

The Anacostia River Watershed: Its Dangerous Toxic Pollutant Sources

Why You Should Be Concerned



- **The Anacostia River is one of the three most polluted Chesapeake Bay tributaries.**
- Fish from the Anacostia carry toxic pollutants and have tumors. A fishing advisory for PCBs and Chlordane has been in effect for the Anacostia River since 1994.
- The three top Anacostia River toxic contaminants are PCBs, Chlordane, and PAHs.

Toxic contaminants affect every citizen who fishes or considers other activities on the Anacostia River and its tributaries.

- **PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls)** – banned since 1979, were commonly used as coolants and lubricants. PCBs are thought to cause cancer and are linked to immune, reproductive and nervous system diseases. PCBs are Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) which last a long time in the environment and build up in animal and human tissues.
 - **Chlordane** - banned since 1988, is a pesticide once widely used for termite control. Chlordane is also a POP and accumulates in animal and human tissue causing liver and nervous system damage. Humans and wildlife are exposed to chlordane through water and food.
 - **PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons)** – byproducts of oil and gas combustion are present at high levels throughout the Anacostia. Some PAHs can cause cancer, mutations, and birth defects.
- 13 of 16 Anacostia subwatersheds actively biomonitored for toxics found **five streams had clams with dangerous levels of PAHs, PCBs, or Chlordane.**
 - The Army Corps of Engineers is addressing trash and stormwater runoff in the Anacostia. The EPA Toxic Chemical Management Strategy Plan plans capping contaminated sediment deposits in the River below Bladensburg but is not dealing with the industrial and legacy sources of these toxics in the Anacostia subwatersheds.
 - The toxics that are not being addressed are disproportionately affecting Anacostia River neighborhoods in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

What You Can Do

- Contact your elected County and Maryland state officials and let them know that these issues are important to you. **Ask your officials to tell EPA to eliminate the toxic contaminant sources in our Anacostia watershed streams.**
- **Contact the MWCOG Anacostia Watershed Restoration Plan (202-962-3322) and ask that removal of Anacostia watershed toxic sources is a major objective.**
- Learn more about toxics in the Anacostia Watershed tributaries by visiting: <http://www.his.com/~hphelps> or contacting Dr. Harriette Phelps at hphelps@hers.com.
- Contact your county council members to clean up toxics in your stream: Indian Creek- high PAHs (Tom Dernoga 301-952-3887); Sligo Creek- high Chlordane (Will Campos, 301-952-4436 or Valerie Ervin 240-777-7960); Still Creek- high Chlordane (Ingrid Turner 301-952-3094); Northeast Branch- very high chlordane (Andrea Harrison 301-952-3864); Lower Beaverdam Creek- high PCBs and PAHs (Marilynn Bland, 301-952-3820). Or call the Maryland Dept of the Environment (410-537-3000).