



Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act

Councilmember Tommy Wells

October 25, 2012 - Urban Waters National Training Workshop

Building Partnerships for Clean Water and Strong Communities

Decision:

- Create a marquee legislative environmental initiative.
- The Anacostia River is part of Ward 6



Define the Problem:

- The Anacostia River is choked with trash.
- Plastic bags make up a substantial portion of the trash.



Research: Efforts to reduce plastic bag trash in every other US jurisdiction had failed.

- How were they defeated?
- How were coalitions organized or prevented?
- How have environmental efforts in DC been defeated before?
- Are there successful models and promising strategies?

Define Success:

- Majority vote by Council.
- Signed into law by the Mayor.
- Impact for a healthy river.



Develop a Winning Strategy:

- Create the Anacostia River Cleanup Initiative.
- Create outreach & advocacy to targeted elected officials and constituencies.



Write the Bill:

- Using research into other's failures, decision points were made in crafting a winning proposal.



Meet With Likely Opponents:

- Grocery stores, convenience stores, Chamber of Commerce, restaurants, etc.



Win The Fight Before It Begins

- Targeted outreach and patience.
- Held one-on-one meetings and presentations with each Councilmember to co-introduce.
- Introduced legislation with an aggressive social & traditional media strategy.

Coalition Building & “Playing Offense”

- Educate and enroll interest groups likely to be targeted by opponents:
 - Senior Citizens
 - Clergy
 - Public Housing
 - Soup Kitchens & Food Banks

Putting Advocates to Work:

- Active social media & online petition.
- Postcard petition gathering in targeted neighborhoods.
- Lobbying Council to pre-empt efforts to defeat or weaken the bill.
- Organize high & coordinated turnout for public hearing on the proposal.



Winning:

- Legislation was passed unanimously.
- Plastic bag use decreased more than 65 percent; no longer top trash component in the Anacostia River.
- Nearly \$2 million collected per year for river clean-up and restoration efforts.

**How have the dollars generated
by the fee been spent?**