



The State of New Hampshire  
**Department of Environmental Services**



**Robert R. Scott, Commissioner**

September 25, 2026

John Magee  
Chair, Piscataquog River Local Advisory Committee  
32 Circle View Drive  
Newbury, NH 03255

RE: Proposed Hadley Falls drawdown

Dear Chair Magee and Members of the Piscataquog River Local Advisory Committee:

Thank you for your letter regarding the proposed late-season drawdown of the Hadley Falls Dam beginning October 19, 2026. The NHDES Dam Bureau appreciates PRLAC's review and offers the following responses to your questions and recommendations.

***Rare, Threatened, and Sensitive Species***

**Given the known presence of wood turtles and brook floater mussels within the Piscataquog River watershed, PRLAC recommends that the NHDES Dam Bureau coordinate the October drawdown with the appropriate staff at the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department responsible for rare, Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern species. PRLAC requests that consideration be given to potential impacts to these and other aquatic and riparian species during the drawdown.** NHDES will coordinate the Hadley Falls drawdown with our engineering consultant and NH Fish and Game as necessary to minimize impacts to species of concern identified in the ARM Grant Agreement. This coordination includes reviewing exposed areas for these species during the drawdown and minimizing the duration of the drawdown as much as possible to avoid exposed areas from experiencing freezing temperatures.

***Archaeological and Historic Resources***

**PRLAC recommends that the NHDES Dam Bureau coordinate with the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources to ensure that any potentially significant archaeological or historic resources exposed during the drawdown are appropriately identified, evaluated, and protected.** Because the drawdown will temporarily expose areas that are normally inundated, NHDES will collect survey and photographic documentation during the process to help identify any archaeological or historic resources revealed as water levels recede. This documentation effort is part of reducing "unknowns" for future design and permitting and ensures that any significant resources can be evaluated before final engineering decisions are made. Coordination with the appropriate state historical authorities will occur as needed once features are identified.

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### ***Potential Release of Contaminants***

**What measures has the NHDES Dam Bureau considered to evaluate and minimize the potential release or mobilization of contaminants that may be present within accumulated sediments during the drawdown? Has NHDES Dam Bureau completed their review of toxic or contaminated sediment and when will a report be available for public review?** Sediment characterization performed upstream of Hadley Falls Dam in 2025 documented the presence of metals and SVOCs, low-level PFAS, and no detections of VOCs, PCBs, herbicides, or pesticides. A second round of downstream sediment sampling was completed in late summer 2026 and is currently undergoing laboratory analysis. NHDES is including the 2025 data with this response and will make the 2026 results publicly available once compiled. Although the deteriorated low-level gate has not operated in approximately 20 years and some localized sediment discharge may occur when it is opened, NHDES will install a downstream silt boom to minimize sediment movement and will begin the drawdown using the stoplog bay upstream of the former hydropower facility before opening the gate.

### ***Sediment Mobilization***

**What measures will be taken to minimize excessive or unintended sediment transport downstream during the drawdown? PRLAC would also appreciate information regarding any planned monitoring of turbidity, sediment movement, or downstream water quality.** To limit unintended sediment transport, NHDES will conduct the drawdown at a rate of 6 inches to 1 foot per day, continuously monitoring turbidity and sediment movement behavior throughout the process. Because the gate is deteriorated and may require heavy equipment to open, NHDES anticipates minor sediment release in the immediate vicinity of the gate. The downstream silt boom and real-time visual field monitoring will allow staff to pause or adjust operations if sediment or turbid water begins moving downstream into Glenn Lake.

### ***Post-Drawdown Water Level***

**What is the purpose of restoring the impoundment to a water surface elevation approximately 1 to 1.5 feet below its current level following the drawdown? PRLAC recommends that NHDES consider restoring the impoundment to its pre-drawdown water surface elevation for the winter unless there is a demonstrated environmental, operational, or public-safety reason for maintaining the lower level.** The impoundment will be refilled to approximately 1 to 1.5 feet below its normal elevation for the future to allow for continued monitoring of groundwater behavior near municipal drinking-water wells to fully understand any potential impacts. This lower level provides additional discharge capacity, reduces hydraulic loading on the structure, assists with ongoing analysis and design, and supports passive shoreline restoration. As a high-hazard dam with limited discharge capability, maintaining a slightly reduced water level also provides additional storage and operational flexibility during storm events.

***Flooding, Streambank Erosion, and Sediment Transport***

**What contingency measures does the NHDES Dam Bureau have in place to address streambank erosion, sediment transport, or other impacts should an unexpected high-water or flooding event occur during the drawdown period?** NHDES will monitor bank stability, erosion, and sediment movement throughout the drawdown, with the ability to slow or stop flow changes if shoreline instability or unexpected conditions arise. The drawdown rate is intentionally gradual to limit bank stress, and if a high-water or storm event occurs, NHDES can pause gate operations and reassess conditions.

***Waterfowl Hunting and River Access***

**PRLAC understands that waterfowl hunting occurs along portions of the Piscataquog River upstream of the Hadley Falls Dam. During the drawdown, portions of the river may become difficult or impossible to navigate by boat, potentially affecting access for waterfowl hunting and other recreational activities. Has NHDES Dam Bureau evaluated these potential access impacts, and how will the public be informed about changes in navigability and river access during the drawdown?** Because the drawdown will lower water levels upstream of Hadley Falls Dam, some areas may become difficult to navigate, affecting access for waterfowl hunting and other recreation. NHDES has notified New Hampshire Fish and Game, and since there are no public boat launches on this reach of the Piscataquog, users will likely continue accessing the river as they do now, navigating more exposed shoreline as levels drop. Much of the drawdown area is within downtown Goffstown, where hunting is already restricted under state regulations prohibiting discharge within 300 feet of occupied residences.

Thank you again for your continued engagement and should any committee members have additional questions, please feel free to contact me at [corey.j.clark@des.nh.gov](mailto:corey.j.clark@des.nh.gov) or 603-271-1961.

Sincerely,



Corey Clark  
Chief Engineer  
NHDES – Dam Bureau

Enclosures: 2026 – Sediment Characterization Report – Hadley Falls Dam