

HUNTERDON COUNTY

# Dam's days may be numbered

Martisa Tall

For The Star-Ledger

Federal officials called it a

public safety risk. The state

classified it as high-hazard.

Almost 40 years after

environmental experts first

warned the Warren Glen

Dam should come down, the

political muscle to make it

happen may finally exist.

Sandwiched in a gorge

of the Musconcong River

between Warren and Hunt-

erdon counties, the 37-foot-

tall dam once generated

hydropower.

It has been out of commis-

sion for decades due to the

river's unreliable flow and

lack of sufficient strength,

and environmental groups

now say leaving the dam

intact is more trouble than

it's worth.

U.S. Reps. Leonard Lance

and Josh Gottheimer have

sponsored a bipartisan

amendment to the Water

Resources Development Act

of 2018 that directs the sec-

tary of the Army to expedite

a study of the feasibility of

removing the dam. The act,

including the amendment,

passed Wednesday in the

House of Representatives.

Removing the dam — the

river's largest — would make

the area safer, create a larger

habitat for fish and enable

people to boat through that

section of the river, said Alan

Hunt, executive director of

the Musconcong Water-

shed Association.

Among the species of

fish in the river are Ameri-

can shad, which come to the

river to breed but live in the

Atlantic Ocean. Opening up

room on the Musconcong

helps them increase their

historically declining num-

bers.

The risk of the dam crum-

bling on its own, letting out

a powerful stream of water

that could destroy nearby

structures and release a lot

of sediment into the rest of

the river, would also be elim-

inated by removing the dam

in phases, Hunt said.

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Then the private landowner decided it was a liability that could impede the sale of a former paper plant nearby, Hunt said. The dam is owned partly by International Process Plants and Equipment Corp. and partly by the state of New Jersey.

Environmental groups also had to get regulatory agencies comfortable with the removals and figure out the funding mechanisms.

The Hughesville Dam, which straddled the border of Warren County's Pohatcong and Hunterdon Coun-

ties's Holland, required more than \$1.6 million to take down.

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The Warren Glen Dam on the Musconcong River between the Warren Glen section of Pohatcong Township and the Bloomsbury area is seen in 2016. A person standing on the dam gives a sense of scale. Courtesy of Musconcong Watershed Association