

Kate Crawford, Hartford, VT.

I am writing to request that pedestrian access to the Wilder Dam, in Hartford, Vermont (project ID: P-1892-030) be included in the dam's re-licensing. I am a resident of Hartford, Vermont and live approximately 0.5 miles from the Wilder Dam. I am also an environmental public health scientist who studies how environmental factors, including things like physical activity, impact people's health across the life course. Pedestrian access to the dam is important to me from both perspectives.

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As a resident and outdoor recreation enthusiast, it would be a tremendous asset to have pedestrian access to Boston Lot, one of the area's largest and most centrally located hiking/mountain biking trail networks and ponds for summer recreation. Despite being a relatively rural part of the northeast, Wilder, Vermont is a suburban neighborhood without walk-able access to trails. Pond access for water recreation that cannot safely or feasibly be done in local rivers is also limited. Currently, access to Boston Lot requires several miles of transit on major state roads with little to no shoulder and/or sidewalks, which means that I, like most people, drive to trailhead. This is an unfortunate barrier to access and use of fossil fuels given that the trailhead is visible from Kilowatt Park. I wish I could more easily take my young daughter for a walk or cross country ski in the woods or to swim!

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As an environmental health scientist, I am also focused on the broader benefits of pedestrian access to Wilder Dam for overall health and well-being of our community. The public health benefits of access to forested tracts of land and outdoor recreational opportunities are strongly supported by scientific research. This is true across the life course, from young children through elderly adults. Consistently, research also demonstrates that these benefits are greatest for people who otherwise have limited access to such resources. The area around the Wilder Dam, including the village of Wilder, is socioeconomically diverse. There are many members of our community who do not have reliable access to a personal vehicle for transportation. While there is a limited public transit network in the area, the routes and hours of operation make Boston Lot access from Wilder inconvenient. Furthermore, the climate in New England renders year-round transportation via self-powered transportation (e.g., bike) unrealistic. As a result, there are many people in our community who cannot readily access forested tracts of lands and outdoor recreation and the associated health benefits. Pedestrian access to the Wilder Dam would significantly expand opportunities for physical activity within our community by providing much expanded access to Boston Lot. The greatest benefits will be felt by people who do not have reliable transportation and who tend to be socioeconomically marginalized.

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In summary, pedestrian access to the Wilder dam and, by extension, Boston Lot is of great personal and local public health importance. Thank you for your attention to this matter when establishing terms for the dam's re-licensing.

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Regards, ^"

Kate Crawford, PhD

Resident of Hartford (Wilder), VT

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