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FishKill_Letter_to_VA_Congressional_Delegation

The Honorable
U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Representative _____/Senator _____:

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations, are writing to urge you to secure \$840,000 in the Fiscal Year 2009 Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for critical scientific studies related to the fish kills occurring in the Shenandoah and James River systems.

Fish kills have been documented on parts of the Shenandoah River from 2002 to 2007 and last year similar fish kills occurred for the first time in the upper James River and continued in 2008. In 2005, it was estimated that the fish kills wiped out 80 percent of the adult small mouth bass and redbreast sunfish along 100 miles of the South Fork Shenandoah River. The impact of the fish kills has been ecological, economic and emotional for the region. According to a study by James Madison University, the recent fish kills in the Shenandoah River resulted in a loss of over \$785,000 in retail sales and revenue in 2005 alone.

The fish kills occurring on the Shenandoah and James Rivers do not match any known fish kill phenomenon. Thus far, federal and state agencies have scavenged funds from existing department budgets and emergency funds to implement and coordinate studies. Extensive studies have been conducted already but have failed to yield conclusive answers as to the causes of the fish kills. Continued intensive and comprehensive investigation is needed to determine the cause of the affliction and begin working toward solutions.

We urge you to include \$840,000 for the existing budget accounts of Priority Ecosystem Science and Toxics Substances Hydrology within the U.S. Geological Survey in the federal fiscal year 2009 appropriations. This is the first crucial step in a three-year, increased effort to determine the cause of the fish kills, identify solutions and protect Virginia's communities and cherished rivers from further harm.

Thank you for your leadership on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Bill Street
Executive Director
James River Association