

Town of Simsbury Conservation Commission

933 HOPMEADOW STREET
06070

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT

4 December 2012

Jason M. Coite
University of Connecticut – Office of Environmental Policy
31 LeDoyt Road, U-3055
Storrs, Connecticut 06269

Dear Sir:

The Simsbury Conservation Commission is deeply concerned about the likely environmental impact on the Farmington River of a proposal under which initially as much as 1.93 million gallons per day of water would be diverted from the river to meet the perceived needs of UCONN and the Town of Mansfield.

We have watched the river with growing concern as the pattern of hot and dry summers in recent years has reduced water levels and raised water temperatures. As was reported in the press in September,

"It has been a tough year due to low flow and warmer temperatures," said Peter Aarestad, director of the Inland Fisheries Division of the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Bureau of Natural Resources.... This year... the temperature of the water released from the dam has been warmer, according to DEEP fishery biologist Neal Hagstrom. He said it's recently been about 68 degrees rather than the normal 55 to 60 degrees. The releases have been kept fairly low this year, officials said. It's a delicate balancing act as water is needed year round and much of it is regulated, Aarestad said. Several sources also pointed to low water levels in the Colebrook Reservoir above Goodwin and the Otis Reservoir in Massachusetts, as further reason officials are being cautious with the releases.

We do not think that one can easily make the assumption that diverting 1.93 million gallons per day (and likely more in subsequent years) would not have a material adverse environmental impact on the river's habitat and recreational values.


We have reviewed the Environmental Impact Evaluation prepared for UCONN by Milone & MacBroom. We note that it has little to say about the environmental impact on the river, and what it does say is unconvincing. The Management Plan for the upper river, upon which the EIE chiefly relies, was prepared in 1992 and is out of date. It does not speak to the last two decades of development in the Farmington Valley, including the impacts on the river of increased impervious surfaces. It does not speak to the stress on the river of recent weather patterns.

We are, of course, open to a scientific study that might demonstrate that the environmental impacts are manageable. To this point, as far as we know, that case has not been made. Absent that, we believe that the risks to our beloved and beleaguered river argue indisputably against the proposed diversion.

This letter was approved by the Conservation Commission at its meeting 4 December 2012.

Very truly yours,

Simsbury Conservation Commission

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margery Winters".

by Margery Winters
its Vice Chairman

df/