

# ANACOSTIA WATERSHED RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP RETREAT SUMMARY

Summary and next steps from April 2017 Strategic Planning Retreat

May 2017



Metropolitan Washington  
**Council of Governments**

## **ANACOSTIA WATERSHED RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP 2017 STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT**

Prepared by Ecologix Group and COG staff on behalf of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership Steering Committee

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## ACTION ITEMS AND DECISIONS:

1. Reframe messaging to promote the positive aspects of the Anacostia River and restoration progress.
  - a. Convene communications group of Public Information Officers (PIO) to communicate progress.
  - b. The PIO group should convene with a larger communications team comprising NGO, private sector, to create communications/PR strategy.
  - c. Messages should target communities already living in Anacostia.
2. Create an Anacostia River dashboard to show important improvements.
  - a. Identify and quantify progress on birds, fish, and other things the public can relate to.
  - b. Also, important for dashboard to help Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership (AWRP) to understand the “inside game” in order to “curate stories on progress” for public communications.
  - c. Present progress in context of Anacostia 10 years ago
    - i. Past scenario/state of Anacostia (major issues that needed to be addressed).
    - ii. Current efforts, programs, work being done (where the money is going; trail maintenance/documenting, boat tours, etc.).
    - iii. All progress/indicators of success (fish/eagle re-establishment, festivals, more people using trails, development).
3. Continue technical and management coordination work.
  - a. Identify areas of progress and most influential efforts contributing to Anacostia habitat restoration and community enhancement.
  - b. Redistribute resources to bolster most effective programs and reduce programmatic redundancy
4. Better coordinate the Anacostia Partnership.
  - a. Integrate more with the COG Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee’s work.
  - b. Coordinate cross-jurisdictional efforts, tracing discharge, and share BMP’s (MS4 policy and implementation, cooperative procurements, IDDE).
  - c. Foster collaboration between stakeholders, businesses, and governments to strengthen collective strategy aimed at protecting and growing the Anacostia as a biological and community asset.
  - d. Reach out to the National Park Service, Army COE, and Park and Planning to get their cooperation and support.

# RETREAT SUMMARY

On April 13, 2017, the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership (AWRP) held a strategic planning retreat at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). The retreat was structured in two parts. In the morning session, a smaller group of government representatives met to review the current state of the AWRP and discuss their strategic goals for the 2017 – 2018 timeframe. In the afternoon session, the group was joined by environmental groups and business representatives to discuss their perspectives on the goals and next steps for the full AWRP.

## MORNING SESSION

### Introduction

Tommy Wells started the meeting with a few comments, summarized by the following points:

- We have made great progress on restoring the Anacostia, but we still have a lot of work to do.
- This Partnership is a key place for us to get together.
- The federal government has been an important partner, but based on the budget proposed by the Trump Administration, they are likely to be taking a diminished role, if any, in the partnership going forward.
- Jurisdictions are making worst case scenario plans. – What are core functions citizens expect and what will federal changes do to affect those and jurisdictions' actions?

The introductory comments were followed by the participants' self-introductions.

## The State of the Partnership and Recap of Previous Strategic Retreat Priorities and Outcomes

### PREVIOUS STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT - SHEILA BESSE, DOEE

(PowerPoint presentation attached)

The priorities coming out of the retreat in 2012 were:

- 1) Coordinated messaging,
- 2) Demonstrating approaches,
- 3) Financing

Sheila reported that a Workgroup formed to address coordination on messaging exchanged a lot of good ideas, but did not reach consensus on additional actions needed. A second Workgroup, formed to discuss demonstrating approaches also provided a good information exchange for the partners, but did not reach consensus on additional actions either. There was no Workgroup convened on financing.

There has been significant progress. For example, implementation of bag fees, regional green streets initiative and the MS4 permit were a few major accomplishments.

## **KEY ASPECTS OF PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE AND 2017 WORKPLAN – STEVE BIEBER, COG**

(PowerPoint presentation attached)

Steve gave an overview of the AWRP and summarized the 2017 workplan outcomes:

- Watershed restoration and monitoring
- Implementation projects
- Communication and outreach
- Coordination and reporting
- Workforce development

### **Discussion Summary:**

Much of the discussion focused on the potential to leverage the work done by the AWRP to strengthen the work of other, related COG committees such as the Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee. This could be accomplished through better coordination at the staff level, particularly when it comes to coordinating technical information on Bay and non-Bay TMDLs. It was noted that the AWRP is unlike other committees in that business people are members at the table. Their interests cross jurisdictional boundaries. They offer a different perspective than environmental advocates and jurisdictions, and having developers involved is unique relative to other policy committees.

There was also discussion about hosting an annual “Restoration Round Table” meeting to match up association and jurisdiction coordination opportunities. This idea had been raised at a meeting of advocates recently. The idea would be to identify implementation opportunities, promote better sharing of messaging, and make better use of Anacostia.net website. It was also noted that departments of transportation should be at the table. Green Street requirements are important. One model for the Restoration Round Table approach might be the existing Trash Workgroup. There was a need for a common metric for counting trash, trash TMDL actions and approaches to address concerns about trash TMDLs. Also, making sure advocate groups were comfortable with the approach and have input. A shared commitment by jurisdictions to do more was very important (hit numbers and go beyond). The Workgroup has been effective at bringing the right people to the table to develop an action strategy.

The group agreed that there were a lot of good suggestions in the preceding discussion that should be carried forward into the next agenda item.

## **Mission, Vision, and Critical Issues**

### **OVERVIEW OF MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS AND FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS – BOB SUMMERS**

(PowerPoint presentation attached)

The AWRP survey results from 22 participants were summarized in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Key points made by the Directors in interviews were also summarized. The presentation concluded with questions designed to initiate the following discussion of the AWRP vision, mission, and priorities for actions.

- effective coordination; efficient time management
- engaged, diverse membership; effective venue for coordination
- clarify mission/vision
- focus on policy issues
- fewer “report outs”
- roles of steering committee and management committee poorly defined
- implement ad-hoc work groups to address specific topics

### **Discussion Summary:**

There was an interest in focusing on unique aspects of this group (the AWRP) and reframing how we define our work – what is it about this group that will make people want to participate? How can this river be an asset for the region? An area of special conservation? Tourism emphasis to attract people to the region, stakeholder reporting to highlight the restoration and the natural resources assets of the river to citizens.

Natural resources of the Anacostia contribute to residents’ quality of life. Need to frame Anacostia as an asset (e.g., Fishing, canoeing, festivals). Need to encourage stewardship to protect and promote asset and use of the river – move away from things like trash TMDL in our messaging to emphasize the positive aspects of the River.

The AWRP already collects data and provides biological reporting detailing the protection and restoration of those assets. There is a need to promote reason for restoration efforts –habitat for all of us. It is an asset that needs to be promoted and used. This group promotes quality of life. Also need to emphasize progress, more access points, bike paths, etc. – capitalizing on the Anacostia’s potential.

Consensus was that these issues (e.g., river as an asset, broad messaging, and cooperative developments/projects) are all well suited for the AWRP.

### **Building for Success**

Based upon previous discussion, the group restated the AWRP mission and identified four key goal areas for 2017-2018, to be presented to the full group after lunch.

Mission: Restore and preserve the natural habitat of the streams and the river that sustains plant, fish, wildlife, and human activities and enhance the quality of life in our communities.

- This has been the basic mission of the AWRP since its inception.

Goals:

1) Reframe messaging to promote the positive aspects of the River and restoration progress  
The group discussed how to reframe the context of the Anacostia watershed restoration message. The statement should emphasize that the restoration effort continues to deliver the River as an “asset.” This group understands that such restoration projects; Wetlands creation, SAV bed surveys, stream restoration, ecological restoration; improve water quality. But the broader “River as an asset” message may intimate that the streams and river continue to improve therefore providing greater

destination amenities and activities along its shoreline such as: river access, recreational fishing opportunities, eagle cam, hiker/biker parks trail network, music festivals, etc.

- Engage communications professionals from jurisdictions, businesses, stakeholders to develop outreach and education materials.
- Engage MNPPC, NPS, CORPS
- Opportunities for community jobs, recreational opportunities.

2) Continue technical and management coordination work

a) Identify areas of progress and most influential efforts contributing to Anacostia habitat restoration and community enhancement.

b) Redistribute resources to bolster most effective programs and reduce programmatic redundancy

3) Foster collaboration between stakeholders, businesses, and governments to strengthen collective strategy aimed at protecting and growing the Anacostia as a biological and community asset.

a) Stakeholders will clarify their ongoing efforts and resources available moving forward.

b) Encourage private sector agencies (commercial developers) to deliver consistent, effective messaging to taxpaying residents (property owners, renters) highlighting ongoing restoration efforts and progress, thereby elucidating the benefits and returns of their investment in the Anacostia.

4) Better coordinate the Anacostia Partnership with the COG Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee's work.

a) Coordinate cross-jurisdictional efforts, tracing discharge, and share BMP's (MS4 policy and implementation, cooperative procurements, IDDE)

## AFTERNOON SESSION

### Strategic Focus in 2017 And 2018

Bob Summers reviewed the mission and goals, summarized above, that were identified by the group in the morning session for discussion by the full group in the afternoon. (See attached list of attendees).

#### Discussion Summary:

The private sector wants to know what is the "report card"? Share information with stakeholders. For example, the storm water credit trading program as best practice for region. Why does it matter? Are there opportunities for private sector to move restoration further along with offsite mitigation and restoration? Redevelopment of existing assets will help make progress. Management committee and technical communications important to get the word out, and to identify most effective projects and maximize impact to advance overarching goals.

Watershed groups would like to work together to put projects into Anacostia.net. Proactive strategy needed to put resources into targeted areas to engage communities, get more concentrated efforts to see benefits and demonstrate progress. There are many common needs and priorities: for example, landowner willingness to allow projects to proceed is key. Need to get right government agencies together to identify roles, tools, BMPs and track progress to keep restoration momentum.



There is also a need to clarify and focus current efforts – one of the purposes of the Restoration round-table. There are many things that could be done, but how to prioritize? Need to choose key projects going forward to select “best” and “bigger impact” projects. Need to choose best sub-watersheds for actions too. COG and the Restoration Round Table Watershed analysis to help prioritize.

The approach should be resource driven, rather than goal driven. Fill in gaps and reduce redundancy in efforts. Jurisdictions can tell non-profits and businesses what to focus on and report back to group.

Need to look broader as to natural resources. River trail, boat rides, kayak rentals provide opportunities to get people engaged on the river. This gets people engaged. A different way to think about this. Need to clearly define fishable/swimmable outcomes.

Need all levels of action to make the restoration sustainable. As we take things to the next level, how do pieces fit together and get partners to plug in.

Communications key to success. A shared “dashboard” for restored Anacostia could help with this: MS4 information, public events, and habitat restoration progress, reframe how we communicate. Easily accessible and updated regularly. Include progress public can relate to (e.g. fish, re-establishing grasses). Evaluate cause and effect to engage stakeholders and evaluate need for overlapping programs. Need to leverage all participants’ communication staff. A dashboard would help answer questions, such as: How do you show progress? What does it tell businesses about best practices? What are businesses looking for? Effects have to be something that is meaningful to the community.

Private development is investing in Anacostia and activates public use of the River. River and waterfront is an amenity and important asset. It is a quality of life issue. Investments in watershed have occurred because of the river. Don’t spend time/resources on cause and effect, present efforts and progress – “story-telling. Shift dialogue to show how businesses are contributing to the restoration. How residents can be engaged to restore? Public side policy has been beneficial to Anacostia. Restoration can’t stall or go backwards to support business goals.

## What happens next?

1) River dashboard – What are the best ways to demonstrate to public. Use COG’s data to show important improvements – identify and quantify progress on birds, fish and other things the public can relate to. Also important for dashboard to help AWRP to understand the “inside game” in order to “curate stories on progress” for public communications. Need to commit Committee staff to this effort.

- Communications strategy: capitalize on Anacostia’s potential. Present progress in context of Anacostia 10 years ago
  - Past scenario/state of Anacostia (major issues that needed to be addressed)
  - Current efforts, programs, work being done (where the money is going; trail maintenance/documenting, boat tours, etc.)
  - All progress/indicators of success (fish/eagle re-establishment, festivals, more people using trails, development)

- Avoid spending time and resources connecting the dots. This is not direct cause and effect; present the efforts and progress/indicators of Anacostia health/revitalization and let the public come to their own conclusion → story telling
- Dashboard must be easily accessible + updated regularly
- Progress indicators should be readily embraced/relatable to public i.e. fish, grasses, family-friendly parks, bike paths, festivals, races (avoid policy wonk/esoteric metrics)

2) Convene communications group – to communicate progress on #1. “Outside game” What can individuals do? Before and after (what was the river like 10 years ago). Private sector also needs to convey their efforts to support broader restoration efforts. Message needs to be a “call to action” and drive behavior change. Take information from the dashboard to craft unified message for all stakeholders. Ensure message engages the whole community, and enhances and enriches quality of life.

- Form PIO communications group to meet with committees and identify the efforts and messaging, what’s out there
- PIO group convene with communications team comprising NGO, private sector, to create communications/PR strategy
- Target communities already living in Anacostia i.e. Latino population (Festival del Rio Anacostia)

3) Reach out to NPS, CORPs, Park and Planning to get their cooperation and support. Jurisdiction Directors and COG staff will do this. (COG contact NPS, PGDOE contact Parks and Planning)

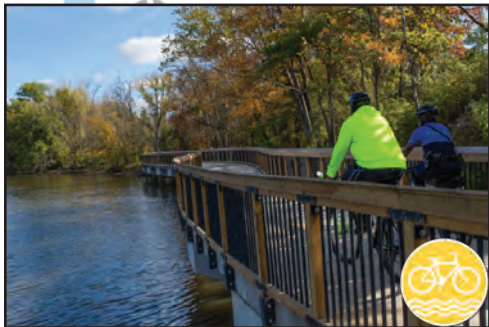


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# Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership



*Department of Environmental Programs*  
***FY 2020 Work Program and Budget***

*July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020*

*Effective July 1, 2019*

# Overview

**Purpose** – Efforts to restore the Anacostia watershed began nearly three decades ago. Since that time, local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as environmental organizations and dedicated private citizens have contributed significant resources toward re-establishing as much of the original ecosystem as possible.

Established in 2006, the Anacostia Partnership’s principal purpose is to provide policy, program and financial oversight of the ecological restoration and protection of the Anacostia watershed, including approval of the annual work program and budget for the Anacostia Restoration support activities of COG.



The work program provides support for COG staff to implement Partnership priorities, track restoration projects, coordinate restoration activities and provide technical services. Importantly, COG staff will focus on enhancing the communication efforts through various media to continue to attract the Anacostia community to “come to the Anacostia” to recreate. At the foundation of this message is the local government’s capital restoration investment to which other watershed communities can leverage.

**Organization** - The activities in the WP&B are divided into three broad categories: (I) Restoration Implementation Coordination; (II) Program Coordination and Reporting; and (III) Outreach. A separate project page has been prepared for each of the activities under those three program areas.

**Funding** – The activities in the WP&B are supported by Anacostia Restoration Partnership (ARP) Contributions and COG funds, and grants. The ARP contributions continue the traditional Anacostia Restoration Fund dating back to 1987.

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