Although a challenged urban river, the Anacostia is home to wildlife like the Great White Egret and Great Blue Heron pictured here.

STATE OF THE *Anacostia River*

2010

A collaboration between:

Anacostia RIVERKEEPER®

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

Welcome to our first State of the River Report for the Anacostia River!

This annual report card is your guide to how well our communities, environmental groups and governments are meeting the goal of a fishable and swimmable Anacostia River as soon as possible, in keeping with the Clean Water Act. Our two organizations came together to produce this report, and we are proud to share it with you. It provides a benchmark of the core river health parameters based on scientific data and policy efforts. For a much more detailed picture of the Anacostia River, check out the report card's online component at www.anacostiariverkeeper.org.

The Anacostia River and the land forming its watershed have long been plagued by pollution, adversely affecting how people use and enjoy it. But we can clean it up if we work together! Will you join us?

Dottie Yunger
Riverkeeper and Executive Director
Anacostia Riverkeeper

Jim Foster
President
Anacostia Watershed Society

Anacostia Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the Anacostia River for all who live, work, and play in its watershed, and to advocate for a clean, healthy river for all its communities.

The Anacostia Watershed Society's mission is to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage.

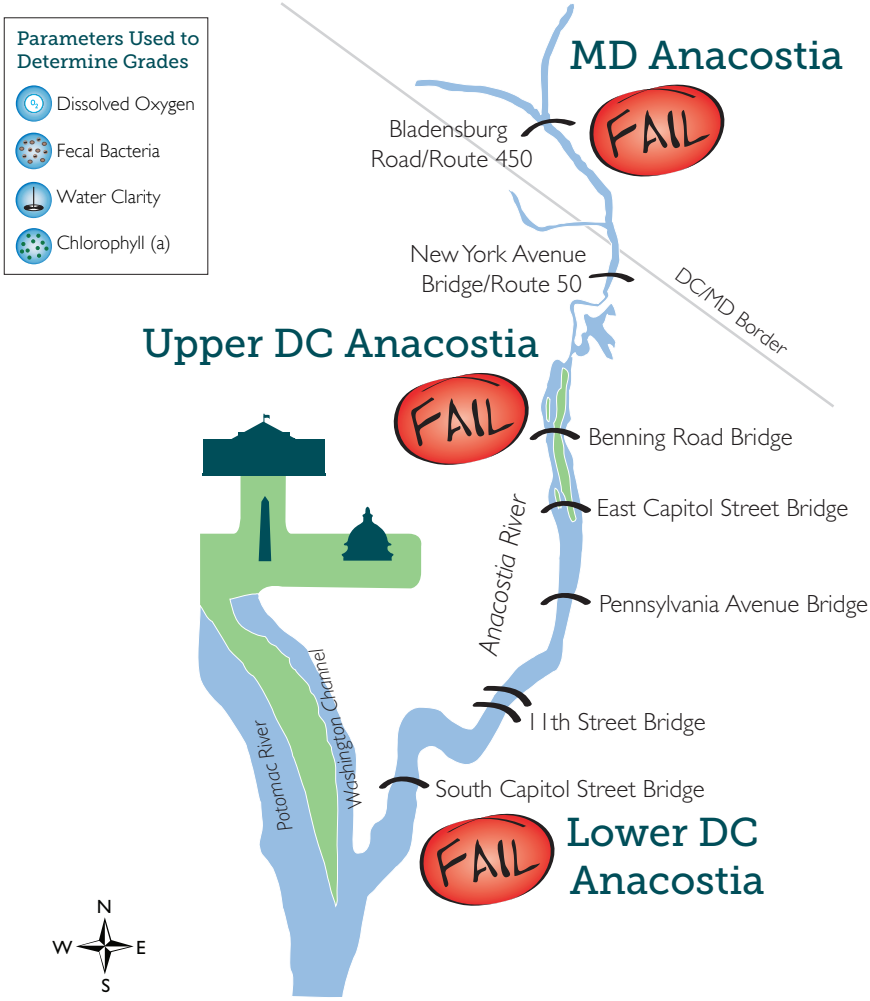
DISCLAIMERS:

- Data set: All available, professionally collected data was used. The data sets include those collected by DC government, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Anacostia Watershed Society.
- The data was compared with DC Water Quality Standards (WQSs).
- For Water Quality Standard Attainment (WQSA) rate calculation, 2009 data set was used because it was the most recent available data.
- For WQSA rate calculation, the following formula was generally used: (# of test results that meet WSQ / Total # of test results) x 100.
- For trend analysis, data sets from 1984 to 2009 or 2010 were used depending on a parameter and a section of the river.
- The WQSs have to be met at all times. "Pass" status was given when a WQSA rate was 100%. Any rate lower than 100% was given "Fail" status.

The 2010 State of the Anacostia River

There are three main impediments to a fishable and swimmable Anacostia – **fecal bacteria**, **toxics**, and **stormwater runoff**, including the trash, nutrients and sediment it carries into the river. These issues must be addressed for us to have a healthy river.

We analyzed water quality data of the tidal Anacostia River to assess the river in three sections: the Maryland portion of the Anacostia (**MD Anacostia**), the upper portion of the Anacostia in DC (**Upper DC Anacostia**) and the lower portion of the Anacostia in DC (**Lower DC Anacostia**). On average, each section met DC Water Quality Standards only 65% of the time. The parameters used for assessment were **Dissolved Oxygen**, **Fecal Bacteria**, **Water Clarity** and **Chlorophyll (a)**.



Core Parameters

Overall, the water quality of the Anacostia River is steadily improving thanks to tireless efforts by community organizations, governments and volunteers.

Dissolved Oxygen

- Measure of dissolved oxygen in the water
- Critical to the survival of aquatic life

Fecal Bacteria

- In DC, Combined Sewer Overflows dump raw sewage directly into the Anacostia River any time rain exceeds the drains' capacity.
- MD has two problems: leaking sewer pipes and animal waste.

Water Clarity (Secchi Disk Depth)

- Measure of how much light penetrates the water column
- Affects the health of aquatic grasses

Chlorophyll (a)

- Measure of microalgae biomass
- Can impact water clarity and dissolved oxygen levels

Water Quality Report Card

	Parameter	O_2				Average of WQSA Rate	Meet WQS?
MD Anacostia	WQSA Rate	98	56	0	100	64	FAIL
	Trend	Improving	Improving	Improving	Improving		
	Estimated Years to Meet WQS	2*	55	361	4*		
Upper DC Anacostia	WQSA Rate	94	74	0	94	66	FAIL
	Trend	Improving	Improving	Improving	Improving		
	Estimated Years to Meet WQS	33	16	4,063	Insufficient Data		
Lower DC Anacostia	WQSA Rate	83	79	0	94	64	FAIL
	Trend	Improving	Improving	Degrading	Improving		
	Estimated Years to Meet WQS	37	12	Will Never Meet WQS	23		

KEY: **WQS** - Water Quality Standards; **WQSA** - Water Quality Standards Attainment

* As the WQSA rate comes closer to 100% the rate of improvement may plateau. As a result, it may take more time to meet the Water Quality Standard by 100%.

Political Report Card

Good public policy is key to saving the Anacostia River. We can either make smart choices with our precious public resources, or continue unsustainable practices.

	Stormwater	Toxics	Trash	Overall Plan
DC	👎	👎	👍	👍
MC	👍	?	?	👍
PGC	👎	?	?	👎
MD	👎	👎	?	👎
FED	👍	👎	?	?

DC

No stormwater regulations | Responsible for several toxic sites and overall lack of progress | Passage of bag bill, wait and see on Trash Diet | Have overall plan for fishable and swimmable river by 2032

MC

Have stormwater regulations | Progress on toxics unknown | Progress on trash unknown | Making progress for a fishable and swimmable Anacostia River

PGC

Stormwater regulations already a year late | Progress on toxics unknown | Progress on trash unknown | No overall plan for a fishable and swimmable Anacostia River

MD

2010 weakened state model stormwater ordinance, lapsed stormwater permits | Toxic sources not well documented | Wait and see on bag bill and Trash Diet | No funding for Anacostia Restoration Plan

FED

Strong stormwater retention standards, no funding for Anacostia Restoration Plan | Lack of leadership on cleanup of toxic sites | Wait and see on Trash Diet | Wait and see on Bay Pollution Diet

KEY: DC - Washington, DC; MC - Montgomery County, MD; PGC - Prince George's County, MD; MD - State of Maryland; FED - Federal Government

Our Issues

Problem: Stormwater

Stormwater washes toxics, trash and bacteria directly into the river.

Above: Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River in normal flow.

Right: Northeast Branch after a heavy rain, demonstrating excessive flows of polluted stormwater runoff.

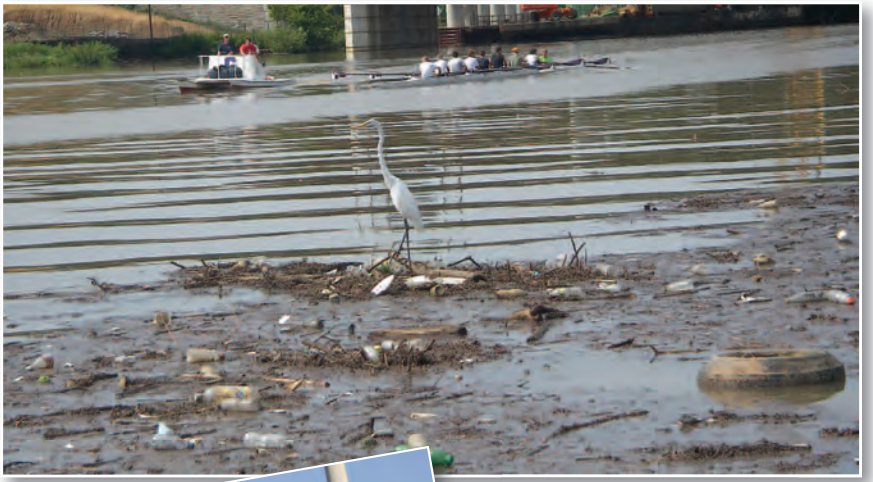
Solution: Environmental Site Design (ESD)

The goal of ESD is to maintain a site's original drainage patterns as much as possible by caputuring and infiltrating rainwater.

Raingardens are an example of ESD that capture polluted runoff onsite, preventing contaminants from reaching the river and restoring the water cycle by infiltrating the rain into the ground.

Our Issues

Problems: Toxics, Trash and Bacteria



Above: Visible and invisible pollution affects humans and wildlife along the Anacostia River.

Left: One of the several legacy toxic sites identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the Anacostia Watershed.

Solutions: Education, Restoration and Legal Action

A healthy river is vital to healthy communities. Education, restoration projects and legal action are tools we use to achieve our ultimate goal of a fishable and swimmable Anacostia River.

What You Can Do

Our ultimate goal is a swimmable and fishable Anacostia, but first we need to get a step closer by meeting water quality standards today. In order to get there, we need to reduce stormwater, trash and toxics. The good news is you can help!

A few ways to help protect and restore the Anacostia River:

- Use water wisely.
- Prevent stormwater runoff with rain barrels, cisterns and rain gardens.
- Go native – native plants are made for our climate so they need less watering and fertilizer.
- Use fertilizer wisely and sparingly.
- Don't flush hazardous waste, chemicals, or harsh cleansers down the toilet or the drain.
- Bring your own bags to the store! Plastic bags litter the River.
- Pick up trash you see on the ground before it ends up in the River.
- Support the Anacostia Riverkeeper and the Anacostia Watershed Society by donating and volunteering!

Additional information on the Anacostia River can be found by visiting **www.anacostiariverkeeper.org** or **www.anacostiaws.org**.

Anacostia Riverkeeper and the Anacostia Watershed Society would like to thank the following organizations for helping to fund this report card:

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