

# It Takes a Community

This document is our best attempt to summarize the many steps and dedication of individuals who made the reconstruction of the Curtis Pond Dam a possibility. Our sincere thanks to all. We extend apologies if we missed naming people or any key steps in our narrative. We welcome any communications with corrections on the history of this remarkable project. Please contact us at [curtispondcalais@gmail.com](mailto:curtispondcalais@gmail.com).

*Thank you all!!*

*The Curtis Pond Association Executive Board*



## History of Curtis Pond Dam Reconstruction 1996 - Today

Around 1813, Marshall Mower and Charity Curtiss Mower, Calais residents, likely first developed both the Maple Corner Dam (behind the Maple Corner Community Store) and the Curtis Pond Dam sites. Many decades later in 1996, Bev and Don Heise discovered a large pile of gravel from the Curtis Pond Dam location and were concerned. They contacted the State dam engineers and requested a site visit. The 30-year journey to repair the dam ensued and our story begins.

Over those 30 years, there were a lot of fits and starts with many volunteers, committees and many Calais Selectboards (SB) working to fix the dam. We use a relay race to emphasize the length and tenacity of the spirit for this project and to recognize the folks from beginning to end of this saga. It's the whole team that won the race, not just the runner/group who ran the last lap. Even though some laps weren't as "fast" as some others, the lessons learned, and tasks completed in each lap helped in the next laps. All laps contributed to getting the dam fixed.

**Lap 1, 1996 - 2006:** The Heises picked up the baton and initiated a community outreach including parades and local meetings in 1996. Bev Heise, along with Bob Belisle and Jeff Fothergill, obtained pledges from the legislature in 2002 and the Maple Corner Community Center to support the project. An ad hoc group of concerned citizens got an initial assessment and \$250,000 price tag by the engineering firm, Dubois and King, Inc. It was presented to the Calais Selectboard (Robert Withey, chair, Randy Fitch, Paul Hannan, Cy Lamberson, Nedene Martin) in October 2003. Committees were formed to Investigate ownership, funding mechanisms, short-term patching and to create an emergency action plan (EAP). Public meetings were

# It Takes a Community

held and community awareness continued to be raised. The questions on ownership, liability and funding issues remained challenges and the baton was dropped in 2006, and no further action was taken

**Lap 2, 2011 - 2013:** The arrival of Irene in 2011 was a sobering reminder of the need to attend to reconstruction. Flooding was no longer a threat but a reality. The baton was picked up by the Calais Selectboard (Denise Wheeler, chair, John Brabant, Scott Bassage, Mike Garand, Toby Talbot). The Curtis Pond Dam integrity was researched, and a dam reconstruction was designed by Dubois and King, Inc. engineering firm. The cost of reconstruction was estimated to be \$318,000. Once again, since there was no resolution of the ownership of the dam, the baton was dropped, and no further action was taken.

**Lap 3, 2017 - fall 2023:** The Curtis Pond Association (CPA) was formed in 2017 by Heidi Thompson and Colleen Bloom. The baton to fix the dam was picked up again when the CPA's Exploratory Group was formed in July 2020. The onset of Covid presented challenges to in-person meetings and were conducted on Zoom or in the outdoors with participants wearing masks. The Exploratory Group presented to the Calais Selectboard on Zoom in February 2021 and ask to work with the SB to repair the dam (Denise Wheeler, Sharon Winn Fannon, John Brabant, Richard Kehne, Marc Mihaly). The CPA's Exploratory Group drove the process keeping the Calais Selectboard informed of the status of the effort, worked with the engineers on design and permit applications, obtained the legal documents to resolve the ownership issue, researched grants, and fund raised. The price tag for the reconstruction in this time frame went from \$580K in July 2022 to \$820K on July 6, 2023, four days before the 2023 flood.

**Lap 4, fall 2023 - 2025:** The CPA raised the final amount needed to cover the estimated costs and handed the baton to the SB (Anne Winchester, Jordan Keyes, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Gabrielle Melina, and later Don Mucherino, Bill Davis, Christy Mihaly and Barbara McAndrew) who got bids and contracts and managed the reconstruction. The price for the reconstruction had jumped to 1 million dollars. The reconstruction was essentially completed in the fall of 2024 with a few small landscaping tasks completed in 2025. The total cost of the entire project (legal, communication, management and reconstruction) is currently \$1.2 million.

---

## Who Helped and What Happened

The following provides some details about the work done and the folks involved in each of the laps. Even more details such as historic timelines, selectboard meetings, copies of the various reports, fundraising information, can be found online on the Curtis Pond Association web site at <https://curtispond.org/>

---

### Lap 1: 1996 - 2006

---

**1996 - 2003:** Initial efforts included organizing awareness about the dam, marching in the Montpelier parade, and getting legislative funding (\$30,000 granted in 6/27/2002 H. 478, No. 149). \$23K was pledged by the Maple Corner Community Center to supplement the funding obtained from the legislature which was eventually increased to a \$30,000 pledge. After researching ownership, the State in May 2003 reported that the Fothergill/Beardsley owned the dam. In October 2003, an ad hoc committee loosely made up of local residents and land owners brought their concerns and proposed solution to Calais

# It Takes a Community

Selectboard with preliminary engineering evaluation including core samples, a watershed survey report, suggested funding methods, and projected property tax loss based on dam removal.

- Bev Heise went to legislature and public awareness
- Jeff Fothergill went to legislature and public awareness
- Bob Belisle went to legislature and chaired the group to obtain and select engineering proposals and provided projected tax loss if the dam was removed.
- Jamie and Davis Cherington
- Don Heise public awareness
- Steve Sweeney
- Bill Powell chaired the group to look into funding mechanisms such as whether to form a fire district, special assessment, or town-wide assessment
- Chris Miller
- J.C. Myers
- Charles Rubner
- Calais Conservation Committee conducted a watershed survey of Curtis Pond with a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program.
- Jeff Tucker, Dubois and King, Inc.

**February 2004:** Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for the Curtis Pond Dam used by local and state officials if the potential or actual failure of the dam. An inundation map was included. Monitors were identified. The EAP is a requirement to be able to obtain insurance through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

- |                |                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Toby Talbot  | • Bill Powell                        |
| • John Brabant | • Jeff Tucker, Dubois and King, Inc. |

**2004 - 2006:** The Calais Selectboard formed the Calais Dam Task Force with representation from across the town except for pond landowners to investigate the status of all dams in Calais, provided strategies for the repair of Curtis Pond Dam including researching alternative solutions, reviewing ownership and liability issues and funding mechanisms. A report was provided on February, 2005 after which public meetings were held. In the fall, 2006, the SB attempted to bring a vote on various questions about the dam. The ownership issue and inability to come up with a funding mechanism that was deemed equitable resulted in no further action to reconstruct the Curtis Pond Dam.

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Chair: Davis Cherington | • Barry Bernstein                    |
| • J.C. Myers              | • Warner Shedd                       |
| • John Brabant            | • Paul Hannan as selectboard liaison |
| • Denise Wheeler          | • Jeff Tucker, Dubois & King, Inc.   |
| • Gary Root               | • Root Engineering, Inc              |

## **Cost expended in Lap 1:**

- Dubois & King, Inc. (\$20,000 for engineering study and EAP in January 2004)
- Root Engineering, Inc (\$1,500 for Alternative Analysis in October 2004 and \$3,000 in January 2006 for Stonewall-Earth Dam Reconstruction).
- State land surveyor (\$5,500) extensive title search of ownership.

# It Takes a Community

---

## Lap 2: 2010 - 2013

---

The Calais SB reviewed potential flooding issues in Calais especially after the Irene flooding including the Curtis Pond Dam. A detailed dam design with an estimated cost (\$245,000) was obtained from Dubois and King, Inc. paid by an additional \$20,091 from the legislature (H. 790, No 161, FY11). No further action was taken to reconstruct the dam.

- John Brabant researched the Curtis Pond Dam and brought info to the SB.
- Jeff Tucker, Dubois and King, Inc. created a detailed dam design and estimated cost estimate of \$245,000.

### Cost expended in Lap 2:

- Dubois and King, Inc. for detailed engineering design (\$16,280)

---

## Lap 3: 2017 - Fall 2023

---

**2017:** Colleen Bloom and Heidi Thompson formed the Curtis Pond Association. CPA board members:

- |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Colleen Bloom president      | • Marc Mihaly, at large    |
| • Jamie Moorby, vice president | • Ginger Clammer, at large |
| • Reenie De Geus, secretary    | • Noreen Bryan, at large   |
| • Marge Sweeney, treasurer     |                            |

**2020 - 2024:** Curtis Pond Association formed an Exploratory Group to work with the Calais Selectboard to get the dam repaired. This included funding raising and communications, working with the engineers on design and permit applications, obtaining the legal documents to resolve ownership issue, researching grants, keeping the community informed. The Calais Selectboard authorized on May 24, 2021, that the CPA work towards getting the dam repaired and appointed John Brabant and Denise Wheeler as liaisons.

The CPA Exploratory Group fluctuated in size and with a broad range of participants. The following were the core group that drove the process from 2019 to 2025.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Colleen Bloom | • Marc Mihaly    |
| • Jamie Moorby  | • John Rosenblum |
| • Marge Sweeney |                  |

*Legal Aspects:* The ownership issue had thwarted other efforts and solving it was considered critical and the first thing on the agenda. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Calais Selectboard and CPA directors in November 2021 provided a path for Calais to eventually take ownership of the dam after it was fixed and insurable.

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| • Marc Mihaly   | • Jamie Moorby                              |
| • Marge Sweeney | • Thomas Melloni, Paul Frank + Collins P.C. |

# It Takes a Community

## *Permits:*

- Colleen Bloom
- Marge Sweeney
- Jamie Moorby
- Jeff Tucker & Michael Hildebrand, Dubois and King, Inc.
- Elizabeth Peeples, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
- Angella Repella, Army Corp of Engineers
- Ben Green and Steve Hanna, Vermont Dam Safety
- John McCullough, Calais Zoning Board
- Catherine Quinn and Kate Kenny, UVM-Consulting Archeology Program
- Nick Emlen & Jake Aho, updated the Emergency Action Plan for the dam
- Grace Glynn, ANR-Endangered and Threatened Species
- Misha Cetner, ANR-Shoreland Protection

## *Financial Aspects (collecting, processing and thanking the donors):*

- Marge Sweeney
- Jamie Moorby
- Nancy Toulis

## *Fundraising Committee: Fund raising started in 2021 and is still on-going.*

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Jamie Moorby    | • Ginger Clammer    |
| • Marge Sweeney   | • Lewis Franco      |
| • Colleen Bloom   | • Bev and Don Heise |
| • Betty Copeland  | • Laura Purcel      |
| • Michael Dworkin | • Meg Dawkins       |
| • Heidi Thompson  | • Mary Hanrahan     |

## *Silent auction (raised \$16,000):*

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| • Jamie Moorby  | • Marge Sweeney |
| • Mary Hanrahan | • Bev Heise     |
| • Laura Purcell |                 |

## *\$30,000 from the MCCC from the 2003 Men of Maple Corner Calendar:*

- |               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| • Dick Jenney | • Steve Gallaher                 |
| • Judy Hardin | • Chris Miller                   |
| • Bev Heise   | • All of the Men of Maple Corner |

## *Hosting concerts and special events:*

- Don and Bev Heise (boat rides and construction help)
- Hosted Concert 1 – Meg Dawkins
- Hosted Concert 2 – Hasso Ewing & Bob Hannan
- Hosted Concert 3 -- Marge and Steve Sweeney

# It Takes a Community

- Hosted Concert 4 – Barbara Butler
- Hosted Concert 5 – Richard Maizell & Iris Welching
- Hosted Concert 6 – Meg Dawkins
- Beer Testing – David Ellenbogen and Mary Hanrahan

*Communication (photos/videos on Facebook and CPA website, mailings and publicity):*

- Jamie Moorby
- Marge Sweeney
- Steve Gallagher, Photos/videos on Facebook and CPA website
- Betty Copeland, Photos/videos on Facebook and CPA website
- Geof Hewitt wrote multiple poems about the dam
- Julia Bowles helped with publicity and fundraising letters
- Art Bell fund made fundraising video:  
<https://vimeo.com/dreamlikepictures/review/785799933/ed70140903>
- Don Heise, music and Curtis the Beaver
- Lewis Franco, music
- Marge Sweeney gathered the information for the “It Takes a Community” document

*Grant Research (over 40 potential grants and leads were researched and/or applied for):*

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| • Marge Sweeney  | • Vicky Arthur                         |
| • Jamie Moorby   | • Bill Powell                          |
| • Colleen Bloom  | • Liz Curry, Commonland Solutions, LLC |
| • Laura Purcell  | • Meredith Dolan, Dolan Municipal &    |
| • John Rosenblum | Utility Consulting, LLC                |

Senator Bernie Sanders announced in March 2024 that a federal appropriation in the 2024 Fiscal Year budget for 525K was secured. To get the funds, approval from FEMA was still required (not a sure thing) and could be a year-long process and nothing could be spent until approved. Since permits, money and a contract with the contractor were ready, and there was concern that new regulations, increases in price and the contractor would no longer be available, the CPA and SB decided to reconstruction in the summer of 2024 and not wait for the uncertain appropriation.

*Special projects:*

- Jonathan Herz researched the feasibility of hydro power
- Eric Perkins researched about preventing beavers from blocking the spillway
- Eric Hanson provided advice about loons
- Noreen Bryan was always there for advice on invasives and plants

# It Takes a Community

**July 11, 2023 Flood:** Although many folks helped, without the tireless work of the following the dam probably would have been lost:

- Jamie Moorby
- Jake Aho and Sarah Black
- Nick Emlen
- Ben Greene, Agency of Natural Resources
- Larry Hebert, Hebert Excavation, Inc.
- Michael Hildebrand, Dubois & King, Inc.
- Betty Copeland
- Steve and Sarah Gallagher
- Don Heise
- Meg Dawkins
- Jonathan Herz
- Paige Cantwell
- Tim Macke

---

## Lap 4: Fall 2023 - 2025

---

**Fall 2023 and Spring 2024:** Calais went out to bid for the reconstruction and management of the construction, decided on a contractor and manager and wrote up contracts.

- Jamie Moorby
- Colleen Bloom
- Marge Sweeney
- Marc Mihaly
- John Rosenblum
- Jeff Tucker and Michael Hildebrand, Dubois & King, Inc.

**Spring 2024:** Handoff from CPA to Calais Selectboard

**Summer 2024 and Spring 2025:** Reconstruction of the dam

- Jamie Moorby representing both SB and CPA
- Kari Bradley, Town Manager
- Larry & Jimmy Hebert, Hebert Excavation, Inc. reconstruction of the dam
- Michael Hildebrand, Dubois & King, Inc. construction oversight
- Darien McElwain moved the lessor bur-reed and other plants
- Don Heise painted the dam
- Noreen Byran giving advice concerning invasives

**Total Costs in Lap 3 and Lap 4** as of 9/6/2025 was \$1,201,266.36

- Engineering & Construction Oversight (\$153,331.77)
- Permits (\$10,620.83)
- Legal and Surveying (\$27,237.50)
- Construction (\$998,749.50)
- Communication and Fund Raising
- Bank Fees (\$3,856.33)



# It Takes a Community

## Special Thanks to All the Donors and the Town of Calais!

Starting in 2021 until the present day, **over \$1.2 million has been pledged or raised from the Town of Calais and over 400 private donors.** We wish we could thank each donor and citizen of Calais personally for their generosity. A sincere thanks to all. We all were able to fix the dam! Here are some of the major milestones to recognize in this fundraising effort.

- The donors of the initial \$100,000 which included the \$30,000 from the Men of Maple Corner Calendar. The Curtis Pond Association made a commitment to the Calais Selectboard in February 2021 that they would raise the first \$100,000 as seed money to cover the “soft” costs that included updating the 2011 dam design and starting the legal and permit processes. These initial donors believed in the project and donated when many were unsure if it could be done.
- The many hundreds of donors who answered our fund-raising efforts including the fund-raising letter in the fall of 2022, the silent auction, boat rides, concerts, etc. It showed the community support for the project.
- The approval of the bond of \$450,000 at the March 2023 town meeting at an almost two to one count. The citizens of Calais recognized that Curtis Pond Dam was an important asset to the town.
- In March 2024, the donors, including the anonymous donor of \$100,000, who quickly gave \$250,000 in a special fund-raising effort. The Calais Selectboard, assured that the taxpayers would not be asked to make up the difference from what had been raised to-date and the ever-increasing estimated costs, approved procuring the bond approved by the town in March 2023.
- The \$200,000 loan to the Curtis Pond Association in May 2024 with payback over a 3-year period that guaranteed the remaining funds needed to cover the higher than estimated contractor bids and allowed the reconstruction to start in the summer of 2024.
- **Our fundraising effort is ongoing to pay back the loan.** As of mid-September 2025, there was \$42,000 on hand, \$62,000 in pledges and just under \$100,000 more to go.
- We welcome any and all tax-deductible donations. Please write your check out to the Maple Corner Community Center (or "MCCC") and put "CPA" in the subject line. All checks should be mailed to **Curtis Pond Association, PO Box 162, Calais, Vt 05648.** Or to donate online, find the link to donate in the yellow box on the CPA website at: <https://curtispond.org/donate-now/>