



**MASSACHUSETTS
MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION**



July 23, 2012

The Honorable Members of the
Conference Committee on the Economic Development/Jobs Bill
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Support for the Dam Safety, Repair and Removal Amendment (Senate #70) to S.2350, An Act relative to infrastructure investment, enhanced competitiveness and economic growth in the Commonwealth

Dear Honorable Conference Committee Members:

Our broad-based alliance of associations representing municipalities, engineers and conservation and environmental organizations respectfully urges the Conference Committee to support Senate Amendment #70 on dam safety, repair and removal included in the Senate's version of *An Act relative to infrastructure investment, enhanced competitiveness and economic growth in the Commonwealth*.

Dam repair and removal is also important for our communities:

- Over 80% of the Commonwealth's 2,892 dams no longer serve their intended purpose.
- 1,680 of the 2,892 dams in Massachusetts pose some level of risk to human life and/or property.
- Repairing dams ensures the community services provided by 43 flood control dams, 44 hydro-power dams and 164 water supply dams.

The Dam Safety, Repair and Removal amendment's provisions would address infrastructure investment and enhance economic growth by:

- Creating a separate state revolving loan fund for dams from existing state capital funds to provide necessary resources for dam owners to repair or remove unsafe dams.
- Authorizing municipalities to assess betterments and issues bonds for dam removal projects.
- Increasing fines for non-compliance with Dam Safety regulations from \$500 to \$5000 for each violation.
- Requiring an annual inventory of dams and ensuring Emergency Action Plans for Significant and High Hazard dams.

The amendment is virtually identical to S1985 which the Senate engrossed in July 2011 and has been

Dam repair and removal is good for the Massachusetts economy and job development.

Municipal Jobs/Economy

- Dam repair and removal reduces and/or eliminates the risks and costs of dam emergencies, including the costs of insurance/maintenance, emergency response, evacuation and lost business thereby allowing municipalities to save scarce funding for municipal jobs. The 2010 dam emergency in Taunton cost the city \$1.5 million.
- Dam removal improves water quality due to the restoration of free-flowing water which may alleviate the need for expensive wastewater and drinking water treatment investments -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studied the Assabet River to assess how dam removal might improve conditions relative to excess total Phosphorous. The study concluded that removing two dams would provide a 20% reduction in Phosphorus coupled with wastewater treatment plant upgrades. Dam removal and impoundment dredging is predicted to meet 90% treatment standards (TMDL for Phosphorous), thereby reducing costs of treatment.

River-Related Jobs/Economy

- Dam removal revitalizes downtown areas and Gateway cities, stimulating local economies with business opportunities related to healthy rivers and restored waterfronts.
- Dam removal provides for recreational activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Anglers alone provide \$600 million to the state economy annually.
- Dam removal improves habitat for migratory fish that sustain our commercial fishing sector worth multiple billions of dollars annually.

Construction and Restoration Jobs/Economy

- State funding for dam removal secures federal matching grants from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture for dam removal in cold water and migratory (coastal waters) fisheries -- \$3-\$4 in federal investments for every \$1 spent by the state.
- The Division of Ecological Restoration estimates that river and wetland restoration projects, such as dam removal, produce an average employment demand of 12.5 jobs and \$1.75 million in total economic output from each \$1 million spent, contributing to a growing “restoration economy” in Massachusetts. Ecological restoration projects help support a number of economic sectors, including design and engineering, construction, wholesale construction materials, nursery products, and non-profit science.

The Dam safety amendment has no opposition and includes broad-based support from a very diverse alliance of organizations, including:

- Municipal: Massachusetts Municipal Association, Massachusetts Water Works Association, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
- Engineering: The American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts, the Boston Society for Civil Engineering Section/ASCE
- Conservation/Environmental: The Nature Conservancy, Mass Audubon, the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance and other organizations
- Union: Massachusetts Organization of Scientists and Engineers

Should you have questions, please feel free to contact: Abbie Goodman (ACEC/MA, agoodman@engineers.org), Steve Long (TNC, slong@tnc.org) or Jennifer Ryan (MAS) jryan@massaudubon.org.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We greatly appreciate your support!

Sincerely,

Linda Orel
Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions

Abbie R. Goodman
Executive Director
American Council of Engineering Companies of
Massachusetts (ACEC/MA)

Anthony Puntin
Executive Director
Boston Society for Civil Engineering Section

Steve Long
Director of Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts

Jennifer Ryan
Legislative Director
Mass Audubon

Julia Blatt
Executive Director
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance