Press Release

from the CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE,
MIDSHORE RIVERKEEPER CONSERVANCY, NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION & PENN FUTURE

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CBF AND PARTNERS GO TO FEDERAL COURT TO DEFEND BAY RESTORATION

(ANNAPOLIS, MD) -- A coalition of environmental groups announced today that they have filed a motion in federal court to oppose the efforts of major national agricultural organizations to force an end to federal and state programs to reduce pollution and restore the Chesapeake Bay. The coalition includes the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, Defenders of Wildlife, the Jefferson County Public Service District, the Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy, and the National Wildlife Federation.

Within days after the federal government announced scientific pollution limits and the states laid out specific plans to reduce pollution in local rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau went to federal court in Pennsylvania to stop those efforts. They have since been joined by other national agricultural lobbying groups, including the Fertilizer Institute, the National Pork Producers Council, the National Corn Growers Association, the National Chicken Council, the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association, and the National Turkey Federation.

"Just as the Bay is making progress in its long fight to survive, these big money industry lobbyists are trying to derail the process. Why? A simple profit motive," said Chesapeake Bay Foundation President William C. Baker. "They want the rest of us to suffer dirty and dangerous water so they can maximize their corn, hog, and poultry profit."

For decades, science has known that nitrogen and phosphorus pollution are responsible for the dead zones, fish kills, and harmful algal blooms that annually plague the Chesapeake Bay. Under the Clean Water Act, and as the result of numerous court cases, a scientific limit, or TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load), has been set. State governments then developed plans designed to ensure that all

pollution control measures needed to fully restore the Bay and its tidal rivers are in place by 2025, with at least 60 percent of the actions completed by 2017. Science set the limits, and the states designed individual plans to achieve the goals.

“This lawsuit is a frivolous attack by polluters against the Chesapeake Bay’s rivers and streams, the source of drinking water for millions and an economic engine for the region.” said the National Wildlife Federation’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Executive Director Tony Caliguiri. “In these economic times it’s appalling that taxpayer money is being spent to defend clean water in local communities against polluters. Responsible local leaders are working hard to set pollution limits for their communities and polluters would rather sue rather than be accountable.”

The lobbyists claim the restoration plans were created overnight and in a vacuum. That is not the case. The plans were preceded by a long and arduous history of efforts to restore and preserve the Chesapeake Bay by the states and federal government. The efforts included a lengthy, transparent series of public meetings, many of which were attended by representatives from plaintiff organizations.

“The new Bay TMDL pollution limit is our best chance to reverse course and restore the health of the Chesapeake and the fish and wildlife that rely on it for survival,” said Greg Buppert, attorney for Defenders of Wildlife. “It’s time for Big Ag to share the responsibility of protecting this economically valuable and treasured natural resource.”

“Our Mid-Shore waterways are magical, special places, but to date they haven’t been adequately protected,” said Timothy D. Junkin, Director of the Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy. “We have an historic opportunity in our hands to heal these waters, and we must not let it be taken away.”

Opponents of the pollution limits claim that EPA is overstepping its authority, and wants the process to start all over again.

“The Farm Bureau’s lawsuit is just another attempt to delay federal action,” said Brian Glass, senior attorney for Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future (PennFuture). “This delay will harm the very people the Bureau purports to represent, endangering farms that need a fresh and clean water supply, and preventing farmers from getting the help they need to protect their own land and waters.”

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