

Beyer, Jim R

From: fburroug@bowdoin.edu
Sent: Thursday, October 11, 2018 9:44 AM
To: DEP, NECEC
Subject: [EXTERNAL SENDER] CMP Corridor

At the suggestion of Cathy Johnson of NRCM, I am enclosing a letter concerning the proposed CMP corridor across the Kennebec at Forks Plantation. It was originally sent to the Assessors at the Forks. Thank you for considering it.

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133 Bay Road
Bowdoinham, ME 04008

Assessors

Oct 7, 2018

The Forks Plantation

PO Box 77

West Forks, Maine 04985

Dear Assessors:

I first began fishing on the Kennebec in 1971—before the advent of whitewater rafting. At that time, pulpwood was still being run down the river. I have fished it every summer since then. In 1985, I joined with a group of friends to build a camp on High Country Road, just north of Kelly Brook. The camp is called Piscator; its President, CEO, and Treasurer—the man who collects the dues and pays the taxes—is John Cullen, of Topsham, Maine.

I am opposed to the proposed corridor for the following reasons.

- 1) The uniqueness of the Kennebec between Harris Station and the Forks.

This stretch of river has only three significant access points—at Harris Station, where the rafting trips begin; at Carry Brook, where a stairway allows kayakers, canoeists, and fishermen to get down into the gorge; and at the old Moxie Stream Road, which ends at the stream, about a quarter of a mile from where it empties into the river. In addition, there are a variety of unmarked footpaths, mostly on the east side of the river. These are used primarily by fishermen.

Under the normal release schedule, the river has a split personality. At low flow, it is a quiet, very private river for fishermen who are willing to get up early and do a little walking. Or who want to take a guided float trip from Carry Brook down to the Ballfield. In my 47 years of fishing there, the fishing has dramatically improved, in part because of discontinuing the pulp drives, and especially because of the adjustments made in flow levels and fishing regulations after the Harris Station relicensing process in 1999.

Anyone who fly fishes for trout and salmon knows how rare—indeed, almost unheard of—it is to have quality fishing within easy driving distance of civilization in an unspoiled setting, and to have it in solitude.

Later in the morning—usually between 11:00 AM and noon in the areas I fish—the river rises suddenly, and becomes a whitewater rafting river, full of people having serious fun, and encountering a place that seems to belong to another world, or another era of history, from Boston or New York or Portland or wherever it is they came from. In terms of the local economy, the rafting companies that make this experience possible are far more important than the fishermen. But the point is that, at present, the Kennebec River provides for two very different kinds of outdoor recreation. One is exciting, festive, convivial, thrilling. The other is calm, focused, observant, and deliberate. Neither impinges upon the other.

In addition, many visitors to the Forks—fishermen, rafters, hikers, leaf-peepers, and others—pay a visit to Moxie Falls, a short walk from a well-marked parking area and across the Old Moxie Road to a couple of handsome platforms, which provide a fine view of the falls, and access to a couple of nice swimming holes. The falls are among the highest in New England, and are spectacular, particularly in the spring.

2) The proposed corridor itself.

The corridor would not, technically speaking, be an access point to the river. But it would destroy the river's special sense of seclusion, in the same way that a highway bridge across it would. I am not arguing that the Kennebec between Harris Station and the Forks is a pristine wilderness river. Of course it is not—its flow has been artificially regulated since the building of the dam at Indian Pond in the early 50's. But this stretch of river—both the magnificent gorge and quieter stretches like the one upriver from Moxie Stream, where the power lines would cross—has become something absolutely unique. Unlike the famous rafting and fishing water on the West Branch of the Penobscot, it does not run parallel to a major log-road. The people who fish or raft are within easy driving distance of their homes; US 201, a major highway, is only a few miles away. But rafters, paddlers, fishermen, and others who go there can experience one of the least altered and most dramatic river corridors east of the Mississippi.

Even if we grant that areas to the south of us need more power, and that creating a huge corridor across Maine is cheaper than the remaining alternatives, why must the power lines cross the Kennebec at this particular point? The river is wide here; the span will be very long, very high, and very visible. It is not clear to me whether the proposed corridor will make use of the Old Moxie Stream Road or not. But it seems highly likely to compromise the unspoiled setting of the magnificent falls, and of the walk through the woods to get to them.

The answer, of course, is money. Since the most logical route, down through New Hampshire, was blocked, the proposed route was the cheapest, and therefore, from the corporate point of view, the best.

From the point of view of the river and the people who enjoy it in all its moods, the logical crossing place is the dam at Harris Station. The river is narrow here. There is already a wide transmission line corridor on the east side of the river leading to the dam. No illusion of wilderness or seclusion will be compromised by another set of high tension lines running across the dam. But rather than negotiate with Brookfield Energy, which would no doubt involve time and money, about using this existing route, CMP will instead do irreparable harm to one of New England's last great places.

Within a few years, the expense of this project will not matter. It will have recovered its costs many times over. But once the privacy of the river corridor has been destroyed, it can never be recovered. The Forks will have lost a vital part of what makes it such a unique community, and one of the great rivers in the eastern United States will have been deemed unworthy of protecting.

Thank you for your attention.

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