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March 5, 2010

Senator Seth Goodall
Representative Robert Duchesne
Natural Resources Committee
Cross State Office Building, Room 214
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Sen. Goodall, Rep. Duchesne & members of the Natural Resources Committee,

At their meeting on March 4, 2010, the Topsham Selectmen decided unanimously to update their letter of support from September 18, 2008 for reclassification of the lower Androscoggin River between Durham Boat Launch or Worumbo Dam to its mouth in Merrymeeting Bay, from Class C to Class B, as proposed by Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB).

Last summer at the request of your committee, FOMB in cooperation with the DEP conducted intensive water quality monitoring on this river segment increasing from their earlier protocols both number of sample sites and sampling frequency. FOMB data gathered in 2009 supports their previous upgrade proposal which we recommended in our 2008 letter. In that the recent more thorough data set also shows the river in attainment of Class B conditions, we have no hesitation in our continued support of the upgrade.

Reclassification will result in the maintenance of Class B standards, which FOMB data clearly show continue to be met on this river section. Reclassification will bring the river into compliance with the law [38 M.R.S.A. § 464 (F) (4) "*When the actual quality of any classified water exceeds the minimum standards of the next highest classification, that higher water quality must be maintained and protected.*"], providing the river with increased protection against future degradation and enable its condition to continually improve.

As you know, classification upgrades are appropriate where it is socially or ecologically desirable to attain higher standards and when the technological and financial capacity exists to achieve those higher standards within a reasonable time. Because the river already meets Class B standards (i.e., it is clearly technologically and financially feasible to meet them) and because there are also clear social and economic benefits from a cleaner river, the requested classification is appropriate.

The experience of other communities around the nation has shown time and again the tremendous potential for social, recreational, environmental and economic benefit from river restoration.

Therefore, on behalf of the Topsham Board of Selectmen, we implore the Natural Resources Committee to send to the full legislature as soon as possible, legislation proposing a reclassification of this lower Androscoggin river segment from Class C to Class B.

Your kind and prompt consideration of our request is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

James Ashe
Town Manager

Cc: Topsham Board of Selectmen
FOMB