

2026

Hydro Reporter

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Tippy Dam

The Hydro Reporter

Consumers Energy publishes the Hydro Reporter annually in conjunction with the Manistee-Muskegon-Au Sable Coordination (MMAC) Team to keep neighbors of the hydro plants and other interested citizens informed about progress in implementing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 40-year licenses issued in 1994. The MMAC Team, which includes representatives from Consumers Energy, state and federal resource agencies and an environmental coalition, coordinates the license implementation process. Contact information for MMAC Team members is listed below.

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Consumers Energy Hydroelectric Plants

MMAC Hydroelectric Projects

Au Sable River



Alcona Dam
In-service: 1924
Capacity: 8 MW



Cooke Dam
In-service: 1911
Capacity: 9 MW



Five Channels Dam
In-service: 1912
Capacity: 6 MW



Foote Dam
In-service: 1918
Capacity: 9 MW



Loud Dam
In-service: 1913
Capacity: 4 MW



Mio Dam
In-service: 1916
Capacity: 4.9 MW

Manistee River



Hodenpyl Dam
In-service: 1925
Capacity: 17 MW



Tippy Dam
In-service: 1918
Capacity: 21 MW

Muskegon River



Croton Dam
In-service: 1907
Capacity: 8.85 MW



Hardy Dam
In-service: 1931
Capacity: 30 MW



Rogers Dam
In-service: 1906
Capacity: 6.75 MW

Non-MMAC Hydroelectric Projects



Grand River
Webber Dam
In-service: 1907
Capacity: 3.225 MW



Kalamazoo River
Calkins Bridge Dam
In-service: 1936
Capacity: 2.55 MW

Note: MW = megawatts; 1 MW = 1,000 kilowatts (kW)
One megawatt is enough to power 1,000 homes.

Modernizing Our Dams

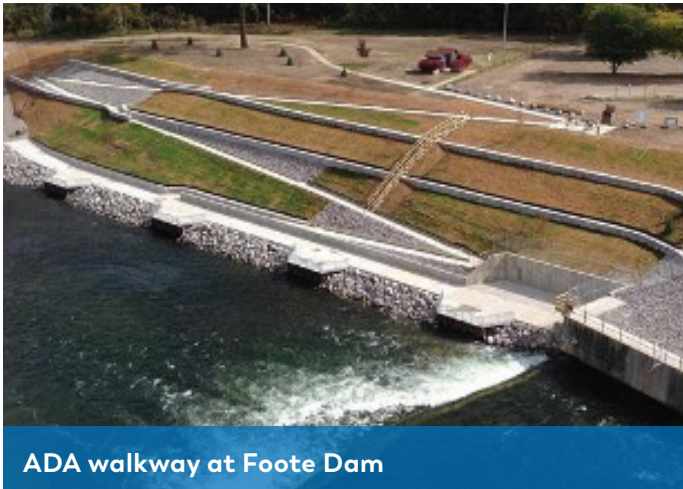
We have always looked to update our 13 hydroelectric plants along the five rivers that run through Michigan. And while the future includes selling them, we're proud of the commitment we made to maintain them for future generations to enjoy.

Consumers Energy's heritage is rooted deep in these renewable energy sources.

The dams were built between 1906 and 1935. And we've completed construction and improvement projects at each of them over the last century.

This past year has been no different.

Here are a few upcoming projects:



ADA walkway at Foote Dam

We're replacing the ADA walkway at Foote Dam this spring and summer. The parking lot for the Foote tailwater access will be closed to the public during this time and will likely affect the parking area throughout the summer.



Loud Dam Wall

The replacement of the Loud Dam left retaining wall will occur during the spring/summer of 2026. This repair should have limited recreation site impact.



Cooke Dam Wall

The Cooke Dam right retaining wall will also begin in the spring of 2026 and continue through the fall. The Cooke Dam project will lead to the closure of the upstream and downstream parking areas along with downstream fishing access and boat launch.



Five Channels Dam Electric Hoists

At Five Channels Dam, we're updating the electric hoists that operate the spill gates. These new hoists will improve water flow management enhancing safety. These upgrades will not affect the recreational sites at Five Channels Dam.

Hydro Lands: A Safe Haven for Butterflies

Michigan is missing some marvelous animals. Passenger pigeons, wolverines and blue pike are among those that died off and are gone. Today, there are 407 species of animals and plants that are either listed as endangered or threatened.

Endangered species are animals and plants whose populations are so low that they're in danger of becoming extinct. Threatened species are wildlife likely to become endangered in the future.

In the mid 1990s, Consumers Energy developed wildlife and forestry management plans for our hydroelectric property along the Au Sable, Manistee and Muskegon rivers to protect endangered and threatened species. Today, our lands offer safe havens for a variety of rare wildlife that are rebounding.

"The 12,000 acres associated with our hydro facilities provide significant potential to protect and enhance wildlife that live along our state's major rivers," said Matt Carmer, Consumers Energy's Natural Resources Manager. "The company takes pride in sharing these lands with wildlife and being good environmental stewards."

Photo credit: Matt Carmer



2025 Planet Award

In 2025, the Consumers Energy Foundation presented the City of Parchment with a Planet Award totaling \$150,000 to support development of a model riverbank restoration along the Kalamazoo River, including the planting of native trees and shrubs for shading, cooling, and riverbank stabilization, and wildlife habitat restoration.

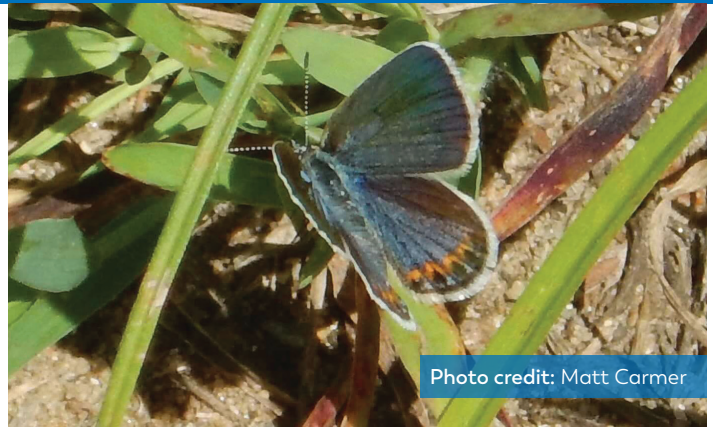


Photo credit: Matt Carmer

Karner Blue Butterflies

About 30 years ago, the Karner blue butterfly was nearly extinct. Its habitat was destroyed by land development, overgrown forests and invasive plants.

The small butterflies — about the size of a nickel — depend on wild lupine plants to survive. The plant grows in forests that are open to the sunlight. When treetops block the light from reaching the ground, wild lupine can't grow. Invasive plants also can crowd out lupine and prevent it from growing.

Named for the vibrant blue wings of males, Karner blues live in savannas that feature sandy soil and widely spaced trees or in barrens that are dominated by shrubs where sunlight promotes the growth of wild lupine and nectar plants. These habitats — some of the rarest in the world — exist near the Hardy and Croton dams on the Muskegon River.

The female butterfly lays eggs twice a year only on wild lupine plants. Once the larvae hatch, the only food that the small, green, soft-bodied caterpillars eat is lupine leaves. (Adults drink the nectar of a variety of flowers.)

Consumers Energy maintains habitats for Karner blues on our property. For decades, the company has hired professional foresters, land managers and environmental planners to oversee our property for wildlife and numerous plant species through wildlife management plans. They monitor and map lupine growth areas, remove woody vegetation and invasive species that inhibit the growth of wild lupine, and work to propagate new wild lupine populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service previously approved the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Habitat Conservation Plan for the Karner blue butterfly. Initial partners, who worked on development of the plan, include the MDNR Wildlife Division and Recreation Division, The Nature Conservancy, Consumers Energy and the Huron-Manistee National Forest.

The plan allows habitat management for the butterfly and is based on practices that protect, enhance or restore habitats upon which the butterfly and other at-risk species depend.

State Colony May Hold Key to Saving Bats

BRETHREN — Michigan’s largest bat colony is defying a disease that has killed millions of bats across the U.S. and Canada over the last 20 years.

In fact, bat numbers at Tippy Dam in northern Lower Michigan remain robust, consistent with a count two years ago. By comparison, about 90% of the bats that hibernate in the state’s caves and abandoned mines have died because of white-nose syndrome.



Scientists have been studying the bats at Tippy Dam on the Manistee River hoping to discover why the disease hasn’t decimated the colony. The hope is that what they learn may help save North America’s bats from the devastating fungus.

“This has always had one of the largest populations of bats hibernating in the state of Michigan,” said Allen Kurta, biology professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University. “Now, after the fungal disease white-nose syndrome has gone through the state, this is the largest population in Michigan and perhaps the largest in the East that still exists.”

On Feb. 25, researchers descended into the lower chambers of the century-old hydroelectric dam on the Manistee River to count the bats hibernating there. They found about 26,500 bats, which is down just 1,500 from the last population survey in 2024.

The winter fieldwork confirmed Tippy Dam as a unique refuge for Michigan’s bats, including rare species.

Most of the bats found inside the dam were identified as little brown bats, which are considered critically imperiled in Michigan. They are listed as a state-threatened species.

Additionally, Kurta and his longtime research assistant Rod Foster counted at least seven tricolored bats during the population survey. The tricolored bat is an even rarer species currently under consideration for federal endangered species protection.

The federally endangered northern long-eared bats have not been seen at Tippy Dam since 2018 and may have been extirpated — the scientific term for disappeared from a region.

Indiana bats were always uncommon, and the last one was spotted there in 2023, though Kurta said he suspects a few remain.

Kurta said it was a relief to find so many bats hibernating at the dam. “It tells me that everything is going quite well. They are not being impacted by that fungal disease,” he said.

The big question is why the bat population at the dam in the Manistee National Forest has resisted the typically fatal effects of white-nose syndrome since it was first detected there more than a decade ago.

Scientists have a hypothesis about conditions at Tippy Dam being the reason the fungus hasn’t been fatal there. It may have something to do with the structure itself, Kurta said.

“Right now, it’s very cold, it’s barely above freezing, but in the summer it’s quite warm. It’ll get up around 70 degrees in the summer, and the fungus does not like high temperatures,” he said.

Kurta has spent years researching environmental conditions inside the dam, such as temperature, humidity, and even how much sunlight infiltrates the concrete structure. He studies how those surroundings affect the bats.

“Most bats get infected when they come back in the fall. They land on the walls and the infection starts again. We’re speculating that there are not that many spores on the walls that are capable of infecting them because they’re impacted by that high temperature over the summer,” Kurta said.



Brooke Daly inside the Tippy Dam hibernaculum.

Improving Fish Habitat: The HIA Program

Since the Au Sable, Manistee and Muskegon river hydro project licenses were issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 1994, Consumers Energy has provided more than \$9 million to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) — Fish Habitat Improvement Account (HIA) program.

These HIA funds, which were agreed upon to mitigate fish damage caused by the hydro plant turbines, have been invested in a combination of fisheries research and on-the-ground projects that include habitat improvement, fishing access, and erosion control. The company's HIA contribution is increased annually at the rate of inflation.

In 2019, the DNR united the HIA program with its Dam Management Grant and Aquatic Habitat Grant into the Fisheries Habitat Grant. HIA program funding has been tracked separately and still supported projects on the Au Sable, Manistee, and Muskegon watersheds for fisheries habitat rehabilitation or enhancement, preparation of comprehensive river management plans, conducting aquatic studies, and improving fisheries recreation at locations with surface water connections to these rivers. This process was used to distribute funds through fiscal year 2025. In 2025, with support from Consumers Energy, DNR decided to use HIA funds for Division-administered fisheries habitat projects, fisheries management efforts, and staff costs associated with river or tributary related activities within the Manistee, Muskegon, and Au Sable river watersheds. Projects funded by the HIA will be identified using an internal process beginning in fiscal year 2026. Questions regarding HIA funding can be directed to Dana Castle (CastleD1@michigan.gov).



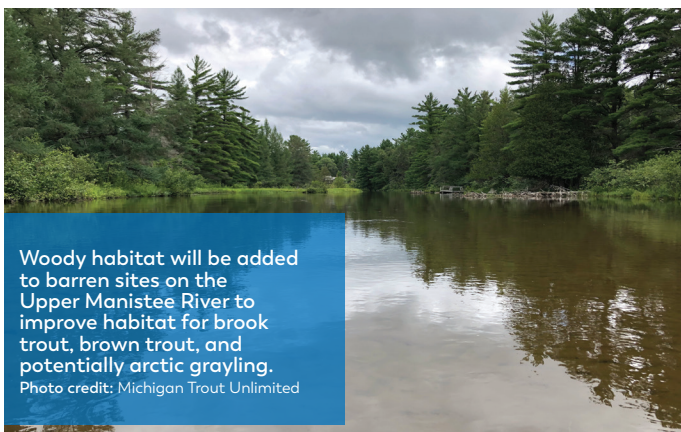
Scoping and feasibility will be conducted to potentially remove the Nartron Dam on the Hersey River.
Photo credit: Muskegon River Watershed Assembly.

HIA-Funded Projects

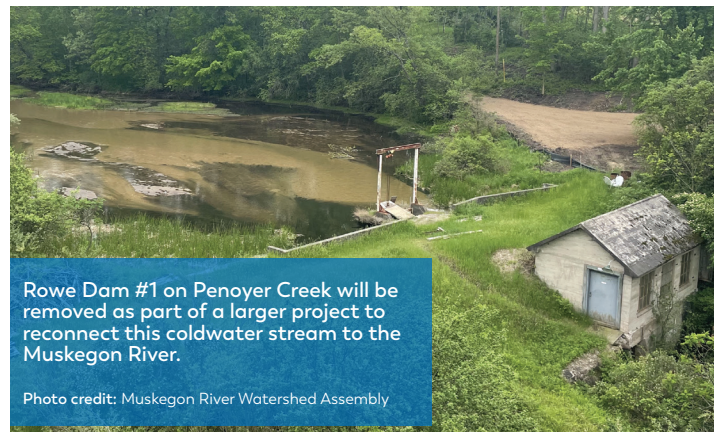
From the 2024 Fisheries Habitat Grant cycle (Fiscal Year 2025), \$375,000 from the HIA is being used in conjunction with an additional \$58,300 from partners to support three Fisheries Habitat Grants.

The Upper Manistee Watershed Association was awarded \$40,500 in HIA funds matched by \$5,300 from the applicant to restore woody habitat in the Upper Manistee River (Crawford and Kalkaska counties). Informed by an inventory of existing wood in the stream, the Upper Manistee Watershed Association will restore woody habitat at least 18 sites to address this priority identified by Fisheries Division Staff and benefit Brown Trout, Brook Trout, and potentially Arctic Grayling.

Funding was also awarded to the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly for two projects. First, \$310,000 in HIA funds were awarded with matching funds of \$40,000 to assist with the removal of Rowe Dam #1 on Penoyer Creek (Newaygo County). Removal of this dam is part of a larger effort to reconnect Penoyer Creek to the Muskegon River, providing coldwater spawning habitat for migratory salmonids and resident brook trout and brown trout. Muskegon River Watershed Council also received \$24,500 matched by \$13,000 from the applicant and \$500 from the DNR's Aquatic Habitat Grant funds to complete initial scoping and feasibility for removal of the Nartron Dam on the Hersey River (Osceola County). The project will begin the process to reconnect 38 miles of cold headwater stream by eventually removing the last dam on the Hersey River.



Woody habitat will be added to barren sites on the Upper Manistee River to improve habitat for brook trout, brown trout, and potentially arctic grayling.
Photo credit: Michigan Trout Unlimited



Rowe Dam #1 on Penoyer Creek will be removed as part of a larger project to reconnect this coldwater stream to the Muskegon River.
Photo credit: Muskegon River Watershed Assembly

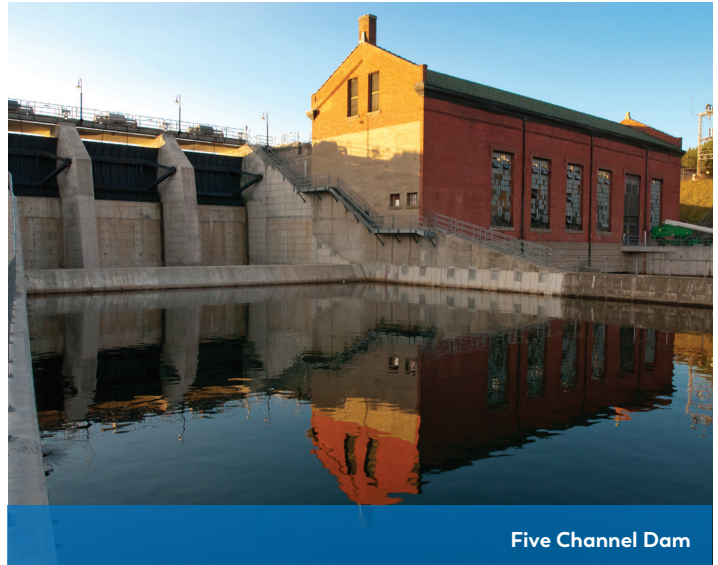
Sale of Consumers Energy Dams Means Bright Future for Michigan Communities

Some big changes are in store for the Consumers Energy dams.

As you might know, we announced in September that we signed an agreement to sell all 13 of our hydroelectric dams along five rivers to Confluence Hydro. Confluence is an affiliate of Hull Street Energy, LLC, a company with a strong track record of operating dams safely in several states. They've made a commitment to continuing to operate the dams, sell their power to Consumers Energy, and relicense them.

The bottom line is the sale is good for Michigan. It will reduce long-term costs for Consumers Energy customers, ensure the dams will continue to operate safely, and provide economic and recreational benefits for their neighbors.

“We believe a sale of the dams is the best path forward for our customers. This sale balances two important needs: to lower costs for Consumers Energy’s customers while continuing to care for communities that depend on the dams,” said Sri Maddipati, Consumers Energy’s president of electric supply. “After numerous conversations with community members over the last three years to gather insights and feedback, we are confident this sale will preserve the reservoirs that hold the key to economic, recreational and community benefits at each of the dams.”



Five Channel Dam

Through any changes, our commitment to the communities we serve will not change. Consumers Energy will continue to power Michigan, we'll continue to serve you and we'll continue to provide updates about the dams and the other work we do to keep the lights on and heat homes and businesses 24/7/365.

To learn more about the dams, go to ConsumersEnergy.com/HydroFuture.

In the meantime, Consumers Energy is committed to operating the dams safely for the good of our coworkers and our neighbors. We're also excited to again be the title sponsor of this year's canoe marathon! We look forward to seeing and talking with you July 25 and 26!



Hardy Dam

This sale is not complete. It's being reviewed by both federal and state regulators, and we're hopeful they'll approve it sometime this year. Until then, our Consumers Energy employees continue to ensure these dams on the Au Sable and four other rivers operate safely and reliably.



2023 AuSable Canoe Marathon



2026

Hydro Reporter

Consumers Energy

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