A Brief History of the Bean Dam

Originally built in 1935 by the Belmont Mill, the Bean Dam (formerly the Gorman Dam) impoundment, the Duffy Reservoir, is the focal point of a conservation parcel managed by the BCC. It was built in order to impound water for generation of electricity for use in the mill during low flow periods on the Tioga River. Seen as it was nearing completion in the photo at left, the dam was a timber crib rock filled dam. As the life of the mill waned, the dam became decrepit due to neglect. The timbers all eventually rotted and the dam became a pile of rubble, as seen in the picture at left. As water ebbed and flowed, the impoundment would change from a five acre pond withheld by the base of the dam to thirty acres as flood waters would overtop the dam.

All dams that aren’t maintained will eventually fail; the question is will it fail stone by stone or in a cataclysmic event all at once endangering downstream property, infrastructure, and life and limb. Because of the threat to the public if the dam catastrophically failed, the NH Dept. of Environmental Services issued an order to breach or repair the dam in 1997. Mr. James Locke, who had purchased much of the real estate that belonged to the Belmont Mill including the land that was the Duffy Reservoir, was the responsible party.

In 2011, Mr. Locke sold the property to Belmont after completing the breaching of the dam to the satisfaction of the DES – Dam Bureau as conservation land. The breech was accomplished leaving the five acre pond and with the construction of a fish ladder to reclaim a significant stretch of free flowing river. The only remaining obstacle between the Tioga River’s headwaters and the Winnipesaukee River is the partially breeched Fellows Mill dam in the Village.

In 2014, Belmont purchased one of the lots in the Tioga Ridge subdivision to provide upland access and parking for the Tioga Ridge and Bean Dam conservation lands at the end of Wild Acres Road. It’s a quick walk in from the trailhead pictured below. There is a rough path around the pond with plenty of birds and other wildlife. Hunting and fishing are allowed on the property.

Watch this spot in the coming months for news of an exciting new conservation land purchase and a public forum to be held by the BCC, in conjunction with NHDES on the importance of testing the purity of water in private wells. Remember – all BCC managed lands are Carry In – Carry Out.