

TESTIMONY OF
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GENERAL MANAGER
WASHINGTON AQUEDUCT
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 4, 2006

Congressman Davis and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I am Tom Jacobus, General Manager of Washington Aqueduct. Washington Aqueduct operates two water treatment plants and other facilities that provide water to its wholesale customers. These customers are the District of Columbia, Arlington County, and the City of Falls Church. Falls Church further serves an area of Fairfax County and the Town of Vienna. Washington Aqueduct is owned and operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

This federal ownership and operation of the water treatment facilities stems from the beginning of the water system for the District of Columbia in 1852. The US Army Corps of Engineers built and operated the system, and in the intervening years has continued to expand and modernize the treatment plants to meet increasing demand and to improve the quality of the drinking water.

Washington Aqueduct receives no direct federal funding. All funds for operations, maintenance, and capital improvements come from its wholesale customers.

All of the water treated at the Dalecarlia and McMillan plants is withdrawn from the Potomac River either at Great Falls or at Little Falls. The treatment processes are regulated by Region 3 of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The water production operations at Washington Aqueduct are in compliance with all environmental requirements, including those of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Throughout the production process, samples are collected and analyzed for bacteria and organic and inorganic substances. Once delivered to the distribution system, the water undergoes additional sampling and analysis. Each year, Washington Aqueduct's EPA-certified water quality laboratory analyzes more than 65,000 samples of the source water and the finished water to determine its quality. All of this is done to ensure the safety of the water provided to our customers.

Washington Aqueduct's principal focus is on producing safe drinking water. To ensure that we will continue to provide drinking water that meets future regulations, we participate in EPA's ongoing evaluation of unregulated drinking water contaminants. Also, we are an active participant with both regional and national groups whose purpose is to advance the science of water. We contribute to the work of the American Water Works Association Research Foundation by direct funding and by participating in

research projects. Our engineers and scientists prepare technical papers and attend conferences to ensure we are current with industry technology and regulatory developments. Additionally we have contractual relationships with nationally renowned consultants in the field of water treatment. We use those consultants to help us evaluate options for future treatment.

We are certainly aware of the reports of fishermen and scientists in the Potomac River basin finding sexually abnormal male smallmouth bass. We are also aware that this phenomenon is observed not only in the Potomac River, but also elsewhere both nationally and internationally.

Our engineers and scientists have been keeping abreast of the research into endocrine disrupting chemicals. We believe that our participation with research and water industry groups and our collaboration with EPA in support of their Contaminant Candidate Listing are very effective ways to be involved with this issue.

We will continue our involvement in research of emerging contaminants and will be prepared to take necessary steps to modify the treatment process to comply with any regulations that come from the results of the ongoing scientific investigations.

I'd like to comment on one other activity in which we are involved. Chemicals can get into the source water, in our case the Potomac River, in a number of ways. If

we can prevent the chemicals from entering the river, then they pose no risk to the drinking water production process.

In April 2004, in conjunction with other water utilities in Maryland, Virginia and with EPA Region 3 and the US Geological Survey along with agencies from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia, we formed a Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership. Two of the goals of the Partnership are to maintain a coordinated dialogue between water suppliers and government agencies involved with source water protection and to coordinate approaches to water supply protection measures in the Potomac River basin.

In September 2005, the Partnership held a workshop to educate water suppliers and government agencies on emerging contaminants in the Potomac River basin. Included on the agenda were endocrine disrupting chemicals. The Partnership is currently working with the American Water Works Association Research Foundation to address more research on endocrine disrupting chemicals in the Potomac River.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to offer these remarks. I am looking forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.