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Removing Dams – Rebuilding Rivers

by Pete Lavigne

In the early 1980s, a group of activists from a small New England town fought the restoration of the nation's oldest hydroelectric dam, the Sewalls Falls Dam on the Merrimack River. That battle ended when an April 1984 freshet washed away one-third of the century-old structure. But the fight kicked off a new social and environmental force — the "undamming" movement.

This swiftly growing movement is crisply documented by Elizabeth Grossman in her book *Watershed: The Undamming of America*. Grossman, a former New York book editor, now rooted in Oregon, tells the story of the most important dam-removal battles in the past 10 years. Snapshots of ongoing fights over Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River, Savage Rapids Dam in Oregon and the Lower Snake dams are interspersed with success stories from California, Montana and across the country.

Another new book, *Dam Removal: Science and Decision Making*, commissioned by the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment in Washington, D.C., takes a methodical look at the potential environmental, social and economic aspects of dam removal. The book, which is the product of a 10-member panel that includes engineers, biologists and policy makers, examines results of small- and medium-sized dam removals throughout the United States.

Taken together or separately, both *Watershed* and *Dam Removal* provide rewarding additions to the growing library of river restoration.

Watershed: The Undamming of America, Elizabeth Grossman, Counterpoint, 2002.
Hardcover: \$27. 248 pages.

Dam Removal: Science and Decision Making, Heinz Center Panel on Economic, Environmental and Social Outcomes of Dam Removal, 2002. Available free from the Heinz Center while supplies last (e-mail info@heinzctr.org) or on their Web site in PDF format at www.heinzctr.org.

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