

Our downtown was built around the Montgomery Dam and the river as it is now

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The proponents of removing Montgomery Dam are selective in their facts or dismiss them altogether. They are continually mentioning the flooding in downtown Camden. The FEMA 100 year storm flood map shows overland flooding at Washington and Mechanic streets, not Main Street.

The 2021 Interfluvial report was very explicit that Montgomery Dam does not contribute to this 100 year flooding and removing the dam will not eliminate any flooding. The flooding is caused by restrictions in the river channel, including bridge abutments.

There was no downtown flooding in the October 31, 2021 storm. There was significant flooding elsewhere, but the dams operated as intended and flows were controlled through downtown.

What was witnessed downtown were leaves plugging the storm water basins on Main Street. That storm resulted in 5.6 inches of rain fall in Camden, basically a 100-year storm, and no flooding or damage occurred downtown, contrary to what others want us to believe.

As for the gate operation at Montgomery Dam, opening that gate does nothing for flood control, as the amount of water cascading over the dam far exceeds the amount of water that can pass through the gate. And the Town can put a motor operator on the gate, similar to what other dams have; thus, eliminating any safety concerns. The staff operating the dam are already on payroll.

Are you suggesting job elimination – I don't think so and would hope not.

The Montgomery dam may not be in top condition – who is responsible for that? The Town has neglected Montgomery in the past 10 years, and when funding to repair the dam was approved in 2017 (nearly 5 years ago) the split Select Board voted to not spend that money on the Montgomery Dam. Costs then were significantly less than they would be today. And this does not mean ongoing maintenance is prohibitive – far from it.

As with anything requiring regular maintenance (most things) continued upkeep results in

much lower costs over the long term. The return on investment for this maintenance will be immeasurable. As for the falls, the current 100 foot wide falls along the dam will not exist and a narrow passage of water over the ledge will remain – if one wants to refer to those as falls, fine – but that what remains will not be the Falls that are in Camden now, not even close.

Comparing Camden to Northfield, Vermont, or any other places in New England that have flooded, isn't a good comparison because they are not similar circumstances or locations. But, by the way, Northfield flooded in 2011, not 2005 – and the population was 5,900 at the last census. "Facts" corrected; you are welcome.

The cost to repair Montgomery Dam is orders of magnitude lower than the costs to removing the Montgomery, Knox Mill and Knowlton dams, removing centuries of silt build up, and creating fish passages around Seabright and East/West dams.

Camden is unique and has a resource in Montgomery Dam and the mill pond it creates. And it shouldn't be ignored that there will be maintenance required for any fish passage, or portage with associated costs. Removing the dam will result in a 'river' much more narrow than what currently exists and the impacts of changed river patterns and depths on existing building structures is an unknown risk, as was highlighted in the Interfluve engineering reports. Scouring, erosion, frost heave damage are real concerns per the first Interfluve report. Our downtown was built around the Montgomery Dam and the river as it is now.

We can't ignore the existing environment, or the potential negative impacts to both the natural habitat and downtown business district that have evolved around the Megunticook River. Let's work together to come up with a plan that will work for everyone in town, not just a special interest.

Steve Mischissin lives in Camden