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Indiana dam demolished that was site of 2017 kayaking death

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SOUTH WHITLEY, Ind. (AP) — A northern Indiana dam that was the scene of a deadly 2017 kayaking accident has been demolished, making the region's Eel River safer for recreation and removing a barrier to migrating fish.

A crew that began demolishing the Collamer Dam on Wednesday finished removing the last of the concrete structure on Thursday, said Jerry Sweeten, a retired Manchester University biology professor.

The dam's removal means the Eel River now includes about 95 miles of free-flowing open waterway that will promote both safer recreation and the river's ecological health, Sweeten said.

"This is a remarkable thing, to open up this much of the river," he told [The Journal Gazette](#). "With this removal, the river is open all the way from Logansport to the top of the watershed, which begins just west of Fort Wayne."

That means there's now no barrier to migrating fish, including small-mouth bass and several species of suckers, including the great red horse sucker, which is an endangered species in Indiana, Sweeten said. The river has 52 fish species, 43 of which migrate upstream, he said.

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The Whitley County dam was a low-head dam, which can be dangerous because they create a circular current at the dam's base that keeps victims trapped beneath the surface until the turbulent water spits them out.

That's what happened to Richard V. Wilson, 31, in June 2017 after the Warsaw man went over the dam while kayaking about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northeast of Indianapolis. A friend pulled Wilson out of the water,

but he was pronounced dead at a hospital.

The \$50,000 cost of the dam's removal was funded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership and a private donation, Sweeten said. A boat launch is planned for the former dam site.

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