



The State of New Hampshire  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**



**Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner**

May 26, 2016

Pat McIlvaine  
Low Impact Hydropower Institute  
P.O. Box 194  
Harrington Park, New Jersey

RE: Vernon Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 1904)  
Comments on Low Impact Hydropower Certification

Dear Ms. McIlvaine:

Thank you for your email of March 31, 2016 wherein you requested comments regarding the potential recertification of the TransCanada's Vernon Hydroelectric Project on the Connecticut River (FERC No. 1904) under the Low Impact Hydropower Institute (LIHI) program. Our comments regarding compliance with state surface water quality standards are provided below.

As you know, the Vernon Hydroelectric Project is in the FERC relicensing process as its current license is set to expire in April 2019. As a result, TransCanada is conducting many studies, the purpose of which (in many cases), is to determine if existing operation of the dam is causing or contributing to violations of New Hampshire and Vermont surface water quality standards. Although some studies are complete, many are not. Until the studies are completed and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) has had adequate time to review them, it is not known, at this time, if existing operation of the Vernon Hydroelectric Project is meeting New Hampshire surface water quality standards. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, if the minimum flow of 1250 cfs established in 1979 is adequate to support aquatic life, downstream fish passage (i.e., American Eel, anadromous species, and riverine fish), and the potential impacts of daily impoundment level fluctuations on aquatic life and habitat.

Since there is insufficient information to determine, at this time, if operation of the Vernon Hydroelectric Project is meeting state surface water quality standards, NHDES recommends that LIHI defer a decision to recertify the Project as "low impact" until the FERC relicensing process is complete.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment should you have any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact either myself (603-271-0699) or Gregg Comstock (602-271-2983)

Sincerely,

Owen David  
Water Quality Certification Coordinator  
Watershed Management Bureau  
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Cc. Jeff Crocker, VTDEC  
Lael Will, VTDFW  
Eric Davis, VTDEC  
Gabe Gries, NHFG  
Carol Henderson, NHFG  
John Warner, USFWS  
Melissa Grader, USFWS  
John Ragonese, TransCanada  
Ted Diers, NHDES  
Gregg Comstock, NHDES