



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
353 WATER STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA ME 04333-0041



July 19, 2024

Laura Paye
Hydropower Coordinator
Bureau of Land Resources
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

**RE: MDIFW Comments on the Draft Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2333)
Water Quality Certification (DEP Application # L-024307-33-G-N)**

Dear Laura:

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) offers the following comments on the Water Quality Certification (WQC) for the Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project, located on the Androscoggin River in Rumford, Maine.

Wildlife Concerns

None identified.

Inland Fisheries Concerns

Minimum Flows

Page 34 the Draft WQC states, “...the Applicant must provide a year-round minimum flow of 1 cfs or leakage from the Upper Dam into the Upper Dam bypass reach and 200 cfs from the Middle Dam into the Middle Dam bypass reach.” While lower than MDIFW’s recommendation, MDEP’s minimum flow requirement for the Middle Dam Bypass Reach including the elimination of the applicant’s 2-period seasonal flow regime is a significant improvement over the previous license, and the Licensee’s proposal. These changes are expected to benefit aquatic life, enhance recreational use, and improve aesthetics of the lower falls.

To clarify our differences noted above, MDEP’s recommendations appear to be largely based on the flow studies conducted by the Licensee, and we would have come to a similar conclusion solely based on that same data alone. However, MDIFW’s recommendations were based on the inflection points, as well as visual and physical experience of the flows during the actual studies and photo documentation. As noted in our previous comments during the relicensing effort, MDIFW did not feel an adequate range of flows were chosen to find the true inflection points for this reach. When conducting IFIM studies, MDIFW prefers to evaluate various flows from the current license minimum flow up to Aquatic Base Flow (ABF), and at least one or two flows above ABF (typically double) for evaluating an appropriate minimum flow.

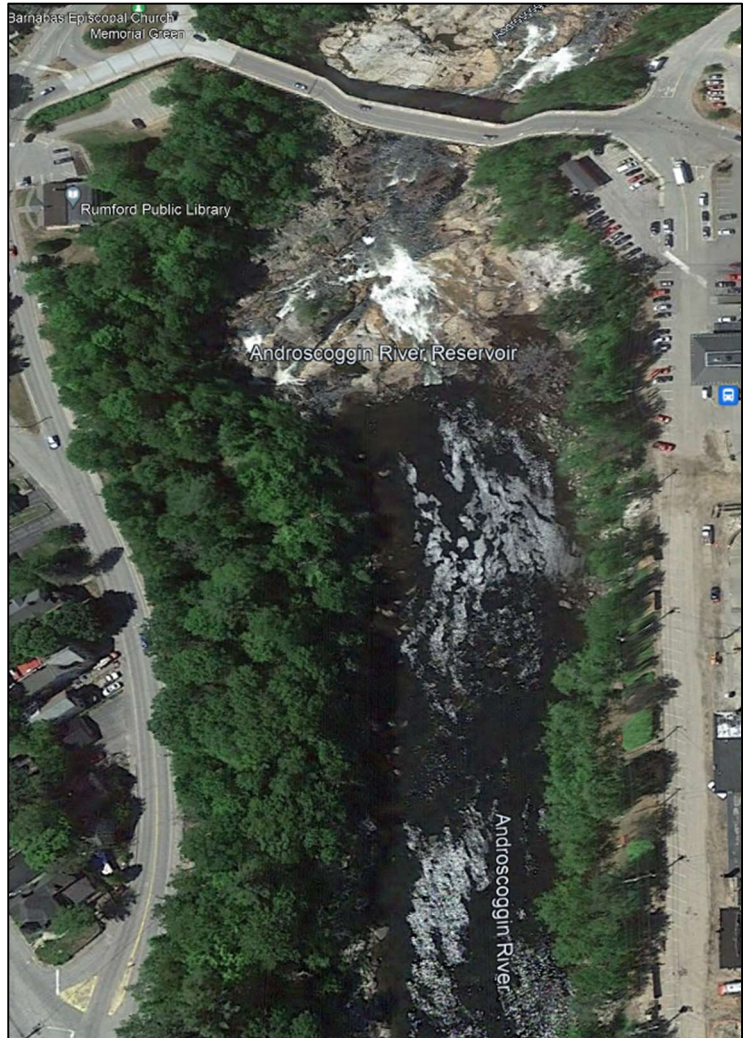
Recreational Access and Use

Page 23 of the Draft WQC states, *“The Applicant reports and the Department finds that access to waters in the Project area and vicinity owned by the applicant include the Carry-In Launch (Carlton Bridge), Logan Brook Access, and Wheeler Island. Access to Project waters not owned by the applicant include Hanover Boat Launch, Hastings Boat Launch, MDACF Boat Launch in Rumford, J. Eugene Boivin Park, Chisholm Park and Trail, Chisholm Overlook, and MDACF Boat Launch in Mexico. Ensuring this or alternative public access to the impoundments and the Middle Dam bypass reach through the term of any new license is necessary to ensure the riverine impoundments and outlet waters continue to meet the Class C designated uses of recreation in and on the water, fishing, and navigation.”*

MDIFW appreciates both FERC’s and MDEP’s commitment to ensuring public access to the resource. MDIFW has three remaining concerns regarding recreational access:

- (1) The need for a boat launch, parking, and portage area to be located on the Upper Impoundment near the boater barrier. FERC has supported the closure of the Logan Brook Access, and a replacement facility is to be determined. It is unclear in the Draft WQC if MDEP supports this, and currently any detailed requirements are undefined (i.e., launch type, parking spaces). Historically, it has been MDIFW’s experience that leaving the details undefined for dam owners can result in less than adequate facilities.

- (2) The Licensee is proposing to build and maintain access and/or steps behind the Rumford public library. The proposed access already exists informally, and a more formal maintained access trail with stairs would be a great addition, but a suitable parking area with signage needs to be identified for anglers, boaters, and other recreational users of the ledges. There are still concerns regarding parking at the library and conflicts arising between library patrons and recreational users. MDIFW is requesting the Licensee develop or dedicate at least 4-6 of the existing parking spaces for recreational use.
- (3) There is no safe access to the east side of the river. The Town has existing parking spaces adjacent to the riverbank (see angled parking on right side of photo), but the river embankment is steep and strewn with large, irregular shaped boulders. Additionally, while there is proposed access on the west side of the river, much of the bypass cannot be safely crossed via wading or rock hopping. MDIFW recommends that one or two sets of stairways be required of the Licensee on this side of the resource to provide adequate access to this large, wide river reach.



Miscellaneous

Page 22 the Draft WQC states, “MDIFW performs annual fish stocking of brook, brown, and rainbow trout in the mainstem of the upper Androscoggin River at three locations upstream of the Project (Gilead, Bethel, and Hanover) and one location downstream of the Project (Mexico).”

Page 26 the Draft WQC restates, “Further, the Department finds that MDIFW performs annual fish stocking of brook, brown, and rainbow trout in the mainstem of the upper Androscoggin River at three locations upstream of the Project (Gilead, Bethel, and Hanover) and one location downstream of the Project (Mexico).”

In 2023, MDIFW began stocking the Middle Dam Impoundment in Rumford to provide a local angling opportunity given the good shoreline access associated with Eugene Bovine Park. In addition, it is hoped

Letter to Laura Paye, Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Comments RE: MDIFW Comments on the Draft Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2333) Water Quality
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that some of the fish will drop into the upper reaches of the bypass. Consequently, we suggest the preceding WQC statements be updated to clarify this.

Please feel free to contact my office if you have any questions regarding this information, or if I can be of any further assistance.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Perry", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Perry
Environmental Review Coordinator

Cc: Francis Brautigam, Joe Overlock--MDIFW Fisheries Division, Augusta Headquarters
Jim Pellerin, Nicholas Kalejs--MDIFW Region A