



Contacts:

Chuck Burnham:

Office: 860-430-2113

Mobile: 860-992-3514

Charles.Burnham@gdfsuezna.com

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FirstLight Discovers Zebra Mussel Veligers Near Rocky River Facility in Housatonic

Late yesterday, a scientist contracted by FirstLight Power Resources (FirstLight) confirmed the presence of Zebra Mussel Veligers, the juvenile form of the invasive species, in the Housatonic River near the company's Rocky River hydro-electric facility in New Milford. The Veliger is the larvae of adult Zebra Mussels. Veligers were *not* discovered in Candlewood Lake or at FirstLight's upstream facilities, Bulls Bridge and Falls Village.

FirstLight has developed a Zebra Mussel Monitoring Plan through its license with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). As part of the plan, FirstLight regularly samples water from the River and tests for the presence of Zebra Mussels. A water sample taken Tuesday indicated the presence of Veligers and this was confirmed with enhanced scientific sampling on Wednesday.

Among those notified of the finding was the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

"Candlewood Lake is one of Connecticut's most important natural resources and its health is critical to outdoor recreational opportunities and the economy of our state," said Daniel Esty, Commissioner of DEEP. "As a result, we take the threat of Zebra Mussels very seriously and have implemented an aggressive program to educate boaters at State boat launches and expanded monitoring efforts, especially in susceptible waters in western Connecticut."

"We appreciate FirstLight's vigilance in monitoring for any sign of Zebra Mussels," Esty said, "and with steps they are now taking to prevent the spread of this invasive species."

Zebra Mussels only become "active" when water temperatures are 50 degrees Fahrenheit and above. As such, FirstLight is currently not pumping any water from the Housatonic River into Candlewood Lake via its Rocky River facility since water temperatures are at this level. The company also continues to actively monitor for further signs of Veligers.

Zebra Mussels were initially discovered in the Housatonic in Massachusetts in 2009 and were found in Lakes Lillinonah and Zoar on the Housatonic in Connecticut in the Fall of 2010.

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