



DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## Division of Ecological Restoration



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*Governor*  
**Timothy P. Murray**  
*Lieutenant Governor*  
**Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.**  
*Secretary*  
**Mary B. Griffin**  
*Commissioner*

January 4, 2012

Mr. Peter Farmer, Chair  
Conservation Commission  
Lancaster Town Hall  
695 Main Street, Suite 4  
Lancaster, MA 01523

Dear Mr. Farmer:

I understand that the Town is exploring the removal of Bartlett Pond Dam and is interested in the Division of Ecological Restoration's perspective on removing this dam.

DER supports the removal of aging dams like Bartlett Pond Dam in order to restore the ecology of river systems. Dams degrade water quality, act as barriers to fish and wildlife movement, and transform free-flowing streams to ponded environments. Dams have been linked to declines in biodiversity in Massachusetts. When a dam is removed, the natural movement of water, sediment, and organic material is restored. DER's preliminary monitoring results show that vegetation returns within the first growing season; that macroinvertebrates re-colonize the restored stream channel within the first year; and that fish immediately take advantage of the newly available habitat.

Removing Bartlett Pond Dam will improve habitat on Wekepeke Brook, a high quality, coldwater stream with a thriving population of native Eastern brook trout. Removing the dam will restore a free-flowing brook to the area currently impounded by the dam. It will improve water quality and habitat for Eastern brook trout and other native species. 18 mainstem and tributary miles in Wekepeke Brook will be re-connected to the larger Nashua River Watershed, creating an undammed stream network over 100 miles long. The dam is a liability and would be expensive to repair; removing the dam creates an environmental benefit and removes a cost and liability from the Town.

The Division of Ecological Restoration has been leading and supporting dam removal efforts statewide since 2001. Together with federal, state, non-governmental organizations, and municipalities like Lancaster, we have removed a variety of dams, small and large, from river systems across the state. As the Town of Lancaster continues to explore dam removal, please feel free to contact our program with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Beth Lambert  
River Restoration Program Coordinator