



CONNECTICUT RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The River Connects Us

15 Bank Row, Greenfield, MA 01301 crwc@ctriver.org www.ctriver.org

May 5, 2016

Honorable Kimberly D. Bose Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

Re: Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project No. 2485
Turners Falls Project No. 1889
Vernon Project No. 1904
Bellows Falls Project No. 1855
Wilder Project No. 1892

CRWC and AMC recreation survey description and results

Dear Secretary Bose,

The Connecticut River Watershed Council, Inc. (CRWC) and Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) created an online survey in late 2015 regarding recreation use, non-use, and commentary on the sections of the Connecticut River that are undergoing hydropower relicensing.

CRWC's comment letter dated May 2, 2016 (corrected version filed on May 3) on FirstLight's study 3.6.1 described some of the results of the online survey. In this letter, we provide a summary of the survey results and also provide the raw data for analysis and review by anyone interested.

Because some of our responses describe portage experiences and other interests at all the facilities under relicensing, we are posting this for the five projects, even though our May 2, 2016 comment letter on TransCanada's Study 30 did not summarize results for Vernon, Bellows Falls, or Wilder facilities.

Sincerely,

Andrea Donlon
River Steward

ATTACHMENTS

CRWC-AMC Recreation Survey summary

Excel spreadsheet: CT River Survey Recreation Survey summaries 2015.xls

Excel spreadsheet: CRWC-AMC recreation survey 11-30-15.xls

MASSACHUSETTS
413-772-2020

LOWER VALLEY
860-704-0057

UPPER VALLEY
802-869-2792

NORTH COUNTRY
802-457-6114

CRWC-AMC Recreation Survey

Summary prepared May, 2016

Introduction

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) have been participating as stakeholder organizations in the hydropower relicensing of Wilder, Bellows Falls, Vernon, and Turners Falls Dams and the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility. We wished to survey our members about recreational issues in the areas of the Connecticut River being relicensed. We also wished to gather some information that we felt was missing from the recreation studies that FirstLight was doing for Turners Falls and Northfield Mountain, namely surveying people who may not be using the river.

Methods

A set of survey questions was developed. Some of the questions were based on survey questions that are part of TransCanada's recreation questionnaire. The survey was posted online using Survey Monkey. AMC sent out an email message to a subgroup of its members on October 26, 2015. Their members within approximately 20 miles of the project areas were sent this email. A reminder email was sent out on October 31, 2015. The AMC survey was closed on November 4, 2015. CRWC sent out an e-blast to Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts contacts (these include CRWC members, have attended a CRWC event, or who sign up to be on our contact list) on October 29, 2015. A reminder was posted November 13, 2015. The survey was also posted as a slider on the CRWC home web page (www.ctriver.org) while the survey was open, and the survey was also linked on CRWC's Facebook page in late October and again in early November. The CRWC survey was closed on November 16, 2015. Those who filled out the survey from CRWC's link did not necessarily live within close proximity to the project areas.

In total, we received 321 responses to the survey; 175 responses were from AMC members, and 146 responses were from CRWC members and other contacts. We summarize the results below in aggregate. We have not split the results by project area or by organizational affiliation. Anyone interested in splitting the results can do so using an Excel spreadsheet we are posting with this summary.

Results

Question 1

Do you regularly visit this section of the Connecticut River or Northfield Mountain for the purpose of recreation (boating, hiking, biking, walking, swimming, sightseeing, etc.)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.3%	232
No	27.7%	89
answered question		321
skipped question		0

Question 2

Why don't you regularly visit this region for recreation?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I'm not interested in the types of activities available in the area	3.5%	3
There aren't adequate facilities/opportunities for the activities I'm interested in	7.1%	6
I prefer other areas with better opportunities	34.1%	29
I'm not currently able to engage in recreational activities	5.9%	5
Other	52.9%	45
Enter additional comments here.		51
answered question		85
skipped question		236

There were 51 additional comments.

Question 3

What kinds of additional facilities or activities would make you more likely to recreate on the Connecticut River?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	55
answered question	55
skipped question	266

There were 55 additional comments.

Question 4

When you visit the Connecticut River for recreation, do you usually stay overnight somewhere other than your home?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I usually stay overnight.	8.5%	20
No, I usually go for the day and return home at night.	91.5%	214
answered question		234
skipped question		87

Question 5.

Where do you usually stay overnight?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Campsite -- provided by a power company	20.0%	4
Campsite -- other	15.0%	3
Hotel, motel, resort, or bed & breakfast	35.0%	7
Other (ex. Camping on private property; staying at a friend's house; etc.)	65.0%	13
If other, feel free to provide more detail.		5
answered question		20
skipped question		301

The 5 additional responses included family, private camping, a cabin, their own home, and a combination of power company camping and private camping.

Question 6.

What additional overnight facilities would you like to see on the Connecticut River?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am not interested in additional facilities	35.0%	7
Additional drive-in campsites	25.0%	5
Additional hike-in campsites	20.0%	4
Additional boat-in campsites	40.0%	8
Additional Leanto/shelters	25.0%	5
Additional Lodges or bunkhouses	15.0%	3
Other (please specify)	15.0%	3
answered question		20
skipped question		301

The three additional responses included additional bike trails, limiting motorized boat access, and disliking further development.

Question 7.

Prior to visiting the CT River, do you check river flow information?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	29.3%	68
No	70.7%	164
answered question		232
skipped question		89

Question 8.

What sources do you use to check flow information?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
USGS real-time flow website	68.8%	44
American Whitewater website	17.2%	11
TransCanada/Waterline river flow information	17.2%	11
Other (please specify)	25.0%	16
answered question		64
skipped question		257

Most people who answered “other” said they used direct visual inspection and/or talking to an outfitter or other river users.

Question 9.

How have fluctuating water levels on the Connecticut River affected your recreation experience?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
They have not.	73.6%	167
Positively	2.6%	6
Negatively	23.8%	54
Briefly explain how the fluctuations positively or negatively affected your recreation and where this occurred.		77
answered question		227
skipped question		94

There were 77 additional comments.

Question 10.

When it comes to water level fluctuations, which would you prefer? (check all that are applicable):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Smaller amount/range of fluctuation in river level	51.7%	31
Less frequent fluctuations in river level	25.0%	15
More gradual/slower fluctuations in river level	41.7%	25
Overall lower river level than what I usually experience	5.0%	3
Overall higher river level than what I usually experience	15.0%	9
None of the above. The current situation is appropriate for my uses.	1.7%	1
Other (please specify)	20.0%	12
answered question		60
skipped question		261

Most responses in the other category listed a desire to have run of river conditions, or something that more closely mimics natural river conditions. One person noted that if the river had to fluctuate, night time would be preferable.

Question 11.

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the recreational facilities available at the Connecticut River?											
Answer Options	1 - Very Poor	2	3	4	5 - Average	6	7	8	9 - Excellent	Rating Average	Response Count
	0	2	11	17	69	44	43	26	8	5.89	220
answered question											220
skipped question											101

Question 12.

Do you ever use alternative river sites to avoid problems at the Connecticut River?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	70.0%	149
Yes	30.0%	64
Please explain.		72
answered question		213
skipped question		108

There were 72 additional comments.

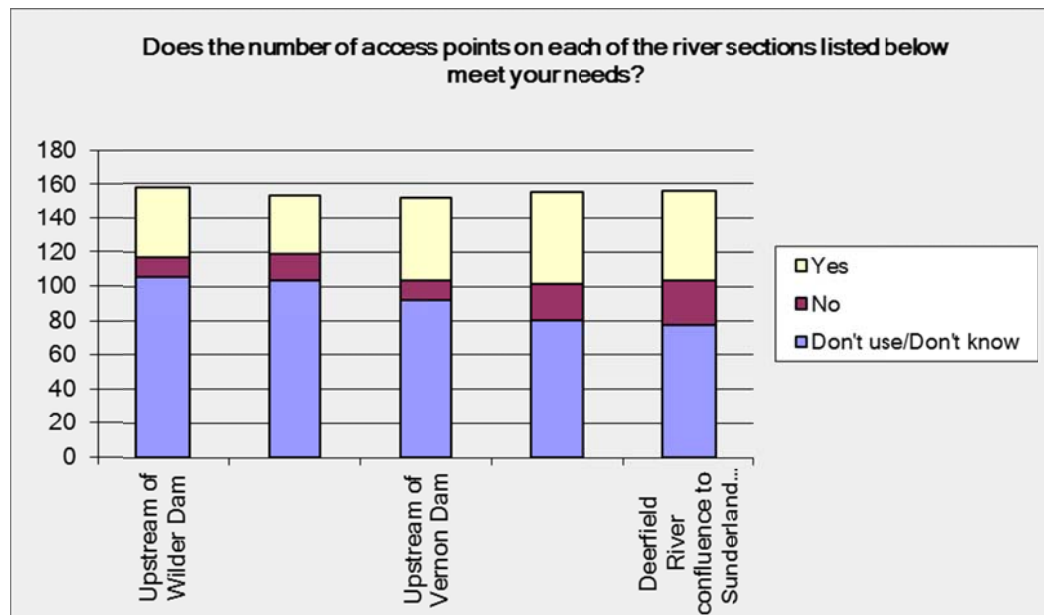
Question 13.

Do you ever operate or ride in a boat or other watercraft for pleasure/travel on the Connecticut River?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, regularly.	21.4%	47
Yes, occasionally.	56.4%	124
No, I don't boat on the Connecticut River.	22.3%	49
answered question		220
skipped question		101

Question 14.

Does the number of access points on each of the river sections listed below meet your needs?				
Answer Options	Yes	No	Don't use/Don't know	Response Count
Upstream of Wilder Dam	41	11	106	158
Upstream of Bellows Falls Dam	34	15	104	153
Upstream of Vernon Dam	48	12	92	152
Upstream of Turners Falls Dam	53	22	80	155
Deerfield River confluence to Sunderland Bridge	52	27	77	156
answered question				161
skipped question				160

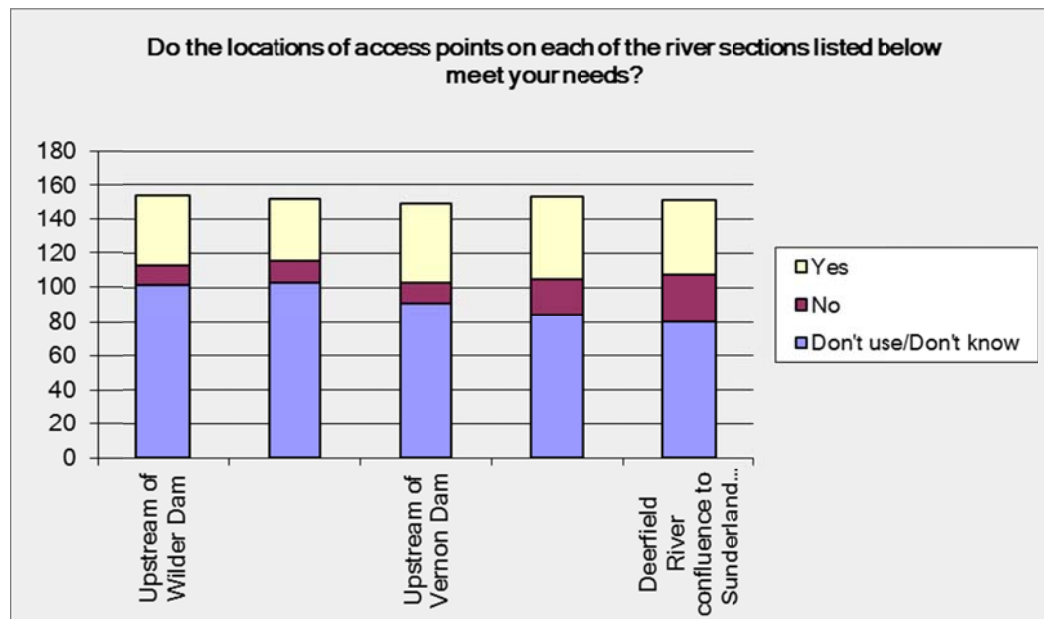
Graphic of Question 14.



Question 15.

Do the locations of access points on each of the river sections listed below meet your needs?				
Answer Options	Yes	No	Don't use/Don't know	Response Count
Upstream of Wilder Dam	41	11	102	154
Upstream of Bellows Falls Dam	36	13	103	152
Upstream of Vernon Dam	46	12	91	149
Upstream of Turners Falls Dam	48	21	84	153
Deerfield River confluence to Sunderland Bridge	43	28	80	151
answered question				158
skipped question				163

Graphic of Question 15.



Question 16.

Around which of these dams have you portaged?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None. I have not portaged around any of these dams.	72.8%	115
Wilder Dam	12.7%	20
Bellows Falls Dam	9.5%	15
Vernon Dam	9.5%	15

Turners Falls Dam	11.4%	18
Please describe your experience(s) with as much information as possible about: ease of portage; facilities provided by the power companies; whether it is walkable or not; etc.		32
answered question		158
skipped question		163

There were 32 additional comments.

Question 17.

Where have you most often launched your boat on the Connecticut River?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	146
answered question	146
skipped question	175

There were 146 additional comments.

Question 18.

Why do you prefer that site?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	141
answered question	141
skipped question	180

There were 141 additional comments.

Question 19.

Please describe any boat launch problems or other boating difficulties you have encountered here or at another site. (Give the name of the site.)	
Answer Options	Response Count
	76

<i>answered question</i>	76
<i>skipped question</i>	245

There were 76 comments.

Question 20.

Do you regularly engage in non-boating recreation on the Connecticut River or at Northfield Mountain Recreation Center?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	63.3%	133
No	36.7%	77
<i>answered question</i>		210
<i>skipped question</i>		111

Question 21.

Please list one (1) to three (3) specific sites on the Connecticut River or Northfield Mountain you have visited most for non-boating recreation?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Site #1	100.0%	114
Site #2	68.4%	78
Site #3	36.0%	41
<i>answered question</i>		114
<i>skipped question</i>		207

There were 114 responses.

Question 22.

At the site(s) you listed above, did you find the facilities there to be adequately maintained and useful for you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	82.1%	96
No. In the space below, please describe any maintenance or facility issues.	17.9%	21
<i>answered question</i>		117
<i>skipped question</i>		204

There were 21 answers to the “no” response.

Question 23.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Access		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Parking areas	90.5%	171
Road access to recreation areas	69.3%	131
Access for the disabled	8.5%	16
Portages around dams	28.0%	53
Other (please specify)	7.4%	14
<i>answered question</i>		189
<i>skipped question</i>		132

There were 14 “other” responses.

Question 24.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Amenities		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Drinking water	42.9%	67
Flush toilets	23.1%	36
Vault/portable toilets	68.6%	107
Trash containers/collection	71.8%	112

Other (please specify)	7.1%	11
answered question		156
skipped question		165

There were 11 “other” responses.

Question 25.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Camping		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Tent campsites	88.0%	88
RV campsites	6.0%	6
RV hookups/utilities	5.0%	5
Campsites without fees	40.0%	40
Boat-in campsites	56.0%	56
Other (please specify)	6.0%	6
answered question		100
skipped question		221

“Other” responses included supervision at campsites, canoe-in and bike-in campsites, island campsites, hike-in campsites, and allowing dogs at camp sites. One person wished there were no campsites.

Question 26.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Boating recreation		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Whitewater opportunities	21.0%	33
Boat ramps	38.2%	60
Boat docks	18.5%	29
Boat access for canoes and kayaks	87.3%	137
Boating safety information	20.4%	32
Navigation hazard marking	30.6%	48
Other (please specify)	7.0%	11
answered question		157
skipped question		164

There were 11 “other” responses.

Question 27.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Non-boating recreation		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Picnic sites	53.5%	100
Swimming/beach access	52.9%	99
Historic sites/information	48.1%	90
Scenic views/viewpoints	66.8%	125
Wildlife viewing/nature trails	74.9%	140
Interpretive/education programs	26.7%	50
Fish Ladders	31.0%	58
Hiking trails	82.4%	154
Biking trails	52.9%	99
River/shore access for fishing	28.3%	53
Other fishing opportunities	14.4%	27
Hunting opportunities	3.7%	7
Other (please specify)	6.4%	12
answered question		187
skipped question		134

There were 12 “other” responses.

Question 28.

What facilities and services help you recreate? In each of the categories below, some of the items listed are found at Connecticut River sites and others are not currently available.

General Recreation Needs

Thinking about your recreation needs, please check all of the facilities, services, and opportunities that are important to you.

Other recreation facilities, services, or opportunities	
Answer Options	Response Count
	16
<i>answered question</i>	16
<i>skipped question</i>	305

There were 16 individual responses. These responses varied greatly, but there were several related to bird watching. Other responses asked for additional swimming access, a bench with a sweeping view to the river, a river trail system, historical interpretive sites in Turners Falls, a river walk with a café, an observation tower, a longer recreation season, and options for horse camping.

Question 29.

Please identify a lake or river in your region other than the Connecticut River that you frequently visit for recreation (boating or non-boating).		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Name of Lake/River	100.0%	231
Location (City, State)	94.8%	219
	<i>answered question</i>	231
	<i>skipped question</i>	90

There were 231 responses to this question.

Question 30.

Why do you visit this site instead of the Connecticut River?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	225
<i>answered question</i>	225
<i>skipped question</i>	96

There were 225 responses to this question.

Question 31.

Into what age range do you fall?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 18	0.7%	2
18-29	1.5%	4
30-39	7.1%	19
40-49	15.2%	41
50-59	24.5%	66
60-69	35.7%	96
70 or over	15.2%	41
	<i>answered question</i>	269
	<i>skipped question</i>	52

Question 32.

What is your gender identity?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	46.5%	125
Male	51.3%	138
Other	1.1%	3
I prefer not to specify	1.1%	3
	<i>answered question</i>	269
	<i>skipped question</i>	52

Question 33.

What is your zip code?

Answer Options	Response Count
	269
<i>answered question</i>	269
<i>skipped question</i>	52

Zip code responses were as follows

- 137 from western MA from Agawam to Northfield and in the watershed
- 16 central and eastern MA
- 1 who splits time between western MA and VT
- 54 NH inside watershed
- 5 NH outside watershed
- 57 VT inside watershed
- 1 VT outside watershed
- 8 CT inside watershed
- 1 outside state (Texas)