



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
344 Merrow Road, Suite A  
Tolland, CT 06084-3917  
(860) 871-4011

November 29, 2010

Ms. Denise Ruzicka  
Director  
DEP – Inland Water Resources Division  
79 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

RE: OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SOUTH BRANCH PARK RIVER  
WATERSHED FLOOD CONTROL CHANNELS

Dear Ms. Ruzicka:

This letter is to inform you of Operation and Maintenance (O&M) violations in the South Branch Park River (SBPR) watershed flood control channels.

In October 1985, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) signed an O&M Agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – known then as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) – as sponsor of the SBPR flood control measures. The agreement states the sponsor is “responsible for operating and performing or having performed all needed maintenance” of the dams and channels identified in the Watershed Protection Flood Prevention Work Plan for the South Branch of the Park River Watershed, Hartford County, Connecticut. Attached to the agreement is an O&M Plan which outlines specific requirements to be performed by the sponsor.

The dams in this watershed are typically well maintained. Some channel sections are well maintained while others are in violation of the O&M Plan and in need of maintenance. The banks of several sections of flood control channels in the watershed contain unsuitable woody and other vegetation. In one section, the woody vegetation has been cut but not removed, a potential hazard should it float downstream and cause an obstruction. Channel sections identified to have issues are shown on the enclosed map; lengths of each section are shown on the enclosed table.

This unsuitable vegetation is a problem because design *n*-values (roughness) of the channels are 0.03 (in most sections) to 0.04, while the current woody and/or other high, dense vegetation on the channel banks have an estimated *n*-value of 0.09 to 0.11. Therefore, the channel does not have the conveyance capacity for which it was originally designed, causing flood elevations upstream to increase.



Section B.2 of the O&M Plan [under the *Vegetation and Earth Fills* heading] states the sponsor shall "Mow grassy areas at least once annually. Crownvetch shall be mowed biennially. All unsuitable woody and other vegetation shall be mowed or cut annually."

These flood control channels were built to protect the businesses and people residing in the Towns of West Hartford, Newington, and Hartford. Since the O&M has not been performed regularly in some sections, homes and businesses are at risk and no longer have the originally designed level of flood protection. Additionally, this could potentially jeopardize the flood insurance benefits these residents receive.

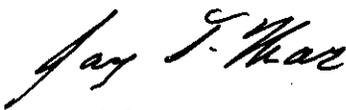
Supplement No. 2 to the aforementioned Work Plan indicates the average annual damage reduction benefit for the dams and channel improvements was \$551,759 in 1971. In 2005, estimated benefits from these flood control measures for the October 2005 storms were \$8.2 million. The work plan indicates approximately 70% of these benefits come from channel improvements.

In accordance with both the O&M agreement and the plan, DEP is responsible for removing (or having removed) the unsuitable woody and other vegetation from the banks of the channels, as well as the previously cut woody vegetation. Therefore, we hereby request DEP perform the necessary maintenance as outlined in the plan within two years from the date of this letter. Failure to complete the corrective actions within that time may result in further action. Lack of O&M in the channels may also potentially jeopardize future watershed rehabilitation funding for structures in the South Branch Park River Watershed.

DEP does have the right to appeal this violation determination.

Should you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 860.871.4011. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jay T. Mar  
State Conservationist

Enclosures

cc: Arthur Christian II, Director of Dam Safety, DEP, Hartford, CT  
James F. Sangivanni, Env. Analyst III, DEP-Inland Water Resources Div., Hartford, CT  
Arthur Ramthun, P.E., SCE, USDA-NRCS, Tolland, CT  
Lesley R. Sweeney, P.E., Environmental Engineer, USDA-NRCS, Tolland, CT