

# CASE Study - FRANCE

## Loire River

# REMOVE THE DAMS FREE OUR RIVERS

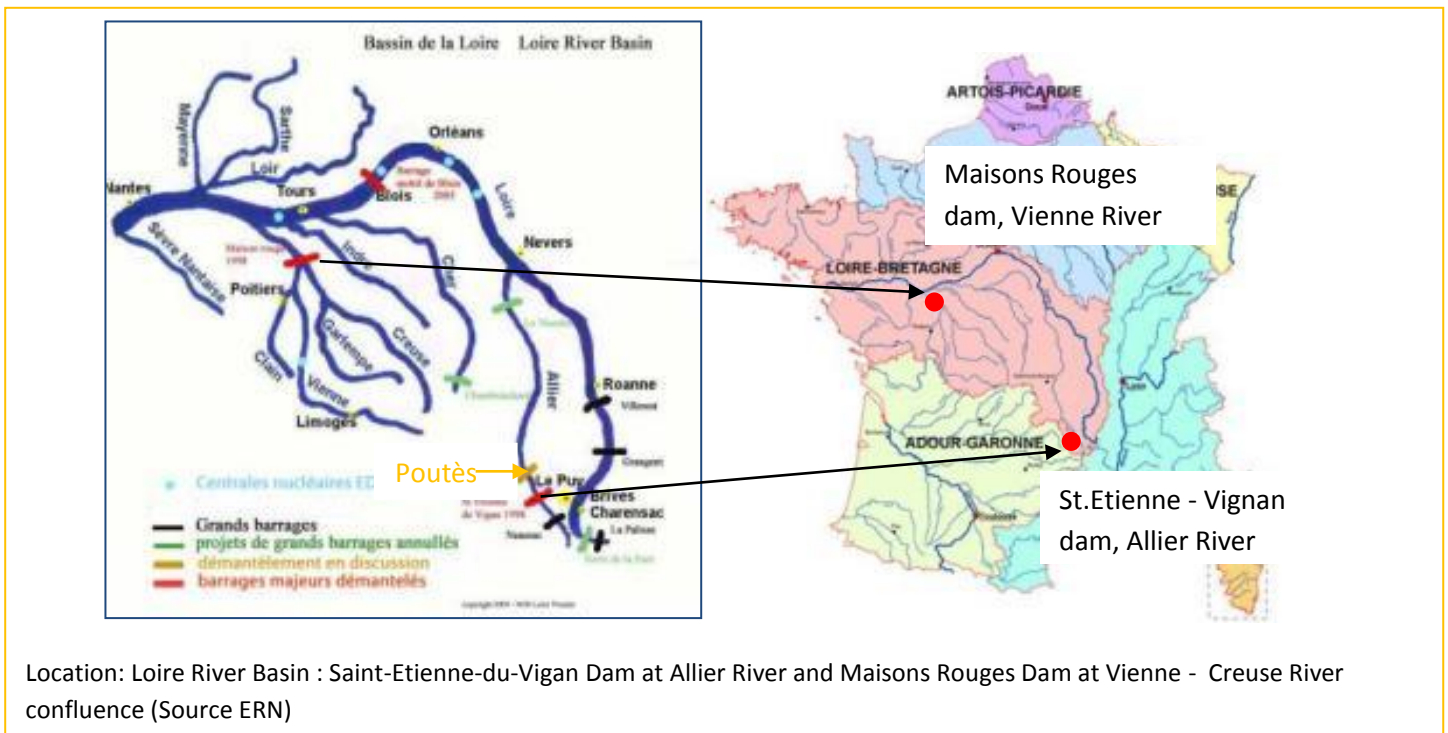
### Saint Etienne du Vigan and Maisons Rouges dam removals

The construction of a dam in the village of [Saint-Etienne-du-Vigan](#) was authorised in 1895 to supply electricity to the town of Langogne (Lozère). Being approximately 14 m high and having no special fish pass for migratory fishes, the dam had sterilised the excellent Upper-Allier salmon spawning sites. At the time of construction, strong protests were uttered, in vain, by the rural people for whom the fishing supplied a considerable additional income.

Under the implementation of the “Plan Loire Grandeur Nature ” (the Natural Loire River Plan) in 1994 by the French Government, the removal of existing dams was considered as a necessary measure to recreate free flowing rivers.

The other major dam removal in the frame of the Natural Loire River Plan, was [the Maisons-Rouges](#) dam, on the Vienne river, another tributary of the Loire river.

Technical Data (Source, ERN and ONEMA 2010)	
Country	France / Normandie
Name of River	Allier and Vienne river, tributaries of Loire River
Name of Dam:	St. Etienne-du Vigan (Allier) Maisons-Rouges (Vienne)
Year of construction	1895 St.-Etienne-du-Vigan 1923 Maisons-Rouges dam
Year of removal	1998
Cost of removal:	1,3 Mio.€ St.Etienne-du-Vigan 2,6 Mio.€ Maisons-Rouges
Type of dam	hydropower
Power capacity	35MW : St.Etienne-du-Vigan no data : Maisons-Rouges
Height / Length	14m : Saint-Etienne du Vigan 4m/200m: Maisons Rouges
Volume	No data
Freed river km	44km Allier River, St.Etienne 35km Vienne and Creuse
Dam owner:	EDF



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After several years of protests by Loire vivante, the Prefect decided not to renew the Saint-Etienne-du-Vigan operation concession 1994. This was the first time that the French Government requested Electricité de France (the French state-owned electricity utility) to remove the dam at their own expense in order to restore the free running flow.

River salmon were coming back the winter after the dam removal and results were encouraging. However many river salmon are still held back due to other dams downstream in Allier river such as the [Poutès](#)-Monistrol dam. This dam is the cause of almost the complete loss of the Loire wild salmon, and is a major drawback for the salmon conservation programme set up by the "Plan Loire Grandeur Nature" where several Mio Euros were invested for salmon reintroduction all in vain due to this dam. After 20 years of heavy protests the partial removal of Poutès Monistrol dam was conceived: from 17m to 4m height. Furthermore the plant will be equipped with a multi-species fish way for upstream and downstream migration. Works are scheduled for 2017 – 2022.

The Maison rouge dam was dismantled and has been an undoubted success. From 2004 to 2007 an automatic counting station on the Vienne River, 20 kilometers above the Maisons-Rouges site, registered 3,500 to 9,500 allice shads, 8,300 to 41,600 sea lamprey, 2-12 brown trout and 2 to 11 adult wild salmon, which was not found there since 100 years!

Alone in the Creuse river in 2007 around 9,000 allice shad, 51,000 sea lamprey, 4 brown trout, 60 salmon were sighted in Descartes 12 kilometers beyond Maison Rouge. This efficient approach for migratory fish has also shown a huge reduction in the sedimentary deficit in the course of the Vienne, with benefits extending even into the Loire main branch.

### Source of Information and links:

[Saint-Etienne-du-Vigan](#), Allier River, Haute-Loire, 1998

[Maisons-Rouges](#), Vienne River, Indre-et-Loire, 1998



Saint-Etienne-du-Vigan dam before removal © ERN, Roberto Epple



Saint-Etienne-du-Vigan dam removal works © ERN, Roberto Epple



Allier river after dam removal © ERN, Roberto Epple

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### Further major dam removals in France:

[Kernansquillec](#), 15m, Léguer River, Cotes-d'Armor, removal 1996

[Brives-Charensac](#), 3m high, Loire River, removal 2003

[Blois](#), 1m high/ approx. 300m large, Loire River, removal 2005

[Fatou](#), Beaume River, upper basin of Loire River, 6m high, removal 2007

### Dams planned to be removed in France:

After a 25 year long fight by Loire Vivante and European Rivers Network the following large dams will be dismantled in the coming years:

**Allier River, [Poutès dam](#)**, partial removal from 17m to 4m height is planned 2017 – 2022.

<http://www.nouveau-poutes.fr/fr/vers-le-nouveau-poutes/du-combat-a-la-concertation>

[https://www.barrages-cfbr.eu/IMG/pdf/1.04.barrage\\_de\\_poutes.pdf](https://www.barrages-cfbr.eu/IMG/pdf/1.04.barrage_de_poutes.pdf)

**Selune River: [Roche qui Boit dam](#) and [Vezins dam](#)** (36m high, 278m long)

<http://www.ern.org/fr/dam-watch/>

<http://www.selunelibre.org>

### Further information:

All the French dam removal case studies can be consulted on the European Rivers Network (ERN) website.

<http://www.ern.org/en/dam-removal/>



Maisons-Rouges dam before removal © ERN, Roberto Epple



Maisons-Rouges dam removal works © ERN, Roberto Epple



Vienne – Creuse confluence river after dam removal © ERN, Roberto Epple

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