



Clean water. Healthy habitat. Thriving communities.

**Connecticut River
Conservancy**

Take Action

for Your Rivers

Hydro Update: FERC Publishes the Draft Environmental Impact Statements for Five Hydropower Facilities



Comment Period for Draft Environmental Impact Statements Are Open!

On May 30th, 2025 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released two separate Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEIS)

for the five hydropower facilities on the Connecticut River that are currently undergoing relicensing.

Environmental Impact Statements are required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA was signed into law on January 1, 1970 and requires federal agencies to assess and evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions.

The DEIS contains FERC's analysis of Great River Hydro and FirstLight's proposals and the alternatives for relicensing the Wilder (P-1892), Bellows Falls (P-1855), Vernon (P-1904), Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage (P-2485), and Turners Falls (P-1889) projects. The DEIS documents the views of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, affected Native-American tribes, the public, the license applicant(s), and Commission staff. The Environmental Impact Statement is the last major step in the relicensing process.

This DEIS reviews the effects of continued project operation and recommends conditions for any licenses that may be issued for the projects. In addition to the applicant's proposal, the draft EIS considers three alternatives for each project: (1) no action, meaning the project would continue to be operated as it currently is with no changes; (2) the applicant's proposal with staff modifications (staff alternative); and (3) the staff alternative with all mandatory conditions.

In the DEIS, Commission staff recommend relicensing the projects under the *Staff Alternative*, which includes most of the applicants' proposed measures, as well as certain mandatory conditions and recommendations made by state and federal agencies and some staff-recommended modifications to further minimize project-related effects on shoreline erosion, aquatic and terrestrial resources, threatened and endangered species, recreation, and cultural resources.

[Learn More About the FERC Relicensing Process](#)

Draft EIS for Great River Hydro Projects



FERC released a DEIS which examines the environmental impact of Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon facilities in VT and NH. In this DEIS, FERC staff identify the primary issues to be:

1. Shoreline erosion along the Connecticut River
2. Water quantity, including how the volume of peaking flows and magnitude of water surface fluctuations in the Connecticut River affect aquatic habitat and recreation access
3. Fish passage
4. Protection of threatened and endangered species
5. Protection of cultural resources

In addition to or in lieu of sending written comments, you can attend an in-person public comment session that will be held to receive comments on the draft EIS. The primary goal of these comment sessions is to have you identify the specific environmental issues and concerns with the [DEIS](#). Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available throughout the

comment session to answer your questions about the environmental review process.

In-Person Public Comment Sessions

July 17, 2025

Session A: 1pm - 3pm

Session B: 6pm - 8pm

Bellows Falls Opera House

7 Village Square

Bellows Falls, VT 05101

Read the Great River Hydro DEIS

Draft EIS for FirstLight Projects



FERC released a draft EIS which examines the environmental impact of Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage and Turners Falls facilities in MA, NH and VT. In this draft EIS, FERC staff identify the primary issues to be:

1. Shoreline erosion along the Connecticut River
2. Water quantity, including how the volume of peaking flows and magnitude of water surface fluctuations in the Connecticut River affect aquatic habitat and recreation access
3. Fish passage
4. Protection of threatened and endangered species
5. Protection of cultural resources

In addition to or in lieu of sending written comments, you can attend an in-person public comment session that will be held to receive comments on the draft EIS. The primary goal of these comment sessions is to have you identify the specific environmental issues and concerns with the [draft EIS](#). Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available throughout the comment session to answer your questions about the environmental review process.

In-Person Public Comment Sessions

July 16, 2025

Session A: 9am - 11am

Session B: 6pm - 8pm

Greenfield Community College

One College Drive

Greenfield, MA 01301

[Read the FirstLight DEIS](#)

Submitting Online Comments



The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing. Please file comments using the Commission's [eComment](#) or [eFiling](#) system.

eComment Option: Limited to individuals filing up to 10,000 characters of text-only comments on their own behalf.

eFiling Option: You must have or create an account and use this system if you are filing:

- On behalf of a company, agency, organization, association, or other non-individual
- Comments exceeding 10,000 characters
- Non-text material (exhibits, photos) or file attachments

All comments must be filed on or before 5:00pm EST on July 29, 2025.

How to File a Comment

Up Next



Kathy, Nina, and Marilla are hard at work reading all 1,000 pages of the draft EIS (thanks to plenty of caffeine). Our goal is to disseminate and consolidate information from these long and dense documents into a digestible format so YOU can participate in the public comment process as well.

Keep an eye out early next month for a short video and summary outlining CRC's top concerns from the draft EISs.

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*We want to thank you for your continued support, interest, and engagement in this lengthy process. Our collective voices help to protect the river and provide clean water, healthy habitats, and resilient communities in the Connecticut River Watershed.*

**CRC Hydropower Relicensing**

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The Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) restores and advocates for clean water, healthy habitats, and resilient communities to support a diverse and thriving watershed. CRC has been a steward of the Connecticut River and tributary streams since 1952. 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. Learn more at [ctriver.org](http://ctriver.org).



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