

Adelheid Koepfer, Wallingford, CT.
Debbie-Anne Reese, Secretary, at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Re: Public comment regarding the Relicensing of Hydropower Project at Vernon Dam, P-1904-078

Dear Ms. Reese,

My name is Adelheid Koepfer, I live in Wallingford, CT and work part time for the Connecticut River Conservancy (Aquatic Invasive Species Field Crew) as well as for the UConn Extension (Research Technician for CT Trail Census and CT Trail Finder). Why, you might ask, is someone from CT concerned about hydroelectric dams in Maine, Vermont or New Hampshire? Here is why: we are downstream from those dams on the Connecticut River, and our coastline is along the Long Island Sound. Flooding events and the water quality of the CT River in CT are highly impacted by what happens upstream, and our coastal fisheries depend on the fish migration of blueback herring, alewives, American shad, American eels, Atlantic salmon and sea lampreys - which have been severely interrupted by the hydroelectric dams upstream.

Water Levels are supposed to be closer to natural water levels under the new license for , however not nearly close enough. Erosion on the river banks, deteriorating water quality, and flood hazard for downstream regions like CT are too high even with the new plan. We had extreme flooding last summer (cresting at 21 feet above high water), and even higher flooding last winter. The trails we monitor were under water for two weeks and our infrared counters barely kept functioning. Economically more devastating, farmers along the CT River lost their crops. Therefore, I am asking for a shoreline management plan and clear limitations on how much and when fluctuations in river height can happen, and I ask to keep water levels more constant downstream (and upstream, for that matter) of the these hydropower projects.

Migrating fish, which are the indispensable base for a healthy CT and Long Island Sound fishery, are still blocked and trapped with the new license. The proposed barrier net should be installed after 2 years, at the latest, and needs to be monitored for the entirety of the license - even if it runs 50 years, e.g. because the relicensing gets delayed like it did. The net also needs to address juvenile American eel or fish eggs that die in the process of getting pumped through a turbine from the river up into the reservoir and back down again. And the spillway lift, as good as it sounds, needs to be put in place much faster and sooner. Long Island Sound fish are already at a shockingly low number, we can not wait 9 additional years. There needs to be more protection for the future generations of fish.

Please ensure the new licenses for these five dams improve downstream conditions for the CT River, for our migratory fish, for our public resources, for our flood-prone communities, and for the Long Island Sound!

Thank you for your consideration,
Adelheid Koepfer
Wallingford

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