



Dam reinforcement work to begin

Water at the Allendale Dam will be dyed green at one point to monitor the flow.

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NORTH PROVIDENCE -- If you see the water flowing neon green over the Allendale Dam on Monday, don't worry -- it's not some insidious new form of pollution.

Of course, toxins lurk in the Woonasquatucket River, but you can't see them -- they're invisible molecules clinging to the sediment on the riverbottom.

The lurid green dye, on the other hand, is part of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's effort to maintain the recently-restored dam.

For the first time since a major restoration project in 2002, the EPA will be renovating the older parts of the dam.

"We tried to leave as much of the old dam in place as we could," said Anna Krasko, the EPA's project manager.

The dam dates back at least to 1886. But by 1991, the wooden timbers supporting it had disintegrated. One night, it simply collapsed, draining Allendale Pond to an expanse of toxin-laced mud.

When the Woonasquatucket River was designated as a federal Superfund site, in 2000, the EPA decided to rebuild the dam as part of its effort to contain the river's pollution -- submerging the toxic soil under tons of water.

The project preserved some of the original dam's old stone walls. That's what the EPA will be reinforcing in its maintenance work on Monday, Krasko said.

Loureiro Engineering Associates Inc. of Plainville, Conn., will start lowering the water level over the weekend.

Krasko said the EPA waited until the driest month to do the work. "We need to do the work in as dry conditions as possible," she said.

Then, workers will release green dye into the water. Ideally, Krasko said, all the water will be flowing over and under the dam at the same rate.

The dye will show if any of it is flowing too fast or too slow.

The work should take about a day, she said. The water level in Allendale Pond will be restored as soon as possible.

The EPA would like to remind residents not to eat any fish, turtles, eels or plants from the Woonasquatucket River, not to wade or bathe in its waters, or touch or eat any sediment along the bank.

