

Dedham Sustainability Advisory Committee
Town of Dedham
450 Washington Street
Dedham, Massachusetts 02026

January 11, 2023

Bethany A. Card, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Doug Rice, Commissioner
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Dear Secretary Card and Commissioner Rice,

We, Dedham's Sustainability Advisory Committee, offer our support for the removal of Watertown Dam on the Charles River. Our mission is to advise Dedham's Select Board, municipal departments and committees, and residents on strategies for advancing our local commitment to sound environmental practices both today and for our town's future. The Charles River is a natural treasure for our region and Dedham.

The Watertown Dam harms the health of the Charles River, as determined by the Charles River Watershed Association's 2021 feasibility study. Findings of the study show that flood elevations upstream of the Dam will be lowered six feet yet no change in flooding is anticipated downstream. With its removal, the prospects of further restoring alewife, American eel, blueback herring and rainbow smelt to the Charles River increase. Not only migratory fish would benefit from removal of the Dam, other resident fish including bass, bullhead, catfish, perch and pickerel would also have increased habitat and access to food and mates.

The current impounded area upstream of the Dam has higher temperatures and lower dissolved oxygen levels. Freeing the Charles River in Watertown will lead to lower temperatures and higher dissolved oxygen levels and permit the water to flow more freely. Colder waterways with higher levels of dissolved oxygen are also better for trout.

In Dedham, we see the impacts of stronger storms and increased rainfall from climate change. Aging infrastructure like Watertown Dam are at risk as stronger and more intense storms degrade infrastructure not designed for today's weather.

Please closely consider removal of the dam for the health of the broad Charles River watershed.

Thank you,

Sustainability Advisory Committee, Town of Dedham

CC: Massachusetts Fish & Game Commissioner Ron Amidon
Division of Marine Fisheries Commissioner Daniel McKiernan
City of Watertown Conservation Commission
CRWA Executive Director Emily Norton