

## ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY 2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

January 2009 marks the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> year that the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) has worked to fulfill its mission to “*clean the water, recover the shores and honor the heritage*” of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities. Over the course of two decades, AWS has successfully engaged more than 64,000 adults and youth in advocacy, stewardship, and education programs benefiting the environment and local communities in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. region. AWS is happy to report that its environmental efforts continue to foster a deeper sense of environmental stewardship among area residents and that the health of the Anacostia continues to improve. In 2008 alone, AWS’s programs reached the eyes, ears, and hands of nearly 9,000 individuals. AWS’s programs included native tree plantings, non-native invasive plant removals, wetland plantings, trash clean-ups, watershed education experiences, and recreational activities on the river. AWS’s key accomplishments in 2008 include:

### HONORING OUR SHARED HERITAGE

After six months of residing in temporary quarters in Riverdale, Maryland, AWS staff returned to a newly-restored George Washington House in May 2008. The restoration of our office headquarters included extensive remodeling to ensure resource efficiency and historical accuracy. Renovations involved the use of environmentally-friendly materials and practices, including high-efficiency lighting; dual-flush toilets; low volatile organic compound paints and carpeting; recycled materials; and Energy Star-certified appliances. AWS’s overall design plans adhered to state regulations for historically-significant properties established by the Maryland Historical Trust.

### ADVOCACY

**AWS celebrated the DC Water and Sewer Authority’s (DC WASA) 40% reduction in combined sewer overflows into the Anacostia!** Following the provisions of a law suit and consent decree formulated by AWS and its environmental partners in 1999, DC WASA effectively met its 2008 goal of reducing the flow of combined sewage and stormwater into the Anacostia River by 40%. While the benchmark represents a huge victory for the Anacostia, AWS will continue to monitor DC WASA’s progress towards reducing overflow by an additional 58% in coming years.

**AWS advocated for strengthening MS4 permits in Maryland.** Alongside our Maryland’s Stormwater Partners, AWS urged governments in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties to issue stronger stormwater regulations for new development and re-development. Part of this advocacy effort called for the establishment of enforceable numeric limits on pollutants (i.e. trash) entering the Anacostia from its many tributary streams and creeks. AWS presented its position on this issue before a full session of the Prince George’s County Council and met individually with council members Eric Olson, Tom Dernoga, Marilyn Bland, and Ingrid Turner. AWS also reviewed and commented on the Maryland Department of Environment’s draft stormwater regulations for new development and re-development. Released in July 2008

and taking an approach similar to one taken by Montgomery County’s MS4 permit proposal, the state guidelines provide good language for new development, but remain lacking with respect to language aimed at re-development projects.

**AWS advocated for better stormwater control in the District of Columbia.** AWS participated in the D.C. Stormwater Management Task Force and advocated for speedy implementation of an impervious surface fee in the District. WASA and the District Department of Environment (DDOE) continue to examine options for modifying stormwater fees based on the amount of impervious surface on a given property. A public comment period is anticipated prior to any future rate changes.

**AWS advocated for stormwater assessment and mitigation in the Paint Branch Sub-Watersheds.** In conjunction with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the University of Maryland (UMD), AWS hired the engineering firm URS Corporation to begin comprehensive study of the Paint Branch and Little Paint Branch sub-watersheds in Prince George’s County, Maryland. AWS also contracted UMD Hydrologist Dr. Karen Prestegard to initiate a three-year complementary sediment transport study for the Paint Branch. The studies will help AWS design better low impact development projects and identify sites where the Anacostia can be reconnected to its floodplain.

**AWS completed baseline trash data collection on the Anacostia.** AWS submitted draft language for the Anacostia Watershed Trash Reduction Plan to DDOE. The draft plan documents the amount and type of trash found in the Anacostia River and its tributaries in recent years. This study will assist in the formulation of a Total Maximum Daily Load for trash pollution in the District of Columbia.

**AWS helped create multi-jurisdictional trash task force.** As a partner in the Potomac River Watershed Trash Treaty working group, AWS advocated for and realized the creation of a joint Maryland/D.C. task force to examine and address trash issues across all political boundaries within the Anacostia River basin. This multi-jurisdictional initiative is the first of its kind in the D.C. metropolitan region.

## STEWARDSHIP

### **AWS provided Non-native Invasive Plant Control.**

AWS neared total eradication of the non-native invasive plants in five watershed parks in Maryland thanks to the work of 2,232 volunteers. For instance, at Little Paint Branch Park in Beltsville, MD, volunteers helped AWS remove 98% of garlic mustard and 95% of English Ivy from park land. After an extensive survey and coordination with the National Park Service, AWS selected Fort Dupont (in Northeast D.C.) as the site where it will initiate a Cooperative Weed Management Area. AWS also began developing a practical manual for encouraging native ecosystem restoration programs designed to provide locally-organized groups with “how to” expertise on invasive plant removals in their particular geographic area. The manual presents AWS’s successful invasive removal sites as models for more regional action.

**AWS held Rain Barrel Workshops.** AWS partnered with Aqua Barrel to conduct two well-attended rain barrel workshops in the spring of 2008. AWS staff and guest speakers from the Maryland Master Gardeners Program taught participants about the need for rain barrels, emphasizing their cost effectiveness and the benefits of reducing stormwater runoff into local Anacostia tributaries. Twenty homeowners left the workshops equipped with new rain barrels to be installed at their homes.

**AWS designed and constructed Rain Gardens.** AWS completed the installation of two rain gardens at the George Washington House in Bladensburg, MD. AWS personnel designed the gardens to capture stormwater runoff from the grounds of our headquarters building. AWS will use the gardens to demonstrate low impact development for educators, residents, students, legislators, and other visitors.

**AWS’s achieved Annual Tree Planting success.** AWS planted 225 native trees inside the Anacostia watershed, along the Anacostia’s Northeast and Northwest branches and near RFK Memorial Stadium in D.C.

**AWS removed tons of trash from the Anacostia.** AWS staff and more than 2,300 local volunteers removed a total of 52.7 tons of trash and debris (including 222 tires) from the banks of the Anacostia, continuing our joint commitment to create a trash-free Potomac River watershed by 2013. AWS’s Earth Day River Cleanup and Celebration alone drew more than 1,900 volunteers from metro area communities! AWS and its partner organizations targeted 26 sites for trash removal throughout the watershed on April 26, 2008—resulting in the removal of 50.2 tons of trash.

**AWS hosted Paddle Sport Regatta:** AWS engaged more than 200 people in competitive canoe and kayak races at our 14<sup>th</sup> annual Anacostia-Port Towns Paddle Sport Regatta.

## EDUCATION

**AWS provided meaningful educational experiences for local students.** AWS engaged 3,799 students in environmental education programs. Educational activities included interactive classroom sessions, field trips on the river via pontoon boat or canoe, and service-learning restoration projects.

**AWS held professional development workshops for local educators.** AWS engaged 42 teachers from D.C. and MD in our annual series of teacher training workshops. These teachers received 10 hours of required professional development credits and learned how to implement meaningful watershed education experiences in their own classrooms. Altogether the trained teachers have the potential to provide watershed education to at least 800 students in the coming year.

**AWS implemented Rice Rangers.** AWS successfully piloted the first year of its new Rice Rangers program. Several dozen local 6<sup>th</sup> graders trained fellow elementary school students in grades 2, 3, and 4 in watershed educational experiences.

AWS 2008 Accomplishment Summary	Estimated in 2008	Estimated 1989-2008
<b>Wetland Plants Grown/Planted</b>	2,700	15,540
<b>Native Trees and Shrubs Planted</b>	225	13,439
<b>Tons of Trash Removed from Watershed</b>	52.7	842
<b>Tires Removed from Watershed</b>	222	9,123
<b>Number of Youth Engaged in Environmental Education</b>	3,799	14,560
<b>Local Educators Trained in Watershed Education</b>	42	327
<b>Total Number of People Engaged by AWS</b>	8,893	64,480