Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game
Division of Ecological Restoration
Invested in Nature and Community
Beth Lambert, Director
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Memorandum

To: Karen Pelto and Thomas Potter, MA DEP
Jim McGrath, City of Pittsfield
From: Alex Hackman and Kristopher Houle, MA DFG DER
Date: April 5, 2018
Re: **Project Update – Mill Street (Tel-Electric) Dam Removal Project (Pittsfield)**

This memorandum is prepared to provide a brief update on the Mill Street Dam (herein 'the dam') Removal Project (Pittsfield) for the upcoming Housatonic River Citizens Coordinating Council (CCC) meeting. The Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) continues to support the City of Pittsfield in this effort to address aging infrastructure, improve ecological conditions in the West Branch of the Housatonic River, and promote conditions for positive change in the West Side neighborhood. We look forward to presenting additional information at the upcoming public meeting in Lenox.

At this time, preliminary engineering design and initial regulatory coordination is complete. The project team is currently focused on an assessment of the upstream active railroad bridges, as well as sediment management alternatives to address concerns raised during the 2016 Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process. Next steps include additional engineering and design work to ensure protection of surrounding infrastructure, a formal response to the MEPA requirement for a Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR), and then project permitting. Our goal is to complete these next steps is the end of calendar year 2018.

Background

In 2000, the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety (ODS) found the dam to be in overall poor condition with significant operational or maintenance deficiencies. Subsequent discussion between the dam owner, City of Pittsfield, and MA Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Riverways Program (now part of DER) led to the consideration of dam removal within a broader context of **neighborhood revitalization and greenway vision**. In 2006, the Riverways Project accepted an application for *Priority Project Status* from the City of Pittsfield, and subsequently funded the preparation of the *Mill Street Dam Removal Feasibility Study* and an associated *Hydraulic and Scour Analysis*, both of which were completed by Kleinschmidt, Inc. (Kleinschmidt). The study identified sediment management as a potential feasibility issue given previously identified pollutant concentrations and potential costs for management.

In 2008, the project was awarded $750,000 in support from the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Fund. In 2009, DER contracted with Kleinschmidt to perform a detailed study of sediment quality and quantity. Based upon the results, Kleinschmidt recommended a sediment management strategy that involves removal and disposal of the impacted sediment, with an approximate cost estimate of $2.5 to $4.75 million (well beyond project finances). Between 2011 and

2014, additional assessments of sediment quantity, quality, and management options were performed. In 2015, DER was awarded approximately $1 million to support the project from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program. In 2015 and 2016, DER contracted with Princeton Hydro, LLC to complete preliminary engineering designs and file an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) to being project review under the MEPA process. As a result of public and agency comments, an SEIR is now required by the City focusing on sediment management options. Lastly, during summer 2016, new information was provided from CSXT – the owner of the upstream active railroad bridge – that raised concerns about structural stability post dam removal. Addressing these potential concerns is the focus of the current work in progress (described below).

Work in Progress

In 2017, DER contracted with Gomez and Sullivan Engineering (GSE) to conduct a subsurface investigation around the active railroad bridges and assess post dam removal structural stability. The field work is nearly complete at this time, and has included soil borings and ground penetrating radar to determine the depth of bedrock. The work will also result in a refined estimate of impounded sediment volume, which the City and partners will use to further consider sediment management options. Final results are not yet available. However, initial results are positive, and appear to indicate shallow bedrock and conditions for future bridge stability. The results of this study will be used to design future protective measures for the upstream bridges, if further engineering analyses determine the need.

Next Steps

Once assessment of the upstream bridges is complete, and a clear path forward for bridge stability and protection is determined, the next steps involve updating overall engineering designs. Part of this work will include re-assessing sediment management options and costs associated with sediment removal and stabilization. After addressing all public and agency comments received during the MEPA process, the project team will look forward to beginning project permitting by the end of 2018.

In order to increase DER technical assistance, Kristopher Houle (P.E.) has been brought on board to help manage the project.

On behalf of our project team, we want to express our gratitude for your continued project support. We look forward to moving the project closer to implementation in the next year.