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March 3, 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

Re: Watertown Dam Removal - Charles River Restoration env.internet@mass.gov, rebecca.tepper@mass.gov,
doug.rice@state.ma.us

Dear Secretary Tepper and Commissioner Rice,

The Board of the Newton Conservators voted to express support for the ongoing efforts to restore the Charles River, including the removal of the dam in Watertown. In this, we join many other organizations, including the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), in recommending that the removal of this dam be given a high priority. The current dam is aging, restricts the migration of various fish species and really serves little purpose. Thus, restoring the stretch of the Charles River above the dam between Watertown and Newton to its natural condition is warranted. The 2021 DER Feasibility Study for the Watertown Dam removal identified several benefits of removing this dam and returning the Charles River in this area to its natural free-flowing state. These include allowing native fish to easily move to spawning areas upstream, cooling the waters upstream of the dam and elimination of stagnation there, and lowering the baseline of the river and thereby reducing the flooding potential both upstream of the dam and downstream should the dam fail.

The Conservators give their support for the removal of the Watertown Dam with the understanding that concerns addressed in the 2021 DER Feasibility Study be taken into consideration. These include preventing newly exposed land along the river banks from being taken over by invasive plants and the need for the removal and proper handling of any contaminated sediments upstream of the dam. We recognize that actions on these items will need to be discussed and evaluated further in open public meetings and are subject to action by Conservation Commissions prior to any final permitting.

The Newton Conservators is a non-profit citizens organization that promotes open space and its use in Newton since 1961. Removal of this dam will help restore the Charles River to a healthy, free-flowing state in an area adjacent to Newton and thus will be an ecological benefit to all who use the adjoining areas and trails for recreation. We therefore urge you to move forward with the necessary studies and planning to remove this dam as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



J. Christopher Hepburn
William Hager

Co-presidents, Newton Conservators

[Newton Conservators, Inc. • PO Box 590011 • Newton Centre • MA 02459 • www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)