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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE: August 2, 2011  
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### **SENATE BILL ADDRESSES SAFETY OF DAMS**

State Senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst), President Pro Tem of the Massachusetts Senate, has announced that the Senate last week approved a bill that would help improve the safety of dams, especially those owned by municipalities and non-profit organizations.

The bill, approved July 28<sup>th</sup>, would provide up to \$21 million in low-interest loans for the repair of dams, giving priority to those owned by municipalities and non-profits, like the Bondsville Dam in Belchertown.

“Senate Ways and Means Chairman Stephen Brewer (D-Barre) and I have been concerned by the lack of resources available for projects like the Bondsville Dam,” Rosenberg said. “There’s a huge backlog of dams in need of repair and this legislation will go a long way toward moving these projects forward.”

The bill also would expand the authority of the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Office of Dam Safety in an effort to address public safety and environmental concerns related to dams in communities across the state.

The bill would also require DCR, in conjunction with the Department of Fish and Game, to submit an annual report listing the ownership and location of all registered dams in the Commonwealth. The report would also provide information on all dams that are hazardous, abandoned or an environmental threat and all dam owners that have failed to meet dam safety requirements.

To ensure information on hazardous dams are up-to-date, DCR would review the hazard classifications of dams at least every five years and develop Emergency Action Plans for “high hazard” and “significant hazard” dams.

DCR would also establish an inspection schedule to ensure that high hazard dams are inspected every two years, significant hazard dams are inspected every five years and low hazard dams are inspected every 10 years.

For dam owners that fail to comply with dam safety regulations, fines imposed by DCR would increase from \$500 to \$5000 per violation.

The bill would allow cities and towns to borrow funds, outside of their debt limit, to pay for the costs of acquiring dams within their borders and any removal, repair, reconstruction or improvements to dams.

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives.