

Thornton (Ted) Cody, Springfield, VT.
April 11, 2024
To: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon Great River Hydro/Hydro Québec's relicensing application for their facilities on the Connecticut River in southern Vermont. As an avid oarsman and advocate for the economic rehabilitation of Springfield, VT (population 9500), I am most familiar with the impoundment between the Wilder Dam (P 1892 030) and the Bellows Falls Dam (P 1855 050).

Primarily, I would like to add my enthusiastic support for plans to moderate fluctuations in the river flow rate. Not only would this "run of the river" management plan reduce erosion (which is now rampant) thus supporting wildlife, it would materially improve recreational opportunities for human powered watercraft. With summer flow rates made to vary between 1200 and 12,000 cubic ft. per second on a daily basis in order to accommodate power demand, the current is often simply too fast for paddlers. Secondly, I would respectfully suggest that a fund be set aside for improved boating access in the Springfield area.

Please allow me to set the scene:
The impoundment between the Wilder and Bellows Falls dams is bordered by farmland, woods, and a few modest homes. As such, it is one of the most pastoral and recreationally valuable segments of the river. Thanks to an historic agreement with Great River Hydro/Hydro Québec's previous owners, there is currently boating access and a large picnic area at Herrick's Cove in Bellows Falls, 6 miles down river from Springfield. At Springfield itself, the Hoyt's Landing ramp is unfortunately off-limits to picnickers and often to human-powered small craft: as it is maintained exclusively through fishing license fees, motorized fishing boats are prioritized by statute over human powered craft and conflict occurs during the frequent fishing derbies held there. Only two or three other potential sites of access to the impoundment exist in Vermont (ie, Wilgus State Park in Weathersfield), but these are limited by rapids or steep muddy embankments.

Springfield is a sizable town whose economic viability has lagged for many years. Its location, on one of the most pristine parts of the river and the dearth of local small boat access, makes it a prime candidate for recreational development, particularly for human powered craft. Great River Hydro/Hydro Québec sponsorship of a ramp and dock facility would make Springfield more attractive to young families and retirees as well. Local politicians are enthusiastic for a such a facility and the simplest means of materializing it may be for town, state, and citizen organizations to develop Hoyt's Landing with the aid of hydro financing. All would benefit.

Sincerely,
Ted Cody, MD
Member, Springfield Rowing Club
Member, VT-NH Chapter, Traditional Small Craft Association

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