Jackson Dam – SLR Presentation
Draft Minutes
October 5, 2026 | Memorial Building | 6 pm to 7:30 pm

These minutes document the discussion and follow up for public transparency.

Shareable link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/WvFKWqLHBbB7QNLYma9Jh_rBuik7f0gR8TMp56HxypRn8xlk2xMiK2T9Jv2WLHAW.43sS8xjnVNtdw970
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View in Zoom

Presentation started at 6:00 pm.

Jackson Dam Public Information Meeting
October 5, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
Memorial Building, Third Floor Meeting Room / Zoom

Purpose of Meeting

The Town of Hardwick hosted the first in a planned series of public conversations concerning the future of Jackson Dam/Hardwick Lake. The meeting focused on the recently completed feasibility study and hydraulic modeling and was intended to provide information and answer community questions. No decision regarding the future of the dam was made at this meeting.

Presentation

SLR Consulting presented an overview of Jackson Dam, the feasibility study, and related flood modeling.

Jackson Dam is owned by the Hardwick Electric Department and is located immediately upstream of the Route 14/15 bridge. The dam impounds portions of the Lamoille River and Alder Brook and creates Hardwick Lake.

The presentation reviewed the history and condition of the dam and changes to the lake and surrounding landscape over time. Jackson Dam is classified as a Significant Hazard dam. The presentation noted that the dam has been rated in Poor condition during inspections in 2010, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2023, and 2024. Significant repairs or modifications would be required to restore the dam to safe operating condition and meet current dam-safety requirements. Continued operation at a lower lake level has been recommended for consideration while a permanent solution is evaluated.

Sediment

A substantial portion of the feasibility study addressed the large quantity of sediment that has accumulated behind the dam.

Preliminary sediment investigations estimated approximately 620,000 to 2.52 million cubic yards of impounded sediment. The presentation emphasized that removal of the dam would therefore require a carefully planned, phased sediment-management strategy rather than simply removing the structure and allowing the river to adjust without intervention.

A conceptual sediment-management design was presented showing areas where sediment could remain and stabilize and areas where excavation, grading, channel development, bank stabilization, or other work could be required.

Ecological Conditions

The existing lake supports plants, wildlife, and wetland habitat that have developed under the current impounded conditions.

The presentation also discussed ecological effects of the dam itself, including its function as a barrier to fish passage and natural sediment movement. Annual winter drawdown creates changing upstream conditions and can release fine sediment downstream.

Future design work would need to evaluate both the existing ecological resources associated with Hardwick Lake and the ecological changes that would occur if a free-flowing river system were restored.

Flood Modeling

SLR reviewed broader hydraulic modeling of the Lamoille River and several potential flood-mitigation projects being considered in and around Hardwick. These included Jackson Dam, the LVRT bridge embankment, floodplain areas along Wolcott Street and Sawmill Lane and other possible floodplain-storage areas.

Modeling of Jackson Dam removal showed that removal could reduce modeled flood elevations upstream of the dam. The greatest modeled change shown near the dam was approximately 2.4 feet during the modeled 100-year event, with the amount of reduction diminishing farther downstream through the village.

The presentation emphasized that Jackson Dam is one part of a larger flood-resilience strategy and that no single project eliminates Hardwick's flood risk.

Feasibility Study Conclusions

SLR described Jackson Dam as a larger and more complicated dam-removal project than many projects completed elsewhere in Vermont.

The study recommends a phased drawdown and adaptive-management approach if removal moves forward.

The "do nothing" alternative is not recommended because of the dam's deteriorating condition and hazard classification. Some form of action will eventually be required to address the risks associated with an uncontrolled failure.

The feasibility study found that dam removal could reduce long-term dam-safety risks, provide flood-resilience benefits, restore river processes and ecological connectivity, and improve long-term river stability.

A conceptual removal design was presented. The concept would remove the principal dam and outlet structures while retaining portions of existing walls where appropriate, stabilizing banks, managing accumulated sediment, and allowing a new river channel and floodplain system to develop.

Public Discussion

Questions and discussion following the presentation covered a broad range of subjects. Major themes included:

- the amount of sediment behind the dam and how sediment would be managed during a removal project;
- the extent of potential flood-elevation reductions and which areas of Hardwick would benefit;
- impacts to the existing lake, wetlands, fish, birds, and other wildlife;
- concerns regarding bald eagles, loons, migratory birds, and other species using the lake;
- the implications of removal for recreation and the historic character of Hardwick Lake;
- the possibility of repairing or rebuilding the dam rather than removing it;
- potential future hydropower use at Jackson Dam;
- possible effects on downstream facilities, including the Pottersville/Wolcott hydroelectric facility;
- the cost of repair compared with removal and the availability of outside funding;
- dam-safety requirements and the long-term liability associated with continued ownership of the structure;
- the relationship between Jackson Dam and other flood-mitigation projects being studied in Hardwick; and
- how and when residents will ultimately have an opportunity to participate in a decision concerning the dam.

Participants were reminded that the feasibility study does not itself authorize removal. Additional engineering, environmental review, permitting, funding, public engagement, and municipal decisions would be necessary before a project could proceed.

Next Steps

The Town, Hardwick Electric Department, Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District, and project partners will continue providing information and opportunities for public discussion.

Additional engineering and design work would further examine sediment management, environmental impacts, flood benefits, costs, permitting, and other technical questions.

The Town is also considering a public vote regarding the future of Jackson Dam, with an Australian-ballot vote anticipated in March 2027 if the necessary municipal actions are taken.

No formal action was taken at this meeting.

Meeting concluded at approximately 7:10 p.m.