

SO, YOU WANT TO REMOVE A DAM...

People feel passionately about rivers, and, sometimes, about dams and their reservoirs as well. Efforts to restore rivers, fisheries, and livelihoods lost to dams can be met with resistance and skepticism, especially if decommissioning advocates neglect to educate important stakeholders, address technical, legal, and economic cost issues, or examine feasible alternatives and possible negative impacts. Addressing these elements early in a decommissioning campaign can lead to strong partnerships between different stakeholders.

- 1. Do your homework.** Know who owns the dam, what legislative processes apply, and which resources, what rights, and whose interests would be affected by continued dam operations and by decommissioning. Identify stakeholders and the costs and benefits of dam removal from their perspectives. Know the relevant government agencies, interested organizations, communities and unions, and assess the depth and range of their interests. Study precedents and dam removal case studies. Don't assume you know who supports or opposes decommissioning.
- 2. Identify alliances and develop working partnerships.** A diverse constituency is critical in dealing effectively with controversial issues around dam removal, even when parties agree that a project is not worth preserving. Include dam preservationists wherever possible. Partnerships require time and diligence to cultivate.
- 3. Anticipate opposition.** Have your facts straight and make your information available to opponents, the public, the media and likely supporters. Effective decommissioning campaigns address concerns related to potential impacts to local jobs, landmarks (i.e., the dam and "the lake"), property rights, and current ways of doing things (e.g., reservoir-based recreation or fisheries). Critics can turn into allies when they are presented with well-reasoned, scientifically sound arguments favoring restoration.
- 4. Educate everybody.** Foster dialogue between stakeholders to resolve issues pertaining to the costs and benefits of restoration. Get on record with local, regional and national governments and demand consideration of decommissioning possibilities.



This brochure was produced by the River Revival project of International Rivers Network. Your organization can join the movement to restore the world's rivers by endorsing the Walker Creek Declaration. You can keep current on dam removal around the world by subscribing to the River Revival Bulletin (send an e-mail to info@riverrevival.org). Consider supporting this important work by becoming a member of IRN! Learn more about all the ways to get involved by visiting our website at www.riverrevival.org.

International Rivers Network supports local communities working to protect their rivers and watersheds. We work to halt destructive river development projects, and to encourage equitable and sustainable methods of meeting needs for water, energy and flood management.

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