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July 13, 2017

Honorable Andrew P. Harris
House of Representatives
1533 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Endangered Species Act Rule for Atlantic Sturgeon Critical Habitat

Dear Congressman Harris:

We wholeheartedly echo the concerns you expressed in your June 6, 2017 letter to Benjamin Friedman, Acting Administrator of NOAA, concerning the proposed designation of certain portions of the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries as "critical habitat" for the Atlantic Sturgeon. The Maryland county governments that comprise the Clean Chesapeake Coalition were never notified or consulted about the proposed rule and its impacts on our local economies that depend on the seafood industry.

For lack of supporting evidence and a gross failure by the promulgating federal agency to properly notice impacted jurisdictions, industries and stakeholders for opportunity to comment, the proposed designation fails to satisfy the statutory requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. The lack of coordination with potentially impacted local governments by the federal agency seeking the rule change, and the absence of consideration for impacts to the human environment of our counties, is another glaring example of a few regulators in concert with special interests imposing their will over the interests of our citizens and businesses. We appreciate the need to protect the Atlantic Sturgeon and other threatened species; however, there must be more transparency and coordination with impact local governments in the regulatory process and procedures when doing so.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ronald H. Fithian".

Ronald H. Fithian,
Chairman and Kent County Commissioner

cc: Benjamin Friedman, Acting Administrator, NOAA
Delmarva Fisheries Association