
Clean Water Services

Balm Grove Dam Removal

Gales Creek, Oregon



Dam removal opens up and enhances miles of habitat for native migratory fish in the mainstem of Gales Creek, a tributary to the Tualatin River.

SERVICES

Construction
Ecological Restoration
Nature Based Solutions

Gales Creek offers some of the best fish habitat in Washington County. Thirteen miles upstream from its confluence with the Tualatin River, however, an obsolete dam has altered flows and impeded fish passage since the 1930s. The 30-foot thick, 100-foot wide, 3-foot high dam was originally constructed to create an area for swimming and boating.

Biohabitats helped Clean Water Services remove the dam to restore not only fish passage, but floodplain connectivity and instream habitat. The project involved diverting Gales Creek and dewatering the work area, safely salvaging and transporting fish and amphibians, demolishing, removing, and recycling the entire dam structure including all concrete, headwalls and piles; installing large wood habitat and boulder structures, and restoring all impacted areas to facilitate enhanced habitat.

The project brings improved sediment, wood transport, and water quality to the system while opening up more than 30 miles of habitat for species such as coho salmon (protected), Pacific lamprey (endangered), cutthroat trout, and winter steelhead trout (threatened). In 2023, Biohabitats install four additional large wood habitat structures and remove a berm to reconnect the creek to its floodplain.