



**American Rivers**  
*Thriving By Nature*

# Shawsheen River Restoration Project

## An Urban River

Representing one of the smaller watersheds in Massachusetts, the mainstem of the Shawsheen River flows 25 miles from its headwaters at the Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, through Andover as it travels to its confluence with the Merrimack River in Lawrence. The watershed has an urban character throughout and supports a population of roughly 250,000 people.

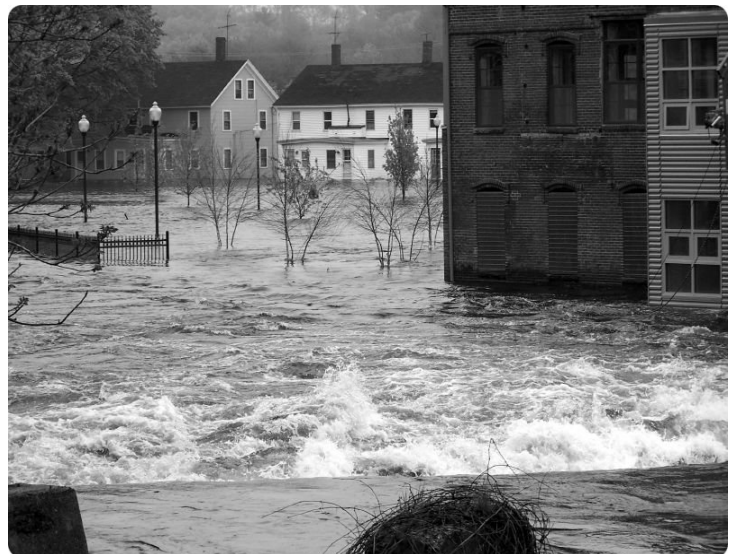


## Relics of the Industrial Age

Until the early 19th century, the Shawsheen River served as essential habitat for Atlantic salmon, river herring, American shad, and hundreds of other native plants and animals adapted to the riverine habitats of the Northeast. During the industrial revolution, the river was dammed to power textile mills, converting it from a free-flowing river into a series of millponds. Today, this outdated infrastructure not only blocks access to fish habitat but the entire downstream river corridor is affected by flooding, sometimes catastrophic. Marland Place Dam causes frequent flooding problems at the Atria Senior Living Center (located in a redeveloped textile mill which once used the dam for water power).

## Bringing Rivers Back to Life

A healthy river can increase property values, boost recreational opportunities, attract tourists, reduce water pollution, and protect people and property from flooding. But dams such as these disrupt the natural functions of rivers, leaving many of them lifeless or cut off from their communities. American Rivers is working to ensure the Shawsheen River escapes this fate by partnering with Center for Ecosystem Restoration, the Massachusetts Riverways Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and others to remove this suite of dams.



*Photo by A.A.S.*



The goal of the Shawsheen River Restoration Project is to remove three mainstem dams in order to:

- Restore a free-flowing native river ecosystem;
- Restore annual spawning runs of native diadromous fish including blueback herring, alewife, American shad, Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey and American eel to more than 20 mainstem river miles and approximately 60 tributary miles;
- Eliminate three artificial impoundments and restoring the natural storage capacity of the wetlands, the project will restore the system's natural resilience to flooding and storms, and is expected to reduce property flooding;
- Provide social, cultural, educational, recreational, stewardship and economic value to stakeholders. The Town of Andover is using the Shawsheen River Restoration Project as a foundation for downtown revitalization and enhancement of public amenities in the river corridor where it flows through downtown Andover.

*American Rivers is providing funding for this project through their partnership with the NOAA Restoration Center.*

## Restoration in Action

Project partners are currently working with the Town of Andover and an engineering firm to finalize a feasibility study that examines removal of the Balmoral, Marland Place, and Ballardvale dams and move into designing the removal of the first two structures.

### Balmoral Dam

Size: 3-foot high by 30-foot long  
Owner: Balmoral Condominium Trust  
Year Built: Early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Historic Use: Ornamental dam built for Shawsheen Village  
Current Use: No current purpose

### Marland Place Dam

Size: 12-foot high by 30-foot long  
Owner: Atria Senior Living Group  
Year Built: 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Historic Use: Textile mill  
Current Use: Marland Place is currently a senior living center, and the dam serves no current purpose.

