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JUNE 30, 2011

About the bloggers



Tim Wheeler reports on the environment and Chesapeake Bay. A native of West Virginia, he has focused mainly on Maryland's environment since moving here in 1983. Along the way, he's crewed aboard a skipjack in the bay, canoed under city streets up the Jones Fall from the Inner Harbor, and gone deep underground in a western Maryland coal mine. He loves seafood, rambles in the country and good stories. He hopes to share some here.

Contributor **Christy Zuccarini** has been **blogging about the local DIY craft scene** for a year for Baltimoresun.com. She brings her perspective on all things handmade to B'More Green, where she will highlight projects you can do yourself as well as crafters who are integrating sustainable methods and materials.

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"Plunge-in" highlights slow pace of river cleanup



Environmental activists and former and present elected officials staged a "plunge-in" today of the Anacostia River in Washington's Maryland suburbs to highlight the failures of government at all levels to clean up the Chesapeake Bay region's degraded waterways.

Several donned white "haz-mat" coveralls before wading in to emphasize the polluted nature of the Anacostia, a tributary of the Potomac River that flows from Prince George's County through the District of Columbia. Vernon Archer, mayor of Riverdale Park just downriver, waded into the water in a business suit.

Like the Patapsco and Back rivers in the Baltimore area, the Anacostia is fouled with trash, sewage and polluted runoff, and its bottom sediments are contaminated with toxic wastes.

The waders at Bladensburg Waterfront Park - and one impulsive soul who did a cannonball into the river - risked infection and illness, as bacteria levels in the Anacostia there often exceed safe levels, especially after it rains.

Speakers pointed out that the federal Clean Water Act, which became law in 1972, called for all American waterways to be fishable and swimmable by July 1, 1983.

Former state Sen. Gerald Winegrad of Annapolis called it "a national disgrace" that the Anacostia, which flows through the nation's capital, is not even close to being safe for water-contact recreation.



"We've come a long way in cleaning it up," said Jim Foster, president of the **Anacostia Watershed Society**. But, he added, "we still have a long way to go." A plan for restoring the Anacostia adopted last year calls for it to be cleaned up by 2032, but Foster indicated he didn't want to wait that long. Although the Anacostia and Baltimore's Patapsco have both been chosen by the Obama administration as "pilot" rivers for a new federal effort to restore urban waters, the initiative promises no infusion of new funding. "One month's rent in Iraq or Afghanistan," Foster said, referring to the costs of the two wars, "would clean up this entire watershed."

The event was conceived by **Howard Ernst**, an Annapolis political scientist and author of two books critical of Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts to date. Others attending included state Sen. Paul Pinsky, a Prince George's Democrat, and David Harrington, a former Prince George's senator and former mayor of Bladensburg.

The event was staged in Bladensburg to emphasize activists' concerns that Prince George's County is not moving aggressively enough to curb polluted runoff from new development. The county council is considering legislation to meet new state standards for controlling runoff - capturing the first 1/2 inch of rain - but activists point out that neighboring Montgomery County mandates that new and redevelopment projects soak up twice as much rainfall.

Among the participants was Dottie Yunger, the **Anacostia Riverkeeper**, who said her dog normally accompanies her on outings. But before wading in, she said, "there's no way I would let my dog swim in this river."

Posted by **Tim Wheeler** at 1:38 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)



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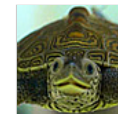
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