

# Kletzsch Park River Access and Fish Passage Project

## Frequently Asked Questions



### Project Background

The purpose of the Kletzsch Park River Access and Fish Passage project is to provide an improved overlook with public access to the river, address the required maintenance of the dam, and provide important passage for native fish species. There are several issues that need to be addressed at the Kletzsch Park dam including erosion along the west bank and shoreline, a degraded portage, disrepair of the dam on both banks, and the dam serving as a barrier to native fish migration upstream. The proposed projects will build on the significant investments in Milwaukee River restoration efforts made in recent years.

### Project Objectives

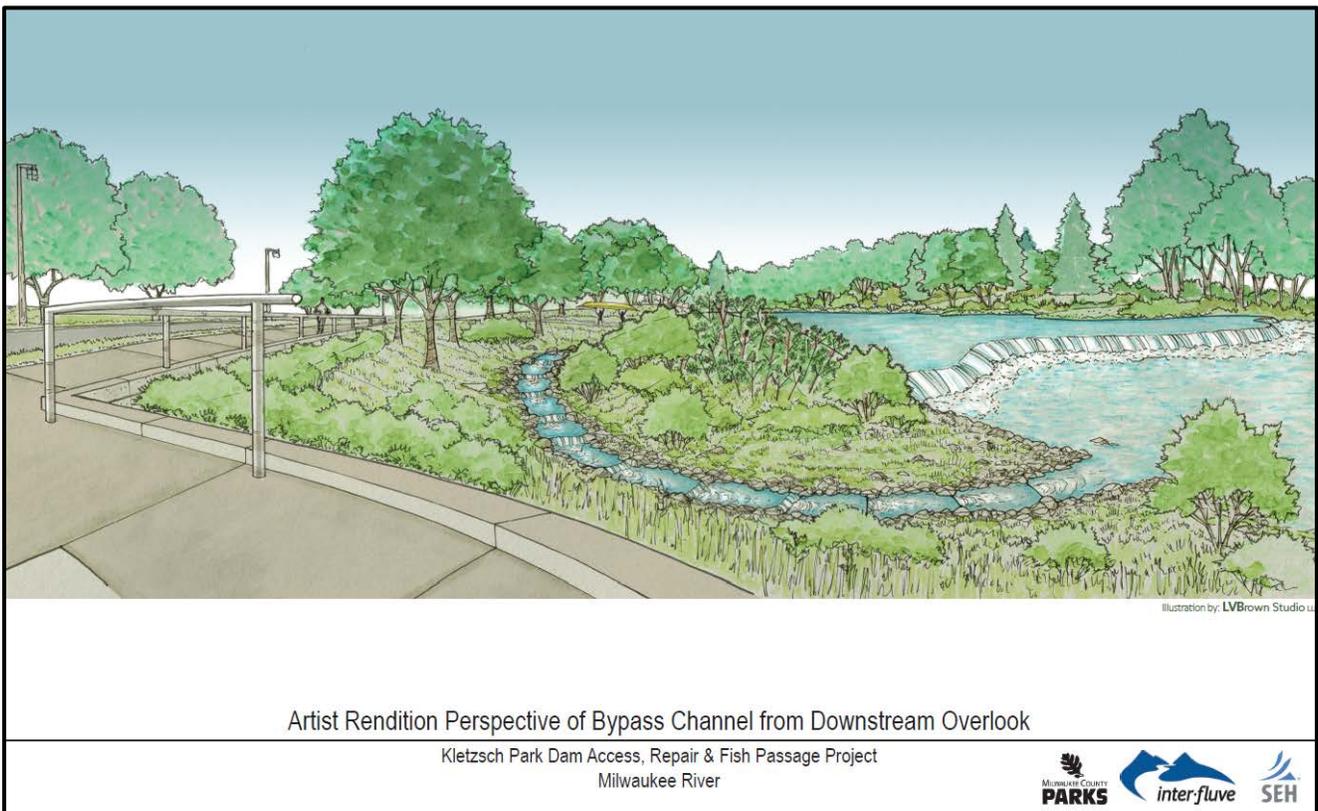
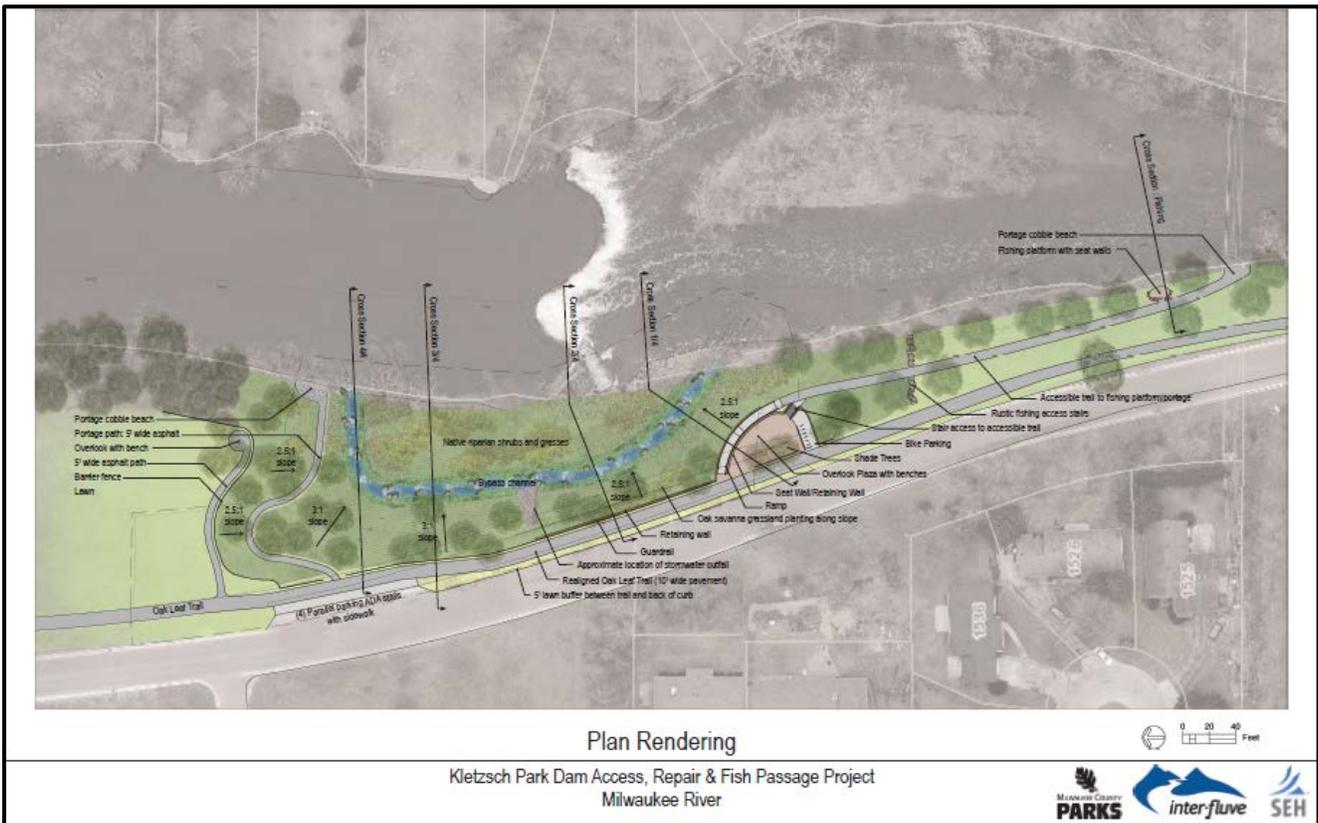
The three main objectives for the proposed project are to address safety concerns, provide better access to the bluff and shoreline for all park visitors, and provide for the movement of native fish species to upper reaches of the Milwaukee River. The project objectives include:

- Address safety issues with the dam
- Provide better bluff stability
- Provide access to the Milwaukee River for persons with disabilities
- Replace degraded canoe/kayak portage
- Improve fishing access
- Create a viewing area and overlook
- Develop fish passage for native fish species to reach the upstream reaches of the Milwaukee River

Milwaukee County Parks and our partners will update this document periodically during the 2019-2020 planning and construction phases of this project. There will be an additional Public Information Meeting when an updated concept is ready to present.

## Concept Designs

The drawings below are the plan and perspective views of the concepts proposed for the Kletzsch Park River Access and Fish Passage Project. These drawings were shared with the public at an informational meeting on January 9, 2019. **Based on public comments received at the meeting, the design is being refined. Milwaukee County will hold another public meeting when an updated design concept is ready to present.**



## Overlook & Public Access

### **Will the public continue to have views of and access to the Milwaukee River?**

Park visitors love to view the Kletzsch Park dam falls from the bluff! And, improving access to the river and maintaining views of the falls are central objectives of the designs. Concept designs shared at the public information meeting in January included a new overlook, wheelchair accessibility to the water's edge, a fishing platform along the shoreline, and a portage around the dam. The community provided great comments on the concept designs. Milwaukee County is evaluating and refining the design concepts to provide better views of the Milwaukee River and fish passage from the overlook, as well as a shorter portage around the dam.

### **Why do we need wheelchair accessibility to the Milwaukee River?**

Persons with mobility challenges because of disabilities, size, age, strength, etc., as well as parents pushing strollers, want to enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else. Universal design concepts of a new path, overlook, fishing platform, and access to the water's edge will afford, to the greatest extent possible, everyone the same opportunity to enjoy the Milwaukee River at Kletzsch Park.

### **The canoe/kayak portage around the dam seems quite long on the proposed plan. Could a shorter portage be provided? Does it have to be paved?**

Fish passage on the west side of the river will require that a portage be routed around the fish passage. The designers are working to keep the length of the portage as short as possible, while maintaining a grade that accommodates all park visitors. Material choices for the surface tread of the portage will be decided as we get closer to completing the design plans.

### **Who will maintain the new park developments?**

County Parks Operations staff will maintain the overlook and other park features, as well as the fish passage. Maintenance will mainly consist of removal of obstructions and litter, very similar to the maintenance that staff already does around the dam.

## Fish Passage

### **Why is fish passage proposed for Kletzsch Park?**

Fish passage on the Milwaukee River at the Kletzsch Park dam is needed for native fish, such as northern pike and lake sturgeon, to reach higher quality spawning and nursery habitat in the upper reaches of the Milwaukee River. Re-introduction of lake sturgeon has been part of a large stocking program since 2006. Before that time, no sturgeon had been found in the Milwaukee River since the 1890s.

Native fish are not strong jumpers and are not able to move past the dam to complete their travels upstream to spawn. A fish passage will allow fish native to the Milwaukee Estuary to move from Lake Michigan to areas upstream of the dam, encompassing 25 miles of river, 29 miles of tributary streams, and 2,400 acres of wetlands. A fish passage at the Kletzsch Park dam builds upon significant investments in river restoration made on the Milwaukee River in recent years, including a fish bypass channel constructed at the Thiensville Village Park; the removal of the North Avenue, Estabrook, Lime Kiln, and Chair Factory dams; the Seminary Dam removal on Pigeon Creek; and the removal of numerous fish barrier culverts and other obstructions.

As a result, fish passage at the Kletzsch Park dam has been identified as a fish and wildlife habitat restoration project in the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) Remedial Action Plan. This plan includes a summary of impairments in the Milwaukee Estuary AOC and the specific actions identified to address these issues. Fish passage at the Kletzsch Park dam was identified as an important action for addressing the loss of fish and wildlife habitat.

### **What is a fish passage bypass channel?**

A bypass channel is a way to get fish around a structure that blocks upstream movement. It is a channel built outside of the river and around the blocking structure, in this case the Kletzsch Park dam. It allows native fish to swim around the dam and move up the river. It is a successful alternative to an in-river fishway which allows fish to move up a ramp built in the stream channel. A bypass channel will allow native fish to get around the

Kletzsch Park dam to migrate from Lake Michigan and the lower Milwaukee River to spawning habitat further upstream. A fish passage bypass channel is the preferred alternative at Kletzsch Park because each of the in-river rock ramp designs examined did not meet the following project criteria required to receive a permit to construct:

- “No-rise” in the flood elevation (explained in more detail below)
- No excessive lowering of the water level in the impoundment behind the dam
- Adequate water depths and velocities for native fish passage
- Work only in areas where there is a willing landowner

### **Could the fish passage be constructed on the east bank of the Milwaukee River?**

While both banks of the river were considered for the fish passage, the west bank of the river was selected as the preferred location because it would be located on public park land, which allows park staff unrestricted access for maintenance of the passage. It also provides access for the public to view the fish passage. The main concerns for construction on the east bank include:

- Limited public land upstream and downstream of the dam and the lack of restroom, parking, and trail facilities
- Need for access across private property to construct, operate, and maintain the dam and fish passage
- Fish passage construction within the floodplain
- Disturbance to downstream wetlands on the east bank

### **Will the passage allow invasive species to move upstream of the dam?**

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the Kletzsch Park dam is not a barrier to invasive species such as sea lamprey or fish, such as salmon, that can be infected with viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS). Strong swimming and jumping species, such as salmon, can get over the dam in certain conditions; however, weaker swimming native species cannot. The first complete barrier to aquatic invasive species along the Milwaukee River is 22 miles upstream at the Bridge Street dam in Grafton.

### **Can the public view fish in the channel? Will the public be allowed to fish in the channel?**

It’s exciting to watch fish move upstream! Improved overlook features and fish passage on the west bank will provide the public with views of fish moving upstream through the bypass channel. To protect the fish as they move through the channel, the area will be designated a fish refuge; therefore, fishing and walking in the bypass channel will be prohibited.

### **What is the “no-rise” law and how does it affect this project?**

The State and Federal standards adopted by the City of Glendale require that projects proposed within the floodplain are studied to determine if the project will obstruct flood flows, which could cause an increase in flood water elevations upstream and downstream of the proposed project. An increase to the flood water elevation is not allowed because of the impact to insurable structures such as houses and garages. The City’s adoption of the floodplain ordinance requires them to enforce the “no-rise” requirement. While other alternatives evaluated for this project had a potential impact on flooding, this proposed alternative does not.

## **Site Disturbances**

### **Will the soil removed with the dam repair work be tested for contamination?**

The east abutment of the dam, where repairs are needed, has a stop-log bypass structure used for lowering the impoundment behind the dam. This structure has not functioned for many years. The Wisconsin DNR has directed the County to restore operation of the stop-log bypass. The structure has been covered with soil and vegetation that must be removed to restore the capability of water flow. Testing of the soil has been waived by the Wisconsin DNR if the material is kept on site, capped with clean material, and revegetated.

### **Will trees be removed in the project area? If so, can the wood be used at Kletzsch Park?**

No one likes to lose trees; however, trees will need to be removed to accommodate a fish passage bypass channel and, potentially, the portage, river access, and other site amenities. Vegetation will also be removed from the east bank for dam repairs. The project team is looking at design options that minimize tree removal.

The final design will include a planting plan with new trees, shrubs, and riparian plantings. We love the idea of re-using wood from the trees! The wood could potentially be used for benches, signage, or railings.

**How will cultural resources at Kletzsch Park be protected?**

The project team is working closely with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to ensure all state laws governing cultural resources are followed. As required by the Wisconsin DNR, on-site investigations have been completed by an Archaeologist. The SHPO reviewed this information and has approved the proposed project. A DNR Archaeologist will be on site to monitor construction activities during the initial phase of ground disturbance.

The exhibit to the right is from the archaeological survey completed for Milwaukee County Parks in 2016 as part of project planning and reconstruction of the Milwaukee River Parkway road.

**Is the project site within the areas shown on Increase Lapham’s maps?**

The Archaeologist contracted to survey the site as part of the Milwaukee River Parkway road project, overlaid a 1933 sketch of Increase Lapham’s map onto a 2015 aerial photo. The mounds and significant resources identified in Lapham’s map are notably outside of the proposed project area, outlined in the solid blue line on the exhibit.



**Project Funding**

The proposed project will build on the significant investments of river restoration efforts made in recent years on the Milwaukee River. Funding for specific portions of the project are:

**Overlook & Public Access**

Wisconsin DNR Stewardship Grant (\$229,536) and County Parks match (\$232,145) to:

- Improve portage around dam
- Improve river access including access for persons with disabilities, where applicable
- Construct new overlook at dam

**Dam Repairs**

Wisconsin DNR Municipal Dam Grant (\$165,000) & County Capital Funds match (\$165,000) to:

- Remove vegetation near dam abutments
- Remove sediment build-up at east abutment
- Repair the by-pass gate at the east abutment
- Repair missing stone façade at east abutment

## Fish Passage

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Grant -- \$550,000 (with additional funds potentially available to us) and the Fund for Lake Michigan Grant match -- \$200,000 to:

- Construct step/pool native fish passage
- Provide educational signage

## Project Timeline

The project team is evaluating and refining the design concepts and will hold another Public Information Meeting when an updated concept is ready to present. The next steps after a concept design is chosen are to complete the design and construction documents, go through the permitting/bidding/contract award process, and follow with construction.

### If you have additional questions about this project, please contact:

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