



For Immediate Release

June 11, 2014

## **ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY RELEASES 2014 STATE OF THE ANACOSTIA RIVER REPORT CARD**

*Water Quality Assessment Accompanies River History and Restoration Roadmap  
For Organization's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

**Bladensburg, MD** – Despite again earning a failing grade for water quality, the Anacostia River can be made fishable and swimmable by 2025. That's the conclusion of the river's premiere advocacy watchdog organization, the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) which today issued its [2014 Anacostia River Report Card](#).

Efforts of government agencies, nonprofit organizations and the private sector to clean the water – making it safe for swimming and fishing per the terms of the Clean Water Act -- are lagging behind their much more successful work to make the river accessible and desirable for boating, riverside recreation, and as a catalyst for economic development. The overall effort and commitment of these agencies and organizations earned a C- in the 2014 Report Card.

“The Anacostia River is coming into its own as a destination for recreation and development, but until we see major improvements in water quality the river will never become the rich amenity our communities want and deserve,” said Dan Smith, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Anacostia Watershed Society. “Major threats to the river continue to be massive sewage overflows and leaks, long neglected toxic hotspots, trash, and way too much runoff that carries sediments from smaller streams to the river, creating damaging mud flats on huge portions of the river just upstream from D.C.”

The good news is that major projects are underway to substantially reduce sewage overflows to the Anacostia by 2018; new funding programs are in place for the rapid expansion of rain gardens, green streets, and greenroofs to curtail the runoff; and public pressure is growing for a coordinated and comprehensive attack on toxic pollution. The rally against river toxics was boosted by a newly formed river coalition, United for a Healthy Anacostia River, that was coordinated by the Federal City Council which is led by former District Mayor and Anacostia advocate Anthony Williams.

As part of the organization's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, the Anacostia Watershed Society has also produced a [State of the River Report](#) on the people, history and stories of the river that includes a timeline and roadmap for a clean river by 2025. To increase public access and recreation on the river, AWS cooperated with the National Park Service to develop the first ever Anacostia Water Trail Map and Guide. The water trail was dedicated by Gov. Martin O'Malley and other officials at a ribbon cutting event on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

“Our goal is to provide a benchmark of progress and create accountability for decision makers entrusted with the health of the river,” said Jim Foster, President of the Anacostia Watershed Society. “It is important for the public to know the current status of the river and to realize that while we have come very far in the past 25 years, there is still a lot of work to be done. There has been an eruption of positive and healthy activity on and around the river in the past decade. But can we afford to wait 18 more years to 2032 to complete the cleanup which is the current District plan? By redoubling efforts across the community now, we know we can do better. We challenge our leaders and institutions to complete the Anacostia River cleanup in 11 years, by 2025. We are long overdue for a clean river.”

The parameters used to assess water quality conditions for the 2014 Report Card include: dissolved oxygen, fecal bacteria, water clarity, chlorophyll, submerged aquatic vegetation, stormwater runoff, toxics, trash, and overall effort and commitment based on current initiatives from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to clean up and restore the river. To view or download a copy of the 2014 Anacostia River Report Card, or find more information, visit [www.anacostiaws.org](http://www.anacostiaws.org).

**About the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS):**

The Anacostia Watershed Society is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization founded in 1989 to protect and restore the Anacostia River and communities throughout its 176 square mile watershed by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage. The vision of AWS is to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable, 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 works in partnership and coalition with all parts of the community, government, and other stakeholders. Anacostia Watershed Society’s programs include environmental education, stewardship, recreation, and advocacy. The Anacostia Watershed Society is working to restore ten new acres of wetlands and reach 5,000 students through environmental education programs in 2014.

Support AWS’s 25th Anniversary Campaign at the ‘Then, Now and Beyond’ Gala on September 22, 2014. Please contact Mary Vasse, [mvasse@anacostiaws.org](mailto:mvasse@anacostiaws.org), for more information.

[www.anacostiaws.org](http://www.anacostiaws.org)

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