FUSS & O'NEILL

What Exactly is That?

Civil engineers have literally shaped the world around you. There are so many things you see (or don't see) every day that make communities work. Today we're going to learn about at a few of these things that have some weird names, but without them, who knows what our world would look like!

What is a culvert?

The simple answer is that a culvert is a structure that helps water get from one side of something to another side of something. You can think of it like a tunnel for water. It can be a big pipe (usually buried close to the surface) that empties into a body of water or it can be under a bridge if that bridge passes over water

What is riprap?

This funny term just means rocks (or other materials) that have been placed by people, but with a purpose. So, no, riprap isn't just anyone making a big pile of rocks for fun. Usually the type of rock, the placement of it, the angle, and its location are all chosen for very specific reasons. And those reasons usually center on protecting shorelines from water, waves, and erosion. You've probably seen riprap next to a river or at the beach. You maybe thought it was placed there by nature or was for decoration. The next time you see riprap, you can share what you've learned!

What is a floodplain?

A floodplain is a pretty flat area next to a river or stream. When we get a lot of rain and the river or stream cannot contain all the water (it floods), the river or stream overflows onto the flat area surrounding it.

What is a fish ladder?
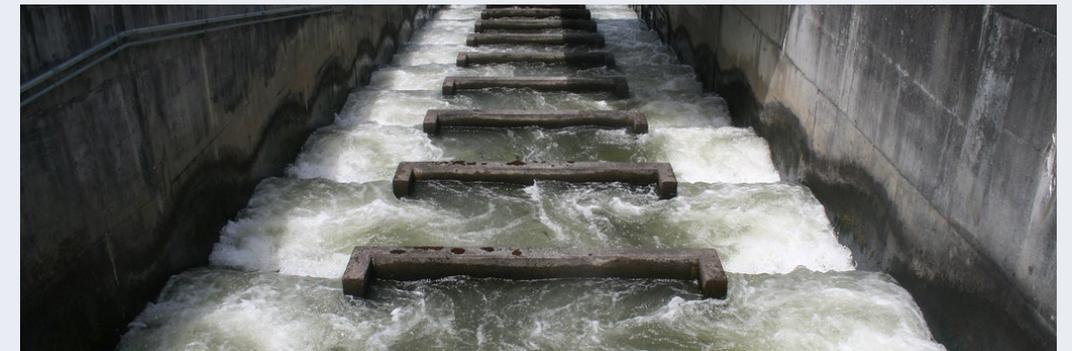
A lot of birds fly south for the winter. A lot of fish swim either upstream or downstream as part of their lifecycle. But if there is something preventing fish from being able to swim either upstream or downstream (example: dams, culverts, or waterfalls), a fish ladder gives the fish a way to swim around the structure. Think of it as a detour for fish! And it's called a ladder because the fish kind of do climb it! They leap through a little bit of water, rest in a pool, leap to the next "step", rest again, and so on and so on!