

From: Connecticut Council of Trout Unlimited
Nutmeg Chapter of Trout Unlimited
To: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Re: DIVC-202004971
Date: Jan. 22, 2021



Trout Unlimited realizes there is an increased need for drinking water, recognizes Aquarion's conservation efforts, and respectfully asks that any changes in the amount of water taken from watersheds be made with the realization that all rivers in the system could be affected.

The Mill River in Easton and Fairfield is known around New England as a unique habitat for wild trout, and Trout Unlimited has spent the last several years working on projects to protect and restore the environment there. We remain concerned that Aquarion's request for more water from the area could put in jeopardy the fragile trout that exist in the cold, clean water we are working hard — as is Aquarion — to protect.

We ask that Aquarion re-install and pay for the USGS streamflow gauge on the Mill River, and install a real-time temperature gauge (the latter where the Mill River meets Lake Mohegan) that can be monitored by Aquarion, the DEEP, and the general public. We also ask that it be spelled out who Trout Unlimited and/or other concerned parties should contact if flows were to reach levels that would endanger the wild trout habitat there. Increasing our concern is the length of the permit: we would rather see shorter spans of 5 years and periodic environmental impact reviews before renewals.

Of particular interest is the effect of any increased use of water elsewhere will have on the recently extended Mill River Wild Trout Management Area, which now extends from the dam to the Merritt Parkway. Fish are not stocked in this stretch, making the survival of native and wild trout critical.

We wish to cooperate with Aquarion and the state in monitoring, and in continuing to work on habitat restoration in the Mill. With that in mind, our anglers and conservationists are at the ready to respond to any calls for data from community scientists in the Mill River or any other habitat in the region.

If the withdrawal is increased, we also ask that Aquarion further educate the public on the waste of lawn watering and take steps to reduce frivolous uses of water not related to public health and wellness, before removing more water from the watershed.

Trout Unlimited is also concerned about the effect drawing water from the Housatonic wellfields will have on the water table and thus the flows in area streams, and asks that safeguards be put in place before consideration is given to reviving their use.

While understanding the need for water for public consumption, we fear that simply allowing the withdrawal of more from the watershed could cause irreparable harm to the region's legacy wild trout. Aquarion has been a leader in conservation and a supporter of TU's efforts, and we look forward to that continuing.

John Kovach, Chairman
Connecticut Council, TU

Rich Rosen
Chairman, Nutmeg TU