Notice of Ecological	Restoration	Project under	301	CMR	11.01(2	)(b)4
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Public comments on this notice may be submitted to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office at <u>MEPA@mass.gov</u> within twenty (20) days of publication of this notice in the Environmental Monitor.					
Proje	ct Proponent: Massachusetts Department of (	Conse	rvation and Recreation, Office of Dam Safety		
Proje	Project Contact (name/email): <u>Jennifer Doyle-Breen, jennifer.doyle-breen@aecom.com</u>				
Proje	Project Address: Wahconah Street Pittsfield, MA 01210				
Revie	Reviewing Conservation Commission(s): Pittsfield Conservation Commission				
Antici	Anticipated Date of NOI Submission: 6/1/2024				
Ecolo	gical Restoration Project Type:				
$\boxtimes$	Dam Removal		Tidal Restoration		
	Freshwater Stream Crossing Repair/ Replacement		Rare Species Habitat Restoration		
	Stream Daylighting		Restoring Fish Passageways		

#### **Description of Scope of Work:**

The proposed project will remove the Bel Air Dam on the West Branch of the Housatonic River and thereby restore the natural connectivity of a waterway, meeting the definition of an Ecological Restoration Project defined in *310 CMR 10.04*. The Bel Air Dam (MA1061) is located in the City of Pittsfield in Berkshire County and impounds Pontoosuc Brook, which is a tributary to the West Branch of the Housatonic River. Bel Air Dam is located approximately 1.1 miles downstream of Pontoosuc Lake. The construction of the dam was contracted in 1832, and it was originally used for power generation for a woolen mill until the 1920s. In the 1940s the use of the mill for wool production was abandoned. Bel Air Dam is now located upstream of several businesses, residences, and thoroughfares. A failure of the dam at maximum pool may cause loss of life and substantial damage to downstream buildings, roadways, and other infrastructure. Therefore, in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR) Dam Safety Regulations, Bel Air Dam is classified as a HIGH (Class I) Hazard Potential dam. The owner of the dam is deceased and the dam has been determined to be Unsafe, based on a Phase II Dam Inspection. The MassDCR Office of Dam safety considers the dam "Abandoned" and has been working closely with the City of Pittsfield to coordinate measures for dam removal, stream restoration, and management of accumulated, contaminated sediments.

The proposed project is a Dam Removal Project as listed in *310 CMR 10.13(2)*, and proposes removal of the entire dam structure, restoration of a natural stream channel in the area of the current impoundment, establishment of adjacent floodplain, and installation of native herbaceous and woody species. The project area historically contained riparian and wetland habitat which has been degraded due to the impoundment. Changes to the environment caused by the presence of the dam include alteration of water temperatures and chemistry, river flow characteristics, and silt loads. The proposed project will also remove contaminated sediment that has accumulated upstream of the dam and includes elevated levels of chromium, arsenic, lead, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and extractable petroleum hydrocarbons (EPHs).

The dam removal project furthers the following Wetland Protection Act (WPA) (*M.G.L. c. 131, § 40*) interests: flood control, storm damage prevention, prevention of pollution, and the protection of fisheries and wildlife habitat. Removal of the dam will remove a hazard that could lead to substantial downstream storm damage if the dam were to fail. The creation of floodplain habitat adjacent to the restored stream channel will contribute to the flood control interest of the WPA and its implementing regulations. Removal of the accumulated and contaminated sediment will remove a source of pollution. Removal of the dam will allow restoration of the channel, which will contribute to fisheries habitat by improving hydrologic connectivity and water quality. Planting of native species will contribute to enhancing wildlife habitat along the restored stream corridor.

Work associated with this project includes the demolition of the existing stone masonry, dam spillway, and appurtenant structures to eliminate the impoundment. The primary spillway, auxiliary spillway, and training walls will be demolished. Additionally, the pedestrian bridge over the dam will be removed. The bridge is immediately above the dam and must be removed to access the dam to implement removal activities. Approximately 35,500 cubic yards of sediment will be dredged from the impoundment area from approximately 8 feet below the current water elevation. The removed sediment will be disposed of at an out-of-state facility. Contaminated sediment will be excavated and managed in accordance with the requirements of the Massachusetts Contingency Plan Regulations (*310 CMR 40.00*) under the oversight of a Licensed Site Professional (LSP).

Resource Area	Estimated Extent of Proposed Alteration	Estimated Extent of Proposed Replacement or other 310 CMR 10.00 required mitigation (if any)
Land Under Water	67,300 SF	21,750 SF
Bank	2,600 LF	290 LF
Riverfront Area	81,900 SF	202,000 SF
Bordering Land Subject to Flooding	22,400 SF	72,300 SF
Bordering Vegetated Wetlands	47,630 SF	30,000 SF

Nature and Extent of Alteration to Resource Area(s) as defined at 310 CMR 10.00:

The Proponent certifies by this notice that the Project is anticipated to meet the eligibility criteria for a Restoration Order of Conditions under 310 CMR 10.13 for an Ecological Restoration Project, not including an Ecological Restoration Limited Project under 310 CMR 10.24(8) and 10.53(4).

- 🛛 Yes
- □ No

List of documentation to be provided to Conservation Commission to demonstrate compliance with applicable eligibility criteria.

Eligibility Criteria Reference	Documentation to be Provided
General Eligibility Criteria (310 CMR 10.13(1))	The attached text (Attachment A) describes how the dam removal project meets these eligibility criteria and will be included in the NOI. In addition, a 401 Water Quality Certification will be obtained from MassDEP and provided to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission in the NOI. Consultation with the Pittsfield Conservation has

	preliminarily confirmed that they agree that the project can meet the General Eligibility Criteria in <i>310 CMR 10.13(1)</i> .
Dam Removal (310 CMR 10.13(2))	The attached text (Attachment B) describes how the dam removal project meets the dam removal criteria and will be included in the NOI. Consultation with the Pittsfield Conservation has preliminarily confirmed that they agree that the project can meet the Dam Removal Criteria in <i>310 CMR 10.13(2)</i> .
Freshwater Stream Crossing Repair/Replacement (310 CMR 10.13(3))	-
Stream Daylighting (310 CMR 10.13(4))	-
Tidal Restoration ((310 CMR 10.13(5))	-
Rare Species Habitat Restoration (310 CMR 10.13(6))	-
Restoring Fish Passageways (310 CMR 10.13(7))	-

#### Designated Geographic Area (DGA) (as defined in 301 CMR 11.02) for the Project: 1-mile

#### Is there an Environmental Justice (EJ) Population (as defined in 301 CMR 11.02) within the DGA? Yes

## If you answered "No" to the question above, you may stop here. If you answered "Yes" to the above question, complete the remainder of the form.

Figure 1 contains the census tracts for Elevated Lead Level populations, Figure 2 contains the Environmental Justice Populations, and Figure 3 contains the Limited English Proficiency Populations.

# Date Advance Notification was provided prior to submitting this Notice of Project (301 CMR 11.01(2)(b)4. & 11.05(4)): 12/27/2023

Advanced EJ Notification was originally distributed on June 27, 2023. After this notice, a meeting was requested by a recipient, which was held on September 5, 2023. Attendees requested an in-person meeting, which was held on December 5, 2023. The second notice was distributed on 12/27/2023, which was 30 days in advance of the MEPA Filing regarding the Notice of Ecological Restoration Project.

## Describe measures taken to enhance public involvement opportunities by the identified EJ Populations (301 CMR 11.01(2)(b)4. & 11.05(4)):

Two community outreach meetings have been held based on requests in response to the initial Advanced EJ notification distributed on June 27, 2022. An initial virtual meeting was held on September 5, 2023, and based on feedback from this meeting, a second in-person meeting was held on December 5, 2023. Prior to the December 5 meeting, DCR engaged the Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity (CBHFH) organization to assist with public outreach regarding the December 5 meeting. CBHFH's efforts included door-to-door community engagement and flyering in local housing developments, abutting properties, and other community gathering spaces to inform the local EJ community regarding the upcoming meeting so that they would have the opportunity to participate. In addition, community members were able to provide questions via email ahead of the meeting if they were unable to participate in person. Notices of both meetings were also distributed by email to the Community Based Organization email list provided

by the MEPA office. The CBHFH also utilized social media to advertise the December 5 meeting, including Instagram, FaceBook, NextDoor, LinkedIn, Threads, and text messaging.

An exact count is not available, but the December 5 in-person meeting was extremely well attended, with an estimated attendance of approximately 100 community members. AECOM provided an overview presentation of the project, and MassDCR and City of Pittsfield staff were in attendance to answer questions as well. Numerous questions were received from the community, which AECOM and MassDCR addressed to the extent possible, along with a commitment to publish a written list of questions and follow-up answers that required further investigation and therefore could not be provided on the night of the meeting.

MassDCR is in the process of developing a website for the project. The website will post a written project summary as well as answers to the questions raised at the December 5 meeting. Over time, the website will be updated with information regarding permit application submittal and review and eventually construction schedules and updates. MassDCR plans to continue to engage CBHFH over the life of the project to disseminate project information as well as links to the project website.

Subsequent to the December 27 EJ Advanced Notice distribution, AECOM received an inquiry from the Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT) requesting that this MEPA submission include a map showing census tracts with elevated lead levels. This figure is attached. BEAT also asked about the source of contaminants that have been detected in the Bel Air sediment and mitigation of impacts to the local EJ community during construction as a result of the excavated sediments. As noted above, the excavated sediments will be disposed out-of-state. MassDCR intends to implement continuous air quality monitoring during construction and to halt construction if air exceedances are detected, in order to allow time to assess and address the exceedance. MassDCR has provided sediment data to MassDEP so that they can investigate pollutant sources as appropriate, since this is beyond the scope of the dam removal project. These questions and answers will be posted on the project website in addition to those received at the December 5 meeting; the "Frequently Asked Questions" on the project website will be periodically updated as the project proceeds and new questions are received.

# Describe any Environmental Burdens and/or Environmental Benefits that may result for the Environmental Justice Populations by reason of the Project (see 301 CMR 11.02 for relevant definitions). To the extent any Environmental Burdens are identified, specify measures to be implemented to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate impacts:

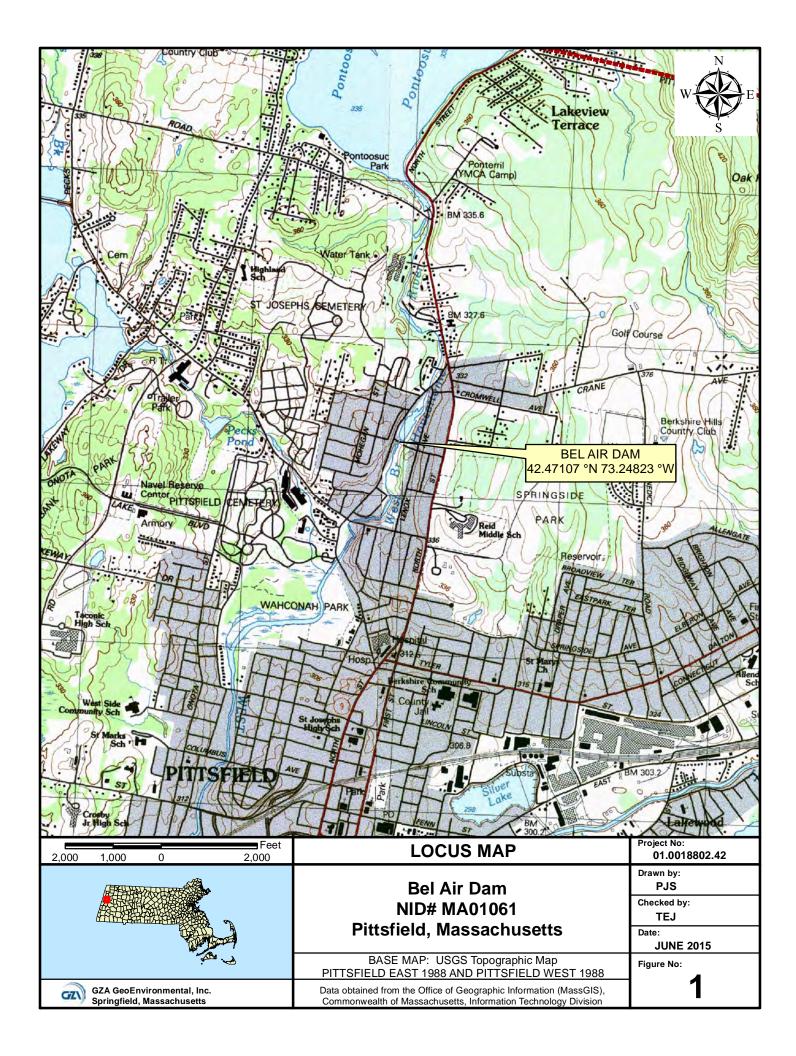
The proposed dam removal would significantly improve the environmental safety and health of adjacent EJ populations downstream of the current dam and impoundment. The EJ population will benefit from the project by the removal of a hazardous dam that would potentially cause loss of life and substantial damage to downstream buildings, roadways, and other infrastructure within downstream EJ census blocks if a dam failure at maximum pool were to occur. The local EJ community will also benefit from the long-term removal of contaminated sediments upstream of the dam, and restoration of this area to an improved natural state with associated benefits such as positive aesthetics, improved air quality, wildlife habitat, and heat amelioration.

Anticipated short-term construction impacts that may affect EJ populations as well as proposed mitigation measures are identified below:

- Short-term impact to vehicle and pedestrian traffic on Wahconah Street during construction would occur due to the presence of construction equipment traveling on the street and the potential need for a lane closure. This impact will be mitigated through the preparation of a Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan.
- Short-term impacts to air quality in the project area could result from the temporary operation of machinery associated with construction activities. Best management practices to control

the construction emissions would be implemented to minimize visible fugitive dust emissions at the property line.

- Short-term impacts to air quality could occur due to stockpiling and on-site management of contaminated sediments before transport out-of-state for final disposal. This impact will be mitigated through implementation of dust control such as watering and continuous air quality monitoring during construction. If air exceedances of chemical constituents in the sediment are detected, then construction activities will halt while measures are implemented to assess and address the exceedances.
- Short-term impacts to noise levels in the project area would be present during dam demolition and sediment removal from construction machinery. Mitigation measures will include scheduling work during daytime hours outside of weekend days.
- Short-term impacts to water quality could occur due to erosion and sedimentation during construction. This impact will be mitigated through use of sediment and erosion controls on-site, phasing of work in water, preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, and compliance with US EPA Construction General Permit requirements.
- Short-term impacts to vegetation and habitat will occur due to clearing of trees, shrubs, and vegetation during construction area. However, post-construction, reseeding and revegetation efforts using native species will be implemented to restore and improve this habitat.



### Attachment A

## Compliance with MassDEP Ecological Restoration General Eligibility Requirements

The text below describes how the Bel Air Dam Removal Project complies with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations regarding General Eligibility requirements regarding Ecological Restoration Projects (i.e., 310 CMR 10.13(1)).

(1) An Ecological Restoration Project shall be permitted by a Restoration Order of Conditions if it meets all of the following eligibility criteria:

(a) The project is an Ecological Restoration Project as defined in 310 CMR 10.04, is a project type listed in 310 CMR 10.13(2) through (7), and the applicant has submitted a Notice of Intent that meets all applicable requirements of 310 CMR 10.12.

The proposed project is a dam removal project, which is described in *310 CMR 10.13(2)*. Mass DCR Office of Dam Safety (ODS) intends to submit a Notice of Intent to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission that meets all requirement of *310 CMR 10.12*.

### (b) The project will further at least one of the interests identified in M.G.L. c. 131, § 40.

The Bel Air Dam Removal Project furthers the following interests identified in *M.G.L. c. 131*, § 40: flood control, storm damage prevention, prevention of pollution, and the protection of fisheries and wildlife habitat. Removal of the dam will remove a hazard that could lead to substantial downstream storm damage if the dam were to fail. The creation of floodplain habitat adjacent to the restored stream channel will contribute to the flood control interest of the WPA and its implementing regulations. Removal of the dam will allow restoration of the channel, which will contribute to fisheries habitat by improving hydrologic connectivity and water quality. Planting of native species will contribute to enhancing wildlife habitat along the restored stream corridor. The Notice of Intent (NOI) will include the following information to support the determination that the project will further the interests identified above:

- Excerpts of the DCR ODS Phase II investigation report documenting the existing Unsafe condition of the dam
- Excerpts of the Emergency Action Plan identifying the storm damage that would occur if the dam were to fail,
- Calculations regarding flood storage capacity of Bordering Land Subject to Flooding maintained/created
- Sediment sampling results documenting the contamination present
- Design drawings illustrating proposed stream channel layout, profile, and crosssections as well as details regarding post-construction native plantings, construction phasing, water management, and sediment/erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Hydrologic and Hydraulic model results documenting current flows as well as anticipated flows after dam removal and stream restoration
- Geotechnical data regarding stability of designed stream channel banks

(c) The project will not have any short-term or long-term adverse effect, as identified by the procedures established by 310 CMR 10.11, on specified habitat sites of Rare Species located within the Resource Areas that may be affected by the project or will be carried out in accordance with a habitat management plan that has been approved in writing by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and submitted with the Notice of Intent.

This project will not have any short or long-term adverse effects as there are no identified Rare Species at the project site and the project location is not within Estimated or Priority Habitat as identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. This was confirmed by doing an offsite investigation using the MassGIS online Map Viewer tool.

### (d) To the maximum extent practicable, the project will:

1. avoid adverse impacts to Resource Areas and the interests identified in M.G.L. c. 131, § 40, that can be avoided without impeding the achievement of the project's ecological restoration goals;

The Bel Air Dam Removal project will avoid adverse impacts to Resource Areas wherever possible by following best management practices and restoring habitats post-construction. The NOI will include design drawings illustrating proposed elevations and stream configuration as well as plantings and construction period stormwater management BMPs.

2. minimize adverse impacts to Resource Areas and the interests identified in M.G.L. c. 131, § 40, that are necessary to the achievement of the project's ecological restoration goals; and

The Bel Air Dam Removal project will avoid adverse impacts to Resource Areas wherever possible by following best management practices and restoring habitats post-construction. The NOI will include design drawings illustrating proposed elevations and stream configuration as well as plantings and construction period stormwater management BMPs.

3. utilize best management practices such as erosion and siltation controls and proper construction sequencing to prevent and minimize adverse construction impacts to Resource Areas and the interests identified in M.G.L. c. 131, § 40.

An erosion and sedimentation control program will be implemented during the pre-construction and construction phases to minimize impacts to Resource Areas on the project site. The NOI will include design drawings illustrating details of construction period sediment and erosion controls, such as silt socks, turbidity curtains, sedimentation basins, and other stormwater management BMPs. The project will seek approval under the US EPA Construction General Permit, and a copy of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be provided to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission.

(e) The project will not have significant adverse effects on the interests of flood control and storm damage prevention in relation to the built environment (i.e., the project will not result in a

significant increase in flooding or storm damage affecting buildings, wells, septic systems, roads or other human-made structures or infrastructure).

The proposed project will not have significant adverse effects on the interest of flood control and storm damage prevention, in relation to the built environment. If the Bel Air Dam were to fail, downstream properties and infrastructure would be immediately affected and experience significant damage. The NOI will include the following to support the conclusion that there will be no adverse effect on these interests:

- Excerpts of the DCR ODS Phase II investigation report documenting the existing Unsafe condition of the dam
- Excerpts of the Emergency Action Plan identifying the storm damage that would occur if the dam were to fail,
- Calculations regarding flood storage capacity of Bordering Land Subject to Flooding maintained/created
- Hydrologic and Hydraulic model results documenting current flows as well as anticipated flows after dam removal and stream restoration

(f) If the project will involve the dredging of 100 cubic yards of sediment or more or dredging of any amount in an Outstanding Resource Water, the Notice of Intent includes a Water Quality Certification issued by the Department in accordance with 314 CMR 9.00: 401 Water Quality Certification for Discharge of Dredged or Fill Material, Dredging, and Dredged Material Disposal in Waters of the United States Within the Commonwealth.

The proposed project will involve dredging over 100 cubic yards of sediment. As a result, this project will seek a 401 Water Quality Certification in accordance with *314 CMR 9.00* for dredging in the Waters of the United States within the Commonwealth and the issued Certificate will be included in the NOI submitted to the Conservation Commission.

(g) The project will not substantially reduce the capacity of a Resource Area to serve the habitat functions identified in 310 CMR 10.60(2). A project will be presumed to meet this eligibility criteria if the project as proposed in the Notice of Intent will be carried out in accordance with any time of year restrictions or other conditions recommended by the Division of Marine Fisheries for coastal waters, and by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife for inland waters in accordance with 310 CMR 10.11(3) through (5). As set forth in 310 CMR 10.12(3), a person submitting a Notice of Intent for an Ecological Restoration Project that meets the requirements of 310 CMR 10.12(1) and (2) is exempt from the requirement to perform a wildlife habitat evaluation in accordance with 310 CMR 10.60.

The proposed project will not substantially reduce the capacity of a resource area to serve the habitat functions identified in 310 CMR 10.60(2). No time of year restrictions have been identified in accordance with 310 CMR 10.11(3) through (5). The proposed project meets the requirement of 310 CMR 10.12(1) and (2) is exempt from the requirement to perform a wildlife habitat evaluation in accordance with 310 CMR 10.60.

(h) If the Ecological Restoration Project involves work on a stream crossing, the stream crossing has been designed in accordance with 310 CMR 10.24(10) for work in coastal Effective 10/24/2014 310 CMR: DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION resource areas and 310 CMR 10.53(8) for work in inland resource areas, as applicable.

The proposed Bel Air Dam Removal project will not involve work on a stream crossing.

(i) The Ecological Restoration Project will not result in a discharge of dredged or fill material within 400 feet of the high water mark of a Class A surface water (exclusive of its tributaries) unless the project is conducted by a public water system under 310 CMR 22.00: Drinking Water or a public agency or authority for the maintenance or repair of existing public roads or railways in accordance with 314 CMR 4.06(1)(d)1.

The proposed project will not result in a discharge of dredged or fill material within 400 feet of the high water mark of a Class A surface water. All dredged material will be temporarily stored on-site before being disposed of out-of-state.

j) The Ecological Restoration Project will not result in a discharge of dredged or fill material to a vernal pool certified by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The discharge of dredged or fill material will not occur in a certified vernal pool, as there are no vernal pools certified by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife at the project site.

(k) The Ecological Restoration Project will not result in a point source discharge to an Outstanding Resource Water.

The proposed Bel Air Dam Removal will not create a point source discharge, nor is the Bel Air impoundment classified as an Outstanding Resource Water.

### Attachment B

#### Compliance with MassDEP Wetland Protection Act Regulations Regarding Ecological Restoration Dam Removal Projects

The text below describes how the Bel Air Dam Removal Project complies with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations regarding Dam Removal projects related to Ecological Restoration Projects (i.e., *310 CMR 10.13(2)*):

(2) Additional Eligibility Criteria for Dam Removal Projects. If the Ecological Restoration Project is a dam removal project, the project shall be presumed to meet the eligibility criteria set forth in 310 CMR 10.13(1)(d), if the project is consistent with the Department's guidance entitled Dam Removal and the Wetlands Regulations, dated December 2007. If the Ecological Restoration Project is a dam removal project, the Ecological Restoration Project shall be approved by a Restoration Order of Conditions, provided that in addition to the eligibility criteria set forth in 310 CMR 10.13(1), the project meets all of the following eligibility criteria:

(a) The project will not involve the removal of a dam that was constructed or is managed for flood control by a municipal, state or federal agency

The Bel Air Dam is not a flood control dam.

(b) The project will not adversely impact public water supply wells or water withdrawals permitted or registered under the Water Management Act, M.G.L. c. 21G, and 310 CMR 36.00: Massachusetts Water Resources Management Program within the reach of the stream impacted by the impoundment.

The Bel Air Dam does not impound a water supply. The dam removal will have no impact on the City of Pittsfield water supply, which is related to other water sources in the City and not related to any impoundments or wells located upstream of the Bel Air Dam on Wahconah Street.

(c) The project will not adversely impact private water supply wells including agricultural or aquacultural wells or surface water withdrawal points.

The Bel Air Dam removal will have no impact on private wells. Based on a review of City of Pittsfield GIS data, there are no private wells located upstream of the Bel Air Dam.

(d) The project provides for the removal of the full vertical extent of the dam such that no remnant of the dam will remain at or below the streambed as determined prior to commencement of the dam removal project, or if such determination cannot be made at that time, as determined during construction of the project.

The proposed project will fully remove the entire vertical extent of the Bel Air Dam.

(e) The project provides for the removal of enough of the horizontal extent of the dam such that after removal no water will be impounded during the 500-year flood event.

The full horizontal extent of the Bel Air Dam will be removed so that no water will be impounded during the 500-year flood event.

(f) The project will not involve a hydroelectric facility requiring a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license or an amendment to a FERC license.

This project does not involve a hydroelectric facility. The Bel Air Dam was a formerly used for manufacturing and is no longer being used for that purpose.

(g) The applicant has obtained from the Department of Conservation and Recreation Office of Dam Safety a written determination that the dam is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Office under 302 CMR 10.00: Dam Safety, a written determination that the dam removal does not require a permit under 302 CMR 10.00: Dam Safety or a permit authorizing the dam removal in accordance with 302 CMR 10.00: Dam Safety has been issued.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Office of Dam Safety (ODS) has determined that the Bel Air Dam is under jurisdiction of the Office of Dam Safety and will require a Chapter 253 Permit. DCR ODS intends to issue a permit for the dam removal, and this will be included in the NOI submitted to the Pittsfield Conservation Commission.

(h) If the project is exempt from the requirement to obtain a license or permit under 310 CMR 9.05(3)(n), the project will not have an adverse effect on navigation or on any docks, piers or boat ramps authorized under 310 CMR 9.00: Waterways. (3) Additional Eligibility Criteria for Freshwater Stream Crossing Repair and Replacement.

Section 310 CMR 9.05(3) only includes subsection a through m. However, the proposed project is not exempt from the requirement to obtain a Chapter 91 license. A pre-application meeting has been held with MassDEP Waterways regarding the requirements of the application. The project will not have an adverse effect on navigation or on any docks, piers, or boat ramps.

