

# Implementing the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan

## *A Progress Report*

September 20, 2011



## **The Plan**

The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan is the product of an unprecedented multijurisdictional effort; a two-year, \$2.8 million investment in identifying specific projects that can turn the river and its surrounding watershed around. Implementing the plan will enhance the vitality of communities in the District of Columbia, and Montgomery County and Prince George's County in Maryland. It will also contribute significantly to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since the Anacostia is one of the most polluted Bay tributaries. *This is a bold initiative, as no other restoration plan in the United States has systematically identified the thousands of projects needed to retrofit an entire urban/suburban watershed of 176 square miles.*

The plan identifies eight restoration strategies and 3018 specific restoration projects. If all are completed, the projects will result in:

1. 10,600 acres of pavement and roofs that send polluted runoff directly into our streams and river controlled
2. 72.5 miles of streams restored
3. 137.4 acres of wetlands restored
4. 41.7 miles of streams reopened for fish to migrate and reproduce
5. 347 acres of forests, meadows, street trees restored or acquired
6. 124.7 miles of streams and roads with trash and debris removed
7. 2512 acres of parklands acquired
8. Toxic river sediments and sites cleaned up.

Even considering the plan's 10-year timeframe, it is an ambitious undertaking.

***Look inside to read what your local jurisdiction has done toward implementing the Plan.***



## ***What's In It for You?***

***Restoration will be a substantial economic driver, will greatly enhance enjoyment of the watershed by residents, and will include many people in a successful civic partnership.***

- An economic analysis of a similar restoration showed \$2 in benefits for every \$1 spent, including increases in property values, job creation and poverty reduction, energy conservation, and other benefits.
- When complete, the watershed will feature the largest continuous urban trail system in the nation—over 160 miles of hiking and biking trails.
- 26 miles of the river and its streams are surrounded by parks and other public lands.
- Many civic, educational and youth mentoring programs care for and use the watershed's resources.
- 25 college, high school and club crew teams practice on the river.



## Actions by Our Local Jurisdictions-

*The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan is a ten- year plan. Just over one year has passed since it was released. The Partnership asked our three local jurisdictions what they've accomplished in the first year. Despite economic challenges and the need to pause and make sure that cleanup efforts also reflect new Chesapeake Bay requirements, we were impressed with the progress presented below.*

### Prince George's County

- In this year's budget, the County Executive put \$17 million in the budget for additional green streets in the County, several of which will be in the Anacostia watershed.
- The County has commissioned an engineering firm to evaluate 20 of the ARP projects for implementation.
- To plan additional projects, the County has appropriated funds for an additional 12 county engineers.
- To fund additional projects, the County has an internal workgroup evaluating potential new funding sources, including stormwater utility fees.
- The County is working to get authorization from the General Assembly for a disposable shopping bag fee (which will greatly reduce bag trash).
- USEPA has also promoted green streets, funding conceptual designs for 10 additional municipal green streets.

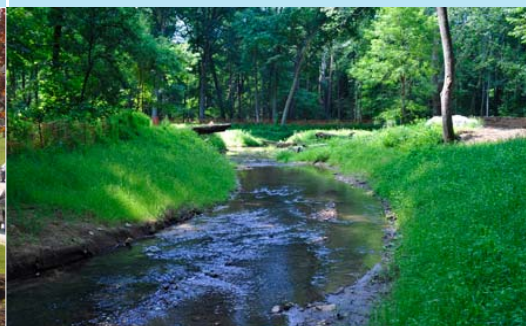
Prince George's County Green Highway



### Montgomery County

- Montgomery County has adopted two very important ordinances:
  - One of the most stringent stormwater ordinances in the nation, requiring new development and redevelopment to control 2.6 inches of stormwater to the maximum extent practicable with environmental site design.
  - A new fee on disposable shopping bags, set to take effect on January 1, 2012, will likely result in a great reduction of trash.
- The County was successful in raising over \$14 million through its stormwater utility to fund many projects in the Plan.
- The County has a very strong MS4 permit and is actively implementing it, including:
  - Retrofitting 4300 acres that have inadequate stormwater controls.
  - Removing impediments to green stormwater controls in County Codes.
  - Working to detect and eliminate pollution sources that are illegally discharging to its stormwater system.

Montgomery County Restoration of Northwest Branch



### The District of Columbia











- The District of Columbia has extended its Green Roof program. This innovative program provides \$5 per square foot for each square foot of new and retrofitted roofs.
- The District has nearly completed the Watts Branch Restoration Project, restoring 1.7 miles of the District's largest tributary to the river, including park upgrades and a new bike trail. The District will begin a similar restoration of Pope Branch in 2012.
- The District has developed a strong but flexible stormwater ordinance proposal. It features a path for developers to comply with its requirements offsite of their developments.
- The District has proposed a system of credits on stormwater fees for property owners who install bioretention, green roofs, permeable pavements and other green stormwater practices.
- The District has been working with the USEPA, which will soon issue a strong stormwater permit with many specific retrofit requirements.

Washington, DC Green Roof



## Programs and Policies Adopted-

*In addition to the 3018 projects, the Plan calls for the Partnership's local jurisdictions to adopt specific key programs and policies that address significant problems in the watershed. Only one year into the 10-year implementation of the Plan, and given the detailed planning that must accompany the implementation of the projects, not many of the projects are complete. But the Partnership's local jurisdictions are well on their way toward implementing some of the key programs and policies.*

Program or Policy	The District of Columbia	Montgomery County	Prince George's County
Adopt strong stormwater ordinances for development and redevelopment	In progress		 (Though strongest standards don't take effect until 2016 and 2019)
Create program of incentives for homeowners to retrofit their residences	 (RiverSmart Homes)	 (RainScapes)	In progress
Adopt strong stormwater retrofit requirements (MS4s)	In progress		In progress
Adopt stormwater utility fees with credits that encourage retrofits of private property	In progress	In progress	In progress
Adopt fees on disposable shopping bags			In progress
Adopt ban on the use of coal tar parking lot sealants			
Improve enforcement of industrial park cleanup requirements			
Make green stormwater controls on streets and highways <i>routine</i>			
Provide commercial and multifamily property with incentives for retrofit	 (Green Roof Rebate and RiverSmart Communities Program)		

### A Trash-Free Anacostia?

Approximately 600 tons of trash are estimated to enter Anacostia waters each year. Most of this trash rides along with the stormwater that enters the waters, but some is directly dumped into the River and its tributaries. On September 21, 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia adopted a new joint Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to limit trash in the Anacostia River and watershed. The Anacostia is the first interstate river in the nation with an enforceable Clean Water Act trash limit. The District, Montgomery County and Prince George's County are working to implement this TMDL in a variety of ways, but this may be one of the hardest tasks facing the Partners, since it involves changing people's everyday behavior.

## ***Cleaning up Sewage***

A portion of the District of Columbia is served by a combined sewer system, mostly in the downtown and older parts of the city. In dry weather, the system delivers wastewater to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant. In wet weather, stormwater also enters the system, the capacity of the system is often exceeded, and the excess flow is discharged into the Anacostia. These discharges are called Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO). There are 15 CSO pipes that flow to the Anacostia.

Fortunately, DC Water is engaged in implementing its Clean Rivers Project. When fully implemented, combined sewer overflows will be reduced by a projected 98 percent on the Anacostia River, resulting in improved water quality and a significant reduction in trash in the water. The Anacostia portion of the Clean Rivers Project is scheduled to be completed by 2018, and is on track to be completed on time and on budget by DC Water.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) is on track for cleaning up Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs, which are essentially leaks from its sewage system), in the Maryland portion of the watershed as well. In 2005, WSSC began a 10 year project of inspecting and repairing over 1600 miles of sewer lines for leaks and this project is on track, though vigilance is needed as additional leaks can develop.



**Anacostia Watershed Residential Rain Garden**

## ***Are we on track for implementing the Plan over the next nine years?***

While substantial progress has been made in the first year, resource constraints, lack of understanding about the benefits of cleanup, and questions about the technical feasibility and cost of some types of restoration techniques are challenges. The Partnership is committed to addressing these challenges and implementing the Plan. We welcome the help and support of everyone who cares about making our nation's capitol region even better.



**The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership is:**

**Akridge**

**The Anacostia Watershed Citizens' Advisory Committee**

**The Anacostia Watershed Society**

**The US Army Corps of Engineers**

**The Audubon Naturalist Society**

**The Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District**

**The Chesapeake Bay Trust**

**The Cohen Companies**

**Mayor Judith Davis, Greenbelt, MD**

**DC Water**

**The District of Columbia**

**The US Environmental Protection Agency**

**Mayor Andrew Fellows, College Park, MD**

**Forest City**

**The Maryland Department of the Environment**

**The Maryland Department of Natural Resources**

**The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

**Montgomery County, Maryland**

**The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**The National Park Service**

**Prince George's County, Maryland**

**The Summit Fund of Washington**

*The Summit Fund of Washington and the Chesapeake Bay Trust are gratefully thanked for their support.*

Much more information about the Anacostia watershed can be found at [www.anacostia.net](http://www.anacostia.net).

Contact Dana Dunmire Minerva, Executive Director, at [dminerva@mwkog.org](mailto:dminerva@mwkog.org) for more information or if you'd like to help.