



The State of New Hampshire  
**Department of Environmental Services**



**Robert R. Scott, Commissioner**

January 30, 2018

The Honorable Kevin Avard  
Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
State House, Room 103  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: SB 529-FN, An Act authorizing river maintenance in the town of Warren**

Dear Chairman Avard and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 529-FN relative to river maintenance of the Baker River in Warren, NH. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) recognizes the good intentions of the sponsors, but opposes the bill as introduced.

River systems, such as the Baker River are complex and dynamic. Significant alterations to rivers, such as dredging projects require detailed analysis and design prior to making alterations to ensure that unintended public safety and environmental consequences do not occur to property owners, or infrastructure adjacent to, or crossing rivers. Dredging projects, if not undertaken with careful design, planning and foresight, can have adverse public safety and environmental consequences to adjacent landowners and to locations downstream of such activity both in the near and long-term.

SB 529-FN, as proposed, would also allow the Town of Warren to remove timber and debris for a section of the Baker River each year. Care needs to be undertaken when removing woody material from rivers, as there can be unintended consequences, such as increasing bank erosion, or impacting infrastructure and property adjacent to rivers. For this reason, NHDES staff have extended standing offers to towns throughout the state to provide on-the-ground field technical guidance relative to identification of which pieces of woody material in a river are acceptable to remove, and which should be allowed to remain. In fact, NHDES provided such an assistance visit to the Baker River in Warren, with town officials, on September 23, 2013. NHDES stands ready to continue this type of assistance, and believes this is a more appropriate way to address the issue of woody material in the state's rivers and streams.

As we have seen in 2017, in Warren and other towns in New Hampshire, rivers are highly dynamic. The issues that have been experienced in Warren are occurring elsewhere in New Hampshire. NHDES does understand these concerns, and is willing to work with committee members, bill sponsors, other state agencies, organizations, and the public to develop long-

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term options for addressing the flood-induced impacts from our state's dynamic rivers. Thus, NHDES suggests the bill be sent to interim study to fully examine existing river management practices, and the current state of river science to identify potential long-term solutions to achieving the desired result of long-term river stabilization while also balancing the protection of life and property.

NHDES welcomes opportunities to improve our processes in order to better accomplish our mission of protecting public safety, health and the environment, and thanks the bill's sponsors. If you have further questions or need additional information, please contact Clark Freise, Assistant Commissioner, ([clark.freise@des.nh.gov](mailto:clark.freise@des.nh.gov) 271-4054) or Eugene Forbes, Director, Water Division, ([Eugene.Forbes@des.nh.gov](mailto:Eugene.Forbes@des.nh.gov) 271-3308).

Sincerely,



Robert R. Scott  
Commissioner

cc: Senators Giuda, Avard, Birdsell, Bradley, Carson, Daniels, Gannon, Gray,  
Innis, Reagan, Sanborn, Ward, and Watters  
Representatives Ladd, Brown, Hinch, Binford, and Schwaegler