



## ANACOSTIA WATERSHED RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 23, 2019  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Board Room, Third Floor  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 N. Capitol St., NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002

### DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

#### **AWSC Members in Attendance:**

- Joe Gill, Prince George's County DoE (PGDoE); Chair
- Jeff DeHan, PGDoE
- Steve Shofar, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP)
- Tommy Wells, District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)
- Jeffrey Seltzer, DOEE
- Matt Robinson, DOEE
- Kate Bennett, MCDEP
- Paul Emmart, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- Marian Dombroski, AWCAC Vice-Chair
- Matt Reis, DCWater

#### **AWSC GUESTS:**

- Carlton Ray, DCWater

#### **COG STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Steve Bieber
- Noah Lee
- Aubin Maynard
- Lisa Ragain
- Phong Trieu
- Steve Walz



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## 1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

*Joe Gill, Steering Committee Chair*

## 2. ANACOSTIA PARTNERSHIP PLANNING

*Joe Gill, Steering Committee Chair*

Chair Gill briefly reviewed the 2017 Strategic Planning Action Items. Overarching goals included: 1) Reframe messaging to promote the positive aspects of the Anacostia River and restoration progress, 2) Create an Anacostia River dashboard to show important improvements, 3) Continue technical and management coordination work, and 4) Better coordinate the Anacostia Partnership. Chair Gill then reviewed the four goals and highlighted the “Action Items and Decisions” and invited the members to discuss if the Action Items warranted revisions? The discussion is highlighted below:

- From the District perspective, the Partnership has done very well to reframe the message shaping the River as an “Asset” and that may have gotten the tax payers to reinvest into the river. Additional future messaging topics should include sharing how much trash is removed from the DCWater recently constructed tunnels and highlighting citizen science results. The next challenges include tackling non-point toxic inputs such as the PCB loadings and collaborating on the effort to reduce this problem. There are many groups working in the watershed, and this is a good forum to coordinate those activities. In addition, the District would like to better engage USACE in the sediment project effort particularly to help determine the River’s optimal depth.
- COG should provide the progress for each action item to show which has been completed.
- From Montgomery County’s perspective, the outreach from the Year of the Anacostia (YOTA) was effective, and the Partnership should continue to build on those efforts. As another step, the Partnership should reconsider coordinating on specific restoration effort(s). The group should consider how to proceed considering funding cycles and costs, geographic layout of the watershed, as well as leadership buy-in, with the understanding that it may be too difficult to coordinate at this level.
- Chair Gill indicated the Partnership should develop a 3 to 5-year messaging plan and identify other long-term goals. The Partnership could also consider working towards another 10-year master/restoration plan, like the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission develops 10-year master plans.
- One possible approach for the Partnership is to develop the vision of an outcome of coordination work. Where does the Partnership want the river to be in 10 years from now? While it may not be possible, the Partnership should reevaluate the possibility of coordinating a unified project and then identify concrete steps among agencies and organizations to achieve project implementation. The group should see if there are examples from other watersheds around the world. The Chesapeake Bay Funders Network could serve as a group integration point to pool resources and funds to target a project(s).
- Through the years, the workgroups of the Management Committee (i.e. currently the Anacostia Trash Reduction Workgroup (ATRW) and the Anacostia Toxics Source Workgroup (ATSW)) have done critical work and have been a source of ideas that bubble up through the MC and SC. There are possibilities to embrace a coordinated project from these two workgroups.

- AWCAC members are concerned about the following: 1) that the message push for a swimmable Anacostia is being put out before it is known to be safe, 2) The Partnership needs to engage representatives from the transportation, recreation departments/organizations to be more effective, 3) there is also an expectation that the Partnership to make actions rather than just receive information, 4) focusing solely on toxics does not recognize that flooding issues that are important upriver, 5) specifying goals post WIP III completion, and 6) AWCAC would like better coordination with the committees. AWCAC members would also like the website to continue to be improved, including adding additional archives and clearer links to the 2010 Anacostia Restoration Plan (ARP).
- Members remained interested in continuing to update the restoration dashboard. The dashboard captures only the completed restoration projects from the over 3,000 ARP projects. The dashboard also includes completed projects beyond the ARP. Since 2010, over 1,800 projects have been completed.
- NPDES became a central driver for the Anacostia restoration effort. The ARP was a pool of conceptual projects for the local jurisdictions. Not all the ARP projects were selected to be implemented, but those projects that have been completed are included in the restoration dashboard and mapping services. COG coordinates with the local jurisdictions to collect the NPDES reporting information for the Anacostia to update the restoration dashboard.
- COG's role is to convene the members and help them make decisions. At times, there will be a need to let control go and allow the group collaboration to succeed. This would carry much more weight should the Partnership seek to collaborate on a unified project.
- It was noted that the current Partnership budget does not support this long-term plan. As a start, COG should develop a 3-year budget plan to get past annual budgeting barriers.

*Outcomes:*

- COG will draft and provide the "Action Items" accomplishments for the 2017 Anacostia Watershed Restoration partnership Retreat Summary.
- COG will provide the 2020 workplan/budget level of effort to members.
- The Chair and COG will continue to facilitate this discussion through smaller venues and report back to the Committee in January 2020.

### **3. DC WATER'S CLEAN RIVERS PROJECT UPDATE**

*Carlton Ray, DC WATER*

The Clean Rivers Project is DC Water's ongoing program to reduce combined sewer overflows into the District's waterways - the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and Rock Creek. The Project is a massive infrastructure and support program designed to capture and clean the combination wastewater and stormwater during heavy rainfalls before it ever reaches our rivers. The project will cost \$2.7 billion dollars and shall be completed by 2030.

Mr. Ray provided an update on progress of the Clean Rivers Project. The project is running on schedule and according to plan, with little to no setbacks. As highlighted by Mr. Ray, one third of the drainage area within the District is served by combined sewer systems, and there are 48 active Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO) outfalls present within the system. The Anacostia River Tunnel

System projects include Blue Plains Tunnel, Anacostia River Tunnel, First Street Tunnel, and the Northeast Boundary Tunnel. The Northeast Boundary Tunnel is under construction. For the Anacostia tunnels that are in operation, over 6.4 Billion gallons have been captured and conveyed to the Blue Plains treatment facility. Over 2,700 tons of trash and debris have been captured and prevented from entering the River.

The Northeast Boundary Tunnel construction started on March 2018. The construction cost is expected to be \$580 million dollars and expected to be operational in 2023. It is estimated that in 2018 CSOs was reduced to 391 million gallons (a year) and to 54 million gallons (a 98% reduction system wide) when the project is fully completed (reductions from a 1996 high of 2,142 million gallons). The Clean Rivers Project remains on track to be fully operational by 2030. Mr. Ray addressed various questions, summarized below:

- Mr. Ray emphasized how the Anacostia tunnel collects sewage overflow, but also tons of trash from stormwater and runoff. The trash is carried to Blue Plains through the expanding underground tunnels system.
- As stipulated by Mr. Ray in a discussion with Mr. Wells, the issue of flooding has nothing to do with the consent decree of 2002.
- A question raised by Mr. Maynard of how the width of the tunnels accounts for different rainfall levels was answered by Mr. Ray—stating that different tunnel models account for rainfall volume.
- Mr. Wells gave high praise to Mr. Ray and the project’s continued success.

#### **4. ANACOSTIA RIVER UNDERWATER GRASSES**

*Phong Trieu, COG and Matt Robinson, DOEE*

Mr. Trieu and Mr. Robinson presented aquatic grasses time-lapsed GIS data from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE). The presentation aimed to provide a clearer picture of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) growth and fluctuation over the past 30 years (1984-2019). The data centered geographically on the tidal section of the Anacostia and Potomac River confluence. The presentation highlighted recent success for aquatic grasses growth in the tidal Anacostia. Overall trendlines show encouraging signs of growth in 2019, despite the high rainfall events of 2018. 2019 aquatic grasses data capture from DOEE shows over 50 acres of grasses up through the tidal reaches of the Anacostia river mainstem, which is an encouraging sign for Anacostia restoration efforts.

- A key discussion surrounded the difference between VIMs and DOEE GIS SAV data. The VIMs data consists exclusively of aerial “fly-over” imagery; whereas the DOEE is largely an “on-the-ground” surveys/observations of underwater grasses and species identification. As a result, the DOEE data can identify smaller clusters of underwater grasses, thus more accurate GIS data capture.
- The AWRP goal for aquatic grasses in the tidal river, by 2025, is to establish and maintain 20 acres of underwater grasses. As of 2019, this condition exists.
- Various factors may influence the underwater grass growth such as the reduction of nutrients and sediments through the accelerated stormwater control efforts, DCwater and WSSCwater sanitary sewer infrastructure/asset improvements, the control of the Canada resident geese population, percent of time with higher water clarity, flow and depth variability, etc. COG

suggested that members should develop a message/story to highlight another improving Anacostia aquatic resources. Members approved an underwater grass/SAV Story Map development for the Anacostia.net web site.

## **5. OUTREACH STRATEGY/BRANDING UPDATE**

*Lisa Ragain, COG*

Ms. Ragain provided a brief update to the outreach strategy. One of the near-term goals is to facilitate a strategy session to articulate and identify the group's 2019-2020 priorities and purposes, identify those goals and outcomes, and target a priority audience with a campaign strategy. COG has contracted with Raftelis to develop this very focused campaign strategy. County PIOs and several NGOs will meet to brainstorm ideas and review the strategy. There should be a plan to review by the next SC meeting.

- Ms. Marian Dombroski suggested that to be affective, specific stakeholders need to be invited, such as the head of Bladensburg Waterfront Park and others. M-NCPPC is an organization that is invited to these meetings.

## **6. STEERING COMMITTEE SHORT BUSINESS**

### ***Management Committee (MC)/Workgroup Updates***

Mr. Trieu explained that workgroups met in place of a MC meeting. The Anacostia Trash Reduction Workgroup (ATRW) met 8/7/19, and the Anacostia Toxics Source Workgroup (ATSW) met 9/19/19,

### ***Data call for Progress Dashboard Updates***

Mr. Trieu announced that COG would be approaching members to request the FY 2019 data to use for updating the Partnership dashboard.

### ***AWCAC***

Ms. Dombroski provided a very brief update of the previous two AWCAC meetings. In September, the group held their Annual Potluck and Members updates. At the November meeting, the group heard additional updates and learned about the Ward 8 Woods project. Members also discussed goals including review watershed-wide forestry issues and working with NPS on many issues (e.g. Buzzard Point development, conserving the river north of New York Avenue, and the development of Kenilworth Park).