NEW LIFE FOR THE ANACOSTIA RIVER WATERSHED

THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT THE FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP
The Anacostia River Watershed is one of seven locations selected for help from the nation’s new Urban Waters Federal Partnership. The goals of this partnership are to reconnect urban areas—particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed—with their waterways and to improve collaboration among the federal agencies working to improve those waters and the surrounding communities. Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

• Break down government program silos to energize existing programs and create meaningful new ones.
• Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
• Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources.
• Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

For more information, visit: www.urbanwaters.gov

ABOUT THE ANACOSTIA PARTNERSHIP
The federal partners believe a deeper connection to local water bodies will bring a new cycle of community hope and energy resulting in healthier urban waters, improved public health, strengthened local businesses, new jobs, as well as expanded educational, recreational, housing, and social opportunities. Led by DOI and EPA, eleven Federal agencies—with authorities ranging from economic development, infrastructure, and environmental and public health protection—will work together to align programs, activities, and expertise supporting local initiatives.

WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW
Below are planned or already underway federal and local projects to improve water quality, restore habitat, enhance local economies, and work with local communities.

Reducing Food Deserts—With a grant from USDA and partnering with the University of the District of Columbia (DC), Groundwork Anacostia DC is working with residents to promote urban gardening and create eco-friendly yards in place of traditional “industrial lawns.” Residents are using their property to grow food that supports healthy eating and cooking practices. This program is essential in the Groundwork Anacostia service area, which has an obesity rate of 44% in Ward 8 (compared with Ward 3 rate of 10%) and lacks grocery stores.

Planting Trees and Educating Youth—Since 1990, DC and USDA Forest Service have partnered to plant and maintain public trees in the Anacostia River Watershed. Current efforts with the city and Casey Trees include urban tree canopy assessment, goal setting and implementation. In addition to thousands of trees planted, partnerships between the District, NOAA, USDA, Casey Trees, and Living Classrooms have supported conservation education for school children throughout the District.

Economic Development—DC and the Washington, DC Economic Development Partnership have developed a five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for DC guided by the Economic Development Administration. The general goal of this strategy is to maximize economic opportunity for residents by creating and retaining jobs and fostering private investments. The Strategy will bring together annually the public and private sectors to create an economic roadmap and be used as an evaluation benchmark in the global economy.

Restoring Urban Streams—DC and the Fish & Wildlife Service, with support from EPA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, are working to restore the Watts Branch Stream—one of the most ecologically vulnerable subwatersheds in one of the most economically challenged areas of DC. This project is already improving fish and wildlife resources and water quality flowing into the river.

Reducing Trash—EPA recently approved a new Total Maximum Daily Load for trash for the Anacostia, making it the first interstate river in the nation with an enforceable trash diet. Each year, hundreds of tons of debris are illegally dumped or washed into the Anacostia River with stormwater. To comply with the Clean Water Act, Maryland, DC, and EPA worked collaboratively with nonprofit groups to develop a TMDL that requires capturing or removing 1.2 million pounds of trash from the watershed annually.

Improving Water Quality—DC proposed one of the greenest MS4 Storm Water permits in the nation. EPA is working in earnest to finalize the permit this spring to govern the next five years of stormwater controls. Many green features are incorporated as enforceable requirements of the permit, along with on-site retention of storm events.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND ANACOSTIA RIVER WATERSHED
The Anacostia River watershed is home to 43 species of fish, some 200 species of birds, and more than 800,000 people. The river flows through Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland and past the Capital in the District and suffers from trash, toxics, sewage, runoff, oil, heavy metals, and fish with tumors and severely degraded wildlife habitat.

At 176 square miles, the watershed is one of the most urbanized in the United States. It has lost over 70% of forestland and 6,500 acres of wetlands. Impervious surfaces now cover 25% of the watershed.

But the river and its watershed hold enormous potential—parts of it are beautiful providing wildlife habitat and recreational amenities.

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