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Delaware Riverkeeper Network celebrates World Fish Migration Day

Organization highlights water quality improvements in the Delaware River and urges for greater protections

Philadelphia, PA - Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) held a paddle and press conference on June 7 at Penn Treaty Park to honor World Fish Migration Day and to bring attention to the critical importance of continued water quality improvements for our rivers, migratory fish, and the overall health of our communities.

Approximately 20 concerned community members and representatives joined DRN for the event. Paddle participants kayaked from Palmyra Cove Nature Park, NJ to Penn Treaty Park, Philadelphia, where a press conference was held to celebrate the return of migratory fish to the Delaware River and call for stronger protections for water quality standards.

Migratory fish have returned to the Delaware River as the water quality has improved through increased protections. However, there needs to be further improvements so that the oxygen levels and the water quality standards for the Delaware Estuary are fully supportive of the River's fish populations, including the incredibly endangered Atlantic sturgeon of the River.

"We all are impacted when the fish are lost from our River system or their populations are in serious decline – whether that loss is due to pollution, degradation, irresponsible dredging or development, or lack of oxygen. Every day there are opportunities to improve the health of our River and its fish populations. Right now we are urging Governors Murphy, Wolf, Carney and Cuomo, through the DRBC, to pass the regulations needed to enhance oxygen levels in the River, raising them from a 50 year old standard to levels supported by modern science. So far they have resisted, we hope today's event will help them to reconsider that poor decision," **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

As recently as the 1960s, oxygen would be absent from the river every year beginning in the spring and extending through the summer and into late fall. However, improvements have been made and the amount of dissolved oxygen has been restored to moderate levels. "As we've begun to restore oxygen to the Delaware River over the last 50 years, we've seen the return of iconic fish species such as the American Shad, Striped Bass, and Atlantic Sturgeon," **said Dr. Erik Silldorff, Restoration Director at the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

"In honor of World Fish Migration Day we must take a look at what's happening to fisheries around the world that are in serious decline due to climate change, pollution, and overfishing. Here in New Jersey, we have Salem nuclear power plants killing billions of fish and fish larvae each year while continuing to pollute the Delaware. For far too long, the industrial facilities along the River have polluted the River and slaughtered millions of fish like the endangered Atlantic Sturgeon. The DEP needs to do its job and require a closed-loop system, or cooling towers, at the power plants along the River," **said Jeff Tittel, Director of**

the New Jersey Sierra Club. “We’re heading into a crisis and if we don’t start changing policies on climate change, protecting habitat and overfishing, we’ll see fisheries continue to crash. We may also see the destruction of our entire ocean ecosystems. The time to act is now!”

The speakers also recognized the efforts of communities working to protect the watershed and the importance of clean water to those communities. “Today Trout Unlimited has thousands of volunteers working out of more than 400 chapters nationwide to conserve, protect and restore cold water fisheries. What happens upstream will eventually flow downstream. Everything is interconnected, so we must work effectively not only on local streams, but also on entire rivers and river systems,” **said Dave Dickens, Trout in the Classroom coordinator at Valley Forge Trout Unlimited.**

“Let's Go Outdoors' mission is to connect city communities to outdoor experiences, with a special focus on engaging those of color. All communities understand the importance of water, the need for its cleanliness and the critical role it plays in our daily health, plus outdoor recreation possibilities. Every week year-round, youth through adults, are experiencing nature in their neighborhood with Let's Go Outdoors, leading to increased awareness of our waterways and positive connections in the outdoors. Let's Go Outdoors is passionate in voicing that the outdoors is absolutely for everyone, it links us all, just like water; and when every community is engaged, knowledgeable and active in keeping our waterways clean, it'll sustain the health of us all,” **said Tarsha Scovens, Founder and Director of Programming at Let's Go Outdoors.**

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