

Thomas Collins, Chester, VT.

To: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

As a frequent user of the Connecticut River waters between Ascutney, Vermont, and Bellows Falls, Vermont, as well as other locations on the river, I would like to submit comment on the regulations of the river between:

Â· Wilder Dam, P-1892-030

Â· Bellows Falls Dam, P-1855-050

My primary concerns are these, detailed in the paragraphs below: fluctuation in water level, access to the river for the public, and need for further development of small and non-motorized craft landings on the Vermont side of the river. I am especially interested in seeing a rowing facility established close to the Springfield, Vermont area.

Water level: Drastic and daily fluctuations of the river level due to hydro facility draw down seems to be affecting wildlife populations and causing sedimentation changes. Less fluctuation would be worth implementing and studying. Research funding should be drawn from a percentage of the hydro profits. The Vermont Center for Ecostudies might be a good resource.

River access: As frequent users of the Hoyt's Landing Access, a number of us have seen friction between individuals involved in sport fishing and community members (not involved in sport fishing.) More specifically, some of those fishing feel that they finance the landing and it should be off limits to those not fishing. Since the Town of Springfield and surrounding towns do not have access to the river at any other point, this (is a strong disincentive) severely limits their ability to (for those who might otherwise) enjoy the river. This includes mental health workers who bring clients to the river, families, retirees who would like to meet there, and a wide array of people who do not fish. Springfield has a bike path that leads to the river, but it does not have a place for people to enjoy the river. (Privatization of the river is a problem.) The river is a public waterway and natural resource that should be available to all.

Development of recreation: A large number of non-motorized small craft use Hoyt's Landing, but because of the limitations of its use as designated by the State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, better options should be made available in the Springfield area. Great River Hydro does an admirable job of managing the Herrick's Cove area. There is an interest in establishing a community rowing facility in the area which could be used for small craft instruction and for development of school teams, for community access to the river, and for canoe camping along the river. Outreach by Great River Hydro for a public/private partnership to establish such a facility would greatly enhance the diversity of recreation in the area and create more possibility for river stewardship.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Collins

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