

Burke Conservation Commission
212 School Street
West Burke, VT 05871

April 20, 2015

Marty Abair
US Army Corps of Engineers
New England District
11 Lincoln Street, Room 210
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Dear Ms. Abair:

Please accept the following comments for consideration regarding NAE-2005-2554 - removal of the East Burke Dam. Specifically, the comments below serve to state the position of the Burke Conservation Commission (BCC) pursuant to the Commission's role as defined in 24 V.S.A Section § 4505. In brief, the BCC supports the proposed removal of the dam. At our March 18, 2015, monthly meeting, the BCC voted unanimously in support of Passumpsic Valley Land Trusts' (PVLТ) intention to remove the dam and restore natural flow to the East Branch Passumpsic River.

The deteriorating dam, which has been defunct for decades, continues to serve as a negative influence upon the river, including impacts to the free flow of water, sediment, and wildlife. Natural and desired watershed function is impaired by the presence of the dam. A recent report commissioned by the BCC on the key natural resources within Burke identified the East Branch of the Passumpsic River as a significant resource worthy of conservation (Engstrom and DeLeo 2013). In concert with these findings and based on an understanding of established science regarding stream ecology, removal of the dam will contribute to an improved ecosystem function within the larger Passumpsic River watershed.

In addition, the controlled removal of the dam and restoration of normal flow will provide several important environmental and biological improvements in the short and long-term:

- A reduction in stream temperatures and an increase the amount of dissolved oxygen, which will in turn benefit a range of aquatic species.
- A natural distribution of sediment throughout a substantial reach of the East Branch Passumpsic will provide appropriate substrate for stream-dependent biota and contribute sediment necessary for normal stream function.
- Allow for the unimpeded movement of fish and macro-invertebrates throughout an extended portion of the East Branch and Dishmill Brook.

We recognize that technical issues remain regarding certain aspects of the removal process. It is our hope that technical experts, representing both PVLТ and the permitting agencies, will satisfactorily resolve these issues and allow the dam removal to proceed. Given the current

failing nature of the dam and its growing safety and environmental impacts, it is our opinion that the appropriate action is the controlled removal of the dam. We believe the dam's removal will benefit the resources noted above while simultaneously removing public safety concerns and environmental issues associated with a potential future uncontrolled dam failure.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Maghini".

Mark Maghini, Chair
Burke Conservation Commission

cc: Burke Selectboard