

Alex Belenz, White River Junction, VT.

Re: FERC No. 1892, Wilder Dam, Great River Hydro LLC - comments on Great River Hydro LLC's Application for a New License

Dear Secretary Reese:

My name is Alex Belenz and I am a resident of the Town of Hartford, VT. I am submitting comments regarding the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) "Ready for Environmental Assessment" announcement for the Wilder Dam operated by Great River Hydro LLC.

I previously served as Vice President of the Connecticut River Valley Resource Commission, the New Hampshire contingent of the bi-state Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC). Through that appointed position and as a private citizen of Hartford, I have been tracking and participating in the FERC relicensing process since 2017.

At this stage, my concerns, like other residents of Hartford, relate to recreational access and environmental health.

#### RECREATIONAL ACCESS:

There is both a need and opportunity to re-establish a pedestrian and bicycle connection across the Connecticut River. Permitting pedestrian and bicycle access across the Wilder Dam would provide a convenient connection from the Wilder neighborhood of Hartford to the vast Boston/Lot Landmark Trails in West Lebanon - a popular hiking and mountain biking trail network featuring nearly 40 miles of trail. The NH Route 10 trailhead, located less than 500 feet from the Wilder Dam access, is a popular access point for this network, featuring a short walk to scenic Boston Lot Lake as well as access to the remainder of the trail network. Walking or bicycling to this trailhead is infeasible currently, due to the far distance and required use of high-traffic roadways.

Implementing the key recommendations of the Kilowatt Park Master Plan. This plan, developed by residents of Hartford, identifies a variety of accessibility and recreational facility improvements that are badly needed, but have not been implemented due to a lack of funding. The Town of Hartford has consistently funded park maintenance activities and has lacked the additional financial resources needed to invest in upgrades. Kilowatt Park is a treasured community resource; however, the substandard facilities limit public use of the park, and the lack of operational support from Great River Hydro represents an unfunded mandate to the Town. The Town of Hartford has respectfully requested \$60,000 per year in funding to support park maintenance and \$120,000 for facility enhancements and other needed capital projects through the entire period of the FERC license. These reasonable requests should be approved.

Permanent public access to Kilowatt Park should be secured through the use of easements on undeveloped areas of the property.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:

The impacts of Wilder Dam operations on riverbank erosion and sediment transport have been the subject of significant concern from riverfront landowners, municipalities, and natural resource agencies. The proposed operational changes for the dam are encouraging in this regard; however, without long-term monitoring and mitigation planning commitments, there will be no recourse for riverfront landowners and concerned communities for decades should erosion issues persist. The application is currently lacking such commitments.

Undeveloped areas of Kilowatt Park provide critical riparian habitat and should be permanently conserved.

Sincerely,  
Alex Belenz  
Hartford, VT

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