



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

For Immediate Release

For Further Information contact:

Amanda Spake (410)867-8783; aspake@comcast.net

Emily Gillespie 301-699-6204; egillespie@anacostiaws.org

New Report Shows Anacostia River Still Decades From Meeting Federal Clean Water Standards

Clean-up Planned for 20 Sites on Earth Day, Saturday, April 9 2011

A new Report Card on the State of the Anacostia River, completed by the Anacostia Watershed Society and the Anacostia Riverkeeper, shows that despite improvements in key indicators, the river will not meet standards set by the federal Clean Water Act for decades, or much longer.

“Unfortunately, we’re not improving water quality in the Anacostia fast enough to make the river fishable and swimmable, perhaps in our lifetimes,” says AWS President James Foster. “Our new Report Card on the State of the River demonstrates that we have to take more action to control key sources of pollution: trash, sewage, and uncontrolled storm water runoff.”

The State of the River Report Card will be officially released on Earth Day, Saturday, April 9, 2011, at Bladensburg Waterfront Park, 4601 Annapolis Road, Bladensburg, MD. The release follows a massive river cleanup effort at 20 sites along the river, involving local businesses, and more than 2000 volunteers, organized by AWS.

As the Report Card indicates, aging sewer systems in some Maryland communities and in the District of Columbia allow raw sewage from leaking pipes and sewer overflows during rainstorms to enter the river. Uncontrolled storm water runoff washes trash into the river, along with fecal waste from animals, and chemicals and heavy metals from industrial sources and residential

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The George Washington House • 4302 Baltimore Avenue • Bladensburg, MD 20710-1031
o. 301-699-6204 • f. 301-699-3317 • info@anacostiaws.org • www.AnacostiaWS.org

developments.

These pollutants lead to an overgrowth of harmful bacteria, algae, invasive plants, and other organisms, reducing levels of dissolved oxygen and light, and destroying water clarity. Water clarity, a key parameter in the Report Card, is an indicator of the health of submerged aquatic vegetation, necessary to the survival of fish and birds. As the Report Card shows, in some sections of the river water clarity will not be achieved for more than 4000 years. Based on current projections, in the lower Anacostia near the District's South Capitol Street Bridge, water clarity will never be achieved.

Likewise, bacterial counts are too high in all sections of the river to meet federal standards. High levels of fecal bacteria may not automatically be harm human health. But high fecal counts often indicate the presence of difficult to detect, disease-causing bacteria, viruses, protozoa and other organisms. In the Maryland sections of the Anacostia, based on current practices, the Report Card shows that bacterial contamination will remain too high to meet water quality standards for some 55 years.

"What is most needed now is good public policy at the local, state, and federal levels," adds AWS President James Foster. "We need sound storm water regulations, aggressively enforced, funding for the Anacostia Restoration Plan, and more rapid replacement of aging infrastructure. With enlightened leadership and continued citizen action, we hope our next Report Card will highlight major progress toward a healthy Anacostia."

This is the first of what will be a yearly Report Card on the State of the River. It will allow citizens, governments, and businesses to better understand how their actions impact the Anacostia, and how they can help restore it to a fishable and swimmable river.

With that in mind, at 8:30 a.m. on Earth Day volunteers will begin removing trash and debris that has collected along the river in the District, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland. A complete list of the cleanup sites, the addresses and leaders at the sites is attached.

An Earth Day Celebration at noon at Bladensburg Waterfront Park will follow the morning cleanup event. Speakers include **Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker**, representatives from AWS Earth Day Event Gold Sponsor **CSX Corporation** and Silver Sponsor, **Giant Foods**. **AWS President Jim Foster** will also speak. The Report Card will also be released. A free picnic lunch will be provided to volunteers. Entertainment will feature live reggae music, and exhibits from community organizations.

To schedule an interview with any of the Earth Day speakers, or to arrange for photographs or video at locations along the river please contact Emily Gillespie at 301-699-6204 or egillespie@anacostiaws.org; or Amanda Spake at (410) 867-8783 or aspake@comcast.net

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.