



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anacostia River Earns a Failing Grade in New Report Card *Maryland General Assembly takes action against river's biggest obstacle*

APRIL 11, 2012 -- A new Report Card on the State of the Anacostia River, released today by the Anacostia Watershed Society, shows that despite improvements in some key indicators, the river still suffers from pollution caused by stormwater.

However, new legislation passed this week by the Maryland General Assembly will require the state's 9 largest counties, including Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, to enact a stormwater utility fee, a major step toward reducing the primary source of pollution impacting the river.

"As seen in our 2011 State of the River report card, unmitigated stormwater runoff is the number one source of pollution for the Anacostia River and the only source of Chesapeake Bay pollution that is still increasing," said Brent Bolin, AWS Director of Advocacy. "The stormwater utility fee bill creates a fair funding source for needed infrastructure repairs that will reduce flooding in our communities and protect pipes, parks, and quality of life from stormwater damage."

The State of the River Report Card will be officially released on Wednesday, April 11, 2012, at Bladensburg Waterfront Park, 4601 Annapolis Road, Bladensburg, MD. The release precedes a massive river cleanup effort scheduled for April 21. The cleanup, organized by AWS, encompasses 40 sites along the river and anticipates more than 2,000 volunteers.

The report card is the second annual summary of water quality data collected on the river. The State of the River report allows citizens, governments, and businesses to better understand how their actions impact the Anacostia, and how they can help restore it to a fishable swimmable river.

Data is collected for four parameters over three sections of the river, for Maryland, Upper DC, and Lower DC. The Maryland section received the highest score, a B-, due primarily to the higher dissolved-oxygen levels in the more agitated tributaries as well as more tree canopy and lower water temperature, which prevent algae growth. Both

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DC sections received a C. Any score below an A is considered failing.

While the report card shows improvements in fecal bacteria levels over the past decade, thanks in part to infrastructure improvements by DC Water and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the key pollutant, sediment, continues to worsen. High sediment levels yielded poor grades for water clarity in all three sections of the river. The lack of sunlight that can reach the river's bottom means no submerged vegetation has been observed in the river since 2003.

The report card also assesses local, state, and federal governments for their effectiveness in restoring the river through policy. While Maryland fared poorly in 2011, passage of the stormwater utility fee is a significant step forward.

Just prior to the close of the 2012 legislative session on Monday night, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB 614/HB 987, which requires the state's largest jurisdictions to create a dedicated fee to reduce polluted stormwater runoff. As the District of Columbia already does, these counties will assess a charge to each property based on the amount of impervious surface. Proceeds will create a dedicated fund for stormwater infrastructure retrofits.

Montgomery County already has a stormwater utility fee for residential properties; the new law will require the county to develop a more comprehensive program.

Prince George's County estimates that \$800 million in stormwater retrofits are necessary to meet the Chesapeake Bay TMDL; this dedicated funding stream will help reach that goal. Green stormwater retrofits will result in the greening and beautification of communities along with a reduction in damage like wet basements, flooding, and erosion.

The stormwater utility fee was part of a package of bills promoted by the Clean Water, Healthy Families Coalition. AWS is one of 15 organizations on the coalition's steering committee.

About the Anacostia Watershed Society

The Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) is dedicated to cleaning the water, recovering the shoreline, and honoring the heritage of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities in Washington, DC, and Maryland. Since 1989, AWS has worked to conserve and protect the land and water of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities through educational programs, stewardship efforts, and advocacy projects. AWS works to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable as required by the Clean Water Act. For more information about AWS, visit www.anacostiaws.org.

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