



April 6, 2017

Executive Director Steven Tambini
DRBC Commissioners
Commission Secretary
Delaware River Basin Commission
P.O. Box 7360, 25 Cosey Road
West Trenton, NJ 08628

Hearing Testimony Provided at the April 6, 2017 Special Public Hearing

Dear Commissioners,

Bad decisions of the past and the present have harmed the fish populations of the Delaware Estuary and River.

We all are impacted when the fish are lost from our River system – whether lost due to pollution, degradation, irresponsible dredging or development, or lack of oxygen.

Some feel the loss in the form of food they want or need to eat.

Some feel the loss in the recreational enjoyment fish provide – e.g. less fish means less fishing.

Some feel the loss of fish in our estuary spiritually and emotionally. There are many who appreciate and enjoy visiting, or even thinking about, our Delaware River as a clean, healthy, diverse ecosystem filled with life, including abundant fish life. A decline or contamination impacts that appreciation and joy.

A decline in fish translates into lost economic value as well. Nowhere is this more obvious than with the Atlantic Sturgeon which used to help support a robust caviar industry on the Delaware River. An industry that if operating today at the levels of the past, we estimate would provide over \$400 million in annual economic benefits including jobs, wages and taxes.

And there are cascading ecological impacts that result from reduced fish populations.

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Today we have an opportunity to make a good decision that will help restore and support the fish of the estuary. A decision that will:

- Help species like the shad whose population levels are only a remnant of what they were in the past.
- And Atlantic Sturgeon who are hanging on for dear life, on the brink of extinction.

For nearly ten years the DRBC has been looking at the issue of propagation, dissolved oxygen, excessive nutrients and fish populations in our River, particularly zones 3, 4 and 5.

Despite the science demonstrating propagation and the value of increased oxygen standards, DRBC has not taken needed protective action. Instead, industry politicking and advocacy has been allowed to overshadow the interests and needs of all others.

In 2013, concerned about how things were proceeding – actually not proceeding – the Delaware Riverkeeper Network submitted a petition to the Commissioners, bringing forth the proof that fish propagation was happening in the estuary and that heightened protection was timely, critical and more than justified.

Rather than act, the Commissioners told the staff to do more review.
Which they did.

And two years ago DRBC issued its own report documenting fish propagation in the zones at issue and the need for increased protections.

And so, we are finally at the end of that needlessly prolonged process, actually two years beyond, and what is your plan?

Send it back for more study.

At this point, to simply say it's time for more study is irresponsible, unacceptable and not defensible.

Our fish, our people and our River need you to honor your duty to immediately recognize the propagation taking place in zones 3, 4 & 5, and to put in place upgraded standards, including a minimum DO standard of 6 mg/l, that will provide the aquatic life of the River oxygen and protection at the levels needed to help them not just survive, but to thrive.

In your concluding slide from today's presentation, you included a quote from the report saying that "full propagation was not found and that is why more study is recommended." This is a deliberate sleight of hand or language designed to mislead. In fact, propagation of all species was found in zones 3, 4, and 5 and that is enough to mandate the actions that the Delaware Riverkeeper Network calls for today.

Respectfully,



Maya K. van Rossum
the Delaware Riverkeeper