



**State of Maine**  
**130<sup>th</sup> Maine State Senate**

August 2, 2021

Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Via email: [melanie.loyzim@maine.gov](mailto:melanie.loyzim@maine.gov)

Dear Commissioner Loyzim:

It is my understanding that your department is due to make a ruling on a water quality certification in relation to the relicensing of the Shawmut Dam on the Kennebec River within the next few weeks. I write to point out the significance of this certification and the extremely negative impacts that a failure to issue the new license would have on people and communities in the Kennebec River region.

The greatest impact of removing the Shawmut Dam would be the loss of jobs. This not only includes the employees who work at this facility, but also the SAPPI paper mill in Skowhegan, which the owners have said would be forced to close if the dam is removed.

Beyond the loss of 725 mill jobs and hundreds of others that depend on the mill, the Town of Skowhegan would lose its first, second, and sixth biggest property tax payers in SAPPI, Brookfield, and the Maine Water Company, altogether accounting for more than \$1.5 million.

As to water quality specifically, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recently issued a Draft Environmental Assessment for relicensing the Shawmut Dam. This assessment concluded that water quality related to the dam is consistent with state standards and would remain so going forward if the dam remained in place.

From the assessment: “Today, water quality at the Shawmut Project and those waters upstream and downstream are at levels that are consistent with the levels stipulated by state water quality standards. Kennebec River flows have also significantly benefitted from the coordinated operation of the upper basin storage reservoirs, reregulation of flows at the Williams Project, and run-of-river operation of all the lower river hydropower projects, including Shawmut (p.73).”

In addition, “Brookfield’s proposal to continue to operate in a run-of-river mode with impoundment fluctuations limited to no more than 1 foot below the normal reservoir level would result in infrequent and minimal disturbances to aquatic and riparian habitat.”

As you know, FERC regulates more than 2,500 dams, 102 of them here in Maine, so that its opinion on these matters is both experienced and expert.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I have no doubt that you will give the decision regarding the certification your usual professional treatment.

Sincerely,

Sen. Brad Farrin

Maine State Senate District 3