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We Give a Dam

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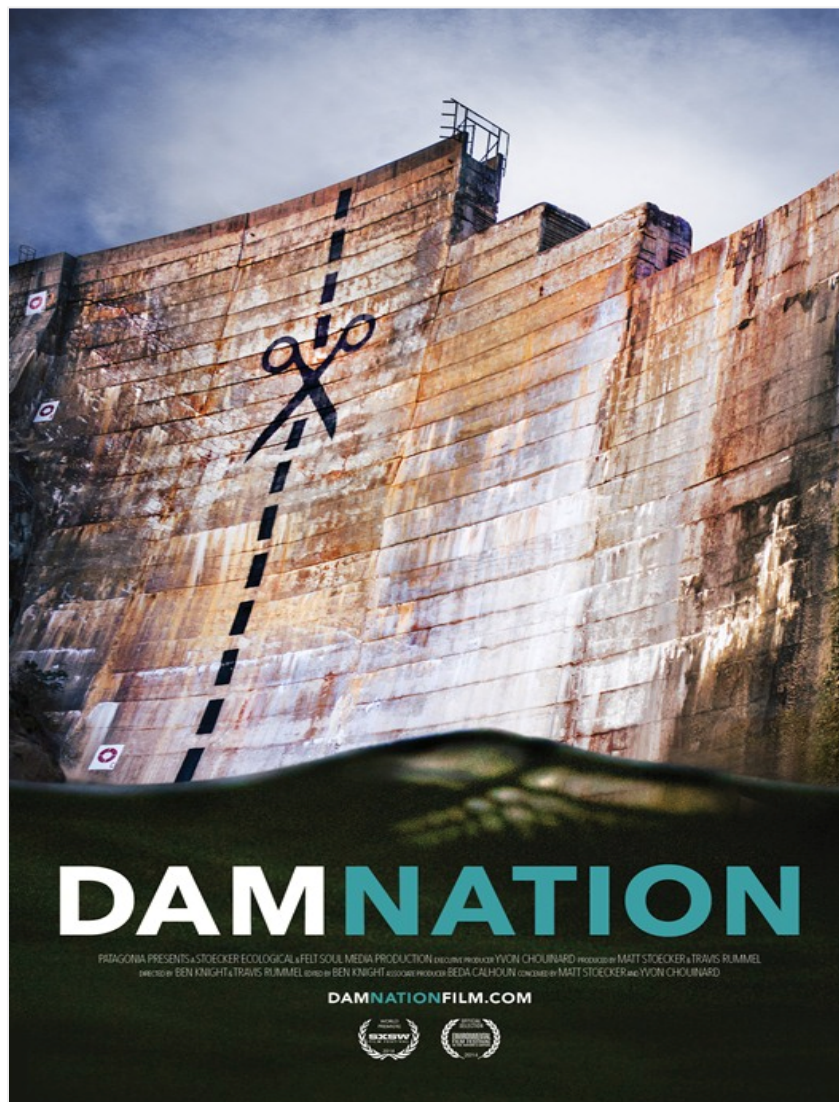
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Thursday, October 30, 2014

We Give a Dam

Charlotte Shade, 2017 Cohort

On Monday October 20th, the Rivers Institute helped put on a screening of the documentary “Dam Nation” as part of UD's Sustainability Week. Dam Nation explores the change in our national attitude concerning dams. At first there was national pride in big dams, which were seen as engineering wonders. Recently, however, there is the growing awareness that our own future is bound to the life and health of our rivers.



Personally, Dam Nation made me very aware of just what dams are doing to our environment. I never realized that dams could even really be a “bad” thing. Dams all over America and all over the world have flooded out countless areas that may have been homes to people and animals. Dams disrupt the natural ecosystem of rivers, which negatively impacts most of the fish species living in the rivers. Migratory fish like salmon are extremely impacted because each season they attempt to swim back up stream to reproduce. Dams have kept salmon from doing this and therefore salmon populations are decreasing dramatically. This also means that salmon cannot be fished, which economically hurts the communities that may have depended on fishing for income.

However, if “Dam Nation” did teach me one thing, it’s that there’s hope! Dam removal is flourishing all over the country as cities are starting to realize what little benefits dams bring to their communities. After the dams are being removed, scientists are finding that the natural environment is restoring itself rather quickly and native species are returning.

So what does this mean for Dayton? We are a city prided for our amazing dams designed by the famous Arthur Morgan. Luckily, there were 3 informative panelists at the screening to explain the dam system of Dayton! None of our dams are used for hydroelectricity and all of our dams are free flowing, which allow fish to travel through without any trouble. The panelists also informed us that Dayton is following the trend of the rest of America as we are looking to remove many of our low-dams, which may be doing more harm than good. Our dam systems are used strictly for flood prevention and therefore do not flood out our environments. Citizens of Dayton can rest assured that we will not wake up to any graffiti on our dams from the stars of “Dam Nation.”