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## **Pigg River Dam Breaching in Franklin County Completed**

Franklin County, Virginia – Dams and other structures choked Southwest Virginia’s Pigg River for over 100 years. Now, with the breach of the river’s oldest and last remaining dam, its waters rise freely from Fivemile Mountain and flow a winding 75 miles east to Leesville Reservoir near its confluence with the Roanoke River.

As Friends of the Rivers of Virginia (FORVA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today highlight the completion of Power Dam demolition, local officials and conservationists look forward to reduced flooding risks, the opportunity to extend the Pigg River blueway for canoeing, kayaking and fishing, and improved river habitat for wildlife including the federally endangered Roanoke logperch and declining Roanoke bass, orange-fin madtom and bigeye jumprock populations.

Partners have shifted focus to monitoring the river’s response to the demolition. As expected, the banks and channel within the restoration area are adjusting, a process which may take a year or more.

The restoration project, administered by [FORVA](#), was possible with over \$1 million of voluntary restoration funding from Duke Energy to breach the dam, monitor results and restore river habitat. Studies guiding the project were funded by the Service with assistance from FishAmerica Foundation.

The possible failure of Power Dam was a looming concern for the Town of Rocky Mount, whose main supply line to the Town's wastewater treatment plant lies downstream, and for the Virginia Department of Transportation, whose downstream bridge crossing faced potential damage. Dam removal has protected these community assets.

The project is the latest of many upper Roanoke River basin restoration efforts by the Service and partners. These include the 2013 removal of Veterans Memorial Park dam in Rocky Mount, the 2009 Wasena dam removal and 2010 Wiley Drive bridge replacement in the City of Roanoke, and numerous riverbank restoration projects throughout the Roanoke River area to reduce sediment loading. These steps are key to improving water quality and have reconnected Roanoke logperch populations divided by dams, moving the endangered darter closer to recovery. Additionally, the efforts join a national trend to remove obsolete dams and restore rivers, with the Service and partners removing more than 1,600 barriers to fish passage over the past two decades.

“This project culminates over a decade of hard work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our partners, whose support makes this restoration work possible. We all benefit from this project’s environmental, recreational, economic and other benefits,” **said David Byrd, fish and wildlife biologist for the Service.**

“River restoration is FORVA’s primary mission, so we are happy to see this project near completion. We thank Duke Energy for joining us with strategic support, cooperation and funding. The Pigg River now runs free again!” **said Bill Tanger, chairman of FORVA.**

“Duke Energy is committed to the long-term protection of waterways in this region,” **said Davis Montgomery, Duke Energy district manager for the Dan River Basin and surrounding region.** “Protecting these natural treasures, and the wildlife that depend on them, is important to ensuring these resources continue to thrive, and are enjoyed today and for years to come.”

“In addition to improving fish habitat, the breaching of the dam will open up nearly five miles of river for recreation. Access to waterways is consistently one of the highest ranking recreational needs in Franklin County. When complete, paddlers will be able to travel on the Pigg River from Lynch Park in Rocky Mount to the new boat launch on Power Dam Road. Developing our lakes and rivers for people to enjoy promotes economic development as people and businesses see Franklin County as a great place to work and play,” **said Director Paul Chapman of Franklin County Parks and Recreation.**

Other partners in the dam removal include the [Town of Rocky Mount](#); [Franklin County, Virginia](#); [Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries](#); [USFWS Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program](#); [FishAmerica Foundation](#); and [Franklin County Historical Society](#).

More information: [project details](#), [photos](#), [time lapse video](#), and [similar projects](#).

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