

Belchertown Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 152  
Belchertown, MA 01007

March 9, 2009

Massachusetts Environmental Trust  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Fate of the Upper Bondsville Dam: A  
Public Outreach Project  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Dear Sirs:

The Belchertown Land Trust, Inc. (BLT), supports the application filed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) for the Upper Bondsville Dam project.

In late 2005, BLT took possession of an abandoned property to safeguard public access to open space along the Swift River. As part of this acquisition, the Land Trust became owners of the Upper Bondsville Dam, which spans some 120 feet across the Swift River between Belchertown and Palmer, and forms a 58-acre impoundment of the Swift River below the Quabbin Windsor Dam. The dam, built in 1900 and long abandoned as a power source, presents serious public safety concerns. The Office of Dam Safety has rated the dam as a significant hazard and during its last inspection of the dam in 1999 deemed it to be in poor condition. If the dam fails, there would be destruction of property and possible loss of life. The dam is also a dangerous infrastructure to the public, and cannot be made completely safe.

BLT is hard pressed to come up with monies not only to inspect the dam, but repair and maintain the dam over the long term. Dam removal presents an opportunity to restore ecological values as is evidenced by the restoration potential model developed in June 2007 by the Mass. Dept. of Fish & Game's Riverways Program. Conversely, the impoundment area creates a significant body of water that is extensively used by boaters, kayakers, fishermen, swimming, and as an aesthetically pleasing area for all manner of recreational minded or environmentally conscious persons.

PVPC has agreed to help us tackle this problem, by offering to develop a public outreach campaign to determine the fate of the dam. This is an activity that BLT is not equipped to handle, given the volunteer nature of its members, and lack of organizational expertise. The proposal put forth by PVPC is seen as a necessary step to resolution of a problem that has begged resolution for many years. We ask that you give this application every consideration. If there are any questions or discussion would be helpful, please contact me at 413-323-4741.

Sincerely,



*for* James Fox  
President, BLT