

A WATERWAY TO 2025

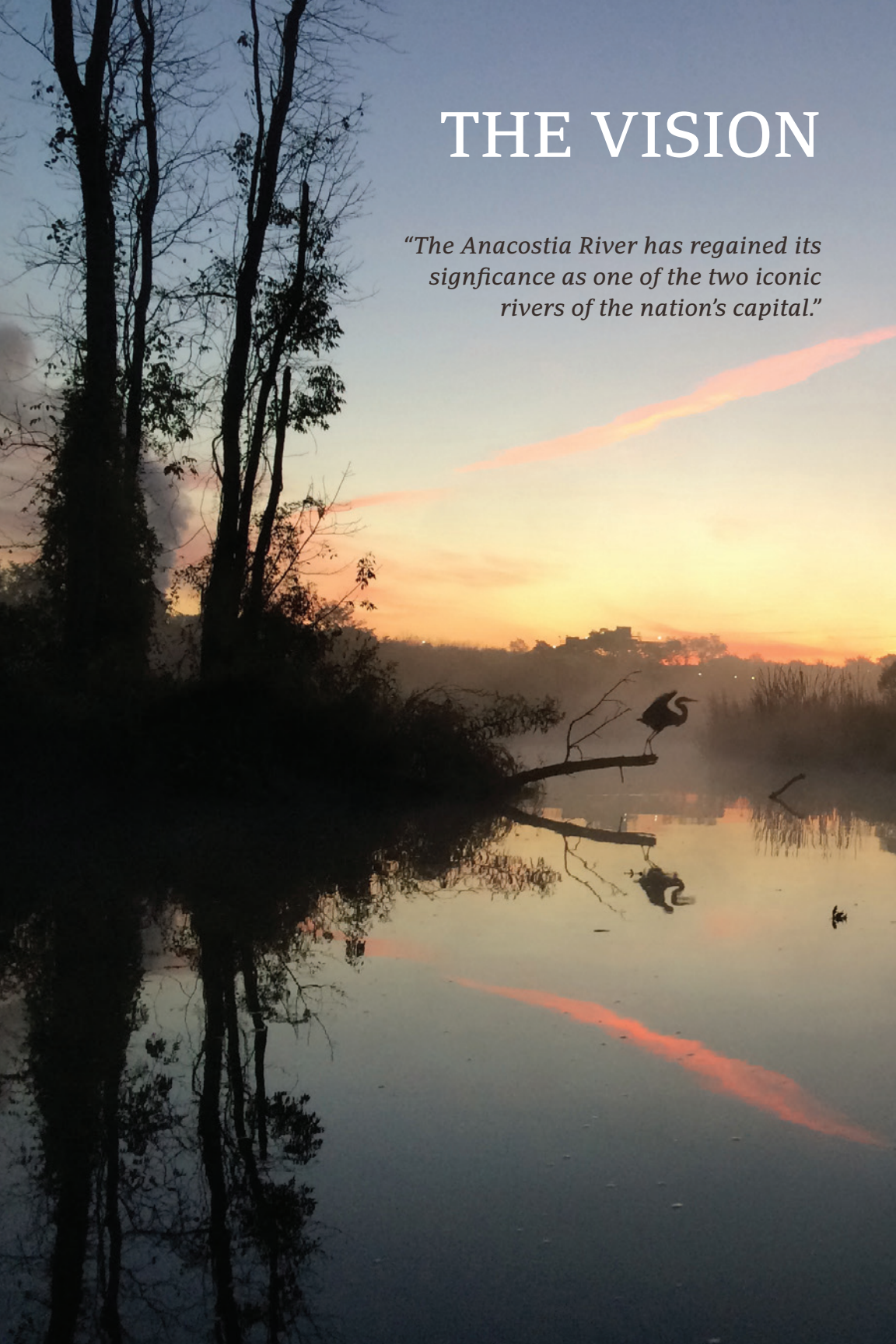
*A Vision
for the Anacostia River*



ANACOSTIA
WATERSHED
SOCIETY

THE VISION

*"The Anacostia River has regained its
significance as one of the two iconic
rivers of the nation's capital."*





In 2025, as winter turns to spring, a restored and vibrant Anacostia River will be fully revealed: swimmable, fishable, and an integral part of the quality of life in the greater Washington DC region.

A network of public lands stretch from pocket parks at the headwaters, along water and land trails throughout the watershed, culminating in expansive National Park sites, the 11th Street Bridge Park, and a bustling riverfront on both banks of the Anacostia River. Historic boathouses, marinas, and docks provide easy access for boaters and paddlers.

On a daily basis, hikers, bikers, and pedestrians enjoy the network of trails crisscrossing the watershed. The annual bass fishing tournament draws anglers from up and down the East Coast. The Anacostia Triathlon has become a signature event, as thousands bike, swim, and run in and around the Anacostia River. Residents and tourists alike cool off in the crystal clear waters of the Anacostia River as families picnic and play along its shores.

Eagles and osprey circle overhead. Shad have returned to their ancestral spawning grounds, and beavers navigate the clean and deep channels of the river. Native plants, grasses, and trees line the river and its tributaries, helping to maintain clean water and provide healthy habitat for wildlife.

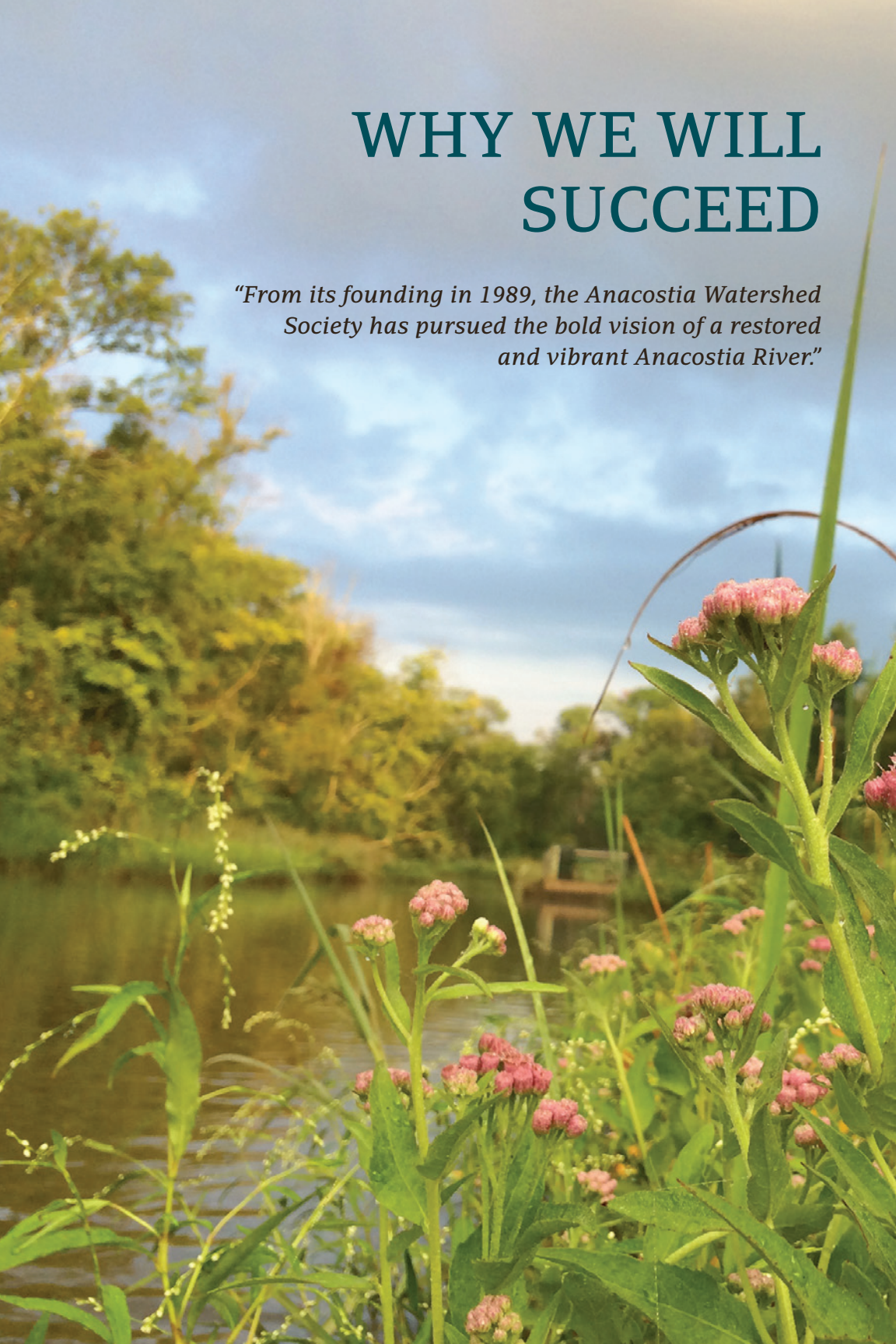
Summer thunderstorms provide relief instead of destruction thanks to the installation of thousands of acres of green infrastructure across the District of Columbia and Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland. The completed DC Clean Rivers project and repair of hundreds of miles of sewer pipes keeps stormwater runoff, trash, and sewage from polluting the river. In one of the most high-profile cleanups ever, long buried toxics in the riverbed have been removed or treated so that they no longer threaten nature or people.

The Anacostia River has regained its significance as one of the two iconic rivers of the nation's capital. Instead of channeling pollutants into the Chesapeake, the Anacostia River is now a national conservation success story, contributing to the Bay's restoration.

The Anacostia River is the centerpiece of one of the largest urban National Parks, enlivening all of the communities in the watershed, and has reclaimed its legacy as an engine of economic development in a sustainable way.

WHY WE WILL SUCCEED

*"From its founding in 1989, the Anacostia Watershed
Society has pursued the bold vision of a restored
and vibrant Anacostia River."*





Forty years ago, a swimmable and fishable Anacostia River would have been unimaginable. By 1972, when the Clean Water Act was signed, the Anacostia River had been all but destroyed. Industrial facilities and municipal dumps lined the banks. The river itself had become a wasteland, littered with tires, refrigerators, sewage, and old cars. Beneath the surface, the riverbed had been poisoned with toxics from industrial byproducts, PCBs, and pesticides. Decades of misguided flood control strategies and poorly planned development had destroyed 96% of the tidal wetlands. From its founding in 1989, the Anacostia Watershed Society has pursued the bold vision of a restored and vibrant Anacostia River. To achieve that vision, the Anacostia Watershed Society has been a leader in developing and implementing the strategy and forcing accountability by setting a deadline (2025) and holding stakeholders accountable to their agreements.

WHY WE WILL SUCCEED

Even today, some remain skeptical about the Anacostia River and about the amount of work still to be done to make the 2025 goal. The Anacostia Watershed Society knows that the Anacostia River will be restored – for four primary reasons:

It's the Law

Decades of successful advocacy and strategic litigation by the Anacostia Watershed Society and other partners have led to a series of laws, regulations, and binding legal settlements that ensure local government entities and legacy polluters will fulfill their responsibilities to address damage done to the river and to prevent future damage. Most major issues facing the river and the parties responsible for them have been identified and held liable to ensure that environmental justice for the river is served.

It's Funded

Too often, good policy falters because there is not enough money to support its implementation. Even as government budgets tighten, the funding is in place for many of the massive infrastructure projects needed to restore the Anacostia River. The settlement agreement with DC Water secures the investment of \$2 billion to prevent sewage overflows. Construction is already moving forward and on track to be completed by 2022 – three years ahead of schedule. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations require the District of Columbia, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County to fund extensive stormwater management efforts, and those efforts are already well underway.

WHY WE WILL SUCCEED



The Community Demands It

Where 25 years ago the community looked at the Anacostia River and saw a mess, today people increasingly see opportunity. Thanks to the Anacostia Watershed Society and many others, the communities of the watershed have become passionate advocates participating in cleanups; lobbying for plastic bag bans; pushing for more access to the river through docks, bike trails, and parks; and electing equally passionate environmental leaders. Our vision for the Anacostia River is now shared among a broad and diverse range of stakeholders.

Everyone is at the Table

Restoring a river like the Anacostia requires the cooperation and full participation of numerous agencies at the federal, state, and local level, as well as private land owners, corporate partners, and a full range of conservation groups and community stakeholders. Remarkably, in the case of the Anacostia, everyone is at the table, responsibilities are clear, and there is a framework for action.

Like the coxswain in the crew shells leaving the dock at Bladensburg Waterfront Park, or the manager in the dugout at Nationals Park, the Anacostia Watershed Society works to bring everyone's talents together to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

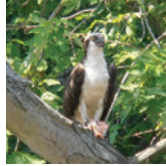
Sustaining the momentum we have built over the past 25 years to ensure a swimmable, fishable river by 2025 will require targeted strategic investments in advocacy, outreach, and science. These investments will leverage, focus, and hold accountable massive government, corporate, and community efforts. These investments will ensure we deliver on the promise of a restored Anacostia, a reborn river running vibrantly through our nation's capital.

REACHING THE GOAL:

Swimmable and Fishable by 2025

"The Anacostia Watershed Society is creating the next generation of Anacostia River advocates who will care for a river they helped restore."





The Anacostia Watershed Society's strategy for this critical phase of restoration and rebirth integrates three key objectives into a highly efficient program designed to sustain momentum, broaden the engagement of stakeholders, and create the next generation of stewards for the long-term protection of the river.

Stop Pollution

The highest priority is to stop current pollution and to comprehensively address legacy pollution issues. After every big storm, our trash traps point us to the problems: polystyrene food containers and cups, plastic bottles, and bags. But harder to see and just as damaging to the river are the chemicals, toxic byproducts, and sediment that washes into the river from parking lots, roofs, and roadways.

At the same time we are working to reduce new pollution, the Anacostia Watershed Society is partnering with government agencies and industrial partners to address the legacy toxics that are buried in the riverbed and along its banks

Restore Natural Systems

As the harm from pollution lessens, the Anacostia Watershed Society is working to restore the natural processes that keep a river healthy: marshes and wetlands, streambeds, and native plants and grasses.

In developed areas, the Anacostia Watershed Society works with schools, churches, and property owners to retrofit and enhance existing properties with green roofs, rain gardens, and permeable pavement that absorb and filter stormwater. As new development occurs, the Anacostia Watershed Society works to ensure that it is "river friendly" so that economic development benefits both the river and communities.

We work with local, state, and federal partners throughout the watershed to restore wetlands and plant native grasses and trees, creating habitat that supports birds and animals. Already, areas of restored marshland are attracting fish, which in turn are bringing more osprey and bald eagles back to the river.



REACHING THE GOAL:

Swimmable and Fishable by 2025

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one that will be our legacy for generations to come."*

Rebuild our Relationship to the River

The Anacostia Watershed Society builds and enhances relationships between the people and their river. We identify the restoration strategies and organize the work of replanting marshland and removing trash, but the hands-on work is largely done by volunteers and students, creating passionate stewards of the Anacostia River.

Engaging thousands of students each year in hands-on environmental learning, such as our Rice Rangers program in which students grow wetland plants from seeds in their classrooms and then transplant them into the marshes of the Anacostia, the Anacostia Watershed Society is creating the next generation of Anacostia River advocates who will care for a river that they helped restore.

We are creating the infrastructure for the watershed to be a first class recreational asset by installing new docks, advocating for the completion of multi-modal trails, and creating maps and wayfinding signage that link communities to the river. We are getting people out on the river to experience its beauty by hosting free Paddle Nights and leading boat and canoe tours for community members, corporate groups, and elected officials.

We are working with partners to develop the new events and programs that will animate the parkland along the Anacostia River. The 11th Street Bridge Park, the Anacostia River Festival, rowing regattas, fishing tournaments, and bike rallies will bring new people to the river and demonstrate its beauty and its potential as a vibrant resource for the region and its residents.

CONCLUSION

We stand on the brink of a huge accomplishment – one that will be our legacy for generations to come. The reversal of 200 years of environmental destruction and the restoration of the Anacostia River can be one of the nation's greatest success stories. The Anacostia Watershed Society is committed to seeing that the promise of the Anacostia River is fully realized, for the benefit of the people living in its watershed, visitors to our nation's capital, and for future generations to come. While the path forward is not easy, our goal is clearly in sight. To reach this goal by 2025, we need everyone to pull together and demand a fishable and swimmable river. We need you.

Photos by Krista Schlyer/kristaschlyer.com & the Anacostia Watershed Society



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

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