



Photo courtesy of Lewis County

## **Dam is key to Croghan's economic vitality**

# **ANCA Supports Efforts to Save Historic Croghan Dam**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Issues of aging infrastructure and how small communities can remain economically viable are coming to a head in Lewis County. As the Village of Croghan struggles to preserve its historic dam and mill, groups are joining an effort to call for more time to look for ways to rehabilitate the structure.

With a July 4 deadline looming to breach the dam, the 14-county Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) urges the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to allow more time for alternative solutions.

Concern for dam stability under high flow conditions at the 93 year old dam has resulted in the DEC, which regulates dam safety, lowering the water level of the Beaver River impoundment by removing stop logs to reduce water pressure on the dam structure. The next step would include breaching the dam and eliminating the impoundment.

According to ANCA President Steve Erman, "it would be a mistake to move too quickly toward breaching the Croghan Island Dam without adequate engineering and the full evaluation of alternatives. This is not consistent with ANCA's objectives of retaining established businesses, preserving culture and heritage, and building on the region's assets for further enterprise development."

"At stake here is the elimination of hydro mechanical operations at the Croghan Island Mill," said ANCA Executive Director Kate Fish. The Croghan Island Mill Lumber Co. is a small manufacturer of handcrafted windows and doors using 19th century machinery in one of the last remaining water-powered mills in the State.

The reduced water levels have also threatened the emergency water supply necessary for fire suppression at the adjacent Interface Sealing Solutions, Inc., a maker of industrial gaskets that employs 35 people.

"The breaching of the dam, as planned, will eliminate jobs in Lewis County, will eliminate the historic attraction of an operating water-powered mill, and will denigrate the scenic quality of a valuable water resource in the Town and Village of Croghan," according to Erman.

ANCA supports the efforts of the Lewis County Development Corporation (LCDC), the Village and Town of Croghan, Lewis County, and the Croghan Fire Department, which with the help of St. Lawrence and Clarkson Universities, have developed an industrial revitalization concept plan based on the upgrading of the Croghan Dam.

The plan, which envisions the use of a renovated dam for hydropower production, will allow the retention of both the historic mill operation and Interface Solutions and will stimulate additional job development through new enterprises needing low cost electrical or mechanical energy. The next step in the planning process is a proposed engineering study of the dam, including repair plans and a flow analysis, to be paid for in part by a grant requested from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration as well as with local funds. A decision on the federal grant request is expected in the near future.

"It is ANCA's view that this study should be performed before there is any further action by the State of New York toward the breaching of the Croghan Dam," ANCA President Erman added.

"The Croghan Dam Restoration Initiative is but one example of the potential for new enterprise development being created through the greater availability of renewable energy in the region," said Kate Fish. "This includes energy from thermal biomass, solar and wind, in addition to hydropower generated through the retrofitting of existing dams."

She further noted that "The recent passage of a bill on net-metering by the State Legislature, if signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo, will be one further incentive for the development of renewable energy and the preservation and creation of new, energy dependent enterprises in the Adirondack North Country region."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, "net-metering enables customers to use their own generation from on-site renewable energy systems to offset their consumption over a billing period by allowing their electric meters to turn backwards when they generate electricity in excess of their demand."

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