



For Immediate Release

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## **ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY CELEBRATES 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

*Organization Dedicated to Improving the Anacostia River Reflects Back at Accomplishments and Asks the Community to 'Discover Your Anacostia'*

**Bladensburg, MD** – The Anacostia Watershed Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities, today announced that 2014 marks the organization's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Throughout the year, Anacostia Watershed Society will honor its key accomplishments and successes over the past 25 years, while engaging communities and partners to push forward toward the vision of a restored Anacostia River.

"I am honored and grateful to have been in the company of all of the people who have labored - many times into the night, in the board room, and at the computers, the cleanups, plantings, and through advocacy efforts - to deliver a more perfect habitat for all living beings in our extended community; a noble effort for which I am grateful to you from my heart of hearts," said Robert Boone, Founder of the Anacostia Watershed Society.

"It is my dream that some of us will be here to celebrate a truly restored 'fishable and swimmable' Anacostia River, prosperity on our shores, and honor the heritage of our Founding Fathers who walked this land called Washington, for they and we deserve nothing less!"

Over the past 25 years, the Anacostia Watershed Society has worked with more than 100,000 volunteers to rid the river of harmful toxins and trash and restore natural habitat for plants and animals. They have planted nearly 31,800 native trees and plants, cleaned up more than 1,146 tons of trash and debris, and removed 56 acres of invasive plants from all along the watershed. The organization has also engaged and educated over 30,450 students through original programs such as RiverSmart Schools and Rice Rangers and trained 787 teachers from Maryland and D.C. to present their watershed curriculum to students.

"I am so proud of our organization's accomplishments over the past 25 years. We have come so far with the help of thousands of volunteers and many partner organizations. Together we have made many improvements in and around the river," said Jim Foster, President of Anacostia Watershed Society. "The last 25 years were about cleaning the river. We plan to complete our work in the next 12 years by seeing the cleanup to completion and changing the way the public thinks about the Anacostia River. Through our 'Discover Your Anacostia' campaign we hope to encourage residents in the surrounding communities to engage with us, connect with the river, and work together to make it a destination for everyone to enjoy."

Since its creation, the Anacostia Watershed Society has also been instrumental in implementing various policies to reduce sewage and stormwater pollution in the river. The organization has helped pass bills to change behaviors resulting in positive impacts on the river, such as a bag bill to reduce plastic bags

and a Ban on selling invasive plants in Maryland. AWS has engaged in legal actions that have resulted in a significant decrease in sewage and polluted runoff in the Anacostia River.

Over the next 12 years, the Anacostia Watershed Society plans on completing its goal of making the river fishable and swimmable. Development of additional access points along the river will make it more user friendly. Plans for 2014 include special 'Discover Your Anacostia' events and activities as the organization continues its commitment to increase river access, build new partnerships, and engage public and private groups to take action so that the Anacostia River can become the celebrated urban asset and park that residents and communities deserve. Special activities and goals for the coming year include:

- Launching the new Anacostia Water Trail and introducing residents to the river with free Paddle Nights beginning in June.
- Passage of anti-litter legislation in the District of Columbia and Maryland, including a ban on river-polluting Styrofoam in D.C., and a bag fee in Prince George's County.
- Helping to launch a new coalition, United for a Healthy Anacostia River, to focus on cleaning up the legacy toxins from the bottom of the river and adjacent sites.

The Anacostia Watershed Society will kick off their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year by mobilizing thousands of volunteers to clean up trash on the river during their annual Earth Day Cleanup event being held on April 5, 2014. Volunteers will clean up 25 sites located along the Anacostia River and its tributaries. Following the Cleanup, the Anacostia Watershed Society will host a celebration at RFK Stadium to thank those who participated. For more information, visit [www.anacostiaws.org/earthday2014](http://www.anacostiaws.org/earthday2014).

**About the Anacostia Watershed Society:**

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, 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 the Society seeks strong partnerships and coalitions, with all parts of the community, government, and other stakeholders. Anacostia Watershed Society's programs include environmental education for youth and adults, stewardship, public policy and advocacy, and recreation. Please visit [www.anacostiaws.org](http://www.anacostiaws.org) for more information.

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