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Organization:

Title:

Comments: May 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Comments on Woodstock Dam Removal Project

FROM: Susan B. Norton, property owner on Millertown Rd, Edinburg VA 22824

TO: Gregg Slezak, USDA Forest Service (USFS)

CC: Aaron Grisdale, Woodstock Town Manager

Joby Timm, Forest Supervisor

I am writing in response to the opportunity to provide comments on the Woodstock Dam Removal Project. My husband Douglas Norton and I have owned a cabin on Millertown Road, Woodstock VA since 1996. Our cabin is shown to be within the impact zone of the project on the Proposed Action map.

Support/Nonsupport

The information we have been provided to date is insufficient to reach a conclusion of support/nonsupport for the project. I would be happy to review the proposal again when Forest Service/Town of Woodstock's approach to the following concerns have been described.

Concerns

1. Millertown Road Impact

Millertown Road is a one-lane gravel road for the last 1/3 mile. The heavy equipment needed to remove the dam and debris is likely to damage the road. The low-water bridge across Poplar run is currently in disrepair (the concrete slab is cracked in several places) and cannot be crossed by heavy trucks or equipment without further damage that may destroy access to our dwellings. The water line feeding most of the cabins is adjacent to the bridge and is vulnerable to damage.

The dam removal plan should include plans for

- *reinforcing or replacing the low-water bridge crossing Poplar Run prior to the project's commencement
- *protecting the water line during the project
- *repairing the gravel section of Millertown Rd. and the low-water bridge post-project completion.

2. Residential water supply Impact

It is unclear whether what is termed 'removal of dam-related infrastructure' may also remove or impact the existing Town water supply that serves the majority of the dwellings just below the dam. This is bound to be a serious concern for several of us, considering the very high connection fees for water service some of us have paid not too long ago. We would appreciate a commitment from the Town that the proposed project will not affect current water supply services to the area.

3. Debris management/removal

The dam removal option should specify the plans for concrete debris management. Leaving the debris adjacent to the dam site should NOT be an option.

4. Silt management/removal

There are substantial silt deposits at the bottom of the reservoir, which became apparent during the 2004 draw-down for dam repairs. The dam removal plan should specify plans for removing, contouring, and/or stabilizing

the silt before it flows downstream into all our currently healthy stream reaches.

5.Stream-side vegetation management

The plan must include details for actively restoring native vegetation to the new riparian zone. Unfortunately, the Forest Service/Town of Woodstock cannot use a hands-off "Let Nature Take Its Course" approach in this area. In addition to the high probability that invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed will take hold, there is currently a large stand of mature, seed-bearing Ailanthus trees adjacent to the reservoir. This stand is primed to colonize the newly exposed reservoir bottom and harbor an infestation of Spotted Lanternfly, which in turn will adversely affect Shenandoah County agriculture. In our 28 years of regularly visiting Little Stony, we have observed that the beavers avoid eating Ailanthus, instead targeting the native species in the riparian zone, leading to increased Ailanthus dominance.

6.Increased Flood Risk

By removing the reservoir's floodwater detention effect that offers some flood protection to downstream dwellings, this project will increase the risk of flooding to the downstream cabins and Millertown Road. How is the Forest Service and Town of Woodstock intending to mitigate this risk? Should a future flood compromise Millertown Road or the bridge over Poplar Run, can the Little Stony community count on the Forest Service or Town of Woodstock for repair assistance?

7.Native Brook Trout

We applaud the Forest Service's interest in enhancing habitat for our native brook trout, but we believe the actions as described may instead harm or even extirpate them from the lower reaches of Little Stony Creek. Right now, the reservoir serves as an important cold-water summer refuge for the trout. The dam serves as an important barrier against stocked fish migrating upstream from Big Stony Creek. It is unclear how the trout population will be enhanced as a result of this project.

Communication

We were happy to see the Forest Service and Town of Woodstock meet with the community in March. A project of this extent, complexity, potential landowner impact and expense should include plans for frequent (i.e., no less frequent than every 6 months) in person meetings with the community of Little Stony property owners.

Very Truly Yours,

Susan B. Norton