

Barbara Schultz, SPRINGFIELD, VT.
Springfield Trails and Rural Economy Committee
Town of Springfield
96 Main Street
Springfield, VT 05156

April 30, 2024

Debbie-Anne Reese, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE; Room 1A
Washington, D.C. 20426

Re: Great River Hydro, LLC, FERC Project No. P-1855-050 (Bellows Falls Dam)

Dear Secretary Reese,

The Springfield Trails and Rural Economy committee is a town-appointed committee that promotes connections between the developed portions of the town and destinations of natural, scenic, and recreational interest. The committee supports Great River Hydro's commitment to recreation and conservation.

The committee is requesting that Great River Hydro's recreation-related activities, during the re-licensing period, include improvements to public river access within the Town of Springfield.

Springfield's eastern boundary is along the Connecticut River, and entirely within the project's "Bellows Falls reservoir" area. The town's access to the river is impacted by hydro-dam related drawdowns at Bellows Falls and by changing flow due to the dam at Wilder.

A goal of our Town Plan is to improve access and use of the river. A 2022 study of Vermont towns, commissioned by the Department of Environmental Conservation, determined that Springfield is one of only five communities along the Connecticut River with the highest level of environmentally vulnerable populations. Our committee and our community have been working to increase recreational access for all. We have been developing parks in the developed areas of town, and have been improving the three-mile paved "bike path" that extends from downtown to the Connecticut River.

There is a Vermont Fish & Wildlife access area at the mouth of the Black River. This location is at the terminus of the bike path and at a highway crossroad. However, this area does not meet the needs of all citizens. State rules exclude users who are not fishing, hunting, trapping or boating.

Residents of Springfield, and visitors, would make use of an expanded access area, or alternative location, that allows other uses such as picnicking, cycling, birdwatching, or simply enjoying the riverfront. Opportunities exist for partnerships to help make this a reality.

We thank FERC, and Great River Hydro, for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Springfield Trails and Rural Economy Committee
Submitted by Barbara Schultz, member and substitute chair, on behalf of the committee

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