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## Fish passage request for information: Bridge Street Dam

1 message

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Alan Stearns <alan@rrct.org>

Mon, Feb 1, 2016 at 2:51 PM

To: Nat Tupper <ntupper@yarmouth.me.us>

Nat Tupper  
Town Manager  
Town of Yarmouth

Dear Nat:

I write to follow up on yours and my recent very brief discussion.

The Board of Directors of the Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT) remains firmly committed to the three goals expressed in our September correspondence (below) to the Yarmouth Town Council. With other individuals and organizations, we are scoping long-term approaches and coalitions to revitalize the ecology and health of the river. RRCT remains equally committed to the economic future of Yarmouth harbor and its businesses and jobs. Our commitment to good public process is emphatic, informing our pace and ecological expectations -- we will be proactive seeking collaboration, teamwork, science, and mitigation of risk. We will soon reach out to marinas to share what we know, and what we'd like to know, and what we'd like to learn and decide together. RRCT plans to convene a "State of the River" panel at a forum this fall, to allow all voices from all perspectives to share recent professional analysis and observations.

We have made a mistake in recent years by narrowly examining harbor siltation in the context only of the dams. After recent storm events, we have noted upriver washouts and dramatic siltation due to poor road construction, undersized culverts, evolving hydrology, and other factors. RRCT and other folks at the table working on river restoration are today even more focused on technical assistance, financial support, and riparian protections in upstream municipalities. These mitigation efforts will directly benefit Yarmouth harbor and its economic interests.

Despite disappointing recent Council votes, we continue to focus our attention especially on the opportunities presented at the Bridge Street dam. Last week I forwarded to you 1985 FERC and 1984 USFWS documents relating to the terms and conditions of Sparhawk Mill's (Bridge Street dam's) hydropower operation. I write today to request the Town's assessment of the Town's obligations, practices, results, and plans, as owner of the Bridge Street Dam, to ensure that there is functional fish passage at this site. I also request the Town's assessment of the obligations and results of other interested parties and agencies (DMR, USFWS) with regard to fish passage at this site. I note that as of May 1985 there was a run of anadromous alewives. As an organization and as a community for the past decade we have all been consciously lax regarding attention to fish passage, because of active town-led discussions on Bridge Street dam removal. Recent Town Council actions make this lax approach increasingly of concern.

Noting either potential redevelopment or ongoing practices of hydropower generation at Bridge Street, the town's plans and obligations might be governed by FERC and other jurisdictions, but also should be guided by proactive policy decisions (above and beyond FERC) by the Town as dam owner at both Bridge Street and East Elm Street.

RRCT asks for the Town of Yarmouth's commitment to open and transparent discussions on fish passage goals and standards for both town-owned dams. Shielding fish passage discussions and documents under the umbrella of business negotiations would frustrate this goal.

Sincerely,

Alan Stearns



## Royal River Conservation Trust

Alan Stearns, Executive Director  
Royal River Conservation Trust  
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alan Stearns** <[alan@rrct.org](mailto:alan@rrct.org)>  
Date: Thu, Sep 17, 2015 at 8:45 AM  
Subject: A healthy and vibrant Royal River (Yarmouth Town Council)  
To: [jmacleod@yarmouth.me.us](mailto:jmacleod@yarmouth.me.us), [akittredge@yarmouth.me.us](mailto:akittredge@yarmouth.me.us), [rbates@yarmouth.me.us](mailto:rbates@yarmouth.me.us),  
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<[dcraig@yarmouth.me.us](mailto:dcraig@yarmouth.me.us)>  
Cc: Nat Tupper <[ntupper@yarmouth.me.us](mailto:ntupper@yarmouth.me.us)>

Dear Chairman Bates & Members of the Council:

For four years, the Royal River Conservation Trust has worked alongside the Town Council, town staff, and town-convened work groups exploring options to enhance the vibrancy and resiliency of the Royal River. Consistently we have recognized the role of Yarmouth's stretch of the Royal River contributing toward potentially enhanced fisheries and recreation in upstream towns, and toward the health of Casco Bay. Businesses thrive in Yarmouth harbor because boaters celebrate the health of Casco Bay. Residents and harvesters need not fear toxics, and rally for clean water in the bay. Consistently we have helped with collection and analysis of good information, and we have helped facilitate robust public conversations on options for the future of the Royal River.

Following recent Town Council workshops indicating a distinct shift in policy direction, the Board of Directors of the Royal River Conservation Trust had the opportunity earlier this week to discuss the issue at length. Unanimously, those present voted to retain a focus on three goals.

First, fish should be able to pass through Yarmouth. In all scenarios of dam maintenance, dam investment, or dam removal, the dam owner should guarantee improved and robust fish passage. We owe that to current and future generations of Maine people. We owe that to upriver towns, and to Casco Bay. The dam owner has a role. An avoidance of action will not allow us to reach this goal. We offer our continued collaboration.

Second, we should have good information on toxics. Unknown scenarios and fears – noting seemingly low-risk findings to date – can routinely be addressed by more sampling and good information. Downstream neighbors, riverfront investors, and residents and harvesters along the river will benefit from best-possible information. We offer our continued collaboration.

Third, we all benefit from public education and public discussion, and open and transparent decision-making. We have consistently maintained that the quality of the decision-making process is as important as the decision itself, since we collectively gain nothing in the long run by divisive decisions. Moving forward over many years, we plan to continue to engage the public in the many decisions we all face regarding the future health and vitality of the Royal River, inviting informed voices as we seek best-possible information, new synergies, and strongest-possible communities. We offer our continued collaboration.

Thank you for your hard work. Please accept my apologies that I will be unable to join you this evening.

Sincerely,

*Alan Stearns*



**Royal River  
Conservation Trust**

Alan Stearns, Executive Director

Royal River Conservation Trust

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