

Intersex fish are signal of problems for rivers

By Hedrick Belin

In the past 30 years, the federal government has taken steps to limit legacy pollutants such as lead, mercury or PCBs, from damaging the natural environment and human health. Unfortunately, the intersex fish — male fish with female characteristics such as eggs — that have been found recently in the Potomac and the Shenandoah rivers are a troubling indicator of new pollutants in the water. These emerging contaminants also pose a threat to drinking water because older systems are not designed to filter these compounds and, as a result, don't protect us very well.

For the past two years, Potomac Conservancy has explored the intersex fish phenomena and researched the issue of endocrine-disrupting compounds. We find that the presence of these substances to be a disturbing portent of declining water quality and perhaps human health for this and future generations.

The conservancy's "fish mystery" campaign raises public awareness of these important questions and highlights the need to

find answers to these pressing water quality and health issues.

The conservancy recently presented a petition from more than 5,000 area residents to Rep. Jim Moran (D-Va.) that expresses their concern for the lack of 21st-century scientific testing for the chemicals compounds that can mimic natural hormones and disrupt the endocrine system. In addition, the petitioners believe that Congress needs to update the regulatory framework to deal with these new pollutants found in the Potomac River, Shenandoah River and other tributaries and calls for more accountability and interagency coordination.

As chairman of the appropriations subcommittee on the Interior and the Environment, Moran introduced the Endocrine Disruptor Screening Enhancement Act (H.R. 5210), legislation that will update the original Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program, which was established in 1996 to test all pesticides that may come into contact with food for their ability to interfere with the body's hormonal system.

The act directs the EPA

to establish a program that tests chemicals found in drinking water to determine whether they are endocrine disruptors and if so, to determine the extent of their ability to interfere with the body's hormonal system.

The Potomac Conservancy agrees with Moran that we need increased funding for current research to understand better the effects of endocrine disruptors on human health, including children, and modified testing and evaluation protocols to be able to screen more compounds and combinations of compounds on an annual basis under the leadership of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Our goal should be to err on the side of caution and keep endocrine disrupting compounds out of the water, rather than trying to remove them once in the water.

We believe that stringent enforcement of updated rules and a cautionary approach to introducing new substances is the only way to protect the source of our drinking water from contamination.

Belin is president of the Potomac Conservancy.

Bingo 

New Market Rescue Squad

EVERY FRIDAY

Doors Open At 5:00 P.M.
Games Start At 6:30 P.M.

Largest Payouts Allowed by the State

\$100 Pay out on reg. games

\$15.00 Minimum Admission

Chest of Dreams

\$500 JACKPOTS

195067

CREEKSIDE 

Plain & Fancy, Inc.

107 N. Main St., Edinburg

Thanksgiving Dinner

Thursday, November 25, 2009

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Turkey, Country Ham, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Dressing, Green Beans, Sweet Potatoes, Sauerkraut, Coleslaw, Rolls, Tea, Coffee and Dessert