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**TO:** Essex County, Town of Jay, GOSR, NYSDEC, USACE, and Others

**FROM:** Milone & MacBroom

**RE:** Project Narrative – Rome Dam (NY ID #219-1082) Removal

**DATE:** March 7, 2018

**MMI #:** 5810-01

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## Background

This memorandum has been adapted from a previous project narrative prepared by the Ausable River Association (AsRA) in conjunction with Milone & MacBroom, Inc. (MMI) and submitted to the Adirondack Park Agency. This document summarizes the highlights of the Rome Dam Removal (Location: -73.700803, 44.439982). The project owner is the Town of Jay (the Town), New York and the project applicant is Essex County, New York (the County). The project engineer is MMI. Both MMI and AsRA are preparing permits for the project. Project funding is through the New York State Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR).

In the wake of Tropical Storm Irene, GOSR dedicated funds to address priority needs of the two Essex County communities most impacted by the flooding. Priorities for the Towns of Jay and Keene are detailed in the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Plan. Assessment of the Rome Dam, a deteriorating structure upstream of the hamlet of Au Sable Forks on the West Branch of the Ausable River, part of the former J. & J. Rogers Company pulp mill, was the Town of Jay's highest priority.

In 2015, with GOSR funds, the Town contracted with MMI to assess the Rome Dam. The yearlong study, conducted from 2016-17, led to the decision by stakeholders that full removal of the Rome Dam should take place to maximize public safety, reduce liability, naturalize the river, and eliminate long-term costs at the site. The Town of Jay Board approved that decision in March of 2017.

## Introduction

Rome Dam is 38 feet tall and 103 feet long with a concrete gravity ogee spillway and stone masonry abutments. It is approximately 1.5 miles upstream of the confluence of the East and West Branches of the Ausable River and the hamlet of Au Sable Forks. Built in 1893-4 and most recently rebuilt in 1936, the dam provided process water and mechanical power for the J. & J. Rogers Company pulp mill, the first phase in its paper-making operation. Rome Dam has not been maintained since 1971, when the Rogers Co. ceased operation. Deterioration of the

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dam has occurred. Cracks and spalling exist in the spillway and abutments. The river left abutment gets outflanked during high water and the abutments appear to be undermined. All outlet works are inoperable, collapsed, and leaking. Sediment and large wood are lodged in the outlet works. NYS DEC has listed the dam as structurally unsound. The dam is a high hazard (Class C) structure since its failure would lead to loss of life and damage to property in the downstream community. The MMI study confirmed the high hazard rating of the dam and clearly showed that the structure is increasing downstream flood and erosion risks.

## Project Description

Rome Dam is proposed for deconstruction in 2018 during low water in summer and early autumn. The project is anticipated to take two to three months, depending on weather and construction equipment allocations. Please refer to the final design plans prepared by MMI and dated March 7, 2018 for project details. Specific sheet references are made in this document to direct the reviewer to additional information.

Rome Dam is located in a gorge on the West Branch of the Ausable River making access for necessary machinery challenging. The design team has chosen to approach the dam from bank right (facing downstream) down a steep slope. An access road exists to the site (see SP-1). A temporary access road will be made from the loop to the corner of the dam to allow equipment access to the site and material hauling away from the site

The Construction Contractor (the Contractor) shall participate in a pre-construction site walk with the Project Engineer and others to review environmental permit requirements, contract provisions and specifications, project limits, and construction details ([see SP-3](#)). The site will be controlled by proper signage and safety fencing (see SP-4). Project stake out limits will be placed by the Contractor and reviewed by the Project Engineer and the Town (see SP-5).

Tree removal will take place in three designated areas to allow access and dam removal (see SP-5). Ninety-two (92) trees will be removed: thirty-four (34) of less than 2" in diameter; twenty-four (24) that are 2-3" in diameter, and thirty-four (34) of greater than 3" in diameter. Species include pine, northern white cedar, red oak and hemlock. Existing native vegetation will be preserved and protected, as possible. Any native vegetation or topsoil removed will be stockpiled and reinstalled, as possible.

The heavy work will start by building construction access to the dam from the existing haul road (see SP-5). Final layout will be confirmed in the field with the Project Engineer. The access road will consist of compacted #3 stone over filter fabric and a compacted subgrade (see DET-1).

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The impoundment will be dewatered initially by notching the dam first on river right and then on river left (see SP-6). The first notch will expose built up gravel that can serve as the base of a haul road across the front face of the dam. Dewatering will continue with the goal of moving the flow to river left.

Dam removal will take place incrementally to remove consolidated sediment and lower the concrete spillway. The timber crib structures will be removed as accessible. Channel restoration will take place as sediment is removed (see CS-1 and PRO-1). Approximately 37,000 cubic yards of sediment will be excavated and pushed to the river right corner of the dam at the access location. The material will be piled, drained, and loaded up to waiting dump trucks. Two piles are anticipated to generally separate coarse and fine sediment. The material will be hauled to two upland sites.

Sand, silt, concrete, and stone masonry will be hauled to the Town of Jay gravel pit located at 371 Dry Bridge Road in Ausable Forks. Gravel, cobble, and boulder will be hauled to 566 Ausable Drive for stockpiling and reuse in future river restoration projects by the Ausable River Association. Both sites are approved for receiving material.

The dam will be completely removed to underlying bedrock (see REM-1). Following removal, the downstream scour hole will be partially cleaned out to reestablish the proposed channel profile (see PRO-1).

Side slopes where the dam abutments were located will be regraded as needed, since they are mostly bedrock. The dam removal will lower water levels at the dam site nearly 20 feet on the West Branch Ausable River (see PRO-1).

Once deconstruction is completed, the temporary access roads will be restored with native vegetation leaving a narrow footpath down to the former dam site. A small, level existing opening will be maintained and will serve as the terminus of the footpath. The site is frequented by local residents who hike along the bank above the river on informal trails.

A 56-foot long railing along the edge of the former outlet works is proposed at this optimal river viewing site. With the steep bedrock walls, the railing is needed for safety as the scenic overlook location is likely to attract visitors to see the restored river in the bedrock gorge. The railing at the end of the footpath is the only proposed extant structure within 100 feet of the new ordinary high water (OHW).

The site will remain open to the public after the dam is removed. Development of a sign describing the history of the Rome Dam and its importance to the community is proposed in a parking area along Ausable Drive. As part of this project, the history of Rome Dam and the J.

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& J. Rogers Company has been documented, as requested by the State Historic Preservation Office, to memorialize the dam and its influence in the area. The sign will be located far from the proposed OHW.

Disturbed locations on the site will be completely restored to original condition, or as indicated on the plans (see SP-2). All disturbed locations will be seeded and mulched with a native mix that meets NYS standards for erosion and sediment control.

Project oversight will be performed by the Project Engineer and the County. The Project Engineer will visit the site two to three times a week to assist with design implementation and to track permit compliance. The County will be on site nearly daily. The Project Engineer will be available by phone and email any time for questions and guidance. A post-construction site walk will take place with all parties to ensure the project is properly completed.

The proposed project disturbance area is 3.0 acres (2.6 acres of river channel below OHW, 0.2 acres of NYS regulated streambank, and 0.2 acres of upland). Indirect disturbance will take place over in the upper impoundment due to anticipated sediment transport even though work is not taking place in this location.

Permitting includes APA approvals for the access, dam removal, and sediment stockpile locations. The Short Environmental Assessment Form is being completed for the SEQR process. Dr. Stephen Longmire on the project team is performing historic documentation of the dam and project site and leading the SHPO consultation process. An inquiry has been submitted to NYNHP and USFWS. A NYS DEC Joint application has been filed for Protection of Waters, Dam Safety, and Recreation River. The Joint Application will be sent to the US Army Corps of Engineers.

## Summary

This project removes a structurally unsound, high hazard dam from a bedrock gorge on the West Branch of the Ausable River. The project has been designed to minimize construction impacts and return the river to its natural pre-dam condition. The dam removal is scheduled to take place during low water in summer and fall of 2018 and will likely take two to three months. Removal of the dam will reduce flood risk, enhance instream habitat, improve water quality, increase the potential for geomorphic stability on the West Branch, and provide the public with a stunning view of a state-designated Recreational River.