

For Immediate Release

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Potomac Conservancy Delivers *Fish Mystery* Campaign Results to Congress

Petition calls for more research into intersex fish and better regulation of new pollutants in Potomac River

Washington, D.C., Sept. 30—Potomac Conservancy Board Chair Robert Hurley and President Hedrick Belin today presented U.S. Rep. James P. Moran (D-VA) with more than 5,000 signatures of area residents who are concerned with the presence of new pollutants in the region's river and drinking water supply. The Conservancy's *Fish Mystery* campaign, launched in late April 2010, calls for more research into why over 80% of male smallmouth bass in the Potomac River are now exhibiting female traits, such as eggs.

The intersex fish phenomena—first discovered in the Potomac River in 2003—has since been detected nationwide. Chemicals that mimic hormones and disrupt the endocrine system are suspected to be the leading cause of intersex characteristics. These include substances common to our everyday lives, including pharmaceutical drugs and personal care products that are flushed into wastewater, and runoff from farms and feedlots that contains pesticides and fertilizers. With almost 90% of the region's drinking water drawn from the Potomac River, the quality of local water and its impact on people—particularly children—is a top concern.

The petition calls on Congressional leaders to support the following actions to prevent these chemicals from degrading the environment and threatening human and aquatic health:

- Provide additional funding (\$500,000 per year for 3 years) to research the causes of intersex fish;



Potomac Conservancy Board Chair Robert Hurley (left) and President Hedrick Belin (right) present U.S. Rep. Moran (center) with the names of more than 5,000 concerned citizens.

- Direct the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences to research endocrine disrupting compounds and their effects on human health, and request that Congress fund that research at \$2.5 million per year for at least 3 years;
- Demand coordination, oversight and accountability from all agencies using federal funds to research these issues;
- Invest in technology that can filter endocrine disrupting compounds from our drinking water supply and from sewage treatment plant output; and,
- Investigate the efficacy of drug take-back programs to keep pharmaceuticals out of our water supply.

"The intersex *Fish Mystery* is an important riddle to solve, and it drives our message home to see so many constituents signing the petition and telling their elected officials that it's time to take action," said Hedrick Belin, president of Potomac Conservancy.

Representative Moran has long expressed concern about the presence of endocrine disrupting pollutants in our waters, and about their potentially negative impact. Earlier this year, Moran, who was named Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and the Environment, introduced the Endocrine Disruptor Screening Enhancement Act (H.R. 5210). The Act directs the EPA to establish a program that tests drinking water for endocrine disruptors and determine the extent of their ability to interfere with the body's hormonal system. Moran has championed federal funding to understand the link between intersex fish and endocrine disrupting chemicals and hopes to have money appropriated in this year's Interior spending bill.

BACKGROUND: In November 2009, Potomac Conservancy released its annual *State of the Nation's River* report, highlighting the issue of endocrine-disrupting pollutants in Potomac waterways, the importance of this issue to residents of the Potomac River region, and shortcomings in current federal and local regulations that leave this widespread problem essentially unregulated. A copy of that report may be found at http://www.potomac.org/site/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/pc_sonr_lr1.pdf. In April 2010, the Conservancy advanced the call for more research into endocrine disruptors via its *Fish Mystery* campaign (www.fishmystery.com)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit www.potomac.org/site/FishMystery/ or contact Lydia Tukarski at Potomac Conservancy at 301-608-1188 x209.

About Potomac Conservancy

Since 1993, the Potomac Conservancy has protected the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries. Its conservation programs address the goals of improving water quality, protecting the river's scenic integrity, enhancing recreational resources, and building an informed and engaged constituency, using a range of tools, including restoration, permanent protection, advocacy, and citizen education and engagement.

In 2007, Potomac Conservancy graded the overall health and well-being of the Potomac watershed at a grade of D+. In the intervening years, annual updates to the *State of the Nation's River* report highlight issues of importance to residents of the Potomac River region. The river's overall health status will be revisited in 2011.

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