From: John Nelson
To: DNR ESTABROOK
Subject: Comments on Estabrook Dam
Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2016 5:07:16 PM

As a professional fisheries biologist and retired resource manager, I fully support the removal of the Estabrook Dam on the Milwaukee River. I was directly involved in the removal of approximately 18 small and large dams over my 30 year career and can state that removal of those dams was the most effective and impactful resource management on rivers that may occur.

The dams have many negative impacts on the biological, chemical and physical character of rivers. The habitat created by dams favors bottom feeding fishes such as the common carp while degrading habitat for sight feeding native fish such as smallmouth bass and northern pike. The physical structure blocks the important seasonal movement between winter and summer habitat and prevents access to important spawning habitat for those species. The waters held back by the dam are normally more turbid due to carp activity and diurnal shifts in oxygen levels may be much greater due to the still water effect. Benthic macroinvertebrate communities are normally far less diverse behind dams as are the fish communities themselves. Conversely, diversity of fish and invertebrate communities have been documented to almost immediately increase dramatically with dam removal.

Overall recreational use of waters restored by dam removal increases greatly as well. We documented those increases in use with the removal of the Woolen Mills dam on the Milwaukee River in West Bend (removed in 1988). Upland use also increased significantly with dam removal.

Again, the environmental and recreational benefits of dam removal far outweigh the perceived social benefits of retaining the dam. I fully support the option of removing the Estabrook Dam.