

Londonderry Conservation Commission

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TO: Londonderry Selectboard

Date: 3/31/2022

FROM: Irwin Kuperberg, Chair

RE: LCC Position on the Williams Dam

The Londonderry Conservation Commission has been monitoring the various issues associated with the Williams Dam, including the recent engineering report from DuBois & King.

We recognize that the dam (together with the associated Mill Pond and waterfall) has occupied a rich part of Londonderry's history, having offered recreation and visual beauty for many generations. Since its construction in the late 1800's it has been the eastern gateway to our North Village community. However, in recent years it has become obsolete and the impoundment behind the dam, filled with soft sediment, stands in stark contrast to the free-flowing sections of river upstream and downstream of the dam.

With regard to water quality, dams have a significant impact on water temperature profile. The sediment impounded upstream of the dam has resulted in a very shallow water column and increased stream width. In the spring and summer of 2022, the Conservation Commission intends to initiate a stream study to provide a baseline understanding of the impact that the dam has on the temperature profile of the West River. Its condition, classified by the State as "Significant Hazard", makes it mandatory that it be removed, rehabilitated or rebuilt.

Based on our assessment of the data in the DuBois & King report we voice our support for the removal of the Williams Dam. From an environmental stewardship and ecological perspective, removal of the dam is expected to result in significant benefits to the West River. From an environmental risk perspective, a properly permitted, designed, and constructed dam removal project will eliminate the potential catastrophic environmental impacts that might result from failure of the dam and uncontrolled release of sediment downstream. From a financial perspective, there is significant funding available to the Town to offset the costs of removal design, permitting, and construction. (Dam restoration or replacement projects are not eligible for these funds, and pursuing these alternatives would represent a significant financial burden to the Town and taxpayers.)

Benefits of dam removal include: lowered water levels during floods and other high-flow events; restoration of fish passage with improved habitat for fish and other wildlife, improved water quality through restored river temperature profile and natural sediment transport cycle; elimination of costs associated with periodic inspections, maintenance, and repairs; the creation of boating opportunities; and, elimination of liability associated with the dam.