

VOICE OF THE RIVER

Newsletter of the Anacostia Watershed Society



ANACOSTIA
WATERSHED
SOCIETY

WINTER 2010
VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1

Clean the Water, Recover the Shores, Honor the Heritage

Education



(Above) High school students from Holy Trinity School in Georgetown enjoyed a canoe trip in October. AWS offers a three-part service learning program called Watershed Explorers for middle and high schools in the watershed. To learn more about how to get your students involved, please contact Lee Cain at lcain@anacostiaws.org.

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- Education News
- President's Corner: Winter 2010 Happenings
- 2009 Accomplishments
- Stewardship News
- 2010 Advocacy Goals
- Facts About DC's Bag Bill
- Meet the AWS Staff

Save the date!

Saturday,
April 24, 2010

Celebrate the 40th
Anniversary of Earth Day with AWS!

Help clean up the Anacostia River and end the day with an Earth Day Celebration featuring free food, music and presentations by government officials.



AWS Educators strengthening connections between living learning features and school curriculum

(Right) Students at Harriet Tubman Elementary School in NW just after completing the construction of hoop-houses on their raised beds. These students will use these living learning features to study the growth of winter food crops as well as the green house effect as it relates to climate change.



Since the fall AWS educators have been working to expand the current watershed education programs into something even more comprehensive and beneficial to area schools. The goal is to develop a program that allows schools to fully utilize the living learning features located on their school property to help teach not only science, but also reading, math, and social studies curriculum. This is an exciting new endeavor for the education department as it will serve to expand the depth of our educational programs while at the same time strengthening school curriculum. This new program will present a wonderful opportunity to educate and empower more environmental stewards in the Anacostia River Watershed.

President's Corner



By Jim Foster
President

Happy New Year! You know, there are people you meet in life that you just feel great about spending time with. I came

to AWS last January and I have been so fortunate to meet and work with all the staff and board members. But the person who has impacted me the most is Jim Connolly. Jim retired from AWS in December and has left big shoes for his replacement to fill. Jim has joined our Board so he is still with us, but I will miss spending time with him daily, his insight, his experience, and his wonderful demeanor.

Jim Connolly worked for AWS for 17 years. He was Robert Boone's first employee and came to AWS from Earth Conservation Corps where he worked removing tires from Lower Beaver Dam Creek among other things. Jim is so passionate about the Anacostia River, the people, and the communities that surround it. He started rowing clubs at Bladensburg Waterfront Park and Anacostia Boat Club to bring people to the river. Jim led tours of the river for thousands of folks, managed our signature Earth Day cleanup every year, and engaged so many people in the business of the river.

As Jim was telling me that he would be leaving at the end of the year, he also presented me with his recommended replacement. How could I not agree? Brent Bolin is our new Director of Advocacy. Brent is an attorney, barred in Maryland, with a Master's degree in Public Affairs. He was formerly with the US Department of Health and Human Services providing environmental and administrative law support. Brent is associated with the Neighbors of North-

west Branch and past board member of Friends of Sligo Creek. Brent lives in Mt. Rainier with his wife. We are in great hands with Brent! In addition, Jim Connolly will form an Advocacy Subcommittee on the Board with Anya Schoolman and others to provide technical support to Brent. It's a win-win for AWS!

This issue of the Voice of the River features an annual report piece summarizing our 2009 accomplishments and some basic financial information. We opted for this format as opposed to a newsletter and a separate Annual Report to control costs while providing relevant information to you. I hope you find this useful and, if you want more information, just give us a call or we are posting material on our Web site.

Today is almost exactly one year for me with AWS. I'm so honored to work with the best organization fighting for the Anacostia River! 2010 is going to be a watershed year (no pun intended!) for the river. There is national attention being focused on her finally and great things are in store. A lot of that attention is directly related to the tireless efforts of many of you. With our capable staff going into the new year, we have set many "BHAGs" (Big, Hairy Audacious Goals) for stronger stormwater regulations and permits, an invasive plant ban in Maryland, a bag fee like DC's in Maryland, installing green roofs on commercial buildings in DC and planting trees, pulling invasive plants and working with our children to learn about the river. Indeed, I am a lucky guy to be at the helm here. Let's make something happen in 2010!! Thanks.

Anacostia Watershed Society, Inc.

President

James R. Foster

Board of Directors

Michael Tilchin, *Chair*

Charles Evans, *Treasurer*

John W. Lyon, *Secretary*

Charles Agle

Sadara Barrow

Robert Boone

James Connolly

Elissa Feldman

Adam Ortiz

James Rosapepe

Anya Schoolman

Jack Wennersten

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Brent Bolin

Director of Advocacy

Jorge Bogantes Montero

Conservation Biologist

Lee Cain

Education Programs Manager

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Emily Gillespie

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Pat Gladding

Director of Development

Germaine Hughes

Administrative Assistant

Steve Kinzer

Maintenance Engineer

Meg Mackin

Membership Coordinator

Masaya Maeda

Water Quality Specialist

Steve McKindley-Ward

Horticulturist

Eric Sibley

Stewardship Programs Manager

Tracey Toscano

Development Coordinator

Ariel Trahan

Environmental Educator

Wendy Van Norden

Environmental Educator

AWS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization seeking to return the Anacostia River and its tributaries to a swimmable and fishable condition through the development and implementation of high quality environmental advocacy, education and stewardship programs.

We've been busy!

Check out the AWS highlights from 2009

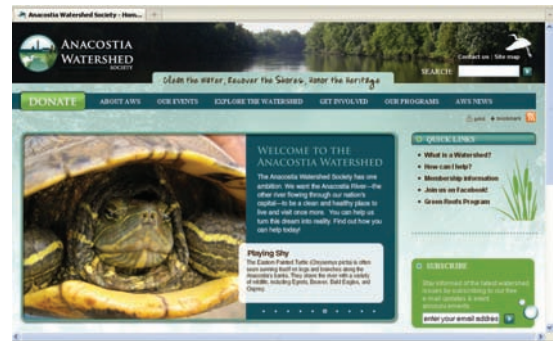
AWS is working with our partners to create a Pollution Budget, a multi-jurisdictional cooperative trash Total Maximum Daily Load or TMDL. The TMDL sets limits for trash that are binding on the responsible jurisdictions. This represents another tool for focusing attention on stopping trash at the source.



AWS has new leadership. **James Foster started as President of AWS in January of 2009.** Jim has spent many years working as an environmental consultant as well as a community activist working on development issues. He has introduced the organization to new partners,

worked with the staff and the board to create a more accountable organization with tangible goals and expectations, and educated elected officials about storm water, toxics, and non-native invasive plants.

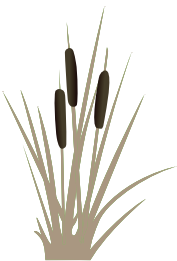
AWS has a **new logo and an updated Web site.** Visit www.anacostiaws.org to see our new look!



AWS has **empowered 9,272 youth and adults** who have helped clean, recover and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities.

On Earth Day, collaborating with 2,000 community and other organization volunteers, **we removed 59 tons of trash, 289 tires and 10,700 plastic bags** from the river and its tributaries.

AWS started managing a **Green Roof Pilot Program** for the District Department of the Environment. The program will take us into the built environment where many watershed solutions will be implemented in the near future.



This year AWS worked closely with Councilmember Tommy Wells and the DC Council to create and pass the **Anacostia River Clean up and Protection Act of 2009.** The Bag Fee as it is known started January 1, 2010. All disposable plastic and paper bags will be charged a five cent fee. The objective of this bill is to change behavior and get people to stop taking a bag, use a reusable bag, or help pay for further education, trash reduction, and reusable bags for less fortunate citizens.



Courtesy of <http://green.dc.gov>

2009 Accomplishments



On September 12, AWS responded to President Obama's call to service and **conducted a major cleanup in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Urban Waters Initiative and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and with Senator Ben Cardin and Congressman Chris Van Hollen** who praised our work and achievements by presenting us with a Proclamation in honor of Anacostia Watershed Society's 20th Anniversary. Volunteers removed 2.5 tons of trash collected from the river and its shores during this event.

Giant Food invited AWS to partner to address critical environmental issues, to educate the public about the new DC Bag Fee, and to promote community involvement in stewardship activities. AWS sees this as a way to help us diversify our funding sources and connect more closely with Giant's customer base, promoting the message that together we can create a healthier environment for all who reside here.



AWS conducted **46 canoe trips** that carried **679 students** and **222 adults**, as well as **52 pontoon boat trips** that carried **1,188 watershed students** and **114 watershed adults** out to experience the flora and fauna along the shore and in the River.

AWS educators **reached 2,769 students** in our three part hands-on environmental programs. The AWS education team also **certified 74 teachers in Project WET** (Watershed Education Experience). Our certification programs meet all State and National Curriculum Standards and the No Child Left Behind Act.



Photo © Derek Parks, Vi Photography, www.imagesbyvi.com

AWS stewardship staff and volunteers successfully **eradicated 100% of Bush Honeysuckle and Multiflora Rose** in one of our targeted parks and continue to remove specific species of non-native plants in eight local parks. Staff and volunteers continue to plant native trees, shrubs, wetland plants and wildflowers in the watershed.

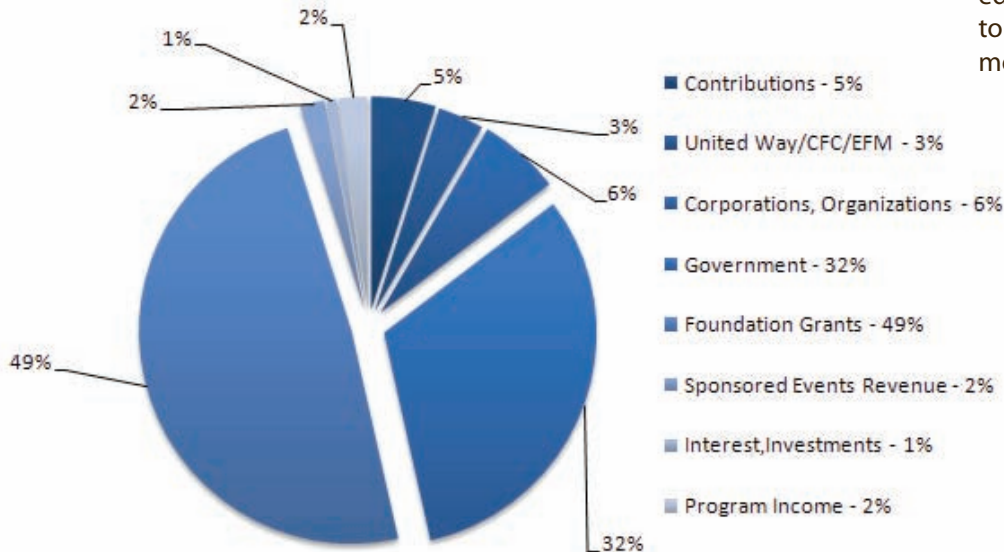
2009 Accomplishments

AWS Income

January - December 2009
preliminary - unaudited



AWS launched a diverse lecture series to showcase our headquarters and to educate the public on historical, cultural, environmental issues.

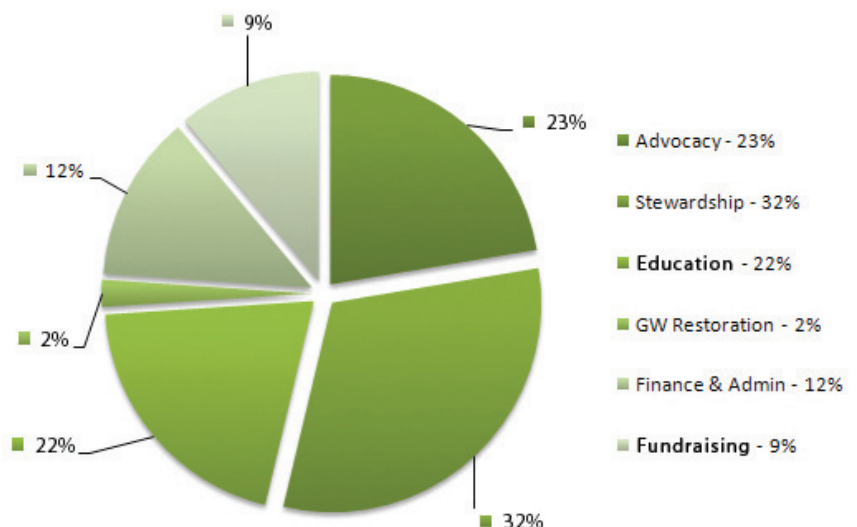


AWS is working on MS4 Permits for Washington and Prince George's County while the Montgomery County's permit has been contested. We continue our advocacy work with legislators in Washington, DC and Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland to implement new language that will reduce the volume and velocity of stormwater from new and redevelopment sites to the maximum extent possible.

The key to restoring the Anacostia River is in addressing the sources of pollution, and in working to restore balance once again to its ecosystem. The Anacostia Watershed Society has always taken an approach based on working with citizens and stakeholders at both the grassroots level, and at the policy level. This has been an effective strategy for us, since we have been able to engage tens of thousands of citizens in educational stewardship activities, which has helped to foster an increased understanding about the Anacostia River and its problems.

AWS Expenses

January - December 2009
preliminary - unaudited



Green Roofs Program Begins in DC



The Green Roofs program is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in partnership with the District Department of the Environment.



AWS, in partnership with the District Department of the Environment (DDOE) has kicked off the Green Roof Rebate–Targeted Large Retrofit (GRR-TLR) program in the District of Columbia. This program is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and is meant to mitigate storm water by providing a \$7.00 per square foot rebate toward any green roof installation over 4,000 square feet. With the current allotment of funding, we should be able to subsidize just over 50,000 square feet of additional green roof surface area. AWS has already set up the structure of the program. We are also promoting it and administering its day to day operation as applicants make their way through the process to completion. We look forward to a long and successful partnership with DDOE as we utilize this program to improve the health of the waterways in the District of Columbia, specifically the Anacostia River. For more information, see the Green Roof page on the AWS Web site.

Interview with AWS Special Project Volunteer Leena Chapagain

AWS spoke to special project volunteer Leena Chapagain about her work to help introduce legislation to ban the sale of invasive plants in Maryland.

AWS: Say a few things about your background for our readers.

Chapagain: I'm a new immigrant from Nepal. In 2007, our family---my husband, 4 year-old daughter and myself---came to this country. We live in Arlington. I have a green card. While I look for a job, I'm doing volunteer work. Back home, I earned a masters degree in botany, and did conservation work in Nepal. I've also earned a second masters in Gender and Development Studies.

AWS: How did you find your way to AWS?

Chapagain: Last spring, I took a three month Master Gardeners course through the Virginia Cooperative Extension. As a botanist, this was a good chance to get familiar with the flora of this part of the United States. On top of regular class work, they require a special project. Having a conservation

background, I was attracted to the invasive plant option. A few other students and I organized 3-4 invasive plant removal outings in Arlington parks.

AWS: That was what led you to our door, right?

Chapagain: Yes. In May, I found AWS's web announcement calling for summer field interns. I worked in the field for a couple weeks. Then Jorge [AWS Conservation Biologist Jorge Bogantes] said, "Leena, we need some legislative research---surveying the laws other states have in place to discourage the sale and spread of invasive plants... Can you help with that?" Ever since, I've been working part-time---some at home, some here in Bladensburg. I've drafted a white paper and done an analysis of the invasive plant statutes in 13 other states.

AWS: Some meaty work...The Maryland General Assembly starts in January. Are you going to have proposed legislation ready for this year's session?

Chapagain: We're trying. When AWS

staff and I met in November with the Maryland Invasive Species Council, they were taken aback that we'd gotten this far drafting legislation without significant input from them. But we ended up getting congratulated and thanked.



One high-level Maryland DNR official said, "This has been needed for 10 years!" That made me feel good.

Editor's Note: As of press time, State Senator David Harrington (47th district) has agreed to serve as the lead sponsor for the proposed ban on the sale of invasive plants in Maryland.

A sound conservation alternative to the “blond death” of mowing-and-spraying

By Jorge Bogantes Montero
Conservation Biologist



Photo by Sara Tangren

Photograph of study area looking downstream from the 38th Street Bridge.

In 2007 AWS ventured into a new restoration endeavor with an experimental research project which attempted to prove the benefits of open-land habitats dominated by native herbaceous species as a floodway revegetation alternative. We have been working at a short section of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River, immediately downstream of the 38th Street Bridge in Hyattsville, Maryland. In the 1950's the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed levees that reach from the bridge down to the confluence of the Anacostia River with the Potomac River. The levees were designed to protect surrounding communities such as Hyattsville from flooding. As a con-

sequence of levee construction, much of the natural river conditions were severely disturbed and the banks were reinforced with large, angular blocks of gray granite (known as “riprap”). This means that tree planting is not an option since woody plants increase the likelihood of damming, thus, the chances of flooding.

AWS conducted an experimental habitat restoration project on the streambanks in order to demonstrate an alternative to the annual mowing-and-spraying of herbicide. The project included the removal of invasive plants and the establishment of a soft-stemmed native plant community. This project was possible thanks to the valuable scientific collaboration of one of our friends, Dr. Sara Tangren, a native plant expert from Chesapeake Natives. The purpose of the project was to monitor the impact of three vegetation management regimens on plant species. Our results and observations show that the plot cultivated with native herbaceous species support more native plant species diversity and wildlife than those that are subject to mowing-and-spraying.

Our next step will be to put our findings into practice and expand this effort throughout the floodways of the NW

Branch. Under the name of Anacostia Streambank Native Habitat Restoration (ASNHR) we will start the implementation phase of this innovative project at a 1-mile segment of the river. That's why we are currently in fundraising mode! This project will benefit wildlife species and will make the Anacostia Tributary Trail System a better place to hike, bike, and, to experience the urban green-spaces. Once more, many thanks to our wonderful volunteers and interns for all the great work on the 38th St. Bridge Project site! More than ever, we will need your help to make this attempt another concrete success in the restoration of the Anacostia watershed.



Photo by Jorge Bogantes Montero

Many people don't have a clue that there is a native cactus species in Maryland and the DC area. The Prickly pear cactus, also known as Devil's tongue (*Opuntia humifusa*) is one of the remarkable natives that were planted at the 38th St. Bridge Project site in Hyattsville, MD.

Cross section diagram of the Northwest Branch below the 38th Street Bridge

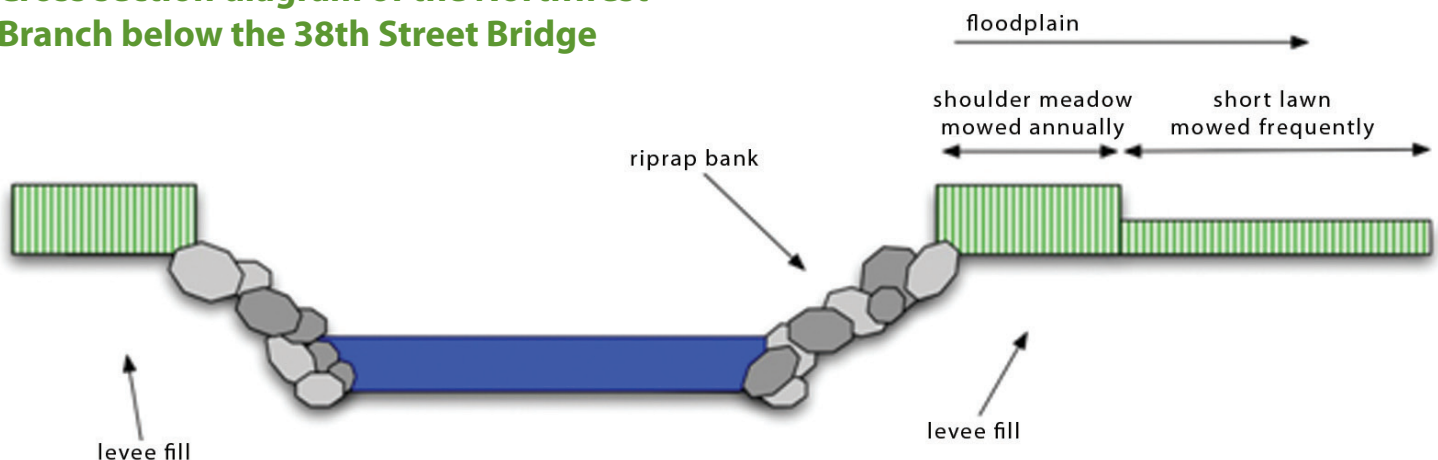


Diagram by Sara Tangren. Not drawn to scale.

Take Action!

By Brent Bolin, Director of Advocacy

Thanks to Jim Foster for the kind introduction at the front of this newsletter. As a citizen advocate for the last several years, I have been passionate about the Anacostia River. My role as Director of Advocacy is to build the constituency of AWS and to build consensus around issues important to the Anacostia River and its citizens. This means you! We can't win this fight without you, your neighbors, and our local elected officials, so let's work together. I want to highlight some of the key issues AWS is working on this year, but I also want to hear from everyone who cares about their local stream, creek, or the mighty Anacostia itself – what are your issues?



Photo by Raphael Talisman/The Gazette

Brent Bolin (left) pictured with former AWS Executive Director Jim Connolly.

the issues...

Stormwater: Our Biggest Hurdle

As you know, "stormwater runoff" – rain that flows off of hard surfaces like roofs, streets, and sidewalks – is a major source of pollution in the Anacostia River and the whole Chesapeake Bay watershed. Areas of hard surface break the water cycle by preventing rain from soaking into the earth and instead speed the rain off site through curbs, gutters and storm sewers directly into our waterways. This runoff picks up pollutants as it flows and, because 75% of the Anacostia watershed is developed, the volume of flow is enormous. The huge peaks in stream flow you see during and after rain events cause terrific amounts of erosion that damage riverbanks and result in sediment deposits downstream. (This process resulted in the colonial port of Bladensburg, at that time 40 feet deep, filling in so that at Bladensburg the river is dry at low tide.)

A Busy Spring in Annapolis

Fortunately our friends in the state of Maryland are tackling the issue of stormwater! AWS is working on two aspects of this issue at the state level:

1) **Protecting the 2007 stormwater law**

In 2007 Maryland showed great dedication to restoring its waterways by passing a law that changes the model of stormwater management to contain rainwater onsite instead of passing the buck downstream. Yet despite having three years to prepare for this shift scheduled to take effect in May, developers are now balking at having to change their polluting ways. They are using scare tactics to tell communities that new stormwater rules will make redevelopment too expensive, which is simply not true. Existing development caused existing problems in our river; we can't recover the river without amending these problems. Restoration IS redevelopment. When unchecked stormwater runoff damages infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and

sanitary sewers, it is citizens who foot the repair bill. Please tell your Maryland state legislators right now not to let the developers win at the expense of taxpayers. Please tell them to protect the 2007 stormwater law.

2) **Impervious surface fee**

It is estimated that in Maryland there is a \$20 billion backlog of water infrastructure upgrades. Senator Raskin has proposed a modest fee, based on the amount of hard surfaces that generate stormwater runoff, to create a funding stream so that local governments can begin to address this huge maintenance backlog. AWS supports the fee because infrastructure upgrades are always more expensive in the future than they are now and systematically addressing these maintenance issues will improve water quality across Maryland. When the time comes for a vote on this measure you will see an action alert from AWS.

the issues...

Trash Reduction

On January 1, 2010 the District of Columbia became a national leader in trash reduction when The Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act of 2009 took effect, instituting a nickel fee per disposable bag. Maryland and Virginia are looking to follow this lead and Delegate Al Carr, representing part of the Northwest Branch area, is the champion of this effort in the Maryland legislature.

DC's New Bag Bill

Congratulations to the District of Columbia for enacting The Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act of 2009, AKA the "bag fee." This bill seeks to reduce trash in the Anacostia by charging a nickel fee for the use of any disposable bag throughout DC. While there has been some grousing about the bag fee, the early news is that plastic bag use is down by half and reusable bag use has doubled. The bag fee is working!

Pictured below: plastic bags at Watts Branch in Washington, DC.



Fast Facts About DC's Bag Bill

The Basics

District businesses that sell food or alcohol will charge five cents for each disposable paper or plastic carry-out bag. The business keeps one cent, or two cents if it offers a rebate when you bring your own bag. The remaining three or four cents will go to the new Anacostia River Protection Fund.

Why a bag fee?

The purpose of the bag fee is to get trash out of our waterways. A recent study found that 33% of the trash in the Anacostia River is plastic bags.*

This is not a revenue bill!!

The District did not enact this fee to cover budget shortfalls. Money raised goes to the new Anacostia River Protection Fund administered by District Department of the Environment (DDOE); DDOE will use the money to provide reusable bags, clean up the river, and educate the public about litter.

Honoring Commitments

The District is a partner in the Trash Free Potomac Wa-

tershed Treaty. The Anacostia has such a severe trash problem that it is considered impaired under the federal Clean Water Act and a "pollution diet" is being implemented to reduce the trash. The bag fee is one important way the District can contribute to this pollution diet.

Recent trash survey findings*:

- Of almost 36,000 items of trash recovered in streams, nearly 12,000 (33%) were plastic bags.
- At a surface sample site near a shopping center, 19% of trash collected was plastic bags.
- At storm drains, which receive water washing off roads and parking lots, 23% of the trash collected was plastic bags.
- At the Fresh Creek trash net, installed to capture and remove trash from waterways, plastic bags were the #3 item collected at about 9% of all trash.

*Presentation of data available at http://www.anacostia.net/Archives/AWMC/documents/MWCOG_Monitoring_Overview_12_2009.pdf

Meet the AWS Staff

There are a few new faces around the George Washington House!



Jim Foster
President

As President of AWS, Jim is responsible for implementing the organization's strategic plan, meeting requirements of the Board of Directors, and providing strategic input to advance the mission of the organization.



Brent Bolin
Director of Advocacy

Brent comes to AWS from a watershed resident and citizen activist background. His efforts at AWS focus on leading our campaigns, engaging citizens, and building coalitions as we all have a part in making a healthy Anacostia River.



**Jorge Bogantes
Montero**
*Conservation
Biologist*

As a member of the AWS stewardship team, Jorge works to control populations of many harmful invasive plant species occurring in local woodlands. Jorge also works to teach area residents and visitors about local environmental issues.



Lee Cain
*Education Programs
Manager*

Lee leads the education department in developing and implementing educational programs geared toward generating stewards of the land and waters of the Anacostia River.



Erin Castelli
*Associate
Development Director*

Erin works with the Anacostia Watershed Society's Development Team to build relationships and raise funds from major donors and prospects, including foundations, governments, individuals, and corporations.



Emily Gillespie
*Communications
Manager*

As the Communications Manager, Emily supports the education, stewardship, advocacy and recreation programs at AWS. She manages AWS's Web site and social media presence, implements public relations strategies and develops all newsletters and e-communications.



Pat Gladding
*Director of
Development*

Pat's responsibilities at AWS include financial planning and management, securing funding from sources, collaborating with board and management team to create and oversee organizational budget process, and working with the staff and board to strategically ensure best practices.



Jeri Hughes
*Administrative
Assistant*

Jeri performs general administrative duties at AWS. She previously ran an industrial laundry facility in NJ, and is skilled in business administration and contract negotiation. Her skills as a mechanic and master electrician help keep the AWS auto and boat fleets running efficiently.

Meet the AWS Staff

Meet the AWS team working hard to restore the Anacostia River!



Steve Kinzer
*Maintenance
Engineer*

Steve works hard to keep things running smoothly at AWS and around the George Washington House. He has previously worked as a plumber, electrician, painter and carpenter and now brings his expertise to AWS.



Meg Mackin
*Membership
Coordinator*

Meg comes to the development team at AWS with seven years of sales experience in corporate business development and college recruitment. Meg is in charge of membership recruitment and helping to increase overall fundraising at AWS.



Masaya Maeda
*Water Quality
Specialist*

Masaya came from Japan where he worked for the government for seven years. At AWS, Masaya works to locate pollution, track it to its source, report it to the proper authorities, and makes sure the issue is addressed.



**Steve
McKindley-Ward**
Horticulturist

Steve serves as a jack-of-all-trades in AWS's Stewardship department. He also undertakes special duties in volunteer and intern coordination.



Eric Sibley
*Stewardship
Programs Manager*

Eric manages the Stewardship Team and specifically administers our new Green Roofs Program. He is ultimately responsible for all of our restoration and mitigation projects.



Tracey Toscano
*Development
Coordinator*

Tracey works on researching new funding streams and donor opportunities while helping to maintain AWS's current committed relationships. She also collaborates on all our special events, activities, and programs.



Ariel Trahan
*Environmental
Educator*

Ariel works as a member of the education team to develop and implement service learning programs on the Anacostia River. Before AWS, Ariel worked as an environmental educator in New Hampshire and Michigan. She's excited to use her experiences to engage youth and adults in the Anacostia Watershed.



Wendy Van Norden
*Environmental
Educator*

As an education team member, Wendy implements educational programs to students and teachers in the Anacostia watershed, and is passionate about developing stewards of all ages. Before AWS, she worked with Montgomery County Public Schools for three years.

Non-Profit Organ.
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Permit #1871



Earth Day River Cleanup & Celebration

Saturday, April 24, 2010

8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

30+ cleanup sites in DC and Prince George's County and Montgomery County, MD.

Earth Day Celebration featuring food, music and presentations by government officials will follow the morning cleanup.

Visit www.anacostiaws.org for more information!



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www.anacostiaws.org

Become a Member of AWS!

Members are the heart and soul of our organization. By becoming an AWS member, you can help us reach our goal of returning the Anacostia to a swimmable and fishable river. Your membership of only \$35 will help make a difference! Please join us in our mission to clean the water, recover the shores, and honor the heritage.

AWS Membership Includes:

- Free admission to all Lecture Series Events! (past speakers; Bill Matuszeski and Howard Ernst)
- An invitation to the Tavern Toast Event! (A fun event held in October; food, drinks, and costumes!)
- Receive our quarterly newsletter and regular updates through mail and e-mail on related environmental protection and restoration efforts throughout the Anacostia River Watershed.

Contact Membership Coordinator Meg Mackin at 301-699-6204 or mmackin@anacostiaws.org to join today!

Remember AWS in your will. Call 301-699-6204 for additional information regarding bequests.