



CITY OF ANN ARBOR  
WATER TREATMENT SERVICES

July 16, 2009

Mr. Byron Lane, P.E., Chief  
Dam Safety Program  
Land and Water Management Division  
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
525 West Allegan St  
Lansing, MI 48909

Subject: Argo Dam, Dam ID 559, Washtenaw County

Dear Mr. Lane:

The City of Ann Arbor is pleased to provide you with a letter summarizing our progress to date and providing you with a schedule for our efforts to further evaluate the future of Argo Dam.

The Huron River and Impoundment Management Plan Committee developed a final report to the Environmental Commission, Park Advisory Commission, and City Council after two years of meetings and three very well attended public meetings. A public hearing was held for both the Park Advisory Commission and Environmental Commission in May, 2009. The Park Advisory Commission has forwarded a resolution to City Council recommending preservation of the impoundment. The Environmental Commission has forwarded a resolution to City Council recommending removal of the dam. A work session was held with City Council on June 15, 2009.

Because of this split recommendation, City Council has directed staff to further evaluate dam-in and dam-out scenerios before a formal recommendation is made on the disposition of the dam. Several areas of study are necessary for both dam-in and dam-out scenarios before an appropriate decision can be made. The areas of study are listed for both scenarios below.

#### **Dam-In Areas for Further Study**

- **Sediment analysis** – The City plans to undertake a sediment study to determine the extent of sediment and estimate future sediment management costs if the impoundment is preserved.
- **Detailed Bathymetry** – The City plans to undertake a detailed bathymetric analysis of the impoundment to create a baseline model of the impoundment for future sedimentation monitoring.
- **Hydropower Options** - The Veterans Administration is evaluating reintroduction of hydropower at one or more Ann Arbor dam(s) and we would like time to see how their interest develops and whether this interest and investment affects the decision by City Council.

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- **Environmental Consequences of Impoundment Preservation** – The city plans to review the available data and obtain new data in key areas to create a baseline for monitoring the impoundment effects on river water quality and ecosystem services.
- **Economic Consequences of Impoundment Preservation** – From these studies, the city will estimate long-term dam maintenance costs and develop cost-sharing plans.
- **Outside Funding Sources** - City staff will evaluate alternate funding sources for rebuilding the millrace to remove the canoe portage. Due to current economic conditions, any decision will be based on our ability to leverage outside resources so identifying viable outside funding sources is critical to any City Council decision. Recent federal support for the Great Lakes is a \$400 million opportunity that we need to evaluate.
- **River Flow Evaluations** –Variations in flow at the USGS gauge at Wall Street are of concern to MDNR and the city is evaluating mechanisms to reduce the variability from Barton and Argo to better meet run-of-the-river conditions.

#### **Dam-Out Areas for Further Study**

- **Sediment analysis** – The city plans to undertake a sediment study to determine the extent of sediment affected by dam removal and estimate sediment management costs as part of this analysis.
- **Detailed Bathymetry** – The City plans to undertake a detailed bathymetric analysis of the impoundment to answer several questions including the shape of the new river channel.
- **Detailed HEC-RAS model** – The city plans to use the detailed bathymetry to develop a detailed HEC-RAS model to answer several outstanding questions including how the floodplain may change.
- **Rowing** - Because the rowing community is most adversely affected by dam removal, City staff will be evaluating two alternative rowing venues to determine if they are viable sites for rowing. We believe that it will take some time to work out the details at one or more sites.
- **Environmental Consequences of Dam Removal** – The city plans to review the available data and obtain new data in key areas to better understand the changes in river water quality and ecosystem services.
- **Economic Consequences of Dam Removal**– Develop more detailed economic analysis of dam removal including new recreation opportunities and costs and reallocation of existing funding to other projects.
- **Outside Funding Sources** -City staff will evaluate alternate funding sources for dam removal. Due to current economic conditions, any decision will be based on our ability to leverage outside resources so identifying viable outside funding sources is critical to any City Council decision. Recent federal support for the Great Lakes is a \$400 million opportunity that we need to evaluate.
- **River Flow Evaluations** –Variations in flow at the USGS gauge at Wall Street are of concern to MDNR and the city is evaluating mechanisms to reduce the variability from Barton and Argo to better meet run-of-the-river conditions.

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The City is requesting a nine month extension (until April 30, 2010) to evaluate these specific areas related to the dam-in and dam-out scenarios, including developing sufficient sources of funding to assist City Council in their decision. At that time we anticipate a directional decision that will permit us to discuss a more specific calendar of events with MDEQ .

Please recognize that this is a complicated set of issues for the community and City Council to evaluate and consider. There are also new developments from the Veterans Administration and federal Great Lakes funding that may provide financial support to assist in a Council decision.

The City of Ann Arbor appreciates the support provided by your office and looks forward to working together on the community's decision related to the dam-in and dam-out decision as well as overall improved management of the Huron River.

Please contact me at (734)794-6426 ext 43902 or [sbahl@a2gov.org](mailto:sbahl@a2gov.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Sumedh Bahl, P.E.  
Manager, Water Treatment Services  
City of Ann Arbor

C: Ms. Sue McCormick, Area Administrator, Public Services, City of Ann Arbor  
Mr. Matt Naud, Environmental Coordinator, City of Ann Arbor  
Ms. Molly Wade, Water Quality Manager, City of Ann Arbor