



## Lowell Mill Dam - Johnston County, NC



In December 2005, the final phase of the Lowell Dam removal was completed by Restoration Systems for the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (NCEEP). The NCEEP is an innovative state program charged with improving water quality in North Carolina by protecting and restoring critical water courses and wetlands throughout the state.

Removal of the dam has proven to be the crucial next step in a long-term effort to provide passage for migratory fish throughout their historic range in the Neuse River Basin. Three other dams -- the Quaker Neck, Cherry Hospital and Rains dams -- were removed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers between 1997 and 2001 on the Neuse River and Little River downstream from the dam. As a result, the Lowell Dam emerged as the #1 dam removal priority in the state, as ranked by 13 state and federal agencies.

Shad, Herring, Striped Bass and Atlantic Sturgeon will now be able to travel up the Little River, a large tributary to the Neuse, into the Piedmont for the first time since the early 19th century. Nearly 300 miles of main-stem and tributary waters have been opened to these exciting sport fish. Almost 700 landowners in Johnston County now have the opportunity to fish from their property for the first time.

In May 2006, resident biologists tracked the passage of the American Shad during spawning season on the Little River. The species was sighted upstream migrating towards the site of the former dam. Specific sightings have also been recorded at the Atkinson Mill Dam in Johnston County and Buffalo Creek in Caldwell County.

Restoration Systems collaborated with Dr. Joseph Hightower and graduate student Joshua Raabe of the N.C. State Department of Zoology in March 2007 to sponsor the installation of a [Resistance Board Weir Panel](#) on the river. The purpose of the study was to gather quantitative data on the migration of fish moving upstream to spawn following dam removal.

On September 21st, 2007, Restoration Systems held a ceremony to donate the park area surrounding the site of the former Lowell Mill Dam to Johnston County, NC, along with an endowment of \$140,000 to the parks department. Two interpretive signs were also placed along the trails of the park, one dedicated to the scientific process of the stream restoration project, and the other to the history surrounding the old dam.