Senior Elected Officials, Scientists and Activists Dive Into Anacostia River
to Highlight Government Failure to Meet Clean Water Act Goal

Call for Tangible Actions to Cut Storm Water Pollution from Development

Bladensburg, MD, June 30, 2011 – A group of leading scientists, community leaders and current and former elected officials plunged into the Anacostia River today to underscore the failure by state and local governments to implement measures needed to clean up the River and the Chesapeake Bay.

The participants risked infection and illness -- in waters public health officials have warned are too polluted for
swimming -- to implore counties, states and the federal government to more effectively reduce polluted storm water runoff from developed areas and new developments.

Their plunge highlighted a long-delayed clean-up effort, coming nearly 30 years after the federal Clean Water Act target date for making the Anacostia River, and numerous other rivers flowing into the Chesapeake Bay, "fishable and swimmable." The Clean Water Act, enacted in 1972, promised that all American waterways would be clean for swimming and recreation by July 1, 1983.

At the event, the swimmers called for readily-achievable actions by Prince Georges County, the District of Columbia, states and the EPA to put the River and all bay rivers on a path to reach the Clean Water Act's long-postponed fishable and swimmable goal.

"The politics of postponement must end," said former Maryland State Senator Gerald Winegrad. "It is a national disgrace that 28 years after the Clean Water Act deadline for making most waters swimmable and fishable, the Anacostia River -- flowing right through our nation's Capital -- is neither. It is not even close," Winegrad said.

Specific actions proposed include:

- Expand and tighten Clean Water Act permits for cleaning-up and reducing polluting storm water runoff from developed areas -- especially in PG County and DC where developers and government agencies are resisting tighter controls.

- Strengthen state and local development control measures, including a requirement for no net increases in storm water discharge rates, volume, and pollutants for all new developments for a 5-year storm event.

- Enact state water quality retrofit requirements for storm water runoff pollution from existing development in counties. This would be best achieved through mandating storm water utilities in each local government and providing adequate funding to assure systematic urban retrofits of large areas of developed lands.

"Clearly, measures undertaken to restore the Anacostia to a swimmable level have failed miserably," said State Senator Paul Pinksy from Prince Georges County, who chairs the Senate Environment Subcommittee and participated in the swim. "We need to take much more aggressive actions to stem storm water runoff that is choking the Anacostia and other rivers flowing into the Bay," he said. "Our state, all Bay states, and the local governments need to step up to the plate and end the pollution ravaging our river systems."

The idea that taking a swim in the Anacostia would represent a risky and bold action that flies in the face of public health warnings made it clear to Anacostia Watershed Society President Jim Foster that elected leaders have spent nearly three decades knowingly turning a blind eye to the landmark Clean Water Act. "A clean Anacostia River depends on our leaders abiding by federal law," Foster said. "We are 28 years behind schedule and that's just not acceptable."

"The deadline for cleaning up the Anacostia came and went 28 years ago," added Dottie Yunger, Anacostia Riverkeeper. "And it's the communities along the river who have paid the price for that missed deadline - with their health."

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Anacostia Riverkeeper: The mission of [Anacostia Riverkeeper](#) is to protect and restore the Anacostia River for all who live, work, and play in its watershed, and to advocate for a clean river for all its communities. Like a "neighborhood watch" for the watershed, we patrol our streams and rivers and hold polluters, developers, and government officials accountable to their environmental responsibilities. With our fellow Waterkeepers in the Chesapeake Bay Region, we protect families by stopping pollution.

Anacostia Watershed Society: The mission of the [Anacostia Watershed Society](#) is to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage. The vision is to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable, in keeping with the Clean Water Act, for the health and enjoyment of everyone in the community. Community involvement is critical to achieving this vision and AWS seeks win-win solutions through strong partnerships and coalitions, with all parts of the community, government, and other stakeholders. Core to our work is reaching out to, educating, and engaging the next generation of decision-makers, our youth.

Senior Scientists & Policymakers for the Bay: _After decades of effort, the voluntary, collaborative approach to restoring the health and vitality of the Chesapeake Bay— the largest estuary in the United States—has not worked and, in fact, is failing. A diverse group of 58 senior scientists and policymakers have joined forces to urge all the Bay states to transition from the voluntary collaborative approach in place for more than two decades, to a more comprehensive regulatory program that would establish mandatory, enforceable measures for meeting the nutrient, sediment, and toxic chemical reductions needed to remove the Bay and its tributaries from the Clean Water Act impaired waters list. This group unanimously recommends that all states draining into the Chesapeake Bay adopt the_ 25 action items _in their Watershed Implementation Plans and act on them_ to improve the Bay's water quality and to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act._