



February 10, 2023

Secretary Rebecca Tepper  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02114

Commissioner Doug Rice  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street  
Boston, MA 02114

**Via Email:** [env.internet@mass.gov](mailto:env.internet@mass.gov), [rebecca.tepper@mass.gov](mailto:rebecca.tepper@mass.gov), [doug.rice@state.ma.us](mailto:doug.rice@state.ma.us)

Re: Watertown Dam Removal - Charles River Restoration

Dear Secretary Tepper and Commissioner Rice,

Mass Audubon would like to take this opportunity to express its support for the many efforts underway to restore the Charles River, including planning for the potential removal of the Watertown Dam. We are pleased that removal of Watertown Dam is a priority project with the Division of Ecological Restoration. As the owner of this dam, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has an important role to play in participating in the planning process that is underway with Watertown and other municipalities along the river and the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA). We appreciate DCR's cooperation thus far with the partners in this process, and encourage you to continue that with next steps in the planning.

Mass Audubon is the largest nature-based conservation organization in New England. Founded in 1896 by two women who fought for the protection of birds, Mass Audubon carries on their legacy by focusing on the greatest challenges facing the environment today: the loss of biodiversity, inequitable access to nature, and climate change. With the help of our 160,000 members and supporters, we protect wildlife, conserve and restore resilient land, advocate for impactful environmental policies, offer nationally recognized education programs for adults and children, and provide endless opportunities to experience the outdoors at our wildlife sanctuaries.

Mass Audubon is supportive of nature-based climate solutions, including the removal of obsolete dams to restore natural flow regimes and ecological processes; reduce flood hazards; improve water quality, restore habitat and aquatic connectivity for fish and other aquatic life, and to restore floodplains and riparian corridors.

Mass Audubon is the largest riverfront property owner in the stretch of the Charles River upstream of the South Natick Dam, at our Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary – including land that is part of the Natural Valley Storage Area. Mass Audubon has a strong interest in the restoration opportunity offered by the removal of that structure. The planning process for the Watertown Dam is another step in the overall restoration of this river. Given our statewide experiences, we are eager to see dam removal explored with further detailed planning, and are hopeful this will lead to the River being returned to a more natural condition with habitats for native species.





The 2021 feasibility study for the Watertown Dam identified several benefits of removal. With climate change already bringing more intense storms, aging infrastructure like Watertown Dam poses a risk that can be reduced with dam removal. The report found that flood elevations upstream of the dam will be lowered by six feet and no change in flooding is anticipated downstream. The study also identified strong prospects of further restoring anadromous fish including Alewife, American Eel, Blueback Herring and Rainbow Smelt to the Charles River, as well as benefiting existing freshwater fish in the river including bass, bullhead, catfish, perch and pickerel. The current impounded area of the river upstream of the dam has higher temperatures, lower dissolved oxygen levels than a natural free-flowing river, and removal would improve conditions for fish and other aquatic life. Indigenous people including the Natick Nimpuc Tribe also support the removal of the Watertown Dam.

Removing the Watertown Dam and restoring the Charles River has received strong support from neighboring municipalities along the river and partner organizations including the Dedham Sustainability Committee, Native Fish Coalition Massachusetts, Sierra Club Massachusetts, Trout Unlimited Greater Boston Chapter, Watertown City Council, Watertown Conservation Commission, Wellesley Natural Resources Commission and the Weston Conservation Commission.

We appreciate DCR's support and cooperation with the Division of Ecological Restoration and Division of Marine fisheries on the feasibility study, and encourage the agencies to continue working collaboratively with CRWA, the municipalities along the river, and other interested parties to advance the next steps in planning for this restoration project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott McCue".

Scott McCue  
Regional Director, Metro West  
[smccue@massaudubon.org](mailto:smccue@massaudubon.org)

cc: Massachusetts Fish & Game Commissioner Ron Amidon  
Division of Ecological Restoration Director Beth Lambert  
Division of Marine Fisheries Commissioner Daniel McKiernan  
Watertown City Council  
Watertown Conservation Commission  
CRWA Executive Director Emily Norton

