



*Mayor and Town Council
Town of Friendsville
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February 19, 2024

Dear Education, Energy, and Environmental Committee,

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee thank you for this opportunity. On behalf of the Town Council and myself the Town of Friendsville is against the passage of SB 837. Friendsville would appreciate an unfavorable committee vote on this bill for the following reasons:

The Town of Friendsville believes that if SB 837 is passed it will negatively impact the hydroelectric dam's (Brookfield) permit requirements resulting in potentially jeopardizing whitewater dam releases. This risk would considerably increase in the instance of a drought spring occurrence or if a Dam service repair issue arises, both of which have occurred in the last few decades. Friendsville has strong social and economic bonds to their annual sixty-six scheduled whitewater dam release days and thus would be against this bill passage.

The Deep Creek Lake Watershed Foundation (Foundation) is considered an equal shareholder among Deep Creek Lake Stakeholders under MDE's Permit considerations. When a permit impact is desired, the request must go through MDE where they determine if it has merit and if so, they request comment from all DCL stakeholders. The Foundation requested an MDE review for their permit impacting study without credible scientific evidence. According to conversation on February 16, 2024, with stand in director of MDE Water Suply Robert Peoples, MDE looked at their request and couldn't find sufficient scientific evidence to support their plan to perform such a Permit impacting study, thus the request was denied. Instead of resubmitting its request to MDE with more creditable evidence included, it appears that the Foundation circumvented MDE and solicited local politicians to intervene. This resulted in the creation of SB 837 without full DCL stakeholder participation or consideration, including the Town of Friendsville.

Friendsville found out about this bill just days ago February 13, 2024, when a warning went out to Friendsville economic River Liaison Jess Whittemore from Brookfield via e-mail and subsequent phone conversations. Mr. Whittemore called Robert Peoples at MDE to verify that what Brookfield was saying was accurate. Robert Peoples said that Brookfield's statement in the e-mail was accurate; "If the Senate Bill is passed, this will impact the requirements of our permit, including but not limited to jeopardizing whitewater releases."

The Town of Friendsville is disappointed that we were not included in discussions leading up to this potentially damaging SB 837, it circumvents the proper, lawful, and thorough MDE process of Dam Permit impact review and stakeholder involvement. The Town of Friendsville is against SB 837 passage and looks forward to helping out in the respectful confines of MDE's, DCL stakeholder negotiation as we expect.

Sincerely,

Spencer R Schlosnagle
Mayor

Cc:

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