



Brad Farrin
Senator, District 3

132nd MAINE SENATE

3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

October 15, 2025

Laura Paye
Hydropower & Dams Program Coordinator
Bureau of Land Resources
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
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Re: Shawmut Hydroelectric Project (P-2322-069); Weston Hydroelectric Project (P-2325-100);
Lockwood Hydroelectric Project (P-2574-092); Hydro-Kennebec Hydroelectric Project (P-2611-
091)

Dear Ms. Paye,

The Shawmut Dam, which provides both power generation and an essential impoundment for operations, represents the lifeblood of Sappi North America's Somerset Mill and its nearly 800 employees. Unfortunately, it has also become a tool for certain interests within state government to advance a broader goal of dam removal across Maine.

The applications submitted by Brookfield Renewable on behalf of Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC, and the subsequent environmental measures filed in 2022, represented a fair and science-based compromise between renewable energy production and environmental protection. In its Final Environmental Impact Statement issued earlier this year, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission concluded that "the environmental measures proposed by Brookfield would protect or enhance environmental resources and would be worth the cost." FERC further determined that the measures recommended by the Department of Environmental Protection were either infeasible, unnecessary, or unsupported by the evidence.

The Department's draft Water Quality Certification issued on October 9 appears to disregard these federal findings entirely. The conditions proposed go far beyond FERC's requirements and impose obligations that are unachievable, unpredictable, and inconsistent with both federal science and state policy. This approach risks making relicensing impossible and jeopardizes hundreds of jobs, millions in investment, and one of Maine's most reliable renewable-energy assets.

Hydropower has been a cornerstone of Maine's energy strategy for generations. Our rivers powered the earliest mills and brought electricity to rural communities as far back as 1899. Today, as we face the loss of critical baseload generation and increasing demand for clean energy, it is more important than ever to preserve and strengthen this resource. Unfortunately, the actions of the Department undermine that legacy by creating regulatory uncertainty that discourages investment and destabilizes communities that depend on hydropower.

The Department's draft certification also ignores the clear legislative intent found in Title 38, which declares that "the surface waters of the State constitute a valuable indigenous and renewable energy resource" and that "it is the policy of the State to support and encourage the development of hydropower projects by simplifying and clarifying requirements for permits." The Department's ever-changing and overly burdensome conditions do the opposite, creating confusion and discouraging responsible development.

In an open letter to Sappi employees dated Aug. 26, 2021, Gov. Janet Mills assured everyone that "the mill isn't going anywhere." However, the process your Department has followed and the stipulations contained within this draft order makes those words ring hollow. By disregarding both legislative intent and federal findings, the Department is placing the future of the Somerset Mill, its workers and the surrounding business community in serious jeopardy.

The Department should withdraw its draft certification and replace it with a reasonable, science-based order that aligns with state law, respects federal expertise, and protects both Maine's renewable energy future and the livelihoods of Maine people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Farrin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a long, sweeping tail.

Brad Farrin
State Senator