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Two Cincinnati Firms Lead Largest Dam Removal in Region

(Cincinnati, Ohio) Stantec Consulting Services Inc. and Ohio River Foundation are leading the team removing the West Milton Dam and restoring areas of the state scenic Stillwater River, north of Dayton, Ohio. The dam removal is one of the largest to ever be removed in Ohio, Indiana, or Kentucky.

The dam was 13 feet high and 200 feet long. Its removal and associated river restoration work will improve water quality and fish passage and reconnect 200 miles of the Stillwater's upstream section to the lower river. With the dam's removal, the Stillwater will have the longest free-flowing section of any river in Ohio.

"This project has many different moving pieces to it," commented Scott Peyton, Senior Principal at Stantec. "First, there was a complex and long permitting and planning process. Second, the dam removal involves using heavy machinery to move a lot of dam demolition debris. Third, changing the lake conditions that existed for one hundred years within the 2 mile-long impoundment upriver of the dam back into a river environment will be done mechanically, by building riffles and other habitat structures. But, it will take a few years for native plants to move back in and the river to find the right stable course and fish and other aquatic species re-populate their natural habitats."

Village officials looking to the future seized upon the opportunity to work with Ohio River Foundation to obtain funds to remove the dam. Funding for this \$1.3 million project comes from Ohio's Water Resources Restoration Program and the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership.

With dam safety reports advising repair or removal, and repair estimates of hundreds of thousands of dollars, it was an easy decision to remove the dam with no cost to West Milton citizens. The Village sees the project as not just a benefit to the river, but also a potential driver for economic growth through bike and walking trail development and better access to the river for all.

As the project moves into the river restoration phase, the crews will be focused on changing the habitat back into a river habitat, with riffles, runs, and deep pools. The goal is to not to re-create the lake fishery that existed behind the dam. Instead the aim is to create a great river fishery that can be enjoyed by all manner of recreational fisherman.

To comply with the project permit and meet historic preservation interests, a documentary video is being compiled with interviews and photos of the dam from historic records and people who have decades of memories of life with the dam.

“We have used a comprehensive approach to this project and developed a workable model that enables us to help communities raise the necessary funds to achieve the social, environmental, and economic benefits of river protection and restoration. We applaud the Village of West Milton for having the vision and ambition that this project requires,” said Rich Cogen, Executive Director of Ohio River Foundation.

Stantec provides professional consulting services in planning, engineering, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, surveying, environmental sciences, project management, and project economics for infrastructure and facilities projects in Canada, the United States, and internationally. It also offers specialized services in ecology, environmental restoration, water resources, and regulatory support for public and private clients in the power, transportation, and energy and resource sectors, as well as provides services in cultural resource management and historic preservation.

Ohio River Foundation is a nonprofit organization serving the 200,000 square mile watershed with education and conservation programs. Its River Explorer and Youth Conservation Team programs reach thousands of students every year, encouraging environmental stewardship and consideration of conservation careers. ORF also assists communities throughout the watershed in protecting water quality and facilitating the restoration and protection of their natural resources.

More information about this project can be found at ORF’s website at www.ohioriverfdn.org and its Facebook page. Information about Stantec, Inc. can be found at www.stantec.com.

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