

Elizabeth Austin, South Hadley, MA.

I am writing to comment on the Relicensing of the Northfield Pumped Storage Facility (P-2585) on the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. This facility was licensed in 1972 and for the past 40 years we have had a trial as to its success as a hydropower facility and its impact on the environment.

Clearly, the facility has succeeded in providing power to our region and beyond. Unfortunately, it has had a negative impact on the environment. You, FERC, allowed GDF Suez to use OUR river to make power and to make money—a lot of money. Yes, we do need power and re-licensing this facility is important but by allowing this to continue to be a pumped storage facility, millions of gallons of water will be taken from our river each night and pumped up Northfield Mountain and then released during peak demand. Thus our river levels will rise and fall unnaturally day in and day out. This will continue to cause erosion of the river banks, damage to nursery habitat for fish, impingement and entrainment of fish, plus interruption to recreational use of the river.

Now is the time to make changes so that this facility has minimal impact. I strongly request that you require a serious study of the feasibility of a closed-loop design. A lower reservoir could be created and water pumped up and down as needed. The demand for electricity will most likely grow over the next 50 years. I urge you to be forward thinking when relicensing this project. If demand grows and we don't have a closed loop, more water will need to be taken from the river. Also, climate change might bring drought and low levels of water as happened in 2012. Our environment is NOT for sale! PLEASE request that the closed loop system be considered during this relicensing process.

Again, this is a 50 year decision you are facing. Please be forward thinking and please consider our environment first.

Respectfully submitted,

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