

# ANACOSTIA RIVER REALTY'S Blog

Fine EAST OF THE RIVER Living by ANACOSTIA RIVER REALTY.

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## 5 Cent Bag Tax Appears To Help Anacostia River Cleanup



On the surface of the Anacostia River, it appears that some of the goals of D.C.'s controversial bag tax are working.

"The bags are a lot less, it's noticeable," said kayaker Will Nuckols.

"But there's a lot of

material that's still out there. Plastics are still a huge problem."

Anacostia Riverkeeper, an organization dedicated to restoring the watershed, agrees that looks can be deceiving.

"There have not been the same efforts to get rid of the pollution that is invisible," said riverkeeper Dottie Yunger.

Yunger is concerned about toxic industrial sites along the water's edge, like the former Washington Gas and Light property. She says the soil is contaminated with PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) and heavy metals.

"So what's happening is, this is just rolling right into the river and dumping the sediments and the contaminants with them, right directly into the river," explained Yunger.

The result is six known toxic hotspots in the Anacostia. Anacostia Riverkeeper and the Anacostia Watershed Society list them as the Washington Navy Yard, the Southeast Federal Center, Poplar Point, Kenilworth Landfill, Washington Gas and Light, and PEPCO Benning Road.

In the last five months, the District of Columbia has collected \$928,150 from the bag tax. So far, keepers of the river say, they haven't seen any of it. Yunger says the Army Corps of Engineers worked with local environmental groups to identify and plan restoration projects.

"So there's a million dollars right there that could go to projects we already know about, we could start tomorrow," Yunger said.

Ward 6 Councilman Tommy Wells championed the bag tax. He says money first goes to public outreach, providing reusable bags to seniors and low income residents, and storm screens.

"We're still early. We're only nine months into implementation. It's already having an impact, so now we need to work on granting for folks," Wells responded.

\$246,000 has been spent on advertising, education, and reusable bags reports

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Christophe Tulou, director of the city's Department of the Environment (DDOE). Tulou says it just got authority to start spending the rest of the money last month. Some, he says, will go to investments in programs like RiverSmart, which helps homeowners and schools make changes to become more river-friendly.

After that, DDOE may come up with its own list of projects and solicit community groups for the jobs.

"We would call on DDOE to figure that out and to release the money as soon as possible," said Yunger.

In the meantime, Anacostia Riverkeeper and Anacostia Watershed Society asked elected officials to sign a pledge that they'd work to hold polluters legally liable for site cleanup.

Still, the whole picture won't come together until the restoration funds make it downstream too.


by Melanie Alnwick, Fox 5 News

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Posted by ANACOSTIA RIVER REALTY at 9:02 AM 

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▶ [July \(6\)](#)

▶ [June \(7\)](#)

▶ [May \(6\)](#)

▶ [April \(2\)](#)

▶ [March \(1\)](#)

▶ [February \(2\)](#)

▶ [January \(6\)](#)

▶ [2009 \(70\)](#)