



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Ground-Healing” Held at Hyattsville Church

Innovative project will treat 2 million gallons of stormwater a year, preventing damaging run-off to the Anacostia River and Chesapeake Bay

Hyattsville, MD August 7, 2015 -- Elected officials, citizens and supporters today joined together at the First United Methodist Church of Hyattsville to dedicate a new stormwater retrofit project that will filter runoff from more than 3 acres of pavement, the first of more than 4,000 acres across Prince George’s County that the state and county will address in an effort to help clean and restore the Anacostia River and the Chesapeake Bay.

Mark Belton, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Adam Ortiz, Director for the Department of the Environment for Prince George’s County; Rev. Dr. Yvonne Wallace-Penn, Pastor, First United Methodist Church of Hyattsville; and Jim Foster, President of the Anacostia Watershed Society were on hand to celebrate the project’s completion and participate in a ground healing ceremony that involved planting native trees, shrubs and plants.

The project, which included the redesign of a three acre parking lot, will capture and treat approximately 2 million gallons of stormwater each year, which otherwise would have gone into storm drains that dump into Wells Run, a badly degraded tributary of the Anacostia River. Among the features of the retrofit project are:

- A series of rain gardens that line the length of the parking lot to catch stormwater as it runs from Belcrest / Queens Chapel Rd. towards East-West Highway. The rain gardens are planted with native plants and trees that allow stormwater a chance to filter into the ground, rather than channeling trash and pollutants into the watershed.
- Permeable paving installed throughout the site to allow stormwater to soak into the ground slowly, and slowing the water before it enters the rain gardens.

- An area of conservation landscaping, also known as BayScape, on the east side of the church, with native plants suited for environments that undergo periods of rain and drought. The BayScape incorporates a labyrinth, creating a meditation space for the church.

The project was conducted by the Anacostia Watershed Society as part of a comprehensive effort to stop pollution, restore natural systems, and reconnect people to their rivers and streams – all to reach the goal of a swimmable and fishable Anacostia River by 2025. The project was funded by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and the supporters of the Anacostia Watershed Society. The total budget for the project is approximately \$500,000.

“Although stormwater runoff remains one of the greatest threats to water quality, it’s also one in which we can work together to control and mitigate,” said Secretary Belton. “Through the [Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bay’s Trust Fund](#), we are able to partner with community groups like the Anacostia Watershed Society and First United Methodist Church of Hyattsville to identify critical areas and create innovative stormwater solutions. We are grateful for these citizen stewards and Prince George’s County for their work to improve the Anacostia River, and ultimately Chesapeake Bay – labors that benefit all of us.”

“Projects such as this one are critical to the health of our local environment and ecosystem,” said Prince George’s County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. “I want to thank and congratulate the Anacostia Watershed Society, the Prince George’s County Department of Environment, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and First United Methodist of Hyattsville on improving the environment of Prince George’s County, the State of Maryland, and the National Capital Region.”

“The First United Methodist Church community is called to renew our relationship with God’s creation, and through this exciting project we are doing just that,” said Rev. Dr. Yvonne Wallace-Penn. “By healing the grounds of our Church we become better stewards of His creation and better citizens of our community.”

“The stormwater retrofit at First United Methodist Church marks the dawn of a new day for the Anacostia River and the Chesapeake Bay,” said Jim Foster, President of Anacostia Watershed Society. “This project is the culmination of more than 20 years of advocacy and planning, and serves as a powerful example of the greener, cleaner future for Prince George’s County and all of Maryland.”

About the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS)

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 this 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