

August 3, 2022

Commissioner Melanie Loyzim
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
17 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: MSCC Support of Shawmut Dam's application for water quality certification.

Dear Commissioner Loyzim:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce to urge the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to approve the Shawmut Dam's application for water quality certification. We are disappointed to hear of the recent draft Department Order that denies the application. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce represents a network of more than 5,000 businesses across Maine, and the Shawmut Dam is critical to the economic vitality of the region it is located, and the entire State of Maine.

The draft order creates remained uncertainty around the future of the Dam and prolongs this application process for another 12-18 months. Uncertainty is not what we need in our energy infrastructure right now. Furthermore, the uncertainty around the impacts this could have on the Somerset Mill, and the jobs that could be impacted creates more confusion for all parties involved. Right now, people in Maine are dealing with record high energy bills, record high inflation, and anything that creates economic uncertainty is not what is best. We hope the Department will reconsider this Draft Order. We also think it is important to note that this will be the third time Brookfield will need to apply for the relicensing, and the denials have nothing to do with the merits of their application.

There are a several critical reasons the state must retain Shawmut Dam. First, the Shawmut Dam is necessary for the operations of the Somerset Mill, which employs more than 700 Mainers and directly supports thousands more. Keeping the Shawmut Dam operating means retaining family-sustaining Maine jobs, significant on-going local investment, and vital property tax payments for community services. In addition, the Shawmut Dam contributes to both local energy security and toward achieving Maine's aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals – two factors that will dominate energy and climate discussions for decades to come. As recent global events have highlighted, reliable energy sources like Shawmut Dam are critical to keeping the economy running, and the value that local, existing energy production provides for preserving system reliability and economic growth must not be overlooked or taken for granted.

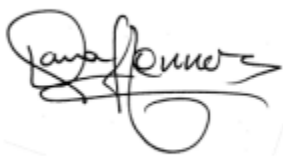
The same is true from the perspective of Shawmut's clean energy generation as the path toward meeting state policy goals will assuredly require the retention of existing renewable energy. This is highlighted by the limitations Maine faces in siting new infrastructure projects and the transmission system constraints that can significantly delay or even prevent the development of new renewable energy. Given these factors, denial of the application, or issuance with unachievable or uneconomic conditions, would be a devastating blow to the local communities that depend on the dam and to the State of Maine.

The application submitted by Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC – which outlines millions of dollars in new infrastructure and operating enhancements to support fish passage standards that, if approved, would be the most stringent in the state – provides a path forward that can, importantly, support species recovery and restoration without the loss of the critical economic and clean energy contributions the dam provides. We applaud Brookfield for acting in good faith and providing a solution that will improve fish passage and will not hurt the economy.

To conclude, The Shawmut Dam is critical to the ongoing operations of the mill, and if the water level drops too low, they will be forced to close. This would have a devastating economic effect on the area through massive job loss, tax revenues lost, businesses in the area whose economies rely on the mill's operations in the area will all be gravely harmed. It would also have a negative climate impact on our state. We should not be doing anything that risks losing clean, Maine made energy. Governor Mills has made climate change a priority of her administration and established the Maine Climate Council which recently released its report, "Maine Won't Wait." As part of this, Governor Mills has set a goal for Maine of reducing our carbon emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce supports these reduction goals for our state and is a proud member of the Maine Climate Council. Which is why protecting Maine's existing renewable sources, including Shawmut Dam is so critical.

We ask that the DEP acknowledge these factors and accept Shawmut Dam's application for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana F. Connors", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dana F. Connors
President/CEO

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