June 13. 2025

Comments on Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC Application for a Water

 Quality Certification on certain Kennebec River Dams

My name is William Meserve, and I live in Falmouth. I am writing to urge the DEP to deny the application for a Water Quality Certification submitted by Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC (BWHP) for the four dams on the Kennebec River between Waterville and Skowhegan (Lockwood, Hydro Kennebec, Shawmut and Weston).These dams inadequately protect sea-run fish species and, as a result, violate Maine’s water quality standards.

One of the many features that makes Maine so attractive to tourists, fishermen,

hikers and anyone who enjoys the outdoors is the wild, unspoiled and rugged beauty

of much of the State. There is no place like it east of the Mississippi River and few

beyond it. Key to this attractiveness are the lakes, ponds, rivers and streams

located throughout the State. One of the most spectacular is the Kennebec. Regrettably, dams, such as those for which BWPH seeks water quality certification, restrict the uninterrupted flow of water and make it impossible for many anadromous fish to move freely up and down stream, thereby reducing these populations enormously and negatively impacting the river’s attractiveness and ecological balance. Dams such as these create impoundment ponds or lakes that warm the water to such a degree that the survival of certain fish, such as Atlantic

salmon, can be severely jeopardized. Moreover, many of the dams reduce the ability

of a stream to flush out decades of pollution, thereby negatively affecting water

quality and the habitat for many aquatic creatures as well as limiting their potential

for recreational opportunities. Not only do these dams -- even those with fish ladders, which have proven inadequate to permit the migration of meaningful numbers of salmon, in particular -- create a major impediment to the return of spawning fish, those relatively few that do make it upstream to lay their eggs see many of the resulting smolts chewed up in the turbines used to generate electricity when they eventually head back to the sea.

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We have seen the beneficial impact of dam removal already on both the

Penobscot and the Kennebec Rivers. With the removal of the Great Works and Veazie

dams on the Penobscot and the Edwards dam on the Kennebec, migrating fish began

to return almost immediately. River herring, alewives, lampreys, smelt, Atlantic

salmon and sturgeon populations have all multiplied, with some species, such as river

herring on the Penobscot, having increased their numbers from a few thousand per

year to several million. Not only has this helped the fish, but bald eagle and osprey

numbers have also increased significantly, and the rivers, which are much more active

in those stretches where dams were removed, are also more attractive to those who

like to sit or walk along their banks or canoe or kayak in them. Perhaps even more importantly for your decision, once the offspring from these migrating fish return to the sea – obviously in much greater numbers -- they provide essential food to increase significantly the number of larger ocean species that are essential for both our commercial and recreational ocean

fisheries to thrive. In short, the benefits already recognized through limited dam

removal have been amazing.

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 The four dams on the Kennebec River are particularly problematic, for they restrict the free passage of salmon to the Sandy River, which may be the premier location in the entire State for spawning salmon to lay their eggs. Removing those dams, which no longer meet water quality standards, would have enormous benefits for both fresh water and salt water fisheries.

 In urging the rejection of BWPH’s application, I am well aware that if that ultimately resulted in the removal of the Shawmut dam, that supposedly could have an adverse impact on the Sappi mill in Skowhegan – the town’s largest employer. Engineering studies have shown, however, that the plant’s water requirements can be satisfied by other cost-effective means that don’t require the dam. Moreover, the amount of electricity generated by these dams is not a major contributor to the State’s overall energy consumption, and any benefit they do provide is greatly outweighed by the significant ecological damage they perpetuate.

 In sum, to approve the requested water quality certification would violate State water quality standards. I therefore urge you to deny the requested certification.

 Thank you.