



January 24, 2012

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Bldg., 3rd Fl
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

On behalf of the members of Potomac Conservancy and Potomac Riverkeeper, we write today to urge Virginia to continue its full participation in the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB).

The northern Virginia region is the most populous portion of the Commonwealth ahead of the Hampton Roads area. Nearly all of northern Virginia's population gets its drinking water from the Potomac River, as do a number of federal government entities, including the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency.

One of the key functions of the ICPRB is to work with the local government jurisdictions in the region on water supply issues. As a neutral non-regulatory convener of decision-makers, the ICPRB is able to provide an appropriate forum to make decisions during drought periods about water releases from upstream reservoirs and water withdraws. This structure has worked well numerous times in the last several decades.

Regarding the fiscal issues, if Virginia leaves the ICPRB to save \$151,500, it will cost Virginia an estimated \$529,000. Virginia's investment in ICPRB more than pays for itself as it is greatly leveraged with federal and ICPRB funds. In some prior years, when ICPRB was coordinating projects such as the Tidal Potomac PCB TMDL, the rates of return for Virginia were even greater.

In addition, this comprehensive regional arrangement has reduced the need for major infrastructure investments by Virginia that would cost Virginia hundreds of millions of dollars if it had to build sufficient reservoirs to meet the drinking water needs of this growing metropolis. Withdrawing from the ICPRB compact may lead to loss of access to the water stored at the

Jennings Randolph Reservoir in Maryland/West Virginia and Little Seneca Reservoir in Maryland.

The Commission focuses on water quality issues through the Potomac Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership. The Partnership is a voluntary association of government agencies and water suppliers, including Loudoun Water and Fairfax Water. This coalition of water utilities and management/regulatory agencies enables a comprehensive approach to protecting raw water supplies in the basin.

Ensuring a safe and secure drinking water supply for nearly 3 million Northern Virginia residents and not burdening taxpayers with the expense of unnecessary and duplicative water infrastructure should be priorities of your Administration. Our groups oppose H.B 1034 and any other legislation before the 2012 General Assembly that would not provide funding for the ICPRB or that would authorize the Commonwealth's withdrawal from this important interstate compact.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your Administration on ways that will protect Virginia's wonderful rivers and streams. It is imperative that the public, private, and non-governmental sectors work together to promote strategies that continue to provide a safe, abundant supply of drinking water to northern Virginia in the 21st century.

Sincerely,



Ed Merrifield
President
Potomac Riverkeeper



Hedrick Belin
President
Potomac Conservancy

CC: The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
The Honorable Beverly J. Sherwood
The Honorable Doug Domenech