
Watertown Dam Comments

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To: kathleen.theoharides@mass.gov

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April 28, 2022

Secretary Kathleen A. Theoharides

Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge St., Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114

kathleen.theoharides@mass.gov

Dear Secretary Theoharides,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you about DCR's Watertown Dam.

Our mission at the Greater Boston Chapter of Trout Unlimited is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. Trout Unlimited is a national non-profit organization with 300,000 members and supporters dedicated to conserving, protecting and restoring North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. We engage with communities across America in the work of repairing and renewing the rivers, streams and other waters on which we all depend. Locally we represent almost 1,000 members of our chapter, with many of them in this watershed.

We encourage you to support the removal of the Watertown Dam and the restoration of the Charles River. We were impressed by the feasibility study's findings and are excited about the prospects of further restoring alewife, american eel, blueback herring and rainbow smelt to the Charles River.

Although we do not know of any coldwater resident trout in the stretch of the river, we see this dam removal as an opportunity for DCR to demonstrate the ability to restore fisheries in a major urbanized area. This project would send a strong signal for further restoration of more urbanized rivers like the Neponset River which have DCR-owned legacy mill dams.

Removal of the dam will improve water quality in the Charles River. The current impounded area of the river 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 as the water would flow

more freely. Colder waterways with higher levels of dissolved oxygen are better for fish like the wild trout that our organization supports.

Some people may wonder if other interventions like a new fishway should be constructed in Watertown. Rebuilding the fishway is not a proper solution to improve ecological conditions in Watertown; dam removal is the best solution for water quality, fish passage and recreation. Fishways unfortunately do not remediate the negative impacts of impoundments. We have seen improvements in river ecology, flood prevention and community safety resulting from several dam removal restoration projects we have worked on regionally (Mill Pond Dam on Traphole Brook in Norwood) and [a great many projects nationally](#) under the auspices of Trout Unlimited National and leadership from scores of local TU chapters.

Removal of the Watertown Dam would benefit not only migratory fish but other resident fish including bass, bullhead, catfish, perch and pickerel with increased habitat and access to food and mates. Finally, the removal of the dam will benefit the upstream and downstream communities by raising the ecological health and recreation value of the Charles River watershed.

Sincerely,

Rui Coelho
President
Greater Boston Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Belmont, MA
617-285-1665

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