

Jackson Dam Project Public Engagement Approach

Purpose

The purpose of the public engagement process is to ensure that residents, businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to learn about the Jackson Dam project, ask questions, share concerns, and provide feedback as the project advances through future study and design phases.

The engagement process is intended to:

- Share information about the project in a clear and accessible manner.
- Provide opportunities for community members to ask questions and express concerns.
- Improve public understanding of project opportunities, constraints, and next steps.
- Identify topics that require additional information or discussion.
- Support transparent communication among project partners, Hardwick Electric Department, the Hardwick Select Board, and the community.

Guiding Principles

Public engagement efforts should:

- Begin early and continue throughout the study and design process.
- Provide multiple opportunities for participation.
- Be accessible, welcoming, and easy to understand.
- Create opportunities for two-way communication and discussion.
- Present information in a factual, transparent, and non-advocacy manner.
- Document questions and concerns and provide follow-up information when available.

Phase 1: Project Introduction and Community Conversation

Timing: Following authorization of the 30% design phase.

Goals:

- Introduce the project and next steps.
- Present findings from the feasibility study.
- Explain the purpose of the 30% design process.
- Provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions, express concerns, and identify topics they would like addressed during future phases of the project.

Potential Activities:

- Community conversation featuring a project presentation, questions, and discussion.
- Informal community potluck or gathering with Stream Table (?)

- Public comment and question collection.
- Online and paper comment forms.

Deliverable:

A summary of key themes, questions, and concerns raised by community members.

Phase 2: Continuing the Conversation

Timing: Summer and fall following the initial community conversation.

Goals:

- Respond to questions raised during Phase 1.
- Provide additional information on topics identified by residents.
- Continue building public understanding of project opportunities and constraints.

Potential Activities:

- Small group community conversations.
- Attendance at existing community gatherings.
- Topic-specific presentations addressing subjects such as:
 - Dam safety
 - Project funding and permitting

Deliverable:

Compilation of frequently asked questions and responses.

Phase 3: Design and Alternatives Conversation

Timing: As design work progresses.

Goals:

- Share design concepts and alternatives.
- Explain tradeoffs, opportunities, and constraints.
- Gather public feedback on design considerations.

Potential Activities:

- Public open house.
- Presentation of design concepts.
- Community discussion and comment period.
- Website updates and informational materials.

Deliverable:

Public feedback summary provided to project partners, Hardwick Electric Department, and the Select Board.

Communication Tools

Information may be shared through:

- Community conversations hosted by the Steering Committee and project partners.
- Public meetings and workshops.
- Hardwick Gazette articles.
- Town website updates.
- Social media and community email lists.
- Printed handouts and informational materials.
- Partner organization communications.

Role of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will assist in planning and supporting public engagement activities, identifying information needs, reviewing community feedback, and helping ensure that residents have meaningful opportunities to participate throughout the study and design process.

Evaluation

Success will be measured not by agreement on a specific outcome, but by whether residents have had meaningful opportunities to:

- Receive information.
- Ask questions.
- Share concerns.
- Understand project constraints and opportunities.
- Participate in ongoing conversations about the future of Jackson Dam.