

Robert A. Nasdor

Northeast Stewardship Director

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January 15, 2013

Jason Coite, P.E.

Environmental Compliance Analyst

Office of Environmental Policy

University of Connecticut

31 LeDoyt Road, Unit 3055

Storrs, CT 06269

Dear Mr. Coite:

American Whitewater is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting and restoring our nation’s whitewater resources, and enhancing opportunities to enjoy them safely. Our members are primarily conservation-oriented kayakers, canoeists, and rafters. Over 400 of our members live in the State of Connecticut alone, and our members throughout the region use and enjoy the Farmington River for whitewater boating, both on the West Branch and on the Tarrifville Gorge section of the Farmington River.

American Whitewater is concerned about the impact of the Metropolitan District Commission’s proposed diversion of up to 5 million gpd from the Farmington river to meet the needs of the University of Connecticut and potentially other towns in eastern Connecticut. The further diversion of water from the Farmington river, by extending the MDC pipelines, will have an adverse impact on all recreational users of the river downstream. In particular, American Whitewater is concerned that the MDC proposal will reduce the availability of water in the Tarrifville Gorge section, which is of critical interest to the whitewater boating community. Throughout New England, whitewater boaters place a high value on the opportunity to paddle at Tarrifville, or T’ville, where they can either run the river or enjoy “freestyle” paddling. Most evenings in the summer, a solid crowd of friendly and inviting paddlers can be found throwing down in T’ville's great play holes. Boaters from all over the area come here because there are year round paddling opportunities that provide a variety of options for play and river running. In addition, the Whitewater Triple Crown challenge is held each year at Tarrifville where paddlers compete in the three major whitewater disciplines -- wild water racing, slalom, and freestyle competitions -- that have attracted top whitewater competitors.

Kayaking on the Farmington river is entirely dependent on water flow. Based on USGS data on water flows on the Farmington at Tarrifville, it appears that the flow was below 641 cfs, or 1.80 feet on the river gauge, on approximately 180 days last year. American Whitewater considers river levels above 1.80 feet to be a good level for boating.  American Whitewater is concerned that the proposed diversion would cause some reduction in flow and would increase the number of days in which the river levels fall below this level. In addition, we are concerned that any flow reduction could diminish boating opportunities that would benefit from higher river levels.

Given these concerns, American Whitewater opposes the proposed MDC diversion of water from the Farmington river until the effects of the diversion on whitewater boating opportunities can be fully studied and the MDC can clearly and convincingly demonstrate that this valuable resources will not be adversely impacted by the proposal. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about American Whitewater’s opposition to the proposed water diversion from the Farmington River.

Very truly yours,

Signature.jpg

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