

To whom it may concern,

On July 27th at 4:30pm, I received a text from my wife, Sarah Sindo, saying the West Branch Penobscot had dropped to bare minimum flow. I finished up work quickly to head up to the river. At about 5:15pm, I encountered a colleague of mine, Noah Duncan, at Little Ambajackamokamus Rapids who was in the process of saving stranded fish from a dewatered gravel bar. I joined in the effort and we returned roughly 25-30 baby fish mostly 1-3 inches back to the river, who were either completely out of the water still flopping, or stranded in micro pockets of water. Most needed gentle tugs by the tail to help get water into their gills to help bring them back till they swam off. While we were saving stranded fish we started compiling dead fish. Soon we were no longer finding anything alive and between 5:45 and 6:45 we searched for more dead fish. In total, Noah and I recovered 39 dead fish in about 1.5 hours on roughly 100 yards of shoreline river right at Little A Rapids. I am not familiar enough to correctly identify the species of fish found.

I was disgusted by this experience. We learned that the outage at McKay Station causing a 83% reduction of the river flow was caused by a cross member on GLHA's powerline pole snapped and caused a small forest fire. It is easy to deduce that if GLHA properly maintained their infrastructure this might never have happened.

GLHA and Brookfield Renewable Power were granted the privilege to generate power and profits off the peoples river. This privilege came with the responsibility of protecting the ecosystems affected by their for-profit operations. GLHA and Brookfield have not taken this responsibility seriously and have neglected the aging infrastructure. I feel justified in using this term because this isn't the first time a powerline system failure has caused the river to shut off instantly. These system failures have been an annual occurrence in my 18 years as a river guide on the West Branch Penobscot. These trip events have been caused by lightning strikes, vehicle accidents, powerline failures, and even a logging truck with a log sticking out too high taking out a powerline. Whatever the cause of these accidents to happen they still seem to happen annually. The current operating license fails to dictate an adequate back up plan for these trip events. In the case of the 7/27 event, water was not restored for a minimum of 2.5 hours. This is completely unacceptable in my view, as there are many ways to reduce the amount of time the water levels are reduced. There are many stakeholder suggestions already on the docket that outline a variety of options to reduce the time water levels are at bare minimum.

I am writing this report to put on record that GLHA clearly does not take the responsibility of maintaining aquatic habitat seriously. FERC must hold GLHA fully accountable in this event, and that FERC, in the new license. Must require GLHA to make investments in their overall infrastructure to reduce the amount of time the river is dewatered to no longer than 30 minutes, to reduce these mass kill offs of aquatic wildlife. Brookfield Renewable sits with over 1 billion dollars of liquidity, surely they can spend a fraction of that to protect our ancient, cherished, sacred, and PUBLIC waterways.

My asks for new license requirements:

1. Reduce trip event dewater events to maximum 30 minutes
2. Require quarterly inspections and maintenance of powerline systems, using unaffiliated and LOCAL contractors to inspect, update, and maintain powerline systems
3. Require GLHA to pay a quarterly dividend to Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
4. Require GLHA to pay a quarterly dividend to the Penobscot Nation
5. Require GLHA to pay a quarterly dividend to the Penobscot River Corridor department of Bureau of Parks and Lands

