

December 20, 2017

Kinnickinnic River Corridor Planning Committee
City Hall
222 Lewis Street
River Falls, WI 54022

Re: River Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No.10489) - Kinnickinnic River

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of American Rivers' more than 275,000 members and supporters in Wisconsin and nationwide to urge you to take this opportunity to restore the Kinnickinnic River and pursue the surrender and ultimate removal of the two dams owned by the City of River Falls.

Since 1973, American Rivers has protected and restored more than 150,000 miles of rivers through advocacy efforts, on-the-ground projects, and an annual *America's Most Endangered Rivers®* campaign. The Upper Mississippi River Basin is one of 11 priority river watersheds for American Rivers where we are actively working to protect and restore rivers by reforming river management, removing dams and restoring floodplains.

More than 1,400 dams have been removed in the United States and American Rivers has managed, supported and/or promoted many of those projects. There is no faster, more effective way to bring a river back to life than by removing a dam, which is why American Rivers supports the surrender of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license on project number 10489 and subsequent removal of the two dams on the Kinnickinnic River. American Rivers plans to participate as a stakeholder organization in any future license surrender or relicensing process.

The Kinnickinnic River is a world class trout stream and major tributary to the St. Croix River, one of the nation's first Wild and Scenic Rivers. Unfortunately, two dams on the lower Kinnickinnic River are significantly degrading vital habitat for fish and wildlife. Removing the dams would lower water temperatures and revive the river rapids that once flowed through the community. These habitat improvements will benefit popular sport fish populations of brook & brown trout, and federally-endangered mussels including the Higgins Eye pearl mussel (*Lampsilis higginsii*), Spectaclecase Mussel (*Cumberlandia monodonta*), and Snuffbox Mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*).

Dam removal also has many economic and public safety benefits. Dam removal can increase property values and spur new businesses that support new boating and fishing opportunities on the river. Dams also create dangerous river currents that can trap people and animals and can cause flooding problems if the infrastructure fails unexpectedly. By removing a dam, these unique safety hazards disappear, and new recreational opportunities are created.

For these reasons, American Rivers supports FERC license surrender, decommissioning of the project, and subsequent dam removal in a timely fashion. The hydropower in operation at the dams only generates 375 kWh, or about 1 - 2 percent of the energy used by the community. The public value of restoring the Kinnickinnic greatly outweighs the continued operation of the project.

We hope the restoration of the Kinnickinnic River proceeds in such a way to keep decisions at the local level.
We hope that

1. The Licensee surrenders the License leaving the project facilities in place while reaching an agreement with all Stakeholders to develop a plan for restoration of the Kinnickinnic River through dam removal and the project becomes a non- generating facility;
2. FERC jurisdiction for dam regulation transfers to the State of Wisconsin DNR; and
3. With the dams in place and under State jurisdiction, we are able to implement the plan to remove both dams and completely restore the floodplain corridor that was impounded and land otherwise affected by the former hydro project.

We hope the Committee finds our input useful and that you give serious consideration to dam removal and restoration as you continue with river corridor planning for the Kinnickinnic River.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Olivia Dorothy".

Olivia Dorothy, Associate Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin

Cc: Corridor Planning Committee members, City Hall, River Falls, WI
Ms. Kimberly Bose, Secretary, FERC, Washington D.C.
Michael Page, *Friends of the Kinni*, River Falls, WI
Dave Fodroczi, *Kinnickinnic River Land Trust*, River Falls, WI
Randy Thoreson, NPS, Twin Cities, MN
Angie Tornes, NPS, Milwaukee, WI
Nick Utrup, FWS, Bloomington, MN
Cheryl Laatch, Wisconsin DNR, Horicon, WI
Jim Fossum, *JDFossum Environmental Consulting*, Winona, MN