

Meet AWS's New President



Greetings. I'm Jim Foster, the new President of the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS). I am honored to be the leader of this amazing organization. I have been in the environmental field for almost

30 years working as a consultant to government and commercial clients. I have been the field engineer for a superfund cleanup, overseen the cleanup of a landfill in Antarctica, conducted stormwater evaluations for bases in Japan, and

compliance inspections and sampling for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). At night, I have worked for a nonprofit on development issues in my community. I am a sailor, kayaker, powerboater, and just flat-out passionate about clean water.

I am here to implement the strategic plan prepared by the staff and approved by the Board of Directors. The plan is great, and calls for increasing our work advocating tirelessly for the river, conducting stewardship to recover the watershed and water, and educating the public about the watershed. I will always try to find a *win-win* scenario in all our efforts and I will work to solve problems at the *root-cause*.

I will ask each of you to get involved with restoring the Anacostia. Our challenges are many and great, but our opportunities and strengths are greater. If we have the will, we can overcome the years of missteps and abuses that have resulted in our river being among the most polluted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. With your help, we will reduce rainfall runoff, use new regulations (sparingly), educate our people, plant native plants, remove trash and invasive species, and find new solutions to problems of development, culture, and economics.

We have made much progress as you will read in this and future newsletters. Please help us help the Anacostia River become fishable and swimmable once again. I look forward to serving you.

AWS Designs Low-Cost Trash Trap for Nash Run



Trash from Kenilworth Avenue and other nearby roadways finds its way into Nash Run near the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Northeast D.C.

Many of you know that clearing trash from the Anacostia River's shores remains one of AWS's most common and popular environmental stewardship activities. In fact, the river's trash problems are so severe that we engage thousands of volunteers at dozens of trash cleanup sites each year throughout the watershed. Trash removal seems like a never-ending exercise: clean up a stretch of shoreline, then wait for the next heavy rain to wash another boatload of litter off the streets and sidewalks, and you're back to square one. That discouraging process led AWS Founder Robert Boone to describe the Anacostia River as a "never-ending conveyor-belt of trash."

What's the good news then? Well, here it is: the conveyor belt's days are numbered. Here's how

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A Trash Plan & Fewer Plastic Bags for D.C.

If you think that bottles and cans are the most common type of trash found in the Anacostia River, think again. More often than not, it's a plastic bag from your local grocery store or pharmacy that's floating near the shore or dangling from that low-hanging tree branch. In a recent Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) report prepared for the District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DDOE), a scientific survey of trash flowing into the river and its tributaries confirmed this observation. In fact, that study—known as the *Anacostia Watershed Trash Reduction Plan*—found that plastic bags make up 50% of the approximately 17,000* tons of plastic products entering the river system each year.

District of Columbia Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells responded to the plan's findings on February 17 by introducing new legislation called the Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act of 2009. The Act will place a 5-cent fee, paid by consumers, on all disposable, recyclable plastic bags and paper carryout bags given out by grocery stores, food vendors, convenience stores, restaurants, and other shops in the District of Columbia. Four cents of this fee will go into a special fund—the Anacostia River Cleanup & Protection Fund—created to help remove trash from the Anacostia, while preventing future pollution. (The other cent collected for each bag will be returned to retailers.)

The legislation effectively shifts the financial burden of im-



proper plastic bag disposal away from tax payers and D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA) customers, and onto bag consumers themselves. In order to change behavior and address the needs of residents with fixed or low incomes, local government will work with service providers to distribute free, re-useable shopping bags throughout the District. As of February 28, a majority of the D.C. Council supported passage of this new legislation.

Two years in the making, the *Anacostia Watershed Trash Reduction Plan* will enable DDOE to establish the framework for a benchmark—known as a Total Maximum Daily Load or TMDL—measuring how much trash can enter the river and its tributaries without violating D.C. water quality standards. The plan also proposes several best-management practices, programs, and legislative strategies (including the above bag fee) designed to make significant and measurable progress toward the achievement of a trash free Anacostia River within the next 5 years.

Electronic copies of the *Anacostia Watershed Trash Reduction Plan* are available from AWS at www.anacostiaws.org and DDOE at ddoe.dc.gov (see the *Anacostia River Initiatives* link).

*Calculation based on quantities of trash entering the Anacostia each year as reported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 2006.

LEARNING HOW TO GIVE

If you've been thinking about how you can support AWS, why not consider making us part of your personal legacy. Leaving AWS a bequest in your will or living trust, or designating us as a beneficiary on your life insurance or retirement account is a simple and tax-deductible way to show how much you care about the Anacostia and the health of our local environment.

If a bequest sounds like the right option for you, please contact AWS's Development Director at (301) 699-6204 or info@anacostiaws.org for more information. If you've already made a bequest to AWS, please let us know. We want to thank you for your generosity. If you prefer to remain anonymous, your gift will be kept completely confidential.

Remember, conditional or challenged bequests may not be tax deductible, so please speak with a legal or financial advisor before finalizing your gift.

Photos: (top, center, this page) A view of the Anacostia River on a relatively trash-free day. This is the river AWS strives to achieve. (below, and next page) Students from D.C.'s Life Pieces to Masterpieces youth mentoring program participate in the 2007 Underground Railroad Expedition.



EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

In 2009, AWS will run the second installment of The Underground Railroad Expedition: A Path To Empowerment—a cross-curriculum education program first piloted in Fall 2007. The Underground Railroad Expedition engages young people on a 25-mile journey through natural areas along the Anacostia and its tributaries retracing a route that freedom seekers may have followed as they fled slavery conditions in the 19th-century American South.

Traveling the entire length of the Anacostia watershed in canoes, on bikes, and by foot, expedition participants take time in the Great Outdoors to reflect on where they have been and where they are going. More details to come later this year.



Trash Trap, continued...

change started to happen. In 2007, after years of advocacy efforts by AWS staff and other environmental groups, local government agencies in Maryland and D.C. petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to officially recognize the Anacostia and its tributaries as “impaired by trash”. That recognition paved the way for the implementation of new environmental policies and opened new doors to new funding for environmental restoration programs inside the watershed. This is remarkable because only one other waterway in the nation—the Los Angeles River in California—has received similar levels of Federal protection.

As part of the regime of federally-funded projects resulting from the new EPA designation, AWS has partnered with the District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DDOE) to develop a new device for keeping trash out of the river. Earlier this year, our Water Quality Specialist, Masaya Maeda, and our Horticulturist, Steve McKindley-Ward, constructed the first version of this experimental device—known as a trash trap—along Nash Run; a tributary stream adjacent to Northeast D.C.’s Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens.

Trash traps come in many



AWS Water Quality Specialist Masaya Maeda inspects placement of plastic mesh squares during construction of AWS’s new Nash Run trash trap (February 2009).

2008 AWS Accomplishments

Planted in the Watershed—

2,700 Native Wetland Plants

225 Native Trees and Shrubs

Removed from the Watershed—

52.7 Tons of Trash Pollution

222 Improperly Discarded Tires

Engaged in Watershed Activities—

8,893 Adults and Children

shapes and sizes, and several already exist along the Anacostia and its feeder streams and creeks. What makes the AWS device unique is its low-cost, low-maintenance design. Constructed from a tensile plastic mesh stretched over a sturdy steel frame, the Nash Run trap was installed in 40 hours, cost \$1,100 in materials, and provides total capture of floating litter and debris flowing into Nash Run from Kenilworth Avenue and other major thoroughfares. The structure itself was assembled with an eye for quick and easy removal, and to facilitate unrestricted movement of aquatic plants and animals.

AWS will take groups of volunteers out to clean the trap and record the quantity and type of litter it collects on a regular basis. Data collected at the trap will be analyzed to determine whether or not the AWS design can provide an effective, cost-effective, and replicable model for trash removal on other small streams inside and outside of the Anacostia Watershed. Stay tuned as we monitor results over the next two years!

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AWS SPRING 2009 CALENDAR

AWS SPECIAL EVENTS[†]

April 18

2009 Anacostia River Cleanup & Earth Day Celebration (sponsored by AWS, Seafarers Yacht Club, and others)

Visit www.anacostiaaws.org for more information.

May 9

Fundraising with Flowers at Behnke's Garden Centers in Beltsville & Potomac, MD

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS[†]

May 2

Edmonston Town Hall
Edmonston, MD

May 16

Riverdale Park Town Hall
Riverdale, MD

TRASH CLEANUP VOLUNTEER EVENTS[†]

March 21

Washington Waterfront in D.C.
Time: 9AM - 12PM

March 28

Call 301-699-6204 for location
Time: 9AM - 12PM

April 4

Annual Potomac River Cleanup (sponsored by the Alice Fergusson Foundation)
Time: 9AM start; Location: TBD

April 18

Annual AWS Earth Day Cleanup (see Special Events section for info.)

[†]Participation may require pre-registration. Please visit AWS at www.anacostiaaws.org or call 301-699-6204 for information.

INVASIVE PLANT VOLUNTEER EVENTS[†]

March 7, April 4, May 2
Greenbelt Park, Greenbelt, MD
Time: 11AM - 3PM

March 21, April 18, May 16
Magruder Park, Hyattsville, MD
Time: 9AM - 1PM

March 28, April 25, May 30
Little Paint Branch Park, Beltsville, MD
Time: 10AM - 2PM



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RESTORATION TODAY

**Anacostia
Watershed
Society**

www.anacostiaaws.org