

## Paye, Laura

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**From:** Ducharme, Jack <Jack.Ducharme@legislature.maine.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 9, 2021 9:57 AM  
**To:** DEP, Shawmut WQC  
**Cc:** Keliher, Patrick  
**Subject:** Shawmut Dam

Ms. Davis Howatt, Commissioner Loyzim,

My name is Jack Ducharme. I represent the people of Madison, Norridgewock, and Solon in Maine House District 111. I am writing you today to urge you consider approval of the Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC's Shawmut Hydroelectric Project - (FERC No. 2322-060) relicensing application.

Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC has applied to the Department for certification that the operations of its Shawmut Hydroelectric Project meet or exceed Maine's water quality standards, including designated uses as well as narrative and numeric criteria, in support of its application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a new license to continue producing hydroelectric energy.

Your report of August 2021 indicates that all water quality standards are met by the owner of this dam and yet your report recommends denial of their relicensing application. The report says that the water is of such a "quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water supply after treatment, fishing, agriculture, recreation in and on the water, individual process and cooling water supply, hydropower generation, and navigation." In the next paragraph, the report goes on to say that because "the operator has not demonstrated that a fish lift... proposed will adequately allow fish to pass upstream or downstream" the water quality is damaged and therefore the "water quality report" recommends removal of the dam. To be clear, despite meeting all water quality requirements, and designing proposed fish passage intended to pass at least 96% of Atlantic salmon upstream and 97% downstream, (standards previously endorsed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in its July 1, 2021 Draft Environmental Assessment), you issued a draft denial. The Governor's office asked you to "stay the finalizing" of the letter for at least a year. I'm asking that you revisit this water quality report and apply the SAME standards that have been applied for years to these dam relicensing projects. I understand that the 99% fish passage requirement proposed by Department of Marine Resources is new and never has been applied anywhere in the country.

Failure to renew this license is significant to this region and to my district. The removal of the dam would create the conditions that would cause SAPPI to close their Somerset Mill. They rely on the Shawmut impoundment area for water for the papermaking process. The 735 direct jobs in the mill would be lost. The rest of the region would suffer significant job losses as it is estimated that the closure of SAPPI Somerset could directly impact over 10,000 people in the Upper Kennebec Valley region. The remaining 40,000 people in Somerset County will also suffer economically if this happens to say nothing of impact to the surrounding counties!

The Town of Skowhegan is nearly ready to embark on the Run of River project. This project is designed to use the Kennebec River gorge in Skowhegan as a water recreational destination. They have raised several million dollars locally to get this project engineered and designed and are nearly ready to begin construction on that. In October, 2021 Senator Collins announced that she had secured another \$2,000,000 from the Fiscal Year 2022 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill for this project. The headwaters of the Shawmut impoundment extend to the area that they intend to use for this Run of River project. Further, Maine

Water just replaced the intake system for the Skowhegan municipal water system and that may be impacted by a reduction in the water level as well.

I believe that we must balance our use of natural resources with the sustainability of that resource. For many years Brookfield and prior dam owners have done that. I urge you to take a balanced look at the resource and consider the economic impact to the Kennebec Valley region. Every person in Somerset County is connected in some way to the SAPPI mill, either by a family member or friend that works there, a business that provides support services to the mill, a business that is patronized by the mill workers, a logger or wood hauler, or some other connection. These are good paying jobs, local jobs. These folks pay lots of local and state taxes as does SAPPI and Brookfield. Please do the right thing for the people of the Kennebec River valley and support the relicensing effort.

Cordially,

Rep. Jack Ducharme  
34 Heald St, Madison ME 04950  
207-431-0775  
Me House District 111  
Solon, Norridgewock, Madison (most of)

\*\*\*Please be advised that anything sent to me in my capacity as a legislator may become a matter of public record, per the Maine Freedom of Access Act, [www.maine.gov/foaa/](http://www.maine.gov/foaa/), which means that other people can ask to read these messages.\*\*\*