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Progress!

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Wednesday, July 27, 2011

Progress!

Plan To Improve Great Miami River Gets \$1M Boost DAYTON, Ohio -- Every year someone is killed or injured on the low dam of the Great Miami River near downtown Dayton. Now, plans to remove that dangerous dam, may be closer to a reality. Cox Media Group Ohio announced Tuesday that the James M. Cox Foundation is making a \$1 million challenge grant to remove the low dam and develop recreational opportunities along the river.

DAYTON: \$1 Million Gives Boost To River Plan

The \$4 million project will remove the low dam and replace it with two scenic drops designed for paddling. It is the top priority of the Greater Downtown Dayton Plan because of its potential economic impact on the area. It is part of a continuing effort to develop recreational opportunities in our area and improve the environmental health of the river.

"The James M. Cox Foundation and Cox Enterprises are strong believers in doing what we can to make a lasting impact on our natural resources. This project is a great example of that," said Jim Kennedy, chairman of Cox Enterprises. "We all need to do our part, and my hope is that this gift will inspire others to make a difference and get this critical project done. "The Monument Ave. dam is large, five feet high and 472-feet long. Officials said it is both a safety hazard and a major obstacle that must be overcome to redevelop the area. Dusty Hall of the Miami Conservancy District took a WHIO-TV crew to within a few hundred feet of the dam in a kayak. As they approached the dam, they could only hear the traffic above and not the water churning below. "That's a very dangerous hydraulic which can trap boaters and it's dangerous and could be deadly," said Hall. The dam was built in 1978 for recreation, not flood control as many people believe. Now, planners said the only way to safely open up the river to boaters is to remove the dam. For many decades, city leaders turned their backs on the river and now they want to embrace it. "The flood of 1913 gave us a great opportunity because it kind of kept all of that industry back from the river that a lot of other cities have. Our river is kind of sitting and waiting for us to reclaim it," said Carrie Scarff, Deputy Director of Five Rivers Metro Parks. The dam will be replaced by two water features where the river can flow and boaters can pass through safely downstream. People who kayak will have a safe place to play in the river. "These amenities are huge economic development tools. We really think that it's going to boost the economy and help create jobs," said Dr. Mike Ervin, Co-Chair of the Downtown Dayton Partnership. Ervin is one of the promoters of the Greater Downtown Dayton Plan and its proposed river run at RiverScape. He said the city already has people fishing, jogging and biking here and Ervin believes adding kayaks and canoes will attract more young professionals to the city. "This project is critical to a vibrant downtown, but it is much more. "It will contribute to the economic development of our entire region, whether you live in Tipp City or Centerville," said Ervin. The dam is the only thing standing in the way of connecting by water, Wright Patterson Air Force Base and the University of Dayton. Hall said, "Removal of this dam will create a connection

between two significant economic drivers of our region, create a tourist attraction and an opportunity for folks visiting the Air Force Museum or Carillon Park, to add to their visit here."The challenge grant from the James M. Cox Foundation will be made to the friends of the Greater Downtown Dayton Plan Fund at the Dayton Foundation.Cox Media Group Vice President Julia Wallace will be working with community leaders to raise the remaining \$3 million as quickly as possible."Our rivers are beautiful and a great resource for the area. The more we can make them a prime attraction for residents and tourists, the better. The river can and should be a focal point for the community," said Wallace.Last year, former CMGO Market Vice President Alex Taylor, great grandson of the late Gov. James M. Cox, committed the company's focus on resolving the low dam issue and led the company in its first participation at Clean Sweep of the Great Miami River.In the last two years, CMGO employees have cleared more than 7,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from the river.