



Conowingo MDE -MDE- &lt;conowingo.mde@maryland.gov&gt;

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## Supporting Conowingo Dam

1 message

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**Hammad, Amir:(Constellation Power)** <[REDACTED]>  
To: "conowingo.mde@maryland.gov" <conowingo.mde@maryland.gov>

Fri, Jul 28, 2023 at 3:57 PM

Dear Secretary McIlwain,

As you consider issuing a new water quality certification to secure a long-term license for the Conowingo Dam, I want to share my perspective on the importance of the dam for Maryland's economy and environment and the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.

I have been proud to call Baltimore home for the past 16 years. In that time, I have held many jobs within Constellation that have allowed me to play a key role in our company's effort to accelerate the nation's transition to a carbon-free future. Now, as the Plant Manager of Conowingo Dam, I manage our state's largest source of renewable energy.

Like all Marylanders, I care deeply about the Chesapeake Bay. Living close to the Inner Harbor and the Chesapeake Bay waterways has afforded me and my family amazing opportunities for outdoor activities, including swimming, biking, running, and hiking.

My team at the dam cares deeply about the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. We are proud that the dam produces no pollution and traps sediment that would otherwise flow downstream from Pennsylvania and New York into the Chesapeake Bay. I am always impressed by our team's commitment to clear debris fields at the dam. These efforts prevent more than 600 tons of upstream debris from reaching the Bay each year on average.

As members of the community, our employees are also committed to preserving and improving the recreation areas along the Susquehanna River to support boating, fishing, hiking, and photography. We are incredibly proud that thousands of people visit our 15 recreation sites annually, where they have some of the best views in the world to spot bald eagles, blue herons, ospreys, and falcons while enjoying the beauty of the Susquehanna River.

In 2016, Constellation entered into a groundbreaking agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) in which we committed to trap and truck American shad and river herring above Conowingo

**and** three other upstream dams to deposit the fish at their spawning grounds. We also committed to improving attraction efficiency and capacity of the dam's two existing fish lifts. Under the agreement, over \$300 million in fish passage improvements were planned to help ensure American shad and river herring reach their native spawning grounds and thrive. The agreement, which implements an adaptive management plan, was the first of its kind and heralded by USFW, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the industry. The ultimate goal for this fishway prescription is to build capacity to pass up to 5 million American shad and up to 12 million river herring annually in order to maintain self-sustaining populations of 2 million American shad and 5 million river herring annually migrating to and reproducing in the Susquehanna River upstream of York Haven Dam and in suitable tributaries.

The significance of the dam's historic agreement with USFW is underscored by current populations of American shad and river herring. During the 2023 fish passage season—March 30 to June 6—a total of 10,020 American Shad and 412 river herring were collected at Conowingo fish lifts. In 2022, the totals were 4,336 and 1,056, respectively. I speak for everyone working at the dam when I share that I am extremely disappointed that the vacatur of the dam's license has delayed this project and puts our projects to restore the fish population at risk.

In 2008, Constellation worked with USFW to begin transporting American eels to tributaries above the York Haven Dam, and we assumed full responsibility for the project in 2017. Since 2017, we have collected and transported over 2 million American eels upstream, which has an important impact on mussel-bed restoration and ultimately water quality of the river.

Outside of the upstream fish passage season (March through June), Conowingo Dam provides a barrier to Aquatic Invasive Species. Since 2021, Constellation in coordination with DNR, USFW, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, the Maryland Department of Environment and other resource agencies has also aided in stopping the spread of aquatic invasive species, such as the Northern Snakehead, Flathead Catfish and Blue Catfish. We have prevented the spread of 1,737 Northern Snakeheads, 1,865 Flathead Catfish, and 26 Blue Catfish and in coordination with DNR. These fish were either donated to local food banks, used for scientific research, or sold in markets.

Constellation has also found opportunities to support conservation beyond the scope of our agreement. Last October, we committed to donating 300 acres of land surrounding the dam to support watershed conservation and enhance public access to local, state, and nation parks. Without a long-term license, Constellation is prohibited from moving forward with this important donation.

I implore MDE to consider the benefits that Conowingo Dam brings to Maryland when making its decision about the water quality certification license. Conowingo Dam is not the problem. We must all work together to address the true causes of pollution in the watershed and secure a new long-term

license for Conowingo Dam that balances the health of Maryland's economy and environment for the future.

Sincerely,

Amir Hammad

Plant Manager, Hydro - Constellation Energy

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