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April 13, 2017

Mark J. Belton, Secretary
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
mark.belton@maryland.gov

Re: Conowingo Dam Sediment Plume (April 8-11, 2017) –
Impacts on Water Quality and Fisheries

Dear Secretary Belton:

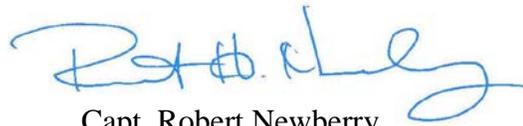
Over the past week, the Conowingo Dam in the lower Susquehanna River has had as many as 14 plus gates open in their spillway. The sediment plume emanating from the Dam as seen in the attached satellite imagery is dense and extends as far south as the mouth of the Chester River. Being that we are now in the peak of the spawning season for striped bass, shad, herring, yellow perch, white perch and (let's not forget) the Atlantic sturgeon, this enormous amount of sedimentation being discharged in a matter of days directly into prime spawning areas for these fish should be a priority concern to the DNR. It is indisputable that the large amount of sediment being delivered to the Susquehanna Flats (much of it being flushed out of the Conowingo Reservoir because it's so full) has a negative effect on those fish in pre-and post-spawn status. Even the eggs that have already been discharged and are developing are at great risk. All the primary spawning rivers and tributaries may not experience the Conowingo sediment plume extending into their upper reaches, but with a sediment plume of this magnitude fish migration can be jeopardized.

We here at DFA want to know what plans DNR has to address the adverse impacts of Conowingo scour and sediment discharges of this magnitude on spawning fish and on our fisheries in general. How does DNR intend to mitigate the harm done this past week to Chesapeake Bay flora and fauna? If such a discharge of sediment was caused by a private individual or business on the same or even a smaller scale during the spawning period, heads would be rolling. DFA has been closely monitoring this issue of sediment and other contamination loading to the upper Bay attributable to the loss of trapping capacity above Conowingo Dam, and we will continue to do so to protect the interest of our seafood industry members and for the betterment of the Bay.

Letter to DNR Secretary Mark J. Belton
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Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Capt. Robert Newberry
Chairman

Attachment

cc: William C. Anderson, DNR Asst. Secretary, Aquatic Resources
D. Lee Currey, MDE Water Management Administration
Clean Chesapeake Coalition

