

VOICE OF THE RIVER

Newsletter of the Anacostia Watershed Society



**ANACOSTIA
WATERSHED
SOCIETY**

WINTER 2017
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Resolutions for the River

By Emily Conrad, Director of Development

Happy New Year from the Anacostia Watershed Society!

It's about that time of year when your motivation to keep to your New Year's resolutions may be waning, so we're here to reinvigorate you with some ideas...

1. Maintain a healthy (trash) diet.

So much of the pollution in the Anacostia River could be stopped at the source if we all made the conscious decision not to buy single serve products. Use a water bottle instead of buying bottled water, and remember to carry your reusable shopping bags. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Refuse!



2. Exercise more... on the Anacostia Trail System!

With the connecting piece of the Anacostia River Trail through Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens now complete, you can get outside and tour practically the entire watershed from protected hiker/biker trails! Don't forget about rowing, too, with more docks than ever dotting the shores of the river.



3. Plant native plants or trees in your yard or neighborhood.

Native plants are incredibly beneficial for our local environment. Species that evolved for our specific climate and environment sustain wildlife and support healthy ecosystems.



Plants also capture carbon and help fight climate change. Volunteer with us this spring to bring more green to the watershed!

4. Spend more time (outside) with your friends and family

Share your love of the Anacostia River with the people you love! Explore the flora and fauna of some of the watershed's parks like Kingman Island, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and the National Arboretum. Invite your friends and family on a nature hike or canoe tour of the river hosted by us throughout the spring and summer (weekly schedule announced in March).



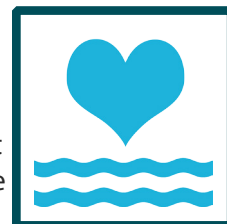
5. Make a sustaining gift for a clean Anacostia River.

Become a monthly donor and ensure a steady source of support for a swimmable and fishable river all year

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long. This year has already brought about a lot of change, and we don't always know what the next day will bring. But we do know that your support throughout the year ensures that actions to restore and protect the river, its wildlife, and its residents happen where they are needed most. Sustaining gifts are a cost-effective and efficient way for you to make a big impact through smaller donations over time.



To become a monthly donor, check the box on the enclosed envelope or on our online donation form at www.anacostiaws.org/donation/checkout.

**Thank you for your resolve
for a healthy Anacostia
River!**

President's Corner

**It's a new year and a new day
for the Anacostia River!**

Because of your generosity and your passion, you enabled us to make tremendous progress towards a fishable and swimmable river possible in 2016. Thanks to donors and volunteers like you, more than 20,000 square feet of rain gardens and riparian meadows were created to reduce pollution flowing into the Anacostia River, provide habitat for native wildlife, and make communities in the watershed more vibrant and healthy. Your support also enabled more than 2,000 local students to get outside, experience the river, and take action to restore it.



The Anacostia Watershed Society had three fabulous board members reach the end of their service term in 2016. Sadara Barrow, Antoinette Sebastian, and Jack Wennersten were strategic thinkers, passionate about protecting the Anacostia River and its people. It was a honor to work with them for many years, and I am thankful for their service! We also welcomed four new board members to the cause: Cynthia Quarterman, Kathryn Petrillo-Smith, Neil Lang, and Mike Lederman. We look forward to working with them for the benefit of the river for years to come.

Looking ahead, our efforts are focused on community-based restoration that engages, educates, and demonstrates how residents' everyday practices can help us achieve a clean river. We will be restoring wetlands and meadows along the river with thousands of students and volunteers this year. We are looking for ways to create natural solutions through technology by installing innovative (and inexpensive!) demonstration projects. Now more than ever the Anacostia River needs watchdogs and stewards to ensure we sustain and advance the river's restoration. Removing historical industrial pollution like toxics and heavy metals is a high priority because it will have a huge impact on the health of the water, its wildlife, and residents.

While the new year and the new administration promise significant change, we are committed to staying the course and fighting for the river. Thank you all for your tireless efforts and sustaining support!

For the River,

Anacostia Watershed Society

AWS is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage.

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Where's the Wildlife?

By Jorge Bogantes Montero, Natural Resources Specialist

The Anacostia River is home to a wealth of diverse animal species, and they all have different strategies to survive the cold winter.

Just where are some of our favorite fauna right now?

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)



Hooded mergansers winter near wetlands and ponds that don't ice over. They nest in tree cavities or artificial wooden nest boxes near water. The mergansers we see in the river mostly come from northern latitudes. In the winter they move to larger bodies of freshwater with milder weather. *Photo credit: Dan Rauch*

Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



Snapping turtles hibernate in shallow waters buried in the mud in places that do not freeze to the bottom. If the temperature drops further, the turtles can freeze to death. During this time, they barely move, although sometimes they can be seen moving under the ice.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)



If you've been watching the updated eagle cam, you know this is nesting season for bald eagles! They are currently building their nests, and females will start laying eggs in late January to February. Incubation lasts for about a month. Both parents take turns to incubate the eggs in rain, snow, or shine! After hatching, the young eagles stay in the nest for about 12 weeks. *Photo credit: Dan Rauch*

Pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*)



During the winter, these colorful fish called pumpkinseeds go to deeper waters and stay minimally active. Even though they still eat invertebrates, they don't eat as much as in other times of the year.



Follow us on Facebook and see more about Watershed Wildlife every Wednesday!

facebook.com/anacostiaws

The Wonder of Wetlands

How they work and why they were nearly wiped out

By Jorge Bogantes Montero, Masaya Maeda, and Maureen Farrington

You might say that 2016 was the “Year of the Wetland” for the Anacostia Watershed Society. Thanks to Anacostia Watershed supporters and volunteers, local wetlands are beginning to thrive and be revitalized. This important work is clean to cleaning the water because wetlands are essential to a healthy Anacostia River.

Just how do wetlands clean water? Often when we talk about the function of wetlands, we say that they act as the “kidneys” of the Anacostia River, filtering out specific pollutants and acting as storage for the flood plain. Just as healthy kidneys are vital to healthy humans, wetlands are vital to healthy rivers. It’s an easy metaphor to describe what they do.



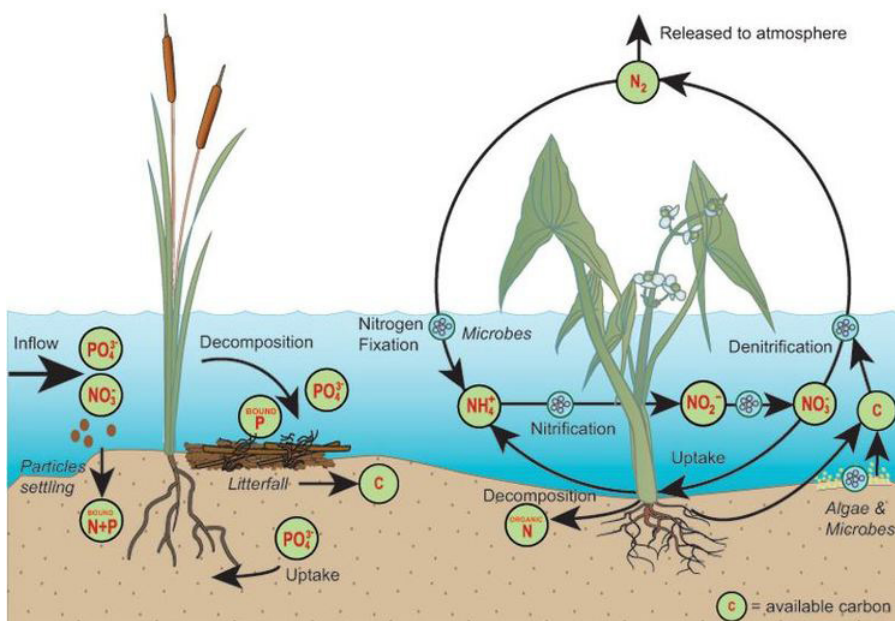
Green Heron and Anacostia River wetlands in 2016; Photo by Jo-Elle Burgard

Nutrients = Pollutants

Some of the main sources of pollution in the Anacostia River nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous. These two chemicals are found largely in animal waste and fertilizers, and make their way to bodies of water in a variety of ways. Among the main offenders are non-

migratory resident Canada Geese who have a digestive system where their input nearly equals their output... meaning that practically all the beneficial plantings that Canada geese eat goes right back into the river as their excrement! Other culprits include home fertilizers and pet waste, which all wash into the Anacostia River aided by the thousands of acres of impervious surfaces throughout the watershed.

Also, human waste from people enters the river via the remaining Combined Sewage Outfalls. Without wetlands, the phosphorous and nitrogen run directly into the river and an excess of those pollutants can also cause algae blooms which threaten human health.



A simplified illustration of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles in a wetland (modified by the Wetlands Initiative from Kadlec and Knight [1996], “Treatment Wetlands”).

Wetland plants work to remove phosphorous and nitrogen with a combination of physical and chemical processes. Physical processes include settling, which is similar to sedimentation on a particle level; volatilization, where a chemical is released as gas; and “Sorption” which is when a chemical adheres to a solid or dispersed in a liquid (adsorption and absorption, respectively). When wetlands employ chemical processes for the removal of these

nutrients, the nitrogen and phosphorous are transformed into other compounds via reactions.

Nitrogen in particular is treated by wetlands. Algae and microbes found in wetlands help to process nitrogen from harmful forms that pollute the river and release it back to the atmosphere as nitrogen gas.

Wetlands may remind you of lazy summer afternoons, but truly they are a veritable hotbed of chemistry that cleans the river.

From Scourge to Saving Grace



Anacostia River Wetlands in 1890; Photo by Library of Congress

This history of wetlands in the United States maps closely to the history of the Anacostia River. They were taken for granted and left to be silted under; or they were filled in and rerouted for farm irrigation. Wetlands were seen as vectors for disease and mosquito breeding grounds. The importance of wetlands' function to clean water and sequester carbon was not fully understood until the mid-20th century, and by then, most of them were gone. Wetlands prevent flooding by being a natural area for water to flow, a feature more important than ever with rapid climate change.

Wetlands were thought to be an inconvenience to fix but now modern science has shown the value of these ecosystems.

What's Next for the Anacostia River Wetlands

The Anacostia River was once surrounded by thousands of acres of wetlands, and in the upcoming year the Anacostia Watershed Society will focus on restoring 12 significant acres. The major sites include the Gateways Wetlands just south of New York Avenue and Kingman Marsh near Kingman Island. With our interns and



AWS interns replant Kingman Marsh in 2015

volunteers, we will do the hard work of replanting native wetland plants, protecting the plants from the resident Canada Geese grazing impact, and removing invasives that choke out the beneficial plants.

Once these wetlands are revitalized, they will treat over 2 million gallons of water a day! The impact on the health of the Anacostia River will be huge, and we can expect to see the results with lush vibrant wetlands that teem with more fish and wildlife than ever before... plus all the awesome places to canoe!

Healthy, functioning wetlands are vital to the Anacostia River's recovery. They are an incredibly valuable ecosystem, and key to the river's resilience.

Interested in volunteering to restore wetlands? Look for opportunities at anacostiaws.org/calendar.



Map of Wetlands to be restored

Introducing the Anacostia River Legacy Society

Introduction by Allan Platt; Article by Emily Conrad

In my time as a board member for the Anacostia Watershed Society and DC resident, I have seen the Anacostia River transformed from an environmental afterthought to a true urban amenity for the region's residents. It is inspiring to see how the Anacostia Watershed Society has rallied the community to protect the river and enjoy the bounty of beauty that healthy progress provides, whether you're biking along the riverside or paddling through its waters.

Together, we have worked towards these goals for a long time, and I consider myself fortunate to be part of the changing tide for the Anacostia River's health. When I think about the future - after I've lived a full and happy life - I want to ensure that the things most important to me are protected for generations to come. This is why I have chosen to leave a legacy of a restored Anacostia River by including the Anacostia Watershed Society in my estate plans. As they say, "You can't take it with you," which is why I want to leave behind a legacy of a cleaner river, a healthier ecosystem with the diversity of plants and wildlife only found here.

I am proud to be a founding member of the Anacostia River Legacy Society, and I hope you will join me by planning your own legacy gift to the Anacostia River to protect its health and beauty for future generations. -AP

What is Planned Giving?

Planned giving is an opportunity to make your mark for generations to come through a charitable bequest. In addition to allowing you to leave a lasting legacy to an important cause, bequests offer tax advantages and flexibility. Planned gifts may include gifts of securities, retirement funds, insurance policies, or a specific amount directed by a will or trust.



Create a lasting legacy like the Cherry Blossoms; Photo credit: Jim Havard



Future Anacostia River Stewards

Your planned gift will benefit the river long into the future – beyond the challenges we are tackling today. We are on track to make the Anacostia River fishable and swimmable by 2025, but our work won't end there. To preserve and protect a clean Anacostia forever, we will need to activate a growing population to understand, enjoy, and vigilantly protect this natural treasure flowing through our nation's capital. Your planned gift will allow you to live forever through your charitable legacy of a clean Anacostia River.

For more information on including the Anacostia Watershed Society in your will, including sample language and frequently asked questions, visit www.anacostiaws.org/planned-giving or check the box on the enclosed envelope to have an information packet mailed to you.

Join the Anacostia River Legacy Society

Please tell us about your plans! We want to acknowledge all Anacostia River Legacy Society members and ensure that your intentions are carried out. Whether you are considering leaving a charitable legacy or have already made a charitable bequest, we invite you to discuss your estate plans with our staff. Once you have completed arrangements with your lawyer or financial planner, you may choose to send us a copy of the section of your will or trust document that details your charitable plans. To discuss your legacy gift, please contact Director of Development, Emily Conrad, at econrad@anacostiaws.org or 301 699-6204 ext. 111.

Congratulations, Master Watershed Stewards!

By Ariel Trahan, Director of River Restoration Programs



On Tuesday, November 30, 2016, we honored the 18 most recent graduates of our Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA). Thanks to funding from the District Department of Energy and Environment, the Keith Campbell Foundation, Prince George's County, and the University of Maryland, the WSA educates and empowers stewards throughout the DC metropolitan region to design and implement stormwater mitigation Capstone projects. These projects utilize low-impact development best management practices such as rain gardens, conservation landscapes, pet waste

campaigns, water re-use devices, and tree plantings; to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff on local waterways and improve their water quality. Through the WSA, we are working to raise public awareness and engage and empower people to make the changes necessary to have trash-free, healthy waterways in order to ultimately catalyze a movement in watershed protection.

The most recent graduates have completed all of their coursework as well as their capstone project. We look forward to seeing these new graduates continue to serve as leaders in their communities!

Interested in becoming a Master Watershed Steward? Classes begin in mid-march, and the application is currently listed on our website.



Watershed Stewards Graduates at the November Ceremony

Saturday Environmental Academy

anacostiaws.org/programs/education/saturday-environmental-academy

The 2017 spring semester of the Saturday Environmental Academy starts on March 11! This 10-week program engages middle school students in hands-on environmental education, culminating in a team-building overnight trip!

Visit the link above to apply!



**Saturday,
April 22,
2017**

Anacostia Watershed Society's

Earth Day

CLEANUP & CELEBRATION

anacostiaws.org/earthday2017

Help stop pollution and restore the Anacostia River at the DC-area's premier Earth Day Cleanup!

Cleanup 9am-12pm

At 30+ sites throughout the watershed

Celebration 12pm-2pm

At Bladensburg Waterfront Park



#AWSEarthDay



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Sponsor Spotlight

MRP Realty



Three cheers for MRP Realty!

In 2016, MRP Realty sponsored our free paddle nights, just one of the many activities the Anacostia Watershed Society offered through our Anacostia River Discovery Series of boat, canoe, and hiking tours last summer.

Thanks to their support, hundreds of watershed residents were able to paddle the Anacostia River and see the beauty of the wildlife and plants, and got back to the shores ready to protect the river!



Introducing the Anacostia Watershed Legacy Society!

For more, see page 6