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## **Environmental Groups Move to Force Pepco to Act on Anacostia River Pollution Cleanup**

WASHINGTON (May 17, 2016) – Environmental groups moved today to force Pepco (Potomac Electric Power Company) to finish a cleanup study on pollution in the Anacostia River. Pepco agreed to conduct the study as part of a legal settlement it reached with the District of Columbia in 2011, but is two years beyond a completion date the parties proposed five years ago.

The Anacostia Watershed Society, Anacostia Riverkeeper, and the Natural Resources Defense Council now are seeking to intervene in the case. The groups are asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to set a final deadline for the long-delayed cleanup study, which will assess the environmental and health impacts of Pepco’s pollution and evaluate possible remedies.

The city sued Pepco in 2011 to force it to clean up PCBs—toxic chemicals the company spilled onto its property at its Benning Road facility in Northeast DC over nearly 2 decades—which contaminated groundwater and stormwater, and polluted the river. PCBs in water and soil do not break down easily, and remain present in the environment for decades. They accumulate in the tissue of fish and other marine life and wildlife. Human exposure to PCBs is associated with cancer and other diseases. Over 10,000 local residents use the Anacostia for fishing and recreation.

In settling the case more than four years ago, Pepco agreed to do a cleanup study, identifying the severity of the pollution and proposing remedies. The city pledged to provide meaningful oversight. They each promised the court the study could be completed within two years. Today, Pepco contends it is still studying the extent of the pollution. It has yet to evaluate possible solutions. The city has failed to direct Pepco to act more quickly, as promised.

“We’re disappointed and frustrated to be back in court, trying to keep the process on schedule, when that was one of the reasons we tried to intervene 5 years ago,” said Jim Foster, president of the Anacostia Watershed Society. “The 1 million residents of the Anacostia River watershed deserve better.”

“Pepco claims to be committed to environmental stewardship, but cloaks decades of contamination of the Anacostia watershed in delays and refusal to meet agreed upon deadlines for reporting and cleanup,” said Emily Franc, the Anacostia Riverkeeper. “It is unacceptable for Pepco to drag its feet while this persistent contamination continues to damage the environment.”

“We need the court to force Pepco and the city to set a deadline, stick to it, and finish this pollution cleanup study,” said Aaron Colangelo, litigation director at NRDC. “Until they do, Pepco won’t begin cleaning up the toxic waste it spilled into the Anacostia over the past several decades.”

The very earliest estimate for Pepco to begin the cleanup is now 2020. That projection assumes the cleanup study is completed on the fastest possible timeline, and that Pepco does not fight the proposed remedy chosen by the city.

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The **Natural Resources Defense Council** (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 2 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Chicago; Bozeman, Montana; and Beijing. Visit us at [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](https://twitter.com/NRDC).

The mission of the **Anacostia Watershed Society** is to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores and honoring the heritage. The vision is to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable by 2025, in keeping with the Clean Water Act, for the health and enjoyment of everyone in the community. Community involvement is critical to achieving the vision and AWS seeks strong partnerships and coalitions with all parts of the community, government, and other stakeholders. Anacostia Watershed Society’s programs include environmental education, stewardship, recreation, and engaging the community through advocacy and volunteer opportunities. [www.anacostiaws.org](http://www.anacostiaws.org)

**Anacostia Riverkeeper** is an advocacy organization working to protect and restore the Anacostia River for all who live, work, and play in the watershed. Anacostia Riverkeeper executes its vision of a clean, swimmable, fishable river through advocacy, community engagement, recreational access programs, and robust volunteer programs all with the goal of improving the health of the Anacostia River for the surrounding community. Anacostia Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, an international grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to preserving and protecting water bodies from pollution. <http://www.anacostiariverkeeper.org/>