



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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Low Impact Hydropower Institute
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The Department of Fish and Game (“DFG”) hereby submits the following comments on the Low Impact Hydropower Institute’s (“LIHI”) Pending Application for the Vernon Project on the Connecticut River in New Hampshire and Vermont (FERC No. 1904).

DFG is submitting these comments to LIHI in order to fulfill the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (“DOER”) Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard Regulations (225 CMR 14.00; “RPS I” and 225 CMR 15.00; “RPS II”). The RPS I and RPS II regulations were promulgated by DOER on January 1, 2009 and require that any hydroelectric project wishing to receive RPS I or RPS II certification from DOER first obtain LIHI certification. These regulations also require all relevant regulatory agencies to comment on the pending LIHI application.

DFG has particular interest in this project as it is located only five miles upstream of the Massachusetts state line on the Connecticut River. The operation of this conventional, dam-dependent hydropower project, indeed its very existence, has significant impact on fish and other riverine organisms and habitat in and along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts, particularly to the so-called Turners Falls Pool, the 22-mile segment stretching from Turners Falls, MA upstream to the Vernon dam.

DFG first commented on LIHI certification for the Vernon Project in 2009. DFG stated at that time that the Vernon Project was not “Low Impact” for a number of reasons (see attached 2009 letter) including;

1. The widely understood detrimental effects of daily peaking hydro on aquatic life.
2. A minimum flow (0.2 cfs) well below USFWS ABF standards of 0.5cfs.
3. Lack of upstream passage for American Eel.
4. Need for a comprehensive study of downstream passage of juvenile clupeids.

The good news is that these and other issues are currently being addressed by state and federal fish and wildlife agencies through the ongoing FERC relicensing process for the Vernon Project. It is quite possible that the new license for the project will require changes in operations or new facilities that will address these issues. DFG believes that the Low Impact Hydropower Institute should wait for FERC to issue the new License for this project so that agencies can determine LiHi eligibility in light of the new License conditions.

However, until we see the new license, for the reasons stated above, DFG does not believe that the Vernon Project should be certified as “Low Impact”.

Sincerely,

Anadromous Fish Project Leader

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