

# VOICE OF THE RIVER

newsletter of the Anacostia Watershed Society



ANACOSTIA  
WATERSHED  
SOCIETY

SUMMER 2012

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Kayaking in Kenilworth  
Aquatic Gardens

Clean the Water, Recover the Shores, Honor the Heritage

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## New Greening Program Coming to Prince George's

AWS achieved another significant victory this summer with the passage of new legislation to help Prince George's County residents control runoff and beautify their properties at the same time.

The bill, CB-40-2012, introduced by Prince George's County Council member Mary Lehman (District 1), uses a portion of the county's stormwater fund to give rebates to property owners that install stormwater retrofits on their properties. These "green infrastructure" measures—green roofs, rain gardens, tree plantings, permeable pavement, and many others—protect the Anacostia River by reducing the volume of stormwater runoff that makes it into the river and its tributaries. Stormwater runoff is the number one source of pollution to the Anacostia.

AWS is leading the Prince George's County Healthy Communities Coalition, a nascent group of civic and environmental organizations dedicated to improving quality of life in Prince George's County (see page 2 for more info). The coalition was excited to support the stormwater retrofits bill, particularly for the other benefits these practices bring to communities. Reports by DC's own Casey Trees indicate that street trees, median plantings, and the like can increase a home's value by about 28 percent. These improvements also lead to stronger ties

among neighbors, a greater sense of safety, healthier play spaces for children, and reduced crime. We have heard a lot of Prince George's County homeowners complain about wet basements and erosion in their communities, and getting stormwater runoff under control reduces those impacts on citizens.

The bill passed the County Council unanimously, and takes effect in 2013. The new program means the entire Anacostia River watershed is covered by a stormwater retrofit rebate program, teamed with Rainscapes in Montgomery County and RiverSmart in DC. Together

these three programs provide a vital tool for advancing the restoration of the Anacostia. It also creates synergy with other AWS programs like Watershed Stewards Academy by providing a mechanism to implement the projects undertaken by WSA class members. We also hope to use the rebate mechanism to facilitate partnerships with municipalities and civic associations who want to address stormwater problems in their communities but need AWS to teach them how.

—Brent Bolin  
Director of Advocacy



Conservation landscaping and pervious pavers in Washington, DC

## The Prince George's County Healthy Communities Coalition is a diverse group of citizens and civic organizations working together for a better quality of life in Prince George's County.

Strong communities have a healthy economy, a healthy environment, and healthy citizens. The goal of Healthy PGC is to unite disparate groups around our common interest of making Prince George's County the best place it can be.

We spend a lot of time talking to citizens about the Anacostia River, and we've noticed a few common themes. While almost everyone would like to see the river cleaned up, not everyone has a personal connection to the river (something we're working to address through our Rediscover Your Anacostia campaign). But many of the communities where we live are faced with wet basements, flooded streets, or erosion problems caused by poor stormwater management, also the number-one problem facing the Anacostia River. Healthy PGC is framing the conversation in a way that makes it clear that environmental policies improve the health of communities, which in turn increases the quality of life in the county.

We have great quality of life in Prince George's County. It could be even better with a healthy development plan.

## Healthy PGC Action Plan

### Complete and walkable streets

The Complete Streets plan the County Council passed this spring will create shade for walking, spaces for biking, and safe places for our children to play. Now we need to implement the plan.

### Effective Stormwater Utility program

Fund badly needed improvements to prevent flooding, wet basements, and damage to parks and other public spaces.

### Retrofits initiative

Help businesses and citizens bring healthy development home with a rebate for retrofits like tree plantings.

### Bay cleanup plan

The WIP is the county's plan to stop polluting our streams. In the end this helps the Chesapeake Bay, but it benefits our county first.

### County clean water permit

Stormwater runoff is regulated by a federal Clean Water Act permit known as an MS4. A strong MS4 means faster and better investment in healthy communities.

Learn more at [www.healthypgc.com](http://www.healthypgc.com)

## Anacostia Watershed Society

*AWS is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage.*

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## Natives vs. Invasives

By Jorge Bogantes Montero, Conservation Biologist

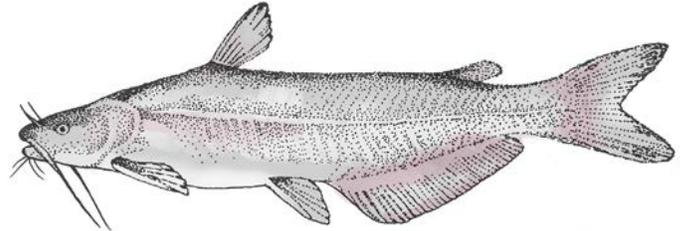


### Brown Bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*)



- Brown bullheads are the only catfish species native to the Anacostia River. They are relatively small (1.7 feet) when compared to congeners like the blue catfish.
- Like other catfish they are bottom feeders, eating a variety of invertebrates. Adults eat other fish, fish eggs, mollusks, carrion, and plant material.
- Brown bullheads are native to the East Coast and the Great Lakes region and have been introduced to the West Coast.
- They are mostly nocturnal and tend to burrow into soft bottom in the winter, which exposes them to carcinogenic substances found in the sediment.
- They can tolerate high carbon dioxide, high water temperatures, and low oxygen levels; they are also resistant to industrial pollution.
- Studies done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have found that as many as 68% of the Brown bullheads in the Anacostia River have liver and skin tumors.

### Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)



- “Blue cats” are native to the Mississippi River basin and have been widely introduced outside of their original distribution range, including the Anacostia River, as a sport fish.
- According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources its populations are on the rise in the Potomac River watershed.
- Blue catfish are the largest species of the catfish family in the United States and can reach an impressive weight of more than 120 pounds!
- They are found in medium to large rivers, often in deep areas; they like the bottom during the day hours, moving into other waters at night to feed.
- Blue cats are voracious bottom feeders, chowing on anything from dead animals to fish and plant matter, making them very successful invaders.

## Watershed Stewards Update

In 18 months the National Capital Region Watershed Stewards Academy, a partnership of key watershed organizations in the region, has produced 50 stewards actively conducting projects and raising awareness in their communities. Some are building rain gardens, while others are doing pet waste education campaigns, as two examples.

As part of their training, stewards learn about fundraising and practice writing grants by submitting proposals to the WSA for funding. Four stewards have leveraged more support by submitting grant applications to take advantage of retrofit incentive programs and grants offered by DC (RiverSmart) and Montgomery County (Rainscapes). Steward Carla Ellern increased her project budget 30 times over by winning a grant from DC! And thanks to Steward Marian Dombroski and other watershed activists who testified in favor of retrofit rebates in Prince George’s County (see cover story), all stewards in the Academy will be able to take advantage of such programs in 2013.



DC’s RiverSmart Program supported Steward Mary Rollefson’s project at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church



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Summer 2012  
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It's Workplace Campaign  
Season Again!

You can help protect the Anacostia River at work, too!

Thanks to our membership in EarthShare, the workplace giving federation for the environment, you can give to the Anacostia Watershed Society through your place of employment with a few dollars here and there from your paycheck. Contributing just a few dollars every paycheck might not seem like much, but it really does add up!

This past year, more than 100 people pledged over \$20,000 through their workplaces. Let's see if we can break that record for the 2012-2013 campaign season and get ourselves that much closer to a cleaner, healthier Anacostia River!

If your employer is not a current partner of EarthShare, please visit [www.earthshare.org](http://www.earthshare.org) for more information on how to connect.

**To give a workplace gift for the Anacostia Watershed Society, please use our designation number:**

**Combined Federal Campaign #: 88425**  
**Maryland Charities Campaign #: 8430**  
**DC One Fund #: 8029**

**Upcoming Events**

-  **September 29:** National Public Lands Day Cleanup at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens
-  **October 10:** Bird House Building and Installation at Bladensburg Waterfront Park
-  **October 20:** Paint Branch Community Cleanup in College Park
-  **November 3:** Tree Planting at Old Port Woods
-  **November 17:** Nursery Maintenance at Bladensburg Wetlands

And don't miss our **Tavern Toast on October 12!** Enjoy beer, cider, snacks, and family entertainment on the grounds of our headquarters at the historic George Washington House in Bladensburg. Free for members, 5 to 8 pm. Look for an invitation soon!

**For more info on these and other events, visit [www.anacostiaws.org/calendar](http://www.anacostiaws.org/calendar)**