



# MASSACHUSETTS Rivers Alliance

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Secretary Rebecca Tepper  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge St, 10th Floor  
Boston, Massachusetts

Commissioner Brian Arrigo  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Secretary Tepper and Commissioner Arrigo,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, I am writing to support the removal of the Watertown Dam. Mass Rivers is a statewide organization with 85 member groups dedicated to protecting and restoring the rivers and streams of the Commonwealth. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our recommendation for the Watertown Dam.

We encourage the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to support the removal of the Watertown Dam and restoration of the Charles River. This is a climate resilience project. Just last week, amid intense rainstorms that caused catastrophic damage in Leominster, fears that the Barrett Park Pond Dam, deemed a “Significant Hazard” by the Office of Dam Safety, may fail caused the city to evacuate around 100 downstream residents to a shelter.<sup>1</sup> The Watertown Dam is also a “Significant Hazard.” Its removal would keep neighbors and recreationalists safe during flooding, and allow the Charles River to thrive in the face of current and future climate challenges. A 2020 study by the National Center for Atmospheric Research found that by the end of the century, the Eastern United States could experience a nearly 18 percent increase in both rainfall and runoff under a worst-case scenario of global warming.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, our existing infrastructure is not built to withstand these extreme changes.

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<sup>1</sup> [WGBH](#). Craig LeMoult. “Feared Collapse of Leominster Dam Highlights Hundreds More that Threaten Damage.” September 14, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [The Boston Globe](#). Sabrina Shankman. With flashier floods and stronger hurricanes, ‘I don’t think we know what normal is anymore.’ September 13, 2023.

Massachusetts has been making progress. To date, 65 dams have been removed in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) within the Department of Fish and Game, has invested significant time and funding towards these projects: over \$6 million in state capital funds from fiscal year 2020 – fiscal year 2021, and last year, the agency was granted \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to further advance dam removal projects. Advancing the removal of the Watertown Dam will complement these ongoing efforts by other state agencies, and set the stage for more restoration work upstream and in tributaries.

This project would also restore habitat for wildlife and could bring dramatic increases in populations of native alewife, American eel, blueback herring and rainbow smelt. Beyond migratory fish, other resident fish including bass, bullhead, catfish, perch and pickerel would also benefit from the increased habitat that would come from dam removal.

Thank you for considering these comments. We greatly appreciate your work to steward lands and waters across the Commonwealth, and to strengthen climate resiliency. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or if we may provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Lange', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Katharine Lange  
Policy Director  
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

CC:

Massachusetts Fish & Game Commissioner Tom O'Shea  
Division of Marine Fisheries Commissioner Daniel McKiernan  
City of Watertown Council  
City of Watertown Conservation Commission  
Charles River Watershed Association Executive Director Emily Norton