

December 17, 2019



Milwaukee County Courthouse
901 N. 9th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Re: Support for Kletzsch Park Dam Fish Passage

Dear County Supervisors,

On behalf of Milwaukee Riverkeeper and the signatories below, we are writing to support the Kletzsch Park Dam Fish Passage Project, and to urge you to approve it at the upcoming Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee meeting and subsequent County Board meeting scheduled in December. The proposed fish passage is funded by EPA's Area of Concern program, as well as other funders, and would provide a way for fish to get past the dam while still retaining Kletzsch Falls, which is important to many in the community.

The proposed fish passage in Kletzsch Park is a generational opportunity to move native fish upstream from Lake Michigan past the LAST man-made barrier to their passage in Milwaukee County, the Kletzsch Dam. Many of our native fish can't jump over barriers, and can't swim upstream through intense flows created by dams and other obstructions. In addition, many native fish, such as northern pike, require access to vegetated wetlands for spawning, few of which exist along the Milwaukee River in Milwaukee County. Allowing fish to reach high quality spawning habitat upstream is essential to creating a healthy and sustainable fishery

For the past 14 years, the Wisconsin Department of Resources (WDNR) has had an ongoing restoration project for lake sturgeon, with a sturgeon rearing facility located at Riveredge Nature Center. Completion of this fish passage would have a significant positive impact on facilitating the return of sturgeon to the upper portions of the Milwaukee River, as well as improving habitat for a wide variety of other aquatic species. Providing a fish passage structure at Kletzsch Dam also provides connectivity to the significant restoration work and improvements made upstream by the Ozaukee County Fish Passage Program, which has removed several major dams, built a fish passage around the Mequon-Thiensville Dam, and addressed hundreds of smaller fish passage barriers. This type of river restoration opportunity does not present itself often, and it is rare that scientists, elected officials, government agencies, community groups, AND funding sources all come together around a project—we may not get this chance again.

We are at a pivotal moment in the history of water in Milwaukee. Momentum and energy are building to prioritize the work to clean up historically contaminated parts of our rivers and estuary through EPA's Area of Concern program. This could mean a serious federal investment to achieve cleaner rivers and healthier communities. Kletzsch Park Fish Passage is a priority project to address the fish and wildlife populations impairment, and our ability to implement this project or our failure to do so, will speak volumes to EPA about our ability to implement future projects.

While we are committed to the proposed fish passage, dam removal would be our first choice to addressing this fish passage impediment. Dam removal is the most effective and least costly alternative for enabling fish passage. However, we don't want to replicate the 10+ years of fighting that preceded removal of the Estabrook Dam. Achieving community consensus usually means compromise – there is often not a clear winner and all sides don't get everything they want. While providing a fish passage around the dam would not fully



restore the natural ecology to the river, it would allow us to retain the “Kletsch Falls” that many in the community love, while still achieving our collective vision of FISHABLE rivers for everyone.

If we do not grasp this opportunity and move forward, we will lose more than just fish passage – we’ll also miss out on another important opportunity to connect more folks to our river through an improved portage, access points, and accessible paths. This will not only protect paddlers, fishermen, and other river users, but will ensure that ALL community members can recreate in our parks and enjoy our rivers safely.

In conclusion, we urge you to support design and construction of the Kletsch Park Fish Passage Project.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Nenn
Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Jessica Jens
Executive Director
Riveredge Nature Center

Mike Kuhr
State Council Chair
Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

John Rennpferd
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Wisconsin Federation of Great Lakes Sport Fishing
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Bob Hammen
President
Great Lakes Sport Fishermen Club-Ozaukee

Kevin Shafer
Executive Director
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
(MMSD)

Cc: Glendale Historic Preservation Commission
Glendale Common Council
Preston Cole, WDNR Secretary
WDNR Area of Concern Program