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HARDWICK, NEWS

Jackson Dam removal advanced

by [Paul Fixx](#) — on March 31, 2026

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and landscaping plans to reduce runoff and erosion at the Caspian Lake Town Beach.



Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservation District Manager Emily Finnegan (left), and SLR International's Josephine Alling (center) and Jessica Clark Louisos (right), present a study about the feasibility of removing Hardwick's Jackson Dam at a joint meeting of the Hardwick Select Board and Hardwick Electric Department Board of Commissioners, March 26.

photo by Paul Fixx

Following each presentation there was discussion and the select board voted to continue the work, looking more deeply into both issues and identifying funding options for each.

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The presentation covered the history of the 1920 dam, rebuilt in 1952, that impounds the Lamoille River and Alder Brook to create Hardwick Lake, which has filled with a considerable amount of sediment over more than 100 years, giving it a maximum depth is just seven feet, they reported.

A dam inspection in 2001 discovered a horizontal crack in both the upstream and downstream face, with a concrete cap added during the 1952 repairs now failing. There is surface deterioration and undermining to the foundation in some areas. A 2001 estimate of repair costs in 2001 came to \$600,000, which would be much more today, said SLR.

Paul Fixx

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At a special joint meeting of the Hardwick Select Board and Hardwick Electric Department Board of Commissioners last Thursday (from left) Norma Weisen, Commissioner Roger Prevot, Select Board Chair Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Commissioner Renaud Demers and Select board member Derek Richardson hear a report on the feasibility of removing Hardwick's Jackson Dam near the intersection of Vt. Rtes. 15 West and 14 North.

photo by Paul Fixxx

The dam is classified as a Significant Hazard due to the property losses and damage to downstream infrastructure that would result from its failure.

Later Johnstone said concrete dams do not fail catastrophically like earthen dams do, reducing the concern somewhat, but certainly not eliminating it.

SLR shared maps and diagrams of the ecosystem and wildlife, a sediment assessment, then a flood mitigation and ice jam analysis

Michaels, Tyler Molleur, Kay Spaulding, Liz Steel, John Walters

INTERNS

Cloey Camley, Hazen Union School

Claire Charlow, UVM Community News Service
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might come from for the dam, the answer was that the cost of not removing the dam is an issue. It's unlikely there's any funding to repair it, he was told.

Prevot said we shouldn't assume the "whatever it takes" cost approach, recognizing "do nothing" is an option.

SLR suggested that's the main reason to implement a phased approach to the dam's removal, which will make it possible to evaluate the project step-by-step, adjusting the plan and seeing what's possible with revegetating the lake bed and deciding what sediment to remove, which they estimate at 63,400 cubic yards in the river channel and 123,000 cubic yards if the adjacent flood plain is included.

Lesa Cathcart asked whether there's data on the effect of removing the dam available for the water table for those living along Hardwick Lake, as well as wildlife that includes eagles and loons. SLR agreed that level of investigation was not possible in this initial phase of the study. Further work is needed and will look at wells and the water table in the area.

Dave Gross commented on the town plan and its mention of recreational areas and preservation of habitat that Hardwick Lake represents, suggesting that beaver might be attracted to Alder Brook flowing through a drained Hardwick Lake.

Among other comments and answers, attendees learned that limited testing of the sediment has shown it to be clean; the cost of removing the dam could be between \$4 and \$9 million;

back with an estimate on funding further study to allow a decision to be made, with possible funding and a hydrology study downstream of the dam to identify possible issues there.

Presentation of a draft concept for work at the Caspian Lake Beach property by Will Marlier, Lake Watershed Program Specialist with the Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District (OCNRCD) included discussion of the property, owned by the Town of Hardwick, including current and future uses, community expectations and coordination with the Hardwick Electric Department to ensure all operational, maintenance, and infrastructure needs are effectively addressed,” said the agenda.

Marlier reviewed a one-page drawing, identifying recommended additions that include work on the boat launch ramp, adding a concrete trench drain beside a rebuilt concrete ramp; wooden ramps leading to a swim area with a new log and stone divider between the sand and grass areas; possible trees or bushes near the granite blocks above the beach (which drew some concern about sight lines); a filter wall at the back of the parking lot, along the outlet brook, a wider buffer of plantings along the brook from the parking lot to near the dam, and an area with pollinator plantings above the riprap at the dam end of the beach.

If the town decides to proceed, Marlier said he’d expect funding and the final design to be complete for work to begin in the summer of 2027.

A motion authorized further work and community engagement to continue with Marlier returning to the next select board

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Paul Fixx

Editor

Paul Fixx is editor of The Hardwick Gazette and lives in Hardwick.

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