



May 24, 2023

Dear Secretary Tepper and Commissioner Arrigo,

I am reaching out to share American Rivers' support to restore the Charles River and remove the Watertown Dam owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. American Rivers' mission to protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers and conserve clean water for people and nature has never been more necessary or more urgent. Our northeast-based staff works across the region to support our state and local partners to identify and implement priority restoration projects.

We encourage you to support the removal of the Watertown Dam and restoration of the Charles River. Removing dams and restoring natural river processes is proven to benefit and sustain not only fish and wildlife populations, but also our cities and towns.

The Watertown Dam being in place harms the health of the Charles River. The potential benefits for migratory fish were clear in the 2021 dam removal feasibility study, highlighting the prospects of further restoring Alewife, American Eel, Blueback Herring and Rainbow Smelt to the Charles River. A free-flowing river will improve dissolved oxygen levels and lower water temperatures in the river. And all species benefit from a connected river allowing access to more and improved habitat, including resident fish such as pickerel, perch, bass, bullhead, and perch. With our freshwater species under pressure from climate change, creating connected river networks is critical for these populations to be resilient.

Already we are seeing the impacts of climate change in stronger storms and increased rainfall. Aging infrastructure like Watertown Dam poses an increased risk from failure. The dam removal feasibility report demonstrates that flood elevations upstream of the dam will be lowered 6ft upstream of the dam and no change in flooding is anticipated downstream. With the dam increasingly at risk and expensive to maintain or repair, dam removal is a permanent solution with broad reaching benefits. And removal of the dam and restoration of the river is further progress from years of cleanup of the Charles River.

Lastly, at a time of reckoning in the Commonwealth and our country we have learned that the construction of the Watertown Dam and others were opposed by the local indigenous peoples. Removing an unnecessary and harmful dam is a start to mend these wrongs and join with those indigenous voices who have been calling for years to remove the Watertown Dam and restore the river.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Singler".

Amy Singler
*American Rivers, Director, River Restoration
Northeast Region, Northampton MA, 413-343-7440*

CC:
Massachusetts Fish & Game Commissioner Tom O'Shea
Division of Marine Fisheries Commissioner Daniel McKiernan
City of Watertown Council
City of Watertown Conservation Commission
CRWA Executive Director Emily Norton