

How Can You Get Involved?



Clean Water. Healthy Habitats. Resilient Communities.

Connecticut River Conservancy

Learn:

The Connecticut River Conservancy is hosting a series of informational meetings. Attend these sessions to learn about the projects and the proposed protection mitigation and enhancement measures. You can also review New Hampshire's page on 401 applications:



Comment:

Make sure your voice is heard! An essential part of the 401 certification process is the public commenting period. The VDEC will release public notice when a draft decision has been issued for the dam projects. Sign up for CRC's hydropower eblasts at ctriver.org/email and we'll let you know when there are public information sessions and when you can submit public comments.



About us:

The Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) restores and advocates for clean water, healthy habitats, and resilient communities to support a diverse and thriving watershed. Through collaborative partnerships in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, CRC leads and supports science-based efforts for natural and life-filled rivers from source to sea.

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Your River Stewards!



Left to right: Nina Gordon-Kirsch (MA), Rhea Drozdenko (CT), Kate Buckman (NH), Kathy Urffer (VT)

401 Water Quality Certifications for the Wilder, Bellows Falls, Vernon Dams

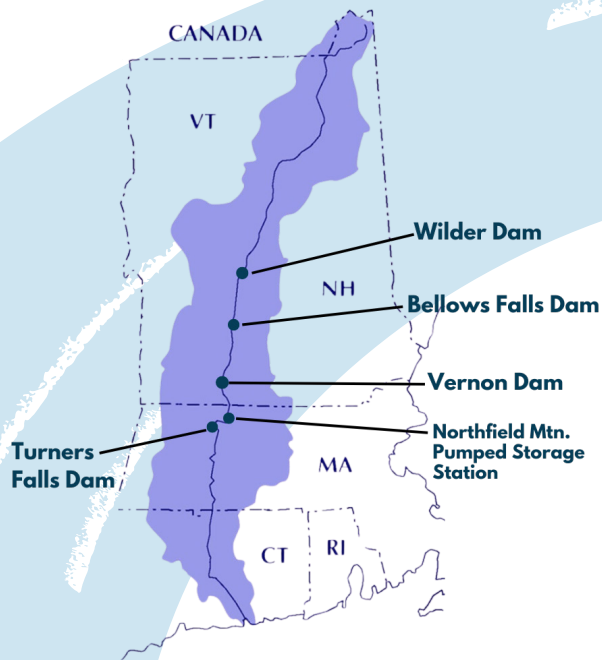
A Guide for New Hampshire Residents



Vernon Dam photo by Al Braden

Background Information

Great River Hydroelectric (GRH) is applying to relicense the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon hydroelectric facilities located on the Connecticut River. As part of the relicensing process, they must apply for a Section 401 water quality (WQ) certification from the State of New Hampshire. These certifications last up to 50 years and will affect 124 miles of the river! The public commenting period of the 401 application is your opportunity to make your voice heard about the impacts of these hydroelectric dams on river ecology and recreation opportunities: these dams generate significant profits by harnessing our river's power, so it's only fair that some of those profits are reinvested to protect and provide access to the river.



What is the 401 Process?

Under the Clean Water Act, the State of New Hampshire has the right to protect water quality in the face of a federal action. The Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon hydroelectric facilities are about to receive a new license from the federal government to operate for the next 40 years. As part of this process, GRH was required to apply for a 401 WQ certification. Whatever is required as a condition in this certification automatically becomes part of the federal license.

Water Quality Standards in NH

In New Hampshire, waters are classified based on their designated uses to ensure they meet specific quality standards for each use. Broadly, NH standards are designed to protect designated uses of surface waters, which include aquatic life/ecology, recreation, drinking water, fish safe for consumption, and habitat that can support life.

- **Ecology:** Ensures the health of aquatic ecosystems, supporting diverse fish and wildlife.
- **Recreation:** Maintains water quality for safe and enjoyable recreational activities, such as boating and swimming.
- **Antidegradation:** Aspects of water quality statutes ensure that water quality and uses are maintained and protected from getting worse.

You can learn more about NH water quality standards here:
<https://www.des.nh.gov/water/surface-water-quality-standards>

Source: New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Hydroelectric Dam Impacts on Water Quality

Ecology

- **Dissolved Oxygen:**
Dams can reduce dissolved oxygen (DO) by slowing water down and trapping organic materials and sediment. DO is essential for the growth and reproduction of aerobic aquatic life, such as fish and invertebrates.
- **Thermal Pollution:**
Dams can cause thermal pollution in rivers by altering water temperature patterns and releasing cold or warm water. Water temperature is a critical environmental parameter for aquatic habitats.
- **Sedimentation:**
Because dams are built to store water, they also store the sediment that all rivers carry. Managing this sediment is a significant challenge for dam operators.

Recreation

Dams can impede access to recreational opportunities. GRH should create comprehensive improvements to recreation access and provide ADA-compliant recreation amenities.



Source: EPA, *Riverine Ecosystem Management*