



**Contact:**

Cheryl Nenn, Riverkeeper: (414) 378-3043

## **Milwaukee Riverkeeper Urges Milwaukee County Executive and Board to Allocate Funds for Estabrook Dam Removal in FY2015 Budget**

**MILWAUKEE (Friday, November 14, 2014)** --- Milwaukee Riverkeeper is asking the County Board and County Executive to remove Estabrook Dam. We urge the Milwaukee County Executive to veto the amendment passed by the Board on November 10th that eliminates funding for Estabrook Dam removal and puts these funds toward healthcare costs. Likewise, we urge the Milwaukee County Supervisors to sustain a veto that would provide funds for dam removal. At a minimum, we urge the Board to have a substantive discussion on why removal of Estabrook Dam is the best option for the environment, the taxpayers, and property owners.

Removal of Estabrook Dam is best for water quality, fisheries and the taxpayer, and would restore the natural and wild aspect of the Milwaukee River in the Estabrook and Lincoln Park areas, increasing tourism and recreation and strengthening the economy. Overall, the ecological health created by a free flowing river offers greater long term value than maintaining the impoundment.

Repair of the Dam is three times more expensive than dam removal when operation and maintenance costs are included over the next 20 years, which is the life expectancy of the Dam. If the Dam is repaired, County taxpayers will pay up to \$5.1 Million in the near term and will incur additional expenses thereafter to either remove, repair, or rebuild the dam. These costs do not include costs for any future dredging from sedimentation or other unplanned contingencies, such as a breach to the almost 80 year old structure.

The majority of the general public supports removal of Estabrook Dam, but many of the Milwaukee County Board Supervisors are not listening. In a public survey this Fall, 68% of valid online responses preferred dam removal. At a public meeting held at Nicolet High School on September 3 with over 125 attendees, the majority of attendees preferred Dam removal. According to Milwaukee County staff, over 1,000 comments on the dam have been made to Milwaukee County Supervisors, the County Executive, and staff, which is an unprecedented amount of public involvement.

The Milwaukee County Parks Department favors removal of Estabrook Dam and has requested that the Board support removal. An Environmental Analysis shows that the Dam could significantly increase flooding upstream during the 100-year storm if dam gates cannot be opened. Historically, the Parks Department has not been able to allocate staff to operate the dam. If electricity is lost during a storm, the gates need to be raised manually, and historically, there have been problems opening the gates. The liability for the County from the Dam is too great.

Insurance providers view the Dam as a flood risk, and property and flood insurance premiums for homeowners have sky-rocketed preventing many homes from selling in the area. Dam removal would lower water levels during the 100 year storm by up to 1.5 feet, likely reducing flood risk upstream, and the need for many homeowners to purchase costly flood insurance.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper urges Milwaukee County to support Estabrook Dam removal in the FY2015 Milwaukee County Budget. Do the right thing for the economy, the river, property owners, and the taxpayer.

####

**About Milwaukee Riverkeeper**

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting water quality and wildlife habitat in the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River watersheds. Milwaukee Riverkeeper advocates for compliance with environmental laws and is licensed by the Waterkeeper Alliance, a network with over 200 organizations worldwide dedicated to clean water and health communities.

For more information about Milwaukee Riverkeeper, visit [www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org)