North American Megadam Resistance Alliance

Protecting rivers and their communities by resisting megadams and their transmission corridors

www.northeastmegadamresistance.org

Spring 2021 Newsletter
Anti-CMP Corridor Referendum Makes November Ballot in Maine

Voters will now have a say in whether the project moves forward.

In late February, Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows announced the very good news that the CMP transmission corridor initiative qualified for the November 2021 state-wide ballot. Opponents of the corridor secured over 80,000 signatures, a buffer of 17,000 above the threshold needed to get the question on the ballot.

The initiative would require the approval of the Maine Legislature for the construction of high-impact transmission lines. It would further require that any high-impact transmission lines crossing public lands be approved by a two-thirds vote of both the Maine Senate and the Maine House. A third part of the initiative would prohibit industrial development in the Upper Kennebec Region.

The $1 billion CMP project, called New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), would transmit Hydro-Quebec electricity from Canada to Massachusetts through 145-miles of Maine. NECEC opposition is based on the environmental impact the corridor would have on vital ecosystems of the Maine Woods, the devastating effect megadams have on First Nation peoples (see article below), and the well-documented fact that large–scale hydropower is neither “clean nor green.”

The Legislature can pass the initiative as written or send it on for Maine voters to decide in November. A legislative public hearing will be scheduled. If the Legislature does
Polls have consistently indicated that a majority of Maine residents strongly oppose NECEC.

The first initiative to get the CMP project on the ballot was struck down by the Maine Supreme Court. Corridor opponents are confident that this second attempt will survive the expected legal challenges.

**NECEC UPDATE**

As reported in the Bangor Daily News, Superior Court Justice Michaela Murphy has ruled that the state of Maine needs to determine if the CMP transmission line project (NECEC) will alter any public lands that it runs through. Arguments for the case are set for March 30.

A two-thirds vote of approval would be needed by the Maine Legislature for the project to proceed— if it were determined that the public lands would be altered or diminished by the corridor.

---

*The devastating effects of hydropower generation on a river in Quebec*

*Photo courtesy of Quebec Hydro Clash*

**Hydro-Quebec's Greenwashing and**
Lucien Wabanonik implores us to consider the systemic racism his people are experiencing from large-scale hydropower.

In an eye-opening opinion piece that appeared in several Maine newspapers, Lucien Wabanonik, an elected councilor with Lac Simon’s band council in Quebec (he also served as chief) and previous Grand Chief of the Anishnabeg Nation Tribal Council, exposed Hydro-Quebec's (HQ) misinformation campaign to paint hydropower as clean energy.

"Hydro-Quebec has waged a well-funded PR campaign in Maine to convince voters that their hydropower is clean," Wabanonik wrote, "but the generation of this power has cost my people everything."

Wabanonik is, of course, referring to New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), also known as the CMP corridor (see above article), which would bring HQ electricity to Massachusetts, through Maine. Last fall, the First Nations of Pessamit (Innu), Wemotaci (Atikamekw), Pikogan, Lac Simon and Kitcisakik (Anishnabeg) announced opposition to NECEC as well as to Hydro-Quebec’s proposed transmission corridor from Quebec to Maine (Appalaches-Maine Interconnect).

In his op-ed, Wabanonik made a powerful statement about the devastating effects of megadams on First Nation people.

"I implore you to consider the systemic racism my people, the Anishnabegs, as well as the Pessamit Innu First Nation and Wemotaci Atikamekw First Nation, are experiencing at the hands of HQ and the provincial government, which solely owns the company," he wrote.

Indigenous communities across Canada have been connected to ancestral lands and waters for millennia. They’ve relied on specific regions for their sustenance, culture, and survival. Hydropower development has displaced thousands, causing cultural genocide. This dirty energy source is a further manifestation of colonization and systemic racism. Hydropower corporations and the Canadian government make billions of dollars in profits each year that largely benefit non-Indigenous populations while leaving Indigenous communities impoverished and violated.

"As I write this today, there are 33 hydroelectric plants, 130 dams and dikes, 2.6 million acres of reservoirs, tens of thousands of kilometers of transmission and distribution lines, and roads illegitimately operating on our ancestral territories," Wabanonik continued. "Hydro-Quebec doesn't rightfully own 36 percent of its total installed electrical capacity, yet we've never been compensated for this massive taking."

Wabanonik explained how megadams blockade and alter rivers, destroying critical ecosystems and traditional food sources while making navigation dangerous. Massive reservoirs that are necessary for power generation poison rivers, plants, and animals with the neurotoxin methylmercury. Hydro-impacted communities are often left with high rates of food insecurity due to contaminated, extinct, or inaccessible food sources.

"While the non-Indigenous majority profits off of HQ's illegitimate dealings, our
rate is five to seven times higher than the rest of Quebec. The Kitcisakik Tribe is situated at the foot of one of HQ's dams, yet they have no access to electricity, running water, or wastewater management."

---

Price Tag for Completing Site C is now $16 Billion

*The cost of completing the project has doubled since 2014.*

On February 26, 2021, British Columbia (BC) Premier John Horgan announced that the misguided Site C dam project would proceed, now as a $16 billion project. In making the announcement, Horgan inaccurately claimed that the project was already half-built.

While there was no great surprise that work on Site C will continue, the new price tag is simply staggering—double its original cost. Site C is now the most expensive dam in Canadian history, with no assurance that this will be the final cost. Ken Boon of the Peace Valley Landowners’ Association shared the latest information with NAMRA, along with some history on how the cost of the project has continued to snowball:

**Fall 2014:** Site C received its Environmental Certificate as a $7.9 billion project.
Fall 2017: With $2 billion already spent, the project is given a new price of $10.7 billion.

February 2021: With $5.5 billion already spent, the new price grows to $16 billion.

Boon noted that as more and more money is invested in the dam, the price tag to complete it grows by the billions. “The project is literally losing ground,” he said.

A recently released report by former BC Deputy Finance Minister Peter Milburn confirmed what has long been suspected—Site C has experienced significant project management and financial oversight problems.

Opponents of Site C are frustrated over British Columbia’s decision to move forward with the project.

“Today is a dark day. Despite the mounting cost overruns and growing evidence of geotechnical instability, the BC New Democratic Party has once again passed up its chance to stop Site C,” stated Sierra Club BC Executive Director Hannah Askew.

“Although much damage has already been done, this government still had an opportunity to halt the project and protect the land and water.”

Askew noted that in addition to the horrendous cost to Hydro ratepayers, and the impact on wildlife and ecosystems to build a dam with no market for the power, Site C construction will also continue to impact hundreds of culturally significant sites and important First Nation hunting and fishing grounds in the Peace River Valley.

The BC government has claimed that it would cost $10.2 billion to terminate the Site C project. But a recent study by respected economist Robert McCullough questioned that estimate.

West Moberly First Nations are pursuing a legal challenge against British Columbia, BC Hydro, and Canada for infringement of constitutionally protected rights. West Moberly is asking the court to stop construction of the Site C dam and order BC Hydro to restore the Peace River to its natural state. Click here to lend support for their legal efforts.

Here is a good one-stop shop for more Site C documents.

Maine Looking to be Part of Atlantic Loop

It’s another plan that diverts us from a true, clean energy future.

The Maine Legislative Committee on Energy Utility & Technology has given the go-ahead on a bill to encourage the Governor's Energy Office (GEO) to advance Maine’s involvement in the planning and negotiations on the proposed Atlantic Loop. The committee is currently addressing suggested amendments before this resolve would go to the entire legislature for a vote.
since 2019. Last September, Prime Minister Trudeau gave a one sentence nod to the Atlantic Loop proposal in his Throne Speech to the Canadian Parliament.

The current discussions are a rehash of a decade long idea of the interconnection of electricity between the Atlantic Provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick, Labrador/Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. Now lawmakers in Maine are discussing how the state could plug into this proposed Canadian electricity grid.

Electricity for the Atlantic Loop would come from large-scale hydropower causing further destruction to the environment of Canada and disruption to First Nations people. Like the proposed CMP corridor that would transmit hydropower from Canada to Massachusetts, via Maine, this hydropower plan is not what we need for a clean energy future. But it’s more profitable to build massive hydropower generation systems that negatively impact the natural landscape than to do what’s really needed—shift gears and harness the energy already provided by nature in abundance—solar power, wind power, tidal power, and more.

---

Graphic courtesy of the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Project EIA Review.

Let's Protect Gull Island
The Mista Shipu (Grand) River in Labrador and Newfoundland has been absolutely ravaged by large dams. The latest dam to be installed, Muskrat Falls, actively contaminates Indigenous food sources with methylmercury, disrupts traditional ways of life, and has gone billions of dollars over-budget with countless delays.

Now Canada is planning an additional dam on the river that could pose an even greater threat to ecosystems, communities, and ways of life. The proposed Gull Island Dam would:

- Flood 232 kilometers of pristine boreal forest—that is almost four times the size of the planned reservoir behind Muskrat Falls
- Poison (from methylmercury) traditional food sources for Indigenous communities
- Release large amounts of greenhouse gases such as methane
- Cause more cultural genocide

According to the Environmental Impact Assessment of the Gull Island Project, it appears that the facility’s main purpose will be to serve the electrical demands of the northeastern United States. This includes states such as New York that are marketing hydropower as clean and renewable energy. This false narrative has, unfortunately, caused widespread support for further hydroelectric development and expanded transmission corridors which damage the environment.

NAMRA (North America Megadam Resistance Alliance) is circulating a sign-on letter calling on elected Canadian officials to oppose the construction of Gull Island.

Please sign on today to stop the damming!

Upcoming Events

NAMRA was excited to announce our first 2021 webinar series featuring activists and experts who are leading the efforts to expose the myth that hydropower from megadams is "renewable and green."

Part 1 of this three-part webinar series took place on March 3, 2021 and presented new developments in the campaign to stop the NECEC export corridor for Canadian hydropower through Maine to Massachusetts. A recording can be found here. Please join us for the next two parts of our series.

Part 2: April 7, 2021 at 7:00 pm ET.

Voices of the Resistance: Indigenous First nations impacted by Hydro-Quebec’s dams and transmission corridors explain the environmental racism of Canadian hydropower exports to the U.S.
electricity is not "clean energy" but environmental racism. It will show the stark reality behind the "green" claims about Canadian hydropower and the export corridor being promoted by Massachusetts as a climate solution.

**Part 3: May 5, 2021 at 7:00 pm ET**

*Updates on the climate impacts of Canadian hydropower*

[Registration](#) is required for this event

Hydropower has always been a false solution to the climate crisis: large dams and their reservoirs emit potent greenhouse gas emissions, flood thousands of acres of carbon-sequestering forests and trap sediments that impair the ocean's ability to act as a carbon sink.

This webinar will review new science that confirms why hydropower should not be part of any climate action plan or the Green New Deal.

---

**TAKE ACTION**

NAMRA is a volunteer-led organization. We rely on your support. Please consider [donating](#) to our important work.

And please sign and share NAMRA's [petition](#) calling on leaders throughout the Northeast U.S. to reject dirty Canadian hydropower.

---

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).