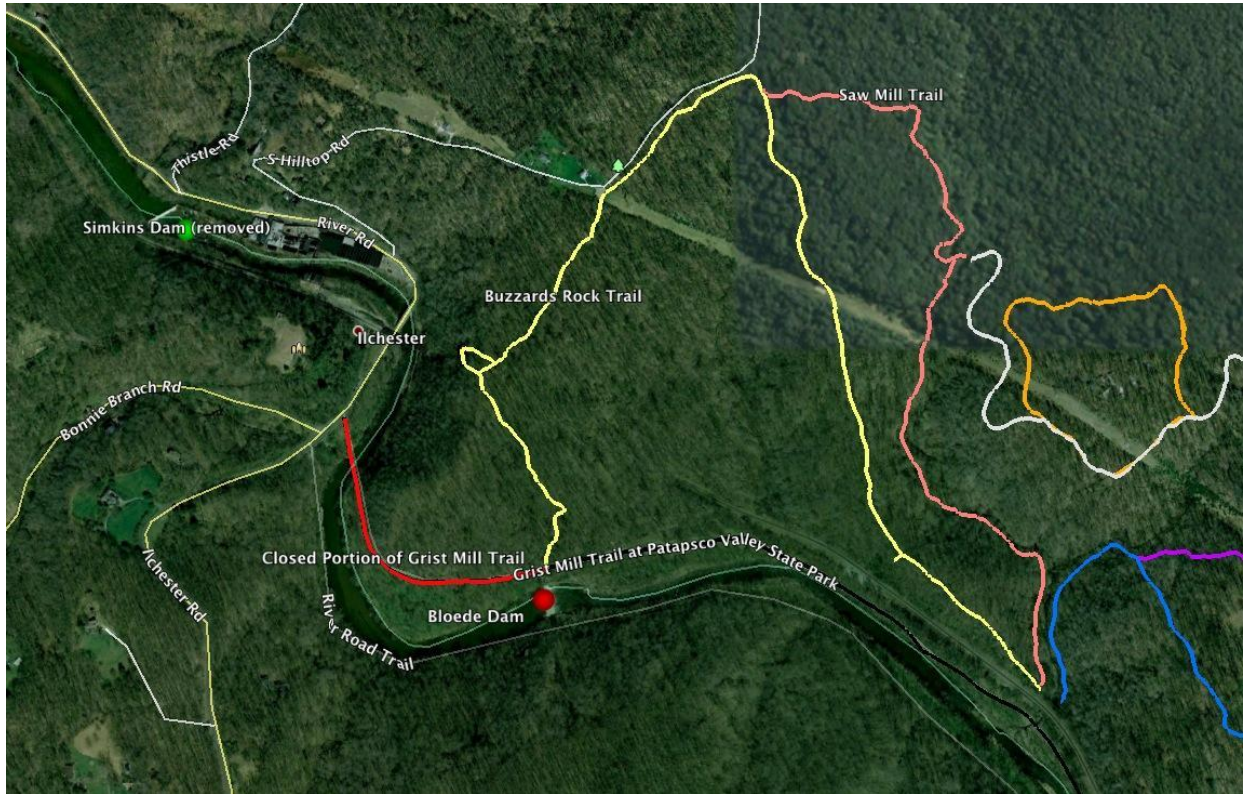
On January 29, 2015, DNR hosted a second public open house to share 60% design plans, which included the data collected and analyzed, the recommended design approach, and short- and long-term impacts.

The 2015 Bloede Open House was attended by 121 people with 31 written comments collected during the event. These comments are summarized and addressed as follows.

Why will the Grist Mill Trail be closed? Are alternative routes available?

Many of the comments received at the Open House were in regard to the Grist Mill Trail. The closing of part of the Grist Mill Trail during construction is absolutely necessary to allow for relocation of a portion of the Baltimore County sanitary sewer line and to ensure that the safety of park users is not compromised. As stated in the Bloede Dam Removal Design Report, the 42" sewer line currently runs, unsupported, through impounded sediment. Several alternative locations for the sewer line were considered; however, the river valley is very narrow in this section of the park with bedrock outcrops restricting our options for relocating the line, as well as available working space. The trail in this location is approximately 20 feet wide, and the public's safety during construction is our primary concern. A part of the trail is expected to be closed from Illchester Road to just below the dam, approximately 0.3 miles. Unfortunately, because of the steep terrain in the park, there is no suitable alternative route.

Maryland DNR and the other project partners recognize the inconvenience and burden the trail closure places on recreational users of the trail, as well as those users who commute via the Grist Mill Trail on a daily basis. The Grist Mill Trail, and all access and construction roads will be returned to their original condition once the project is complete.



**How will the proposed sediment management plan affect the Chesapeake Bay TMDL?
Won't all of this sediment destroy the river?**

The release of sediment during the removal of the dam continues to be a concern with some park users. The project team takes the removal of the Bloede Dam and analysis of short- and long-term impacts seriously when evaluating the most appropriate method for removing the dam structure and managing sediment within the dam's impoundment. Once the results of additional borings and sediment cores estimated the volume of sand and gravel impounded behind Bloede Dam, and confirmed the presence of a pocket of finer sediment containing phosphorus, the project team elected to consult with a broad group of sediment and nutrient experts from across the Chesapeake Bay. This consultation occurred on January 15, 2014, in the form of a Sediment Management Workshop. The first half of the workshop focused on presenting the group with an overview of the hydraulic modeling results, sediment analysis and geotechnical investigation results (Bloede Dam Removal 60% Design Report, pages 5-6, 9-16) conducted at the dam site. An analysis of biological and geomorphic monitoring data collected from the Patapsco River since the Simkins Dam removal (October 2010, see Tab 9) was also presented.

This was followed by a lengthy discussion on the sediment management options at the Bloede Dam site: removal and excavation of the sediment in question, stabilization of material in place, or the mobilization and passive release of the material. Group discussion on sediment management tactics focused largely on (1) timing of the mobilization and (2) the potential for ecological risk. Overall, the group agreed that passive sediment management was the appropriate approach for the removal of Bloede Dam.

It is important to realize that, even in the absence of any dam removal, the Patapsco River mobilizes large amounts of sediment on an annual basis, particularly during major storm events. Evidence of this can be seen by looking upstream of Daniels Dam, well above any dam removal projects. Large sediment deposits formed during the period of the Union and Simkins Dams. Movement of sediment has been occurring for hundreds of years. We can see this in historical photographs showing the large amounts of sediment trapped behind Bloede dam, soon after it was built and in a historical photograph in the Catonsville Library showing large amounts of sediment deposited at the base of the viaduct around the turn of the century. Rivers move sediment as part of a natural process. The material trapped behind Bloede Dam is sediment that would have naturally been moved downstream if it were not for the artificial trapping and storage of the dam. Releasing a large amount of trapped sediment during the removal will create short-term impacts, but the long-term benefits gained from removing this blockage outweigh any impacts we might observe in the near future.

Regarding TMDL issues, the summary from the Bloede Dam Biogeochemical Impacts Report states, "...the importance of these release rates is related to the area of deposition; if the area of deposition of fine-grained Bloede Dam material is amortized over the whole tidal Patapsco, these releases are aerially very moderate." The report also summarizes, "...we did not specifically consider nitrogen releases in this analysis because they are likely small." The findings presented in the Bloede Dam Biogeochemical Impacts Report ([link below](#)) were discussed at the January 15 sediment workshop. All parties present agreed that effects from nitrogen and phosphorus would be minimal.

More information on sediment can be found here:

[Bloede Dam Biogeochemical Impacts Report](#)

[Bloede Dam Sediment Management Memo](#)

[Sediment Transport Model](#)

Why is it important to remove Bloede Dam?

The DNR and its partners continue to receive comments in support of dam removal. Most of the comments favor removal of the Bloede Dam because of its danger to park users and the environmental impacts it creates.

Will DNR consider stocking smallmouth bass?

There were several comments received about stocking smallmouth bass in the Patapsco following the dam removal. While the DNR is not necessarily opposed to this, we feel natural repopulation of the area will occur as the river returns to pre-dam conditions. In the area once impacted by Simkins Dam, we quickly saw a return of cobble bottom and rock outcrops that are now occupied by smallmouth bass and other fish.

Have Baltimore County and Howard County local agencies been a part of the process and have the county Departments of Public Works been part of the sewer line relocation?

The relocation of the 42" Baltimore sewer line and the smaller Howard County line by Bonnie Branch were the biggest challenges the Project Partners encountered following the original public meeting in 2012. Since discovering the need to relocate these infrastructures, we have been working closely with both Baltimore and Howard County Public Works. The relocation of the sewer lines is of the utmost importance to the Project Team

The project team has also met with other agencies within Baltimore and Howard counties to ensure they are appropriately briefed on the project.