

## Springfield Township Mill Pond Dam Project Q&A

Some statements have been made publicly that are factually inaccurate; see below for responses. For more details, see the [Fact Sheet](#) and other information and materials provided in the menu tab.

**1. *Removing the dam would leave the impoundment area stinking and unsightly.***

**RESPONSE:** The Feasibility Study noted that odor would not be a long-term issue under any alternative. The consultant did indicate that soils and organic matter exposed from the impoundment during dewatering may have an odor until dried or revegetated but the drying and revegetation of the soil would occur within a matter of weeks.

**2. *The only reason the dam is being removed is because there is grant money available, which was not available with the other alternatives.***

**RESPONSE:** Cost and available grant funding were only two of the eight factors noted and constituted only 25% on the total score of each alternative. While it is true that the dam removal alternative is more expensive than some of the others, and grant funding is available for removal but generally not for repair or maintenance activities, the alternative selected was not the most expensive.

**3. *The Township is creating a snake farm.***

**RESPONSE:** The Township plans to restore the impoundment and, like other wetlands that are part of the Shiawassee River corridor in Springfield Township, the consultants concluded that the impoundment could well-become an ecosystem habitat conducive to fish and wildlife. Just downstream of the dam, the Shiawassee Basin Preserve is known for its globally rare wetland system. These wetlands provide valuable habitat to many threatened and endangered plant and animal species, including the Poweshiek skipperling butterfly and eastern massasauga rattlesnake. These animals may find a home in the restored impoundment area as they have in other Township parks. However, the goal is to create opportunities for passive recreation and nature viewing for human visitors, not to create a snake preserve or farm.

**4. *The Township can't disturb the area because there are endangered rattlesnakes.***

**RESPONSE:** The eastern massasauga rattlesnake is listed as a 'Threatened' species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The Township has received a Certificate of Inclusion on an Incidental Take Permit issued to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which obligates it to comply with a conservation agreement to implement certain conservation measures for the rattlesnake. The consultants concluded that no significant adverse effects to wildlife would be expected from

dam removal. It is possible that some species will be displaced to nearby habitats in the region. However, as stated above, the consultants concluded that the impoundment could well-become an ecosystem habitat conducive to fish and wildlife, including eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

**5. *Springfield Township has failed to maintain the Mill Pond.***

**RESPONSE:** Springfield Parks and Recreation, along with Oakland County Parks and Recreation, jointly treat the pond for nuisance aquatic weeds, however efforts to maintain the pond have become a “losing battle” over the years. In general, small dams tend to have negative ecological effects on a river system. Water quality is negatively impacted due to low oxygen conditions, nutrient and sediment build-up and proliferation of invasive species. Springfield Township Parks and Recreation had spent a great deal of staff time and funds to maintain the beach area for decades prior to its closure. In 2018, the Springfield Township Park Commission made the decision to close the beach due to infrequent use in recent years and the expense associated with the maintenance. The process of restoring the shoreline is underway.

**6. *Dam removal would be more expensive than replacement.***

**RESPONSE:** While it is true that the initial cost for dam removal would exceed the cost of replacement, dam replacement would still require ongoing maintenance and repair cost for the lifetime of the dam, and long-term repair and maintenance would likely exceed the cost differential between dam removal and dam replacement. Additionally, total cost for dam removal includes funding to restore and naturalize the stream channel.

**7. *Dam removal has been stopped by a lawsuit.***

**RESPONSE:** There was a pending lawsuit in Federal Court however no injunction was issued and the process of preliminary engineering and conceptual park design continues. Springfield Township and Oakland County believe that the complaint lacks merit and is premature. The recommendation to remove the dam was not arbitrary but was made after analysis of a tremendous amount of information and a great deal of discussion about each alternative. Legal counsel has advised that the Township and County went well beyond what would be legally required in making their recommendation.

***UPDATE: An opinion dismissing the lawsuit was issued by the court on December 3, 2020.***