

**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
Hearing on “Ova-Pollution in the Potomac: Egg-Bearing Male Bass and Implications for
Human and Ecological Health”
1 p.m., October 4, 2006**

Testimony of Charles M. Murray, General Manager, Fairfax Water

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present comments at this important hearing. My name is Charles M. Murray and I am the General Manager of Fairfax Water, Virginia’s largest drinking-water utility. Fairfax Water is a non-profit, public water authority governed by a ten-member citizen board of directors who are appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Fairfax Water provides retail or wholesale service to nearly 1.5 million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties, the City of Alexandria, the Town of Herndon, Ft. Belvoir, and Dulles Airport. Fairfax Water operates state-of-the-art water treatment plants on both the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers.

As a large community drinking-water utility, we are regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act through the Environmental Protection Agency. As with all community water utilities, Fairfax Water is dependent upon the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set standards protective of public health, through the resources provided by Congress in the Safe Drinking Water Act. In Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health has been delegated regulatory authority for drinking-water utilities. I am proud to report to you that Fairfax Water meets all federal and state drinking-water regulations and has never had a violation of any maximum contaminant level. In fact, Fairfax Water takes pride in not only meeting these regulations, but in surpassing regulatory requirements for producing top-quality and esthetically pleasing water.

You have asked me to address today my awareness and concern regarding a recent USGS study and subsequent article in the *Washington Post* discussing egg-bearing male bass fish found in the Potomac River. Unfortunately, the USGS has not yet shared the report referred to in the *Post* article, so I cannot comment on it. What I can speak to are three things: my personal philosophy on the profession of drinking-water treatment, Fairfax Water’s activities in the National Capital Region to protect the Potomac River Watershed, and Fairfax Water’s participation in advancing the science associated with understanding endocrine disruptors.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, as you are dedicated to serving the people of the United States in the best way possible, we at Fairfax Water are similarly committed to serving our customers. A statement that hangs on my office wall, written by a former executive director of the American Water Works Association, captures the importance of our work. I share this with you now.

We are, all of us, water beings on a water planet. Water is life. Without it, all living things die. Our dependence on water is absolute; our psyches know this and signal us in myriad ways of water's elemental importance and significance. That is why we love the water and remember experiences associated with it. Of the earth's vast resources of water, only a small fraction is fresh and drinkable. A few people among the globe's billions have been charged with the task of ensuring everyone else has a reliable supply of safe water. Supplying potable water is an essential human activity, a great responsibility, and a vocation of distinction.

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As you can see, with this philosophy in mind, it is with a sense of responsibility and commitment that I and the people of Fairfax Water perform our duties as the major Northern Virginia drinking-water provider. To that end, Fairfax Water is a founding member of the Potomac River Source Water Protection Partnership (Partnership). The Partnership is a voluntary organization of water utilities, state, interstate, and federal partners whose representatives are dedicated to source-water protection. The Partnership has identified endocrine-disrupting compounds (EDCs) as a priority issue. The Partnership is following the latest research into which specific chemicals may be causing the endocrine-disrupting effects on fish in the Potomac River. The short-term goals include defining and prioritizing EDCs based on a review of current knowledge and consultation with experts, assessing potential sources of EDCs in the Potomac River, and identifying appropriate best-management practices for their control. The long-term goal is to enhance local understanding of EDC identity, sources, distribution, possible human and ecological health effects, management practices to limit their presence in the environment, and methods of treatment and removal.

In addition to the Potomac Partnership, Fairfax Water, along with many water utilities across the nation, contributes to and participates in the activities of the American Water Works Association Research Foundation (AwwaRF). AwwaRF is a member-supported non-profit organization that sponsors research to enable water utilities, public health agencies, and other professionals to provide safe and affordable drinking water to consumers. AwwaRF is the research arm of the water-supply community. I serve on the Board of Trustees for the Foundation and my utility, Fairfax Water, is a longtime investor in AwwaRF, as are most of the water agencies in the greater DC area. AwwaRF operates a \$30 million-a-year drinking-water research program. To date, AwwaRF has conducted 21 projects totaling about \$5 million specifically to study the issue of endocrine disruptors. It is this research that ultimately will help lead us to understand the significance of endocrine disruptors in the aquatic environment.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by noting that AwwaRF is once again seeking funding from the United States Congress. AwwaRF is 80% funded by local drinking-water utilities and research partnerships and 20% through funding assistance from Congress. I want to express my strong support for the \$5 million AwwaRF funding request in the EPA Science and Technology account of the FY'07 Interior Appropriations bill.

Thank you. I will be happy to answer your questions.