Caledonia County
Natural Resources Conservation District

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September 28, 2026

Town of Hardwick
Select Board
P.O. Box 523
Hardwick, Vermont 05843

To the Hardwick Selectboard,

We are writing to recommend that a question regarding the future of Jackson Dam be included on the March 2027 Hardwick town ballot, and that the question be decided by Australian ballot.

The Caledonia County Natural Resources Conservation District has secured the necessary funding for a full design and permitting process for the removal of Jackson Dam. We secured this funding from a variety of sources, including Partners for US Fish & Wildlife, a State Wildlife Grant, and Watersheds United Vermont (through the state Clean Water Fund). The funding needed for data collection and a preliminary design is available right now. However, the funding needed to advance the process from preliminary to final design and permitting is contingent upon demonstrated public support. We will provide the residents of Hardwick with a preliminary design by early 2027, which will include details about the benefits, drawbacks, costs, sediment issues, and downstream effects of a potential removal. With the support of the Jackson Dam Steering Committee, we also plan to create several opportunities for learning and conversation related to the Jackson Dam prior to March 2027.

The preliminary design and a robust public engagement process will provide enough information for the public to make an informed decision on the future of Jackson Dam by March 2027. If the residents of Hardwick vote to move forward with project at that time, we will be able to demonstrate to our funders that there is sufficient public support to continue the design process. Voting to move forward with the design process would not mean that residents are committing local taxpayers to a specific future construction cost. The project will also be subject to state and federal regulatory review. This milestone also would not mean that public engagement would end. We would continue to provide opportunities for Hardwick residents to engage throughout the remainder of the design and eventual implementation process.

At this point, we are not recommending that the Select Board approve the wording of a ballot question. We are recommending that the board commit to placing a question about the future of Jackson Dam on the March 2027 ballot, and specifically to have that question decided by an Australian ballot.

Sincerely,

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Emily Finnegan
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