Cypress Branch Dam Removal

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), working in partnership with American Rivers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, aims to restore migratory fish species habitat through the removal of the Cypress Branch Dam on Cypress Branch, a tributary of the Chester River in Maryland. Removal of this dam will restore 18 mainstem and tributary miles of spawning habitat for blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*) and alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) in an effort to ensure sustainable populations of these native species.

Cypress Branch Dam is an earthen and rock-rubble dam structure owned by Maryland DNR. It is located on Cypress Branch, a tributary to the Chester River on Maryland's Eastern Shore, and is located in Cypress Branch State Park near Millington, Maryland. The dam currently serves no functional purpose and is in an advanced state of disrepair. Fisheries staff from Maryland DNR have documented abundant populations of river herring in the lower portion of the Chester River watershed. In order to re-establish fish passage and restore the upstream channel, the project team is planning a restoration that includes removal of the rock-rubble dam and a portion of the earthen dam in order to re-establish a natural stream channel and floodplain through the former impoundment and allow river herring to access more than eight miles of low gradient upstream riverine habitat in Cypress Branch and 10 miles in the Cypress Branch tributaries. Restoration of a free-flowing river system includes restoring the natural form and function of Cypress Branch so that it is able to provide refugia from the effects of climate change for the target species.

When implemented, this project will address one of the Chesapeake Basin's primary threats to migratory fish populations and result in the reconnection of 18 miles of habitat for river herring. The proposed approach is self-sustaining and eliminates current operation and repair costs incurred by the Maryland DNR.

The project is currently being evaluated in the permitting process. More information will be provided once permits are approved.