



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Clean Water Act Celebrates 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Top officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the District of Columbia Departments of Environment and Public Works, the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA), the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) gathered on the banks of the Anacostia River Oct. 16 to observe the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Clean Water Act and to hear about the successes our nation's capital has had in addressing the clean water challenges facing cities across the nation. Americans can celebrate progress in meeting the water quality goals over the past 36 years while acknowledging that communities continue to face the ongoing and costly challenges of aging and ailing infrastructure, a growing population, changes in precipitation brought on by climate change, and increased stormwater runoff.

Washington, D.C., is an example of a city working to restore its urban watershed with a combination of infrastructure improvements and innovative stormwater management. The benefits of these successes include a revitalized Anacostia River and waterfront and improvements to Chesapeake Bay water quality.

### CSO Elimination/Water Pollution Control

DC WASA has embarked on a large-scale, long-term project to mitigate the area's combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The first phase involved infrastructure upgrades that have already reduced overflows by about 30 percent. In the second phase, the heart of the plan, huge underground wastewater storage tunnels are being constructed at a cost of \$2 billion to reduce CSOs by 98 percent in the Anacostia River and 96 percent overall by 2025. In addition, more than a \$1 billion is being spent to upgrade DC WASA's Blue Plains wastewater treatment plant to further reduce pollution to the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay.

### Stormwater Management

Last December, the District and EPA agreed to implement major green infrastructure enhancement to protect the Potomac and the Anacostia rivers from stormwater runoff. Highlights of the new measures include planting and maintaining at least 13,500 more trees and devising a low-impact development plan that involves converting paved areas such as median strips and large sidewalks into green space, creating a tax incentive for installing green roofs, requiring all new District-owned buildings and, where feasible, all major renovations of District-owned buildings to include green roofs, implementing enhanced street sweeping and trash removal programs, and installing 50 rain gardens and 125 rain barrels.

"The Clean Water Act is 36 and going strong, leading the way for sustainable solutions to the most pressing problems facing America's rivers and watersheds. Today, EPA, the District of Columbia, and our many partners are making real progress in the nation's capital, controlling sewer overflows and reducing

stormwater pollution through innovative projects and green technologies,” Benjamin H. Grumbles, EPA assistant administrator for water, said. “The Anacostia River will be one of the greatest urban river revivals in the nation’s history and set a shining example for other communities on how to increase stewardship, grow responsibly, and adapt to climate change.”

“The Clean Water Act truly represents a great success in our country's effort to protect our natural environment. I am hopeful that we can build on the strong foundation laid by the Act as we seek creative policy solutions to the new challenges facing our waterways,” George Hawkins, director of the DC Department of Environment, said. “Nowhere are these challenges better exemplified than here on the Anacostia River, which improves daily thanks to innovative urban environmental strategies that owe a great deal to the precedent set by the Clean Water Act.”

“Every year, the Department of Public Works sweeps up five-and-a-half million pounds of grease, oil and debris from District streets,” DC Department of Public Works Director William O. Howland, Jr., said. “This is one of the best ways to keep pollutants from contaminating the District’s waterways and ultimately our marine life and drinking water supply.”

“DC WASA is a leading environmental steward in the region, spending more than \$3 billion to reduce combined sewer overflows and install plant upgrades to control pollution in our local waterways,” DC WASA General Manager Jerry N. Johnson said.

“As we celebrate the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Clean Water Act, we face an unprecedented economic crisis that makes the federal-state-local partnership even more critical for addressing the nation’s ongoing clean water challenges,” NACWA Executive Director Ken Kirk said. “We urge Congress to return this year to enact an economic stimulus package that includes significant funding for communities to implement water and wastewater projects that are vital to public health and the environment as well as economic growth.”

“The Clean Water Act has made a tangible difference in the quality of Washington’s Anacostia, Potomac, and Rock Creek over the past decade,” Doug Siglin, federal affairs director for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said. “But as far as the Chesapeake Bay is concerned, the Act is like a grand old 1972 car. It has taken us to a lot of great places in its life, but it isn’t fully up to the task of getting us where we need to go in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Congress needs to start thinking now about giving our old friend a new hybrid engine more responsive to the times.”

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