
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5355 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING THE WATER RESOURCES OF THE UPPER FARMINGTON RIVER VALLEY.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to make Colebrook River Lake Dam release and holdback requests to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as needed, to achieve an optimum flow in the Farmington River for fish and wildlife, recreation, the river's health, flood risk reduction, tourism, hydropower, and safety. The commissioner must consult with the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) when doing this. (Colebrook River Lake Dam is on the west branch of the Farmington River in Colebrook.)

The bill also requires MDC to release from the Goodwin Dam the amount of water released from the Colebrook Dam based on the DEEP commissioner's requests. This applies regardless of any state statute or special act. (The Goodwin Dam is on the west branch of the Farmington River just east of Colebrook, downstream from the Colebrook River Lake Dam.)

Lastly, the bill requires the DEEP commissioner to report to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2025, on recommended ways for the state to manage Colebrook River Lake waters between 701 and 641 feet in case the federal government releases MDC from its responsibility for these waters. The report must address the state's interest in achieving an optimum flow for fish and wildlife, recreation, the river's health, flood risk reduction, tourism, hydropower, and safety. The commissioner must consult with relevant stakeholders when preparing the report.

*House Amendment "A" applies the MDC requirement relating to the Goodwin Dam regardless of any special act.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 34 Nay 0 (03/15/2024)