



Elder Ghigiarelli -MDE- <elder.ghigiarelli@maryland.gov>

Conowingo Dam

1 message

Martha <marthadennis@juno.com>
To: elder.ghigiarelli@maryland.gov

Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 2:52 PM

Maryland Department of the Environment
Attention: Elder Ghigiarelli

August 23, 2017

Dear Elder,

Having lived near the Conowingo Dam for much of my life, I can confidently say that the area around the dam is among my favorite places in Maryland.

For people who enjoy the great outdoors, such as myself, it offers fantastic nature-watching and recreational opportunities, like fishing and hiking. For students and educators, it is a phenomenal destination for field trips. For me, personally, it has been a place for camping, hiking, and boating with family for years.

My experience is not unique. Already, the dam, reservoir, and surrounding recreational areas attract more than 250,000 visitors annually – providing nearby Cecil and Harford counties with a robust tourist economy. Moreover, with the recent \$4.5 million investment into a fish wharf by the dam's owners, there are now brand new attractions for fishermen, bird watchers and photographers.

That said, the Conowingo dam is much more than a recreational destination. For starters, the dam is Maryland's largest source of renewable energy – providing more clean energy than all other renewable energy sources in Maryland combined. In 2012, the dam alone produced enough electricity to power 159,000 homes for an entire year; and every year, the dam prevents the release of 6.5 million tons of greenhouse gasses. The dam is also the region's first line of defense against large-scale blackouts, as it would be the first plant called upon to restart the regional electric grid if ever a blackout event occurred.

Environmentally, the dam does wonders for local wildlife populations and habitats. Thanks to the dam, two million tons of sediment and 600 tons of logs and debris are prevented from entering the upper Chesapeake Bay annually. The dam also creates natural breeding grounds for the American Bald Eagle and native fish populations.

All of this is on the line as you consider to issue a permit that is required for its continued operation. The calculus is simple: failure to support the dam would be felt by thousands of Marylanders, sacrificing a cherished cultural landmark and a vital part of our energy mix and economy. Those employed by the dam and their families would be most directly impacted, but the entire region would suffer.  

As a native Marylander, I feel strongly that the dam's many benefits are not something we should take for granted. We cannot afford to lose this asset. For these reasons, I implore you to re-license the Conowingo dam. 

Sincerely yours,

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