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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vermont DEC Moves to Decommission, Remove
Green River Dam in Morrisville

This week, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued its Final Water Quality Certification to Morrisville Water and Light (MWL) for hydropower developments at the Green River Reservoir, Lake Elmore, Morrisville, and Cady Falls. The Water Quality Certification will be incorporated into the federal hydropower license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to assure compliance with the Clean Water Act over the next 30 to 50 years, and may lead to dam removal.

Under the conditions mandated by DEC, MWL will be required to reduce hydropower generation at the Green River Dam to such an extent that the project will likely no longer be an economically viable source of energy. According to MWL, the utility is unwilling to operate the hydropower project at a loss, and that may lead to draining the reservoir and dam removal. Unprofitable hydropower dams are commonly removed as they are a costly liability to maintain and could pose a safety hazard. The removal of the Green River Reservoir Dam would eliminate the Green River Reservoir and result in the loss of Loon and other wildlife habitat and recreational use of the reservoir. Decommissioning of the project will also lead to an increase in electric rates for MWL customers according to MWL.

According to Bob Nasdor, Northeast Stewardship Director at American Whitewater, a national river conservation and whitewater boating advocacy organization, “The removal of the Green River Dam would restore the Green River to its natural state and restore natural aquatic habitat and boating opportunities. With this said, the loss of Green River Reservoir would be felt by many.”

If however the dam is not removed, the new State decision does not bode well for the Green River or the people that treasure it. Bob Nasdor notes: “The new Water Quality Certificate would perpetuate unnatural flows in the river, while limiting paddling opportunities and ecologically important spring flows, not to mention a large percentage if not all of hydropower generation.”

The Green River downstream of the Green River Dam is popular with whitewater boaters. Currently, MWL provides a number of whitewater releases in the spring and late

fall that attract experienced boaters from the US and Canada seeking to run its challenging rapids. American Whitewater, along with the Vermont Paddlers Club, has been involved with efforts to relicense the hydropower project through participation in the boating study and through advocacy to FERC and DEC.

The DEC Water Quality Certification stands in stark contrast to the FERC environmental review that proposed to balance profitable power generation with non-power values including aquatic habitat and recreation. The State Certificate must be adopted by the FERC, unless it is overturned through an appeal.

American Whitewater has offered support for the more balanced Federal proposal that pairs power generation with environmental and recreational improvements, and also supports the apparent dam removal goals of the State. The organization does not support the flows required in the new Water Quality Certification

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