



THE ANACOSTIA NETWORKER

The Newsletter of the Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee

Dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Anacostia River and its tributaries

Vol. 3, April 2004

Welcoming the New Neighbors

On October 25, 2003, a great thing happened for the Anacostia watershed at the historic Adelphi Mill. Thanks to the efforts and support of the Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee (AWCAC) and the Summit Fund of Washington, fifty citizens attended a one-day workshop focusing on the protection and restoration of their favorite local stream, the Northwest Branch. Presentations were given by Jim Sorensen (M-NCPPC) who highlighted the archaeological and historical resources of the



Panel discussion at the Neighbors Working to Restore the Northwest Branch Workshop, October 25, 2003

subwatershed, and John Galli (MWCOG) who described the environmental assets and restoration potential of the Northwest Branch. The workshop also included a panel discus-

following Anacostia groups: the Friends of Eagle Creek, Eyes of Paint Branch, Anacostia Watershed Society, Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. As eloquently stated by AWCAC representative David Paglin, "our watershed streams are part of our heritage and of our future, and we need to begin acting as caretakers of this resource in

order to return some of what has been given us." The take-home message provided by the workshop was that the Northwest Branch has and continues to provide its



M-NCPPC Archaeologist Jim Sorensen leading a walk along the Northwest Branch following the workshop

residents with tremendous natural, cultural and historic resources and opportunities. Today, the subwatershed is facing a variety of environmental threats and problems that require citizen involvement to be resolved.

The result of the workshop was to galvanize attendees into forming a new group dedicated to the protection and restoration of the stream. Over the following few months, a group of about twenty citizens worked together to create the fledgling, yet rapidly growing "Neighbors of the Northwest Branch." This past February, the group obtained its 501(c)(3) non-profit group status, and by March had grown to ninety members. The mission of the group states that the Neighbors are "committed to protecting, promoting and restoring the water quality, natural habitat, and ecological well-being of the Northwest Branch watershed. We intend to: (1) foster environmental awareness and education,

(2) take action by engaging in various water quality,



Biologists Charlie Gougeon (MDDNR) and Phong Trieu (MWCOG) performing an electrofishing survey in the Northwest Branch following the workshop

habitat restoration, land preservation and trash reduction efforts, and (3) enlist broad-based public participation in and support of the foregoing goals and activities."

Led by President Bill Howard, the

Neighbors secured their first grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust in March 2004. The money has subsequently been used to purchase waders and other equipment for the Neighbors first Stream Cleanup Day held on April 3rd.

For information on how to become involved with the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch, visit www.neighborsnwb.org or contact Bill Howard at 301-625-7771.

Anacostia Watershed Highlight: Anacostia Watershed Initiative Act

The Anacostia Watershed Initiative Act was introduced to the U.S. Congress in November 2003. If passed, this legislation will provide \$250 million of funding for Anacostia restoration-related projects and initiatives. We encourage you to contact your Congressional Representatives to voice your support for this Act. More information is available at www.anacostia.net

Action Alert! The Continuing Battle over the Inter-County Connector

By now, all of you have most likely heard of the Inter-County Connector (ICC), a proposed highway spanning Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland that would link the I-270 corridor near Gaithersburg with the I-95 corridor near Laurel. What you may not realize is that within the Anacostia watershed, the ICC would impact four subwatersheds: Northwest Branch, Paint Branch, Little Paint Branch, and Indian Creek, including the Special Protection Area of the Upper Paint Branch. If constructed, this six-lane highway would destroy more wetlands and forest than any other project ever submitted for permit approval to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District. Federal agencies have stopped the ICC three times in the past 40 years, most recently in 1997 when the EPA gave it its worst possible rating.

Recently, both the Montgomery County Council and the Maryland Senate passed by overwhelming numbers resolutions to restart the environmental impact study (EIS) on the so-called Master Plan Alignment of the ICC. The study is currently underway at an accelerated pace set by an executive order by President Bush which "streamlines" the study process. *Environmental Defense* has released a report criticizing the ICC process under this executive order because reasonable alternatives to meet our region's transportation needs are not being considered in the current study. Maryland Governor Ehrlich's team has narrowly defined the Purpose and Need of this study as building a limited access highway from I-95 to I-270. This doesn't leave much room for any outcome but the one they are looking for - build the ICC. You can find the report at: www.environmentaldefense.org/go/fastrack

In addition, this project is extremely expensive. Including financing costs, the ICC is currently estimated at more than \$3 billion and rising. That means a lot less money for other transportation projects, especially transit. Governor Ehrlich stalled the popular Metro Purple Line study as soon as he took office, and so far has failed to commit \$5 million toward Metro's requested operating budget. These moves will lead to more roads and traffic, leading to more polluted runoff in our rivers and streams, more destruction of open spaces, and more lost wetlands.

Alternative transportation solutions that studies have shown beat the ICC include investment in transit, balancing development of homes and jobs across the region, and improving our existing roads. Information about the history of the ICC, hikes along the proposed ICC corridor, and opportunities to become involved can be found at www.SaveCommunities.org The best thing citizens can do to show their opposition to the cost, environmental degradation and division of communities the ICC would

bring is to write their state senator and the state highway administration opposing the ICC, and calling for ICC alternatives that meet our needs without a new highway.

AWCAC is opposed to the ICC and encourages your involvement in its efforts to protect both the environmentally sensitive Anacostia headwaters and the millions of dollars invested in the Anacostia watershed restoration to date. For more information, contact Bob Ferraro of the Eyes of Paint Branch at 301.890.1998, or write to P.O. Box 272, Burtonsville, MD 20866.



Paint Branch Brown Trout Threatened by the Proposed ICC

A New Beginning for Hickey Run

A major accomplishment for the District of Columbia portion of the Anacostia watershed in 2003 was the successful signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the District of Columbia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the restoration of Hickey Run. Hickey Run is a small Anacostia tributary which flows through the USDA's National Arboretum, which is located immediately below New York Avenue, Northeast. Although its surroundings are beautifully manicured, the stream suffers from major pollution problems, and has the dubious distinction of having caught on fire in the 1930's.

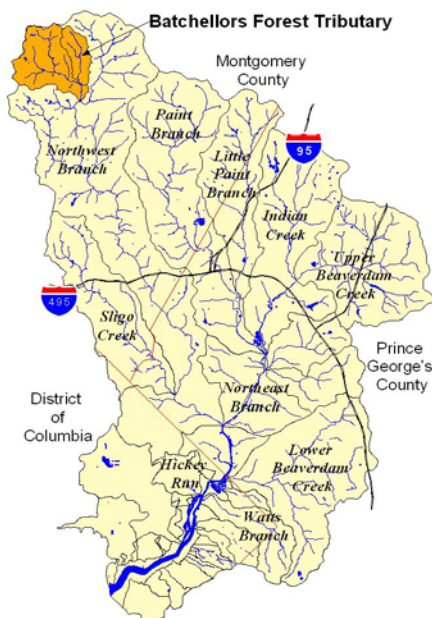
For a variety of reasons, this MOU had been stalled for several years. Through AWCAC's involvement this critical first step has finally been completed. With the assistance of the Friends of the National Arboretum, Representative Bereuter (R-NE) and Secretary of Agriculture Veneman, the principals have finally drafted and signed the MOU. The MOU will allow the installation of a facility on Hickey Run to trap trash, oil and grease washing out of an industrial area north of New York Avenue, as well as the restoration of over 3,000 linear feet of stream. Funding and a qualified contractor are in place to begin the project, with completion scheduled for 2006. Bill Matuszeski and Tom Arrasmith of AWCAC, along with Lori Miller (USDA/ARC) deserve great credit for jump starting this initiative.

Action Alert! Proposed Batchellors Forest Tributary Special Protection Area Designation

Batchellors Forest is a remnant mature hardwood forest located in the headwaters of the Northwest Branch subwatershed. The forest contains large areas of high quality contiguous forest and wetlands that include an array of habitats and support a diversity of plants and wildlife, making it a prime candidate for inclusion in Legacy Open Space, Montgomery County's preeminent land protection program. Much of this forest provides habitats for forest interior bird nesting, and the site may include habitats for rare, threatened, endangered, and/or watchlist species.

According to the Maryland - National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) *Environmental Resources Inventory for Olney and Vicinity* (April 2002), the forest along the Batchellors Forest Tributary is one of only four Significant Forest Areas that are currently outside parkland. The forest interior, which abuts the property where a proposed Sprint cell tower would be constructed, includes a disproportionately high percentage of the Northwest Branch watershed's sensitive areas as defined by the 1992 State Planning Act. The *Inventory* goes on to note that in this area, "some of these wetlands are part of a larger network of forested stream valley features of floodplain, vernal pools, and springs that provide valuable habitat for wildlife, including amphibians such as frogs and salamanders." This area is already a significant stream buffer and wildlife corridor and, given the growing shortage of undeveloped land in this vicinity, it will be increasingly important as a greenspace in the years to come.

In keeping with the intent and spirit of both the historic Chesapeake Bay Restoration Agreement of 1983 and the subsequent "tributary strategies" of 1992, preservation of Batchellors Forest tributary would play a small but nevertheless valuable role in helping to maintain the high quality of water flowing into the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River and ultimately into the Bay.



Please voice your support for protecting this rare resource. We encourage citizens to request that as part of the Olney Master Plan, the Batchellors Forest tributary be designated as a Special Protection Area with both an environmental overlay zone and an imperviousness cap of 8%. Letters and emails should be addressed to:

Mr. Steve Silverman, President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850
Councilmember.Silverman@montgomerycountymd.gov

Friends of Sligo Creek

The *Friends of Sligo Creek* are dedicated to protecting and restoring Sligo Creek and its stream valley park.

The two most critical threats to our park are invasive plants and stormwater runoff. We are working on solutions to both. Guidance on invasive plants and training on removal comes from M-NCPPC's Weed Warriors program. This spring, members have been busy constructing two deer exclosures in the park to determine the effect deer may have on native plants. To celebrate Earth Day this year, we are holding a "Free the Trees" event to rid the trees of invasive English Ivy. The event will kick off our creek-wide assault on invasive vines, organized in different sections of the Park by our Sligo Stewards. The stewards can be contacted through our website.

On the second problem, our Stormwater Committee is working with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP) to make homeowners aware of rain gardens, rain barrels and other stormwater control measures they can take on their own properties.

Many people don't realize it but Sligo's water quality has improved over the last few years. In fact, MCDEP and M-NCPPC are reintroducing several fish species that once thrived in Sligo Creek, in hopes that the creek can now support them. In another effort to help Sligo's critters, a number of our members have joined the FrogWatch USA, national amphibian monitoring program. They are listening for frogs in the evenings to determine what species are in Sligo Creek, and to learn about these important and threatened animals.

Each year in September we hold a *Sweep the Creek* event at which volunteers work to remove trash from the entire 8-mile stream in one day, pulling out tons of trash for the Parks Department to haul away. Throughout the year, in addition to work events, we hold educational program meetings and lead guided walks in the park.

To learn about our watershed activities or to join us, contact Ann Hoffnar at 301 585 8891, or visit the Friends of Sligo Creek website at www.fosc.org

What is AWCAC?

The Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee (AWCAC) was formed in 1996 to serve in an advisory capacity to the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee (AWRC). This citizen-based committee provides a vital link between the watershed community and the AWRC to ensure that public interests are considered during all restoration and protection projects and activities. AWCAC includes six members from each of the three Anacostia watershed jurisdictions (Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, Maryland and the District of Columbia). Many of these individuals represent watershed organizations based in their communities.

The qualification for membership in AWCAC is an active interest in the effort to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its tributaries. AWCAC meetings are held the second Tuesday of every other month, and are open to all interested persons. For more information contact Christine Vatovec at 202.962.3233 or cvatovec@mwccog.org.

AWCAC Chair's Vision

A clean and healthy river whose lovely creeks, streams and broad reaches are home to abundant wildlife, delight our neighborhoods, charm our visitors, beguile our critics, and grace our Nation's Capital.

-Tom Arrasmith, 2004 AWCAC Chair

Meet the Members and Associates

Executive Committee: Thomas Arrasmith (2004 AWCAC Chair), Elizabeth Arnold (Vice-Chair, Prince George's County), David Paglin (Vice-Chair, Montgomery County).

Montgomery County: Bob Ferraro (Eyes of Paint Branch), Jim Fary (Neighbors of Northwest Branch), Bill Howard (Neighbors of Northwest Branch),

Charles Pritchard (Neighbors of Northwest Branch), Helene Smith (Friends of Sligo Creek).

Prince George's County: Lauren Alexander Augustine, Gabe Horchler, Jolene Ivey, Dale Manty, Lutz Rastaetter (Concerned Citizens to Restore Indian Creek).

District of Columbia: James

Andre, Craig Benson, John Garner, Bill Matuszeski, James Willie, Steve Wellner.

The committee is actively engaged in recruitment efforts in all three jurisdictions.

Spring 2004 Calendar of Events

- **Saturday, April 17** Tree Planting at Layhill Park in Montgomery County
Contact: John Galli @ 202-962-3348
- **Saturday, April 24** Anacostia Earth Day Cleanup and Celebration
Contact: M-NCPPC @ 301-779-0371 or AWS @ 301-699-6204
- **Saturday, May 1** Tree Planting at Queens Chapel Road in Prince George's County
Contact: John Galli @ 202-962-3348
- **Tuesday, May 11** AWCAC Meeting 7:00 - 9:30 pm at Bladensburg Waterfront Park
Contact: Christine Vatovec @ 202-962-3233
- **Saturday, June 5** Anacostia River Cleanup Days
Contact: M-NCPPC @ 301-779-0371

Special Exhibit at the National Building Museum - D.C. Builds: The Anacostia Waterfront
January 17 - May 23, 2004. Visit <http://www.nbm.org/Exhibits/current/DCBuilds.html> for more information.

*Want to know more about your watershed?
Check out the Anacostia website at
www.anacostia.net*