



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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MARYLAND DELEGATE MAGGIE McINTOSH VOTED 2013 CHAIRMAN OF FULL TRI-STATE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION SETS ADDRESSING CONOWINGO SEDIMENT AS A TOP PRIORITY

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND — Maryland Delegate Maggie McIntosh, a Baltimore City Democrat and Chair of the House Environmental Matters Committee, has been selected to Chair the Tri-State Chesapeake Bay Commission for 2013. Delegate McIntosh will lead and oversee the policy and legislative efforts of the 21-member Commission made up of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia legislators, natural resource agency and citizen representatives.

“The Chesapeake Bay Commission has a long record of success working on a bi-partisan and multi-state basis to help restore the Bay and its rivers and streams, and I am honored to have been selected to lead that continuing effort,” said Delegate McIntosh. “This year we intend to make the massive sediments which have built up behind the Conowingo Dam on the Susquehanna River a top priority of the Commission. With the dam scheduled to be relicensed in 2014, we want to work closely with Pennsylvania, our federal partners and Exelon, the dam’s owner, to find and implement a practical solution to the sediment problem, which poses a serious threat to the Chesapeake and its living resources. Fish passage, low flow and land conservation are also issues that must be addressed.

“As a first step, our Commission is calling on the EPA – the lead federal agency in the Chesapeake watershed cleanup effort -- to become more engaged in the relicensing process and on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure that Exelon’s license to continue operating the hydroelectric dam includes provisions to address the accumulated sediments,” she added.

Since it was built in 1928, the Conowingo Dam has served as a trap for the substantial amounts of sediments and nutrients which wash down the Susquehanna River each year, preventing them from reaching the Chesapeake Bay. Although the loads of sediments and nutrients upstream of the dam have been reduced in the past few years due to initiatives to restore the water quality of the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay, the dam’s trapping capacity has shrunk over the past 84 years, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, to the point where major storms could scour significant amounts of these accumulated sediments and nutrients and send them into the Bay. These excessive sediment and nutrient loads reduce water quality, feed algae blooms, and adversely impact the Bay’s living resources.

In August 2012, Exelon submitted an application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a new 46-year license to operate the dam. In reviewing the application, FERC is required to give equal consideration to energy conservation, preservation of environmental quality, fish and wildlife protection, and recreation.

The Chesapeake Bay Commission, under Delegate McIntosh's leadership, will be also be focusing on other key state and federal issues to advance Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts including stormwater, agriculture and land conservation efforts.

Delegate McIntosh assumes leadership of the Commission from Virginia Senator Emmett Hanger who chaired the Commission in 2012. In 2014 the Chairmanship will rotate to Pennsylvania.

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a policy leader in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. As a tri-state legislative body that advises the legislative branch of state government, its mission is to identify critical environmental needs, evaluate public concerns, and ensure state and Federal actions to sustain the living resources of the Chesapeake Bay. The Commission works directly with the state General Assemblies and the U.S. Congress and serves as the legislative branch of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

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