

**Investigating River Restoration Feasibility for  
Argo Pond on the Huron River,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan:  
Proposal**

**Client: Huron River Watershed Council  
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## **Abstract**

People have long used dams and reservoirs to produce inexpensive energy, store water, control floods, provide recreation, and spur economic development. However, we are just beginning to understand the negative impacts dams have on rivers, such as habitat damage and water shortages downstream. Across the country, state and federal agencies are examining dam removal as a means to restore the ecological integrity of rivers. Argo Dam on the Huron River in Ann Arbor, Michigan, has been identified by the state Department of Natural Resources as a candidate for removal and ecological restoration. However, for an equitable and informed decision to be made on removal, much research is needed, such as studies on hydrologic, ecologic, economic, and social impacts. Our project will focus on the “human” aspects of this issue, with the goal of evaluating the political and economic feasibility of restoring the Argo area. This will include identifying stakeholders and determining the value of the dam and pond for users and local residents. Our research methods will include mail surveys, interviews, and literature review. Our client, the Huron River Watershed Council, plans to use our findings to augment the ecological and other data that they are gathering to develop proposals for the future of Argo Pond and Dam.

## **Problem Statement**

A study by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has suggested that, over the long term, removing Argo Dam could produce considerable ecological, economic, recreational, safety, and aesthetic benefits (Hay-Chmielewski 1995). However, community perceptions and attitudes have not been thoroughly assessed and a comprehensive economic analysis does not exist (Riggs 2003). Though removal of the dam may be desirable from an ecological standpoint, other considerations will be at least as important in management decisions for this portion of the Huron River. In this project, we will evaluate the feasibility of restoring the Argo area to a more natural state, including removing Argo Dam, focusing on the political and economic factors involved. We will do so by gauging community perceptions, attitudes and values with mail surveys that employ both socio-cultural research questions and a non-market valuation method, guided and augmented by literature review and interviews with key stakeholders. We will share our findings with our client, the Huron River Watershed Council, and other interested parties to help inform management decisions for the Argo area, and also with the larger academic community to contribute to the base of knowledge about river restoration feasibility.