

Nathaniel Hanson, Ellsworth, ME.

I write as a resident on Ellsworth's lower Union River, a local business owner, and father of two children who are growing up here in the woods and waterways of the Union River Watershed. Please promote the health of the environment, and the economic development of our town, by refusing to relicense the Leonard Lake Dam on the Union River.

The Union River is the heart of our small coastal community. From the head of Union River Bay, where my house looks across the mouth of the river, the tidal river winds north for a couple miles, rich with eagles, osprey and seals. Each spring we see the adult herring and alewife and the juvenile eels running upstream. They travel through town, past our scenic waterfront park and harbor, and under the Main Street Bridge, in the middle of our downtown. Their migration ends abruptly a few hundred yards above Main Street where the 70 foot Leonard Lake Dam rises abruptly out of the natural river. The natural scenery of the river ceases above this point, and above the 70 foot concrete barrier, the river is replaced by an artificial impoundment that has none of the natural flow, beauty, or energy of the river that once ran below it's surface.

Above Leonard lake, about a mile north of the dam, the river re-emerges. Free of the artificial lake, the river flows beautifully through woods, around small islands. In the springtime, this stretch of gentle whitewater is where I introduce my young kids to river kayaking. I can only imagine the benefits to the town of Ellsworth if this beautiful river were allowed to flow naturally through our town to the head of tide. The lucrative elver and alewife fisheries would boom, providing income to fishermen and revenue to the town government. The downtown would be linked to the river by a beautiful natural greenway, allowing for stunning views from the bridge, providing hiking and river recreation for families and visitors alike. The recreational fishing opportunities, and whitewater kayaking potential that exist on a restored Union River could be powerful attractions for young Mainers looking for a community to call their home.

Leonard Lake is a blemish in the middle of the most beautiful feature of Ellsworth - the Union River. Restoring the Union River to it's naturally-flowing state would benefit the quality of life and economic health of Ellsworth. Our economic future depends on creating a town and a lifestyle that continues to attract families and businesses. The Union River is one of our greatest assets, and we want it back!

Please do not renew the license for the Leonard Lake Dam.

Thank you,
Nathaniel Hanson
Ellsworth, ME

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