

**Title:** Initial Steps for Addressing Regional Drinking Water Supply Vulnerability.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Potomac River supplies 78% of the drinking water in the region. While the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and Fairfax Water have alternative sources, the Potomac provides 100% of drinking water to the District of Columbia and Arlington County (via the Washington Aqueduct) The District of Columbia and Arlington County do not have any off-Potomac reservoir storage.

At present there are upstream reservoirs which release stored water during droughts to increase Potomac flow. The water utilities share the costs of upstream reservoirs.

The three largest suppliers-the Washington Aqueduct, WSSC and Fairfax Water- participate in the cooperative system which manages the Potomac allocations during low flow periods. There are water utilities that withdraw upstream of the three major utilities and are not part of the cooperative system. But we need to note that as demand and withdrawals from other utilities may require new shared multi-purpose infrastructure including complex new agreements between the water suppliers.

The regional water supply faces two significant risks:

- severe drought due to climate change
- major spill contamination

If the Potomac drinking water withdrawals were restricted it is important to note that Arlington and the District have a one day supply available, Fairfax has a four to five day supply available and WSSC has a [ENTER DAY].

It is imperative that we begin to address this local, regional and national drinking water supply vulnerability.

We ask that Fairfax Board of Supervisors:

1. Support S. 2443 is pending in the US Senate. The accompanying Report (S. Rep. 118-72) contains the language that would appropriate \$500,000 for the study of a back-up water supply for the DC area. It was a Congressionally Directed Spending request by Virginia Senators Kaine & Warner and Maryland Senators Van Hollen and Cardin that made it into the Appropriations Committee bill. See page 180 of the Report: <https://www.congress.gov/118/crpt/srpt72/CRPT-118srpt72.pdf>

2. Recognize that this is a first step in addressing this issue and be aware that further action will be required.

3. Share with the citizens of Fairfax County the message to *Use Water Wisely*.

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