



# MASSACHUSETTS Rivers Alliance

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May 10, 2022

Dear Town of Natick Charles River Dam Committee,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, thank you for the opportunity to provide comment as you consider plans for the South Natick Dam. The Massachusetts Rivers Alliance is a statewide non-profit organization with 80 member groups dedicated to protecting and restoring the rivers and streams of the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts is river rich. Our rivers provide us with ample aquatic recreational opportunities, and habitat for abundant and diverse wildlife. Unfortunately, there are 3,000 dams statewide that interrupt flow and have adverse effects on wildlife. One way we can dramatically improve a river is by removing old dams. Removing the spillway of the South Natick Dam provides an opportunity to efficiently restore habitat and increase local climate resilience.

Allowing the water to run unobstructed can improve wildlife passage and improve water quality above and below the dam site. Some of our state's most iconic species, like river herring and brook trout, require a safe journey upstream to their spawning grounds. Once abundant, these species have suffered population decline as dams went up and impeded their movement. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries [has more information](#) on sea-run fish, and the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, which removes dams across the state, [has information](#) on the water quality impacts of small dams.

Removing an obsolete dam can also protect abutting properties from flooding. As climate change brings unprecedented precipitation levels, the impoundments behind the dams are at greater risk of overflowing into neighboring properties. To be prepared for these changes, municipalities should use forward-thinking climate projections in their planning processes.

The Charles River is iconic for its history, sweeping views, and incredible recreational opportunities. By removing the dams that dot the watershed, the Charles River can also be known as a leader in ecological restoration and climate resilience.

Thank you for your consideration. If I can provide any additional information or if you'd like to discuss these comments further, please contact me ([katharinelange@massriversalliance.org](mailto:katharinelange@massriversalliance.org)).

Sincerely,

Katharine Lange  
Policy Specialist  
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance