

Waltham Conservation Commission

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December 20, 2022

Beth Card, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Doug Rice, Commissioner
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Card and Commissioner Rice,

We, the members of the Waltham Conservation Commission, submit this letter to express our support for the removal of the Watertown Dam. The Charles River is extremely important to the residents of Waltham, who appreciate it for its beauty, ecological functions, historical significance, and recreational opportunities. The Waltham Conservation Commission encourages the removal of the Watertown Dam and subsequent restoration of the river to more natural conditions.

Although the project is not in the regulatory jurisdictional area of the Waltham Conservation Commission, we are interested in and support the project because the Watertown Dam impedes the natural, historic migration of diadromous fish upstream to Waltham. Removing the dam would improve ecosystems in Waltham by providing a timely influx of fish, a critical food source that supports the springtime reproduction of bald eagles, ospreys, river otters, black-crowned night herons, and other species have been documented in Waltham.

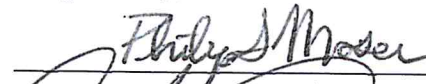
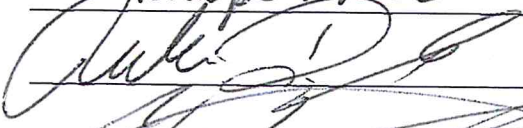

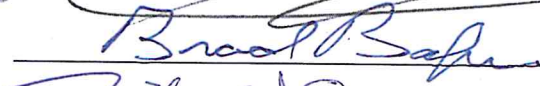

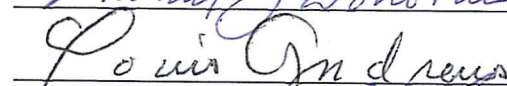
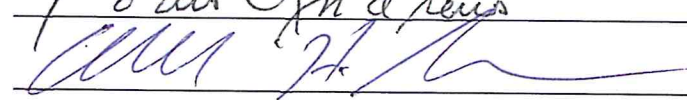
We were impressed by the detail of the feasibility study conducted in 2021. Based on the findings of this study, we feel the removal of the dam will be beneficial for the following reasons:

- Currently, the dam blocks passage of migratory fish including Alewife, Blueback Herring, Rainbow Smelt, and Shad. Removing the dam will allow these fish to reach locations further upstream, increasing access to spawning habitat and food sources.
- Removal of the dam would increase resiliency to flood events caused by climate change. According to the report, flooding downstream of the dam would remain unchanged, while floodplain elevation upstream could be lowered by as much as six feet.

- Currently, the impounded area directly upstream of the dam measures higher temperatures and lower total dissolved oxygen. These conditions are detrimental to most fish species. Removal of the dam would allow water to flow more freely, producing colder, more oxygenated conditions that are better for fish and amphibians.
- Immediately upstream of the removed dam, the lowered water surface would initially create more exposed banks. These exposed banks will then be vegetated, increasing the size and diversity of the riparian buffer.

Across Massachusetts, and indeed the country, unnecessary dams are being successfully removed and rivers restored. We urge you to add the Watertown Dam to this list.

Respectfully,

	Philip Moser, Chair
	William Doyle, Vice Chair
	Gerard Dufromont, Secretary
	Brad Baker
	Mike Donovan
	Louis Andrews
	Alexander Sbordone

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