



Anacostia Watershed Society

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NEW RIVERFRONT ACCESS AT U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM MEANS MORE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF DC AND MARYLAND

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY AND PARTNERS CELEBRATE OPENING OF NEW FLOATING DOCK ON THE ANACOSTIA RIVER.

Washington, D.C.—Strains of Credence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary" greeted a special group of visitors as they arrived at the U.S. National Arboretum in Northeast Washington, D.C. this Thursday. Traveling by pontoon boat from Bladensburg Waterfront Park in Maryland, these pilgrims were among the very first to venture into the botanical garden using a newly-installed floating dock on the Anacostia River.

The travelers—a mix of officials, agency heads, and environmental advocates from Maryland and the District of Columbia—disembarked onto the sloping riverbank forming the Arboretum's eastern border. There they mixed and mingled with counterparts who journeyed by land to celebrate the official opening of the Arboretum's new boat landing and park entrance. The new dock and River Gate will afford visitors complete access to the Arboretum's many natural wonders and a unique way to get to them.

Speaking during the hour-long ribbon cutting ceremony, Dr. John Hammond, Acting Director of the Arboretum, told the crowd that the new dock facility "...reflect[ed] the cooperation between a multitude of agencies and interested parties." Based on an idea to expand recreational and educational opportunities on the Anacostia championed by activists at the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) and the Anacostia Watershed Citizens Action Committee (AWCAC), the landing was constructed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) with support from the Arboretum and the National Park Service (NPS).

Pre-empting questions about his agency's role in a project on Federal land in the District of Columbia, M-NCPPC Chief of Natural and Historical Resources, Chris Wagnon, observed that, "[t]he river doesn't care if you're a D.C. resident or a Maryland resident." In fact, the 176 square mile area covered by the Anacostia and its tributaries unites territories claimed by Montgomery County, MD, Prince George's County, MD, and Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8 in the District. "I challenge [Maryland] residents to come to Bladensburg Waterfront Park, rent a kayak or go on a pontoon boat tour and use this dock," Wagnon proclaimed, outlining the many benefits the new facility would bring to its upstream neighbors.

"We have really accomplished something here," stated District Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr. (Ward 5). Reminiscing about childhood visits to the Arboretum made with his mother, Thomas lauded the Arboretum expansion as "...one way to ensure that our natural resources are what they need to be...and ensure that we connect [our] waterways to our resident."

Voicing a conviction that the notoriously polluted Anacostia will only become clean if more watershed residents take an interest in the river, AWS President Robert Boone declared the completion of the dock and the opening of the River Gate an

environmental victory for Washington and Maryland. As he thanked all those involved in the project, he reminded the crowd that “[i]t will take many little victories like this before we can say the river is restored.”

Following their remarks, Hammond, Wagnon, Boone, and NPS National Capital Parks-East Superintendent Gayle Hazelwood officially opened the River Gate area to the public by cutting a red, white, and blue ribbon stretched across the riverbank. Each one kept a piece of the ribbon as a reminder of the occasion.

“This is what happens when people work together for the benefit of the community,” Hazelwood reflected, summing up the success of the dock project and the morning’s festivities.

Open every day between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., the River Gate entrance furnishes direct access to the National Arboretum’s Asia Valley collection, and provides an ideal venue for picnics, weddings, special events, and quiet walks in the shade. Casual visitors can arrange a pontoon boat tour to the Arboretum from Bladensburg Waterfront Park in Bladensburg, Maryland, while more intrepid explorers may want to rent a canoe or kayak and make the 45-minute paddle to the access dock. (For more boat tour and rental information, call Bladensburg Waterfront Park at 301-779-0371.)
