North American Megadam Resistance Alliance

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

www.northeastmegadamresistance.org

Winter 2022 Newsletter
A Resounding Victory in Maine

Voters overwhelmingly reject CMP’s transmission line and, so far, the courts are upholding the results.

It was a resounding victory for opponents of CMP’s misguided transmission corridor project (New England Clean Energy Connect). On November 2, Mainers voted overwhelmingly (60 percent to 40 percent) to stop the corridor, which was slated to bring electricity generated by destructive Canadian megadams to Massachusetts via Maine.

NECEC opposition was 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, and the well-documented fact that large-scale hydropower releases significant amounts of methane and is neither “clean nor green.”

Following the vote, CMP ignored the people’s will and continued working on the project until Governor Janet Mills (a NECEC supporter) finally asked the company to halt construction on November 19.

Corridor proponents also vowed to continue the legal battle over NECEC. But in mid-December, they were handed another setback when Judge Michael Duddy of the Business and Consumer Court denied a request from NECEC backers to stop
As reported in the Bangor Daily News, Judge Duddy ruled that the transmission corridor proponent’s argument “does not outweigh the harm to voter confidence and participatory democracy that would result from preventing the initiative from becoming law.”

Although the court’s decision was a major victory for CMP transmission corridor opponents, it’s not the final word on the issue. In early January, Judge Duddy sent a challenge from NECEC proponents on to the Supreme Judicial Court. Until that court reaches a decision sometime in the coming months, the state of Maine will continue to suspend CMP’s license to continue construction on the project.

For now, we have a lot to celebrate!

Many thanks to the great work of NAMRA’s alliance members and other allied organizations including Say NO to NECEC, Sierra Club Maine, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Appalachian Mountain Club, and others.

Hydro-Quebec Says No New Hydro Projects Planned

*High cost of megadam construction and decreasing costs of wind and solar are big factors.*

Eminetra Canada recently reported that Hydro-Québec spokesman Francis Labbé has confirmed that the utility is not planning any further hydropower projects. He noted that any new project would take at least 10 years to plan and build, and that it would be expensive,
we are not going in that direction, given the delays, costs and other options,” Labbé said.

The decreasing cost of other types of renewables such as wind and solar is making them increasingly more attractive options.

It was unclear how much the growing public opposition to large-scale hydro, including the recent successful Maine initiative (see above article), is influencing Hydro-Quebec’s direction.

François Bouffard, an associate professor of electrical engineering at McGill University, stated in a Eminetra Canada website article that the megadam projects that drove the company to early success are now “past development models.”

He explained that early dam construction and operation didn’t show enough concern for the environment or for the Indigenous peoples of the area. Vast areas of lands were flooded without the due diligence needed to prevent ecological disruption and health issues.

While it’s good news that Hydro-Quebec may be giving up on new megadam construction, Labbe emphasized that the company will still be actively managing and maintaining its 62 existing hydro plants.

“This is far from the end of Quebec’s hydropower,” he said.
Drought conditions in Manitoba have brought water from Cross Lake down to a trickle.

Drought Impacting Hydro Production in Manitoba

*The region is overly reliant on one source of electric generation.*

Drought conditions across the Canadian prairies have caused far-reaching implications in recent years. Water levels flowing into Southern Manitoba are at a **40-year low**, and have been impacting agriculture, drinking water sources, and recreation. These impacts are being felt in Northern Manitoba as well, with dry conditions also reducing the ability of Manitoba (MB) Hydro to produce electricity. In recent reports, MB Hydro is now **forecasting** a large multimillion-dollar deficit due to the lack of water available for its hydroelectric megadams.

Although the drought may be a natural phenomenon, scientists and activists have been saying for decades that governments must start preparing for these kinds of situations. Despite advanced warnings, the Manitoba government has not prepared our province for this climate emergency. At the core of energy planning for this province is MB Hydro, which
Despite this gigantic responsibility, this public utility has been utterly negligent when it comes to planning for the future and continues in the direction of relying solely on destructive megadams for electricity production.

In terms of energy diversity, the Province of Manitoba has none. Much could be said about the statement consistently touted by MB Hydro that “96 percent of the electricity produced is clean, renewable power.” We can question the accuracy of the term, "clean," but what should also be questioned is the reliance on the term "renewable." If 96 percent of the area's electricity, essentially all of it, depends upon one resource being available, then we are in dire need of diversification. And if that one resource is the availability of flowing water, it needs to be questioned how seriously top-level bureaucrats and politicians have been considering the very real present-day and increasing severity of future impacts from climate change on the provincial ability to produce electricity.

Due to the low availability of water province-wide, MB Hydro has been holding it back wherever possible and reducing flows out of their control structures and generating stations in order to stabilize production over the winter. This tactic has come at a cost to northern communities that rely on their lakes and rivers for food and water. Cross Lake has been especially affected, with MB Hydro holding back as much water as possible at the Jenpeg Generating Station.

According to their own data, MB Hydro has more than halved the amount of water flowing into Cross Lake through Jenpeg—from 79,428.6 ft³/s (Nov. 18, 2020) to 31,963.8 ft³/s (Nov. 18, 2021). This kind of community prioritization would not be necessary with a diversity of energy sources—allowing a lower amount of hydroelectricity to be generated without compromising the entire system.

MB Hydro’s operations have long been destructive for Indigenous communities, cultures, and economies, aquatic ecosystems, and forest habitats. These impacts need to be seriously weighed against the benefits of increasing the provincial dependence on a "renewable" resource so sensitive to the impacts from climate change. Diversifying the energy mix with a healthy dose of wind and solar is not only a reasonable demand for improving climate resilience, it could also cost less. Environmental harms from flooding have very significant social and economic impacts on Northern Manitoba communities. The billions of dollars of public funds being poured into megadams, and the accompanying hundreds of kilometers of transmission lines, could be utilized in ways that are much more beneficial to those communities.

Wind and solar projects can be developed in and around urban cities such as Winnipeg, the exact place consuming the majority of the energy being produced by northern megadams. This would lessen the amount of infrastructure required to transmit the electricity. If droughts are forecasted to be more common in the future, a very different direction needs to be taken by MB Hydro and the Manitoba Government.
Increased Pressure for Champlain Hudson Power Express

New York’s governor finalizes the contract—misinformation continues.

With construction of the CMP transmission corridor stopped (we hope permanently) in Maine, and New Hampshire's rejection of a transmission line bringing Quebec hydro-generated electricity through the state, we expect the pressure to increase on construction of the long-delayed 340-mile, 1.25 billion watt Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) transmission corridor through eastern New York to New York City.

In late November, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced that the state government had finalized the CHPE contract. Her announcement contained much of the usual misinformation—that CHPE would provide clean renewable energy, plentiful unionized jobs, and would positively impact climate change. Nothing was said about damages to the Hudson River, the loss of habitat, and the negative impact to the Native Peoples of Canada. The megadam greenwashing persists.

The Solidarity Committee, along with many other groups and individuals, will continue efforts to block CHPE, with the goal of preserving and protecting rivers, safeguarding the
Groups Join Forces to Oppose Gull Island

*Project would result in a loss of ecosystems and Indigenous Peoples’ territories*

On October 12, the Sierra Club Canada Foundation, Grand Riverkeeper, and North American Megadam Resistance Alliance (NAMRA) submitted a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the premiers of the Atlantic Provinces, calling on them to oppose the Gull Island hydropower project. The letter was signed by more than 80 other social and environmental organizations.

The proposed Gull Island megadam would be built on the Mista Shipu (Grand) River in Labrador. If built, the dam would tower 300 feet into the air and further impede the flow of the Mista Shipu. The reservoir for Gull Island would flood 23,000 hectares of carbon-sequestering and biodiverse boreal forest—four times more than Muskrat Falls. This flooding would result in the loss of ecosystems and ancestral territories for Indigenous Peoples as well as an increase in methylmercury levels in fish and wildlife, the traditional
Impacts of the Gull Island megadam project include:

- Fragmenting and strangling rivers, as nutrients and sediment get blocked behind dams
- Destroying freshwater and marine habitat along with the fisheries dependent on them
- Changing natural river flows and upstream and downstream ecosystems
- Producing significant volumes of greenhouse gas emissions, including methane
- Poisoning wildlife, fish, and the Indigenous Peoples who depend on them with the neurotoxin methylmercury
- Repeatedly violating treaty obligations and Indigenous rights, as prescribed by the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Gull Island shares several similarities with the Muskrat Falls project and would compound the problems already caused by that project. Muskrat Falls nearly bankrupted the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and also released dangerous levels of methylmercury into the food chain.

Muskrat Falls Delays Cost Taxpayers $200 Million

The Halifax Examiner recently reported that delays in electricity production from the Muskrat Falls project in Labrador have cost Nova Scotia taxpayers more than $200 million. The cost was incurred because of the four years of delays in power production from Muskrat Falls, causing more expensive replacement electric power to be used by Nova Scotians.

According to the Examiner, the information was finally made public by Nova Scotia Power on December 24, 2021. It was ordered to disclose the amount by the Utility and Review Board.

Site C Update

As winter approached, work continued on the over budget and behind schedule Site C Dam project, with 2021 marking six years of construction.

The logging, clearing, and burning of thousands of brush-piles continues on the 128 km future footprint of the reservoir—yet it is being labeled as the “Site C Clean Energy Project” by BC Hydro.

On a positive note, the strongest legal challenge to the project will begin in March when the infringement of treaty rights case from West Moberly First Nation’s is scheduled to
NAMRA members participated in the anti-megadam rally at the COP 26 conference in Glasgow in early November.

ACTIVITIES/EVENTS:

NAMRA members attend COP 26 Conference
Two members of NAMRA attended this past fall’s international COP 26 Conference on climate change in Glasgow to raise awareness on the harm that hydropower causes to ecosystems and communities—emphasizing that this destructive energy source will only worsen the climate crisis. They successfully advocated against megadams being used as a climate solution and joined hundreds of others in exposing the greenwashing of hydropower to conference attendees.

National Day of Mourning
On November 25, the United American Indians of New England held the 52nd
the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday. This serves as a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the erasure of Native cultures. It is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection, as well as a protest against the racism and oppression that Indigenous people continue to experience worldwide.

NAMRA and our allies submitted a [video](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) for this event on victories in the struggle to raise awareness about the impacts of hydropower dams on Indigenous peoples and their ways of life.

**Third edition of Hoodwinked in the Hothouse**

A third edition of *Hoodwinked in the Hothouse*, a publication that exposes false corporate solutions to the climate crisis is now available. This comprehensive compendium of false climate solutions exposes greenwashed energy sources that continue to lead the world down risky pathways and serve to worsen the climate crisis. The third edition includes information on why megadam hydropower is a false solution to the climate crisis and how it will only worsen the environmental and human rights crises. [Audiobooks](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) of this publication are now available.

A recent Hoodwinked in the Hothouse [webinar](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) featured a panel of climate justice organizers and frontline community leaders in a discussion about the multi-billion-dollar climate investments being promoted by corporations and governments.

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**Your support protects rivers and their communities!**

We are thrilled about our recent successes, especially in working to stop the New England Clean Energy Connect (Central Maine Power’s transmission corridor) from tearing through forests in Maine to deliver dirty Canadian hydropower to Massachusetts.

In November, an overwhelming majority (60 percent) of Maine voters rejected the CMP corridor and Canadian hydropower (For more, see story at top of the page).

Many thanks to the hard work from members of our alliance and other allied organizations including Say NO to NECEC, Sierra Club Maine, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Appalachian Mountain Club, and others.

And thanks to supporters such as yourself, NAMRA helped fund two alliance members in attending the recent COP 26 United Nations Climate Change Conference.
Please donate [online](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) or by check (be sure to put NAMRA in the memo) and mail to:

**Save The Colorado**
**PO Box 1066**
**Fort Collins, CO 80522**

Thank you.

### TAKE ACTION

NAMRA is a volunteer-led organization. We rely on your support. Please consider [donating](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) to our important work.

And please sign and share NAMRA’s [petition](https://mailchi.mp/b25cd7655678/namra-winter-2022-newsletter) calling on leaders throughout the Northeast U.S. to reject dirty Canadian hydropower.

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