



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

300 Westgate Center Drive

Hadley, MA 01035-9589

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/Region 5/FR

FEB 19 2013

Mr. Shawn Garvin
Regional Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

Dear Mr. Garvin:

I am writing to express our interest in, and concern for, the health of the Susquehanna River ecosystem. As you know, the Susquehanna River is the east coast's largest river and the drainage comprises almost half of the Chesapeake Bay's total watershed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) places high priority on restoring the Chesapeake Bay, as well as having responsibility for conservation of numerous Federal trust species in the Susquehanna River drainage. We concur with recent scientific assessments that indicate a chronic problem exists with recruitment of smallmouth bass in the river.

We also are concerned with the recent rise in reported skin lesions observed on bass, as well as emerging evidence of the occurrence of inter-sex fish, possibly caused by endocrine disruption compounds in the water. The Service believes the suite of warning signs exhibited by the smallmouth bass population is cause for a careful and thorough assessment of environmental conditions in the river. While exact linkages and root causes seem to remain unclear, we believe the evidence suggests that environmental stressors are affecting the biota in the river.

Our efforts to restore American shad and American eel in the river, as well as striped bass and the federally listed Atlantic sturgeon in the Chesapeake Bay, depend heavily on the health of the entire ecosystem. As such, we are invested in the Susquehanna River, and are committed to conserving it to support sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic resources.

We appreciate the working relationship we have with the Environmental Protection Agency and look forward to our continued work together to conserve the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

If you have any additional questions or require further assistance on this matter, please contact me, at 413-253-8300 or Mike Millard at 570-726-4247.

Sincerely,

Acting Wendi Weber
Regional Director
Region 5