



Charles River Watershed Association



Environmental League of Massachusetts



Protecting New England's Environment



IPSWICH RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION



Neponset River Watershed Association



American Rivers
Thriving By Nature



Mass Audubon
Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892



WESTFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSN.



HERRING ALLIANCE

May, 7, 2008

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Support for Removal of Baker Dam and Tileston & Hollingsworth Dam on the Lower Neponset River

Dear Secretary Bowles:

The undersigned organizations support efforts to remove the DCR-owned Baker and Tileston & Hollingsworth (T&H) Dams on the Neponset River in Boston and Milton. Decommissioning these two dams was recommended by the Massachusetts Riverways Program's Technical Advisory Committee, which included representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Environmental Protection Wetlands and Hazardous Waste Programs, Department of Conservation and Recreation Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program, the Boston Conservation Commission, and the Milton Planning Department. The dams typify those described by you when you released the "Dam Removal in Massachusetts" Guidance in December, 2007:

(M)any ... dams are no longer serving the purpose for which they were built, but but remain as decaying relics of our industrial past. They create ecological and hydrological hurdles. Dams that have served their life and are no longer functional need to be removed. That removal can be a win for everyone. It can restore rivers and streams to the vibrant, robust, complex habitats they once were; help revive fisheries that, because of dams, have been cut off from their historical spawning grounds; eliminate safety hazards; and relieve owners of unwanted liabilities.

Although dams have existed in this area of the Neponset River for centuries, their original purpose -- water power for industrial plants and mills -- ended long ago. While recognizing that contaminated river sediments behind the dams will have to be remediated before the dams come down, removal of these dams would:

- Help revive fisheries by restoring access of shad and herring to their traditional spawning grounds for a full seventeen miles up the Neponset River and its tributaries. Shad and herring make up a large part of the diets of popular salt water sport fish such as striped bass, bluefish, and tuna.
- Relieve Massachusetts taxpayers from endless dam operation & maintenance costs. Baker and T&H Dams are now nearly 50 years old and must soon be either removed or undergo significant repair or replacement. Currently, both dams are actively malfunctioning. According to the Riverways Program, if the work were done in conjunction with a PCB cleanup, the additional cost of removing the two dams would be about \$2 million, compared to approximately \$7.2 to rebuild and maintain them for another 30 years. Dam removal is also eligible for federal assistance grants.
- Eliminate safety hazards and taxpayer liability. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, neither of these dams functions as a flood control structure. In fact, Baker Dam actually reduces the amount of water that can quickly pass through to the ocean during a major storm. In a "100 year storm," the dam would flood the DCR Neponset Greenway bike path and the MBTA tracks (as it has in the past during even smaller storms). Making matters worse, these floodwaters would likely be carrying a load of toxic sediments. The latest safety study of Baker Dam concludes that it is a "significant hazard" dam, meaning that "failure may cause loss of life and damage homes [and property]."
- Restore natural river habitat and re-establish some of the wetlands that once bordered the river. Resident freshwater fish species, such as largemouth bass, would benefit from a return to the natural river flow, with its cooler water temperatures and higher oxygen levels.
- Improve Boating. Dam removal would create a continuous "water-trail" from Walpole to Boston Harbor.

In conclusion, the benefits of removing these dams are significant, and we hope that you will join us in supporting this effort.

Sincerely yours,

Laura Wildman, Director of River Science
AMERICAN RIVERS, NORTHEAST
FIELD OFFICE

Robert L. Zimmerman, Jr., Director
CHARLES RIVER WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION

Peter Shelly, Director
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WATERSHED ACTION ALLIANCE OF
SOUTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS

Peter Baker, President
HERRING ALLIANCE

Mark Damon, President
WESTFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSN

cc: State Senators: Hart, Joyce, Marion Walsh, Morrissey, James Timilty
State Rep's: Forry, Scaccia, Martin Walsh, Walter Timilty, Ayers, Tobin,
Rogers, Kafka, McMurtry, Allen, Galvin, Harkins
City of Boston: Jim Hunt
Town of Milton: Judith Darrel Kemp, Ingrid Beattie
EEA: Kathy Baskin, Vandana Rao, Dave Powers, Phil Griffiths
DCR: Rick Sullivan, Rosemary Powers, Mike Misslin, Liz Sorenson, Lisa Berry Engler
DFG: Mary Griffiths, Joan Kimball, Gabrielle Stebbins, Tim Purinton
DEP: Laurie Burt, Paul Locke, Janine Commerford, Lealdon Langley, Mike Stoman
EPA, Ed Reiner
USACOE: Dave Larson
NOAA: Matt Collins
CBI: Pat Field, Kate Harvey, Sarah Cohen