

# Report Supports State Ownership of the Green River Dam

The long-awaited report will likely put pressure on the state to acquire the Hyde Park facility to preserve the beloved reservoir



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The dam at the Green River Reservoir

A long-awaited report on the future of the Green River hydro dam concludes that the most cost-effective option for its future would be for the state to assume ownership and stop generating electricity at the Hyde Park facility.

The report confirms what officials from the dam's owner, Morrisville Water & Light, have been saying for years — that the dam cannot be operated profitably under new water-quality rules imposed by state regulators. Facing tighter restrictions on how much water the utility can divert from the 653-acre Green River Reservoir for power generation, the utility decided in 2024 to give up its federal license to generate power at the dam, which it built in 1947.

That could lead to the structure's removal and the draining of the popular and scenic reservoir, an outcome no one says they expect or want.

The report was intended to analyze the condition of the dam and the cost of maintenance should the state agree to take over operations to preserve the reservoir and popular Green River Reservoir State Park.

One key takeaway is that the dam is in decent condition. The utility at one point suggested that keeping more water in the reservoir in the winter could cause ice to put additional pressure on the structure. The report largely dismisses that as a risk, noting that “the dam performs well with respect to modern dam safety and engineering standards.”

In a press release Tuesday, the utility highlighted the dam’s structural integrity as one of the reasons the state should not fear taking over operations.

The other key analysis is the cost of owning and operating the dam. The report outlines a range of options.

The most expensive option, at \$16 million, would be to remove the dam, which would take years and be politically polarizing. The least expensive option would be to do nothing, though the report notes that might prompt the utility to lower the water level to the point where the state park would be affected, causing park visits to plunge.

The report concludes that the least expensive option, when impact on tourism is considered, would be for the state to own the dam, invest the minimum needed to keep it safe and shut down the power generation.



A kayaker at Green River Reservoir JEB WALLACE-BRODEUR

Shutting down the hydro, a controversial decision when clean energy is at a premium, would save the state money. That's because under new water-quality regulations, continuing to operate the hydro plant would lose about \$610,000 per year, the report estimates.

By investing the bare minimum and shutting down the hydro operations, the state would preserve \$34.2 million in visitor spending in the region and tax revenue over 20 years, the report estimates.

This would result in a net benefit to the state of \$29.1 million over that period. Tearing down the dam, when all the costs and impacts on the park and visitors are assessed, would result in a net loss to the state of \$21.3 million.

The study supports the idea that the 4,000 ratepayers of Morrisville Water & Light shouldn't have to bear the costs of operating the dam and the state should take it over, according to the utility.



A loon on the reservoir JEB WALLACE-BRODEUR

“With safety confirmed, costs defined, and benefits undeniable, Vermont should assume ownership of the Green River Reservoir Dam and Dike to safeguard this statewide resource for generations to come,” Scott Johnstone, general manager of the utility said. “We stand ready to work with the Administration and the

Legislature on an orderly transfer that protects the reservoir, preserves public access, and provides long-term certainty for the community and the State Park.”