



# 2006 Environmental Agenda *for the* District of Columbia

140 recommendations to protect and defend the environment in  
the District of Columbia

## ***Sponsors***

American Rivers

Anacostia Coordinating  
Council

Anacostia Watershed Society

Audubon Naturalist Society

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Wholeness for Humanity

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Written by Nancy Stoner, Andrew Fellows, Maj Fiil, Paul Schwartz, Heather Whitlow, Steve Coleman, Fred Millar, Cheryl Cort, Eric Gilliland, Diana Dascalu, Ed Lazere, Meghan Beach, Jeffrey Wilkes, Brent Blackwelder, Chris Weiss, Winston Brathwaite, Merrilee Harrigan, Gilda Allen, Heather Langford, Claire Barnett, Ellen Larson Vaughan, and Michele Roberts.

Edited by Nadia Steinzor, Crosspatch Conservation Consulting, [nsteinzor@earthlink.net](mailto:nsteinzor@earthlink.net)

Cover Photo Credit: “Kingman Hideaway” by Jim Dougherty

Cover Design by Brendan Hoffman, [photo@brendanhoffman.com](mailto:photo@brendanhoffman.com)

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# 2006 ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*The following organizations support the principles of the DC Environmental Agenda 2006 report to chart a course for better environmental protection. They do not necessarily endorse or have expertise on every recommendation in this report:*

American Rivers  
Anacostia Coordinating Council  
Anacostia Watershed Society  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Beyond Pesticides  
Bluewater Network  
Casey Trees Endowment Fund  
Center for Food Safety  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Clean Water Action  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Container Recycling Institute  
DC Environmental Education Consortium  
DC Fiscal Policy Institute  
DC Smart Schools  
DC Statehood Green Party  
Food & Water Watch  
Friends of the Earth  
Global Green  
Green Spaces for DC  
Howard Environmental Law Society  
Institute for Local Self Reliance  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
No DC Taxes for Baseball  
Potomac Riverkeeper  
Safer Neighborhoods Campaign  
Sierra Club  
Washington Area Bicyclist Association  
Washington Parks and People  
Washington Regional Network  
Watts Branch Alliance  
Wholeness for Humanity

*For more information please contact:*

Chris Weiss  
Director  
DC Environmental Network  
Friends of the Earth  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW #600  
Washington D.C. 20036  
Phone: (202) 222-0746  
Fax: (202) 783-0444  
Email: [cweiss@foe.org](mailto:cweiss@foe.org)

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# AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 2006

## I. Introduction

In 1999, 12 civic and environmental organizations created the first ever *Environmental Agenda* for the District of Columbia. This agenda was a collaborative effort of citizen activists determined to chart a course for environmental protection. It recognized that a new Mayor and City Council would have the opportunity to reverse some of the negative trends of years past and promote a more livable city for all residents. The Agenda provided critical problems and outlined recommendations for solutions, drawing upon the collective wisdom of many District environmental leaders, as well as successful initiatives in other parts of the country.

The first *Environmental Agenda* was endorsed by many District-based environmental organizations, including the Anacostia Watershed Society, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Committee of 100, Friends of the Earth, Green Party of DC, Institute for Local Self Reliance, Scenic America, DC Sierra Club, Sustainable Community Initiatives, Washington Area Bicyclist Association, and the Washington Regional Network.

The scope of the recommendations reflected issues that impact the lives and health of District residents in every ward. Recommendations dealt with safe drinking water, clean rivers, protection of parks and trees, improved air quality, and economic revitalization. Since then, the environmental community has been able to proudly point to many agenda accomplishments, including:

- Protection of Oxen Cove in Ward 8 from a new prison development.
- Improvements to District bicycle paths.
- An increased number of clean running, compressed natural gas buses.
- Improvement in compliance with federal stormwater permit requirements.
- Establishment of a lead city agency for stormwater management.
- Formation of the Environmental Planning Commission and Mayoral Environmental Council.
- Creation of a new Department of the Environment.

The 1999 agenda created a partnership with a City Council and Mayor who were more environmentally sensitive than their predecessors and helped build momentum for many successful legislative victories. Enactment of laws to protect the District's disappearing tree canopy; increase the use of clean energy (wind and solar power); and stop the transport of toxic chemicals such as chlorine gas from traveling within a stone's throw of central neighborhoods pushed the District a bit closer to being an example to other U.S. cities.

Today, the Summit Fund of Washington and more than 30 environmental, health, faith, citizen, and civic organizations have answered the call to action by creating this new environmental agenda for the District. The current agenda both builds on the successes of the past six years and sets a new standard for environmental excellence throughout the District. Taken together, the proposals detailed in the following pages will help the city chart a course toward excellence in the provision of services and the protection of public health.

As we believed in 1999, restoration of environmental quality in the District is a pro-business, pro-economic growth platform that an increasing number of public officials are starting to embrace and act on. With the 2006 agenda in hand, a newly elected Mayor and City Council will have a clear blueprint that will help lead the way toward sustainable economic re-development and an improved stewardship ethic for the natural environment. As we said in 1999, we expect no less from our leaders who will take us forward in the next decade, and beyond.

*Note that detailed contact information for the organizations mentioned in each of the following sections is provided at the end of this report.*

## II. Clean Rivers: Anacostia River Restoration

*Prepared by Nancy Stoner, Natural Resources Defense Council*

The Anacostia River flows 36 miles from Maryland through the heart of the nation's capital before spilling into the Potomac River. The area was once a Native American village trading center and home to redwing black birds, turtles, beavers, and a variety of lush plant life. The nation's founders hailed the Anacostia as a commercial passageway vital to the development of the capital city.

Today, plans to build a baseball park for the Washington Nationals, new restaurants, businesses, and housing could well bring many thousands of residents and visitors to the banks of the Anacostia. Yet, this important river is among the most polluted in the nation. When it rains, toxic substances and trash from streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and rooftops wash directly into the Anacostia. During heavy storms, untreated sewage even overflows from Washington, DC's sewage system, overwhelming the river with bacteria and other pollutants.

Despite all these problems, the image of the Anacostia as a beautiful river still looms large. Although the Anacostia has over time become Washington's "forgotten river," beneath the trash and muck lies a potential urban oasis, a valuable natural resource that could provide outdoor recreation, increase property values, and attract new business and investment. **The success of the new development plans for the Anacostia area rests on the river being healthy and vibrant. A clean Anacostia could also open the way for residents and tourists to use and appreciate neglected attractions** such as the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, the Frederick Douglass House, and the National Arboretum. Furthermore, the low-income communities located closest to the Anacostia deserve a clean river.

Fortunately, there is renewed interest in cleaning up the Anacostia River. To achieve this goal, **the District will need to curb polluted stormwater runoff; keep sewage out of the river; use water quality standards to keep trash and other pollutants out of waterways; green the waterfront and improve community access to the area; and work with Maryland to protect tributaries to the Anacostia.** Each of these issues is addressed in turn below.

### **Curb Polluted Stormwater Runoff**

Stormwater makes up a significant share of the pollution entering District waterways. It is essentially rainwater that lands on streets, sidewalks, buildings, and ground that has no vegetation. When rain falls on these impervious surfaces, it picks up such substances as oil and fluids from cars, pesticides, road de-icers, leaves, sand and dirt, airborne pollutants, dog, bird and other animal wastes, and common trash and carries them into storm drains and sewage systems. In two-thirds of the District, this polluted run-off flows untreated directly into the Anacostia River (as well as Rock Creek Park and the Potomac River) through what is known as the "Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System."

Another very important pollutant, though invisible, is heat. When a summer storm "cools off" the city, much of that heat is simply transferred to our rivers through stormwater. And with every 1-degree increase in river temperature, concentrations of oxygen in the water plummet—killing the fish and other aquatic life that depend on cooler temperatures and oxygen supplies to survive.

In the other third of the District (which includes the central business district, the White House area, and Capitol Hill), storm sewers serve the dual purpose of conveying sewage and surface runoff. During periods of heavy rain or snowmelt, combined sewers carry more water than can be treated at the Blue Plains wastewater treatment plant. This combined sewer overflow (CSO) system carries untreated

sewage directly into the District's waterways. (CSO concerns are addressed in the next section of this *Agenda*.)

Under the federal Clean Water Act, the District is required to comply with a permit to reduce stormwater pollution so that water quality in the Anacostia continues to improve—and ultimately becomes safe enough for swimming, boating, fishing, and other uses. However, today the District's program for the Anacostia is neither aggressive enough nor sufficiently funded to even make a dent in the problem. Fortunately, the City Council recently enacted a Department of the Environment Act that will consolidate management of stormwater policy and require both an evaluation of resource needs and an assessment of innovative, progressive initiatives that could be incorporated into the city's stormwater program in order to make it more effective.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Give the Department of the Environment (DOE) responsibility for ensuring that all District agencies involved in stormwater management have adequate programs and resources to succeed.** The Department of the Environment should have the authority to compel other District agencies to comply with the terms of the District's stormwater permit. The District currently has multiple agencies involved in stormwater functions, including the Department of Health, the Department of Public Works, the Water and Sewer Authority, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, the Office of Planning, and the Department of Transportation. DOE should require each entity that is responsible for reducing stormwater or whose activities generate stormwater to submit a management plan and budget to DOE for approval.

**(2) Use Low Impact Development techniques to reduce stormwater pollution.** The District must take steps to reduce the amount of stormwater running into the Anacostia and other waterways. This can be achieved by limiting development that damages and eliminates wetlands and other green space; requiring new development and redevelopment projects to retain and treat rainfall onsite; actively planting and preserving trees and other vegetation; and providing incentives for the owners of existing structures and parking lots to retain more stormwater before it reaches streets and sewers.

Such steps to “green the city” and keep stormwater out of sewers will reduce toxic runoff, streambank erosion, and reduce the frequency of overflows from combined sewer overflow systems. Because Low Impact Development principally relies on the use of soil and vegetation to reduce stormwater pollution, it would provide a host of other benefits in addition to helping to clean rivers. Urban greening improves air quality by filtering air pollution, counteracts the urban “heat island” effect by lowering surface temperatures and providing seasonal shade and rooftop insulation, and improves the energy efficiency of buildings. Urban greening also improves urban aesthetics, boosts property values, and provides wildlife habitat and recreational space for urban residents. A multi-benefit environmental approach ultimately supports programs that are more diverse and cost-effective than management practices aimed solely at stormwater control (such as the sand filters in widespread use throughout the District today).

**(3) Increase resources available to the stormwater program by revising the storm water fee system and creating incentives for onsite stormwater retention and management.** More resources are needed for the District to implement the strategies and technologies necessary to reduce both the amount and type of stormwater pollution flowing into its rivers. The 2000 Stormwater Permit Compliance Amendment Act included an initial fee set at a level that would generate \$3.1 million per year. But in 2002, a panel established through the Act to evaluate the adequacy of the fee determined that it was based on an inequitable system and would not produce sufficient funds to comply in the

long term with federal permit requirements. The panel therefore recommended that the fee instead be based on the impervious surface area of each property—a factor strongly correlated with the volume of stormwater generated by a site.

The District's stormwater administration has estimated that \$7 million is needed annually to fund an effective stormwater management program. The fee should be increased to a level that will generate both that amount and an additional \$3 million to provide incentives for private landowners to undertake pollution-reducing activities on their properties. Such incentives would encourage the use of water-retaining green roofs, rain barrels, rain gardens, grassy swales, permeable pavement, cisterns, tree boxes, and other means of reducing and filtering stormwater pollution.

**(4) Require federal agencies to comply with District's stormwater control laws and regulations.**

The District will never be able to fully control stormwater runoff into its waterways without the cooperation of the federal government. Nevertheless, federal agencies are often reluctant, and even unwilling, to comply with District requirements. As a result, many major federal construction projects proceed without District permits and inspections, resulting in increased runoff and water pollution. Enforcement is needed to bring the federal government into compliance.

**(5) Identify and control continuing sources of toxic pollution.** The bullhead catfish caught in the Anacostia River have a higher rate of cancer tumors than the same kind of fish caught in any other river in the United States, a trend attributed to high levels of toxic contamination. New research from the U.S. Geological Survey in Austin, Texas, has identified one potential source of the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that are linked with tumors: the coal tar sealant used to maintain parking lots and driveways. Other possible sources include auto salvage yards, recycling facilities, runoff from highways, and industrial stormwater sources. Washington, DC and Maryland should collaborate on research studies to pinpoint the sources of toxic pollution into District waterways and address this problem through improved use of stormwater permitting tools, public education, and enforcement.

**Keep Sewage Out of the River**

As mentioned above, just like many older American cities, Washington DC has a combined sewer system that carries rainwater and human waste through the same pipes. On dry days, these pipes carry waste to the Blue Plains wastewater treatment plant, but on rainy days, the system is overwhelmed with stormwater from streets and buildings—in turn sending raw sewage directly into the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and Rock Creek Park. Every year, the Anacostia River alone receives 1.5 billion gallons of combined raw sewage and runoff through the sewer overflow system.

Beyond the combined sewer system in the center of the city, separate pipes carry the sewage to Blue Plains, but due to inadequate maintenance and deterioration with age, these pipes often fail—leaking raw sewage into streets, parks, and waterways and even backing up into residents' homes during severe storms.

Sewage and stormwater pollution contaminate Washington, DC's rivers with bacteria and viruses. None of the waterways in the city are safe for swimming or other types of recreation (such as kayaking) in which one's body comes in contact with water. The public is also advised not to eat carp, catfish, or eel from District waters because they are contaminated with toxins, and weekly or monthly limits on the consumption of other fish (such as largemouth bass) are suggested due to the likelihood of toxic contamination. Even the Potomac River, the source of most of the region's drinking water, is contaminated by raw sewage and toxic stormwater pollution.

Due to federal, state, and citizen enforcement actions, both the DC Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) are now subject to consent decrees that require a variety of approaches be taken to reduce raw sewage overflows into the watershed. These include increasing stormwater storage in the combined sewer system, replacing broken pipes, cleaning out clogged pipes, replacing failing pumps, and educating the public and business owners on actions they can take.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Build the Anacostia storage tunnel to reduce the combined sewer overflows.** WASA is working to design underground tunnels to store most of the mix of sewage and stormwater that currently flows into District waters when it rains—with the result that more would flow directly to Blue Plains for treatment. WASA needs to take prompt action to build the Anacostia River tunnel. In addition, the U.S. Congress should provide funding for this project because the tunnel will improve the appearance, smell, and health of the river, benefiting everyone in the nation’s capital.

**(2) Use Low Impact Development approaches to keep stormwater out of the combined sewer system.** WASA should not rely on tunnels alone to solve the combined sewer overflow problem. Other cities that have combined sewer systems (such as Portland, Toronto, Chicago, and Seattle) have found that green roofs, rain gardens, tree boxes, and cisterns help keep stormwater from entering the system and also help save water, reduce energy use, decrease the urban heat island effect, and increase property values. The District should partner with WASA to evaluate green infrastructure approaches for reducing stormwater flows into the city’s sewer system and seek funding from the U.S. Congress to support Low Impact Development strategies.

**(3) Reduce sanitary sewer overflows.** WSSC has a long-range plan to correct the pipe breakages, blockages, and pump failures that cause sewage in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties to overflow into upstream tributaries of the Anacostia River. The District should not take for granted that promised improvements will be made, but should take action to stop Maryland from exporting untreated sewage into its waterways.

**Use Water Quality Standards to Keep Trash and Other Pollutants Out of Waterways**

Under the Federal Clean Water Act, an important regulatory tool for reducing water pollution is the Total Maximum Daily Load. Unlike technology-based regulations that serve as a standard for most discharges (e.g., the requirement that utilities and companies use the “best available technology,” the maximum daily load standard represents an actual physical limit on the total amount of pollution that can be discharged into a waterway. Dischargers essentially have to follow a “pollution budget” until the waterways (or a particular segment) are clean. For example, maximum daily load requirements might set a ceiling on the amount of oil and grease that can be discharged into the Anacostia River above East Capitol Street.

In addition, maximum daily load standards help support a balanced population of native shellfish, fish, and wildlife. They provide an additional way to protect public health and the environment in cases when conventional, technology-based pollution controls are inadequate. They also provide a way for regulators to determine that actions are being taken to stay on the path toward fishable and swimmable waterways.

Washington, DC has made tremendous progress over the past decade in establishing TMDLs for bacteria, sediment, and other pollutants that make water unsafe. But neither the District nor Maryland has yet developed a Total Maximum Daily Load standard for a key pollutant: trash. Every year,

20,000 tons of trash ends up in the Anacostia and its tributaries. A Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) survey of the Anacostia and its tributaries found on average more than one piece of trash in every foot of stream.

To address the visual and pollution-related problems posed by trash, the Anacostia Watershed Society removed an estimated 536 tons of trash and 11,103 tires from the river system during 1989–2005. Earth Conservation Corps members and volunteers have so far pulled more than 4,300 tires from the Anacostia and, in 2004, removed 60 tons of trash from Kingman and Heritage Islands. The Army Corps of Engineers also clears debris from the river five days a week to ensure that navigation is not impeded, a program that removes about 1,200 cubic yards of debris annually. WASA removes 500–700 tons of trash annually from the tidal areas of the Anacostia.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Identify the Anacostia River and its tributaries as being polluted by trash and develop Total Maximum Daily Load standards to address this problem.** Communities in Alaska, California, Connecticut, New York, and Washington State have used TMDLs to spur government and citizen action to keep trash out of rivers. The District and Maryland should both follow these examples by recognizing that the Anacostia and its tributaries don't meet local water quality standards for cleanliness, safety, and aesthetics and making them a priority for cleanup.

**(2) Use maximum daily load standards to put dischargers on “pollution diets.”** A “maximum daily load” is only a number if it isn't put into action. Just like a scale indicates whether you're gaining or losing weight but can't take the weight off—only diet and exercise can do that. Similarly, a maximum daily load indicates how much pollution needs to be reduced, but the District and upstream jurisdictions must incorporate this standard into a cleanup plan by actually reducing the amount of pollution that dischargers are allowed to generate.

Washington, DC and Maryland should work together to develop plans to meet water quality standards. In the case of trash, such a plan should include public education; enforcement of litter laws; trash traps for roads, parking lots, and sewer pipes; and more trash removal using skimmer boats, booms, and cranes. In the case of bacteria, sediment, oxygen-depleting nutrients, and toxins, all permits issued to entities that discharge into District waterways and their tributaries should be subject to pollution limits based on Total Maximum Daily Load standards and required to use appropriate methods to meet those limits.

### **Improve Community Access to and Green the Waterfront**

Washington's waterfront land is a valuable environmental asset. The capacity of the parkland and other green space along the Anacostia to buffer pollution is a critical part of restoring the river. Yet there are threats to green space as developers rush to buy up land near the site for the baseball stadium, Poplar Point, and other properties with waterfront views. There are several ways to control such development, including action by the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation to restore the Anacostia River and revitalize its shorelines within Washington, DC. In the long term, the District must protect remaining waterfront parkland and wetlands, enhance access to the waterfront, and ensure that all new development uses green roofs, rain gardens, and other state-of-the-art approaches to minimize water pollution to the Anacostia River.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Ask the new Department of the Environment (DOE) to develop a vision for sustainable development, a greener environment, and enhanced access to clean waterways.** District agencies could adopt policies, codes, and procedures to help protect the natural resources of the Anacostia River by enhancing green space, urban forestry, and the use of soil and vegetation—proven methods to reduce pollution, improve wastewater treatment, and create recreational opportunities for residents, commuters, and tourists. The new DOE should set the direction for all other governmental agencies and commissions by adopting goals, policies, and directives for action and ensuring that these are implemented.

**(2) Develop collaborative efforts among the City Council, the Mayor, and the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation (AWC) to ensure that all waterfront development is compatible with restoration of the river.** Drawing the public back to the Anacostia is key to the river's recovery. New development projects should maintain existing parkland, connect with the pedestrian and bicycle trail, allow access to the river, provide docks and other facilities to support recreational use of the river, and include 150-foot minimum setbacks from the water to facilitate filtration of polluted runoff. The Mayor should announce plans for new public boat and paddlesport boat access points (including a floating dock) and completion of the river trail. Such efforts could be funded through existing and planned waterfront improvement projects at locations such as Southeast Federal Center, Poplar Point, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and Kingman Island.

**(3) Amend Washington, DC's Comprehensive Plan to preclude development on waterfront parkland and wetlands,** except for uses appropriate to a park. The City Council should ensure that the Comprehensive Plan establishes the vision of a "Green DC." Innovative policies are being used around the country to green urban areas and make cities more sustainable—a trend that the District should emulate.

**(4) Make sure that the Anacostia Watershed Council sets sustainable development standards for all of its projects** and offers incentives for environmentally sound, creative uses of waterfront parcels for those private projects that it does not control. With major redevelopment on the horizon, the AWC has the opportunity to facilitate innovate green design. Introducing green space preservation and sustainable development strategies into the Anacostia watershed restoration process will support many of the AWC's environmental and community development objectives, including cleaner water, cleaner air, reduced city temperatures in the summer, increased energy efficiency, and increased property values.

### **Work with Maryland to Protect Tributaries to the Anacostia**

Approximately 80% of the Anacostia River's watershed lies in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. The water flowing into the District from Maryland is extremely polluted with toxins, pathogens, sediment, and other substances that kill wildlife and make the water unsafe for most uses. Even if the District were to solve its own pollution problems, area waterways will still fail to meet water quality standards due to floating debris, sewage, and sediments from waters upstream in Maryland. Suburban dumping will not stop until the Mayor of Washington, DC demands that it stop. As the downstream user, the District must take the lead in strengthening commitments to reduce stormwater pollution and combined sewer overflows. Unless the District convinces Maryland to address these concerns across the entire Anacostia watershed, the water flowing from Maryland will continue to carry tremendous loads of pollution into the District's portion of the river.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Monitor and regularly publicize the amount of pollution flowing down the Anacostia River from Maryland.** The new State of the Environment report required by the Department of Environment Act is an important vehicle for monitoring pollution levels. In turn, that information can be used to argue for a stronger water pollution control program in Maryland.

**(2) Use information on upstream pollution to initiate negotiations.** The Mayor and City Council should reach out to the Governor of Maryland, the Prince George's and Montgomery County Executives, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If the suburban jurisdictions fail to respond, the District should consider taking legal action to force Maryland to clean up its rivers and streams before they flow into the city.

**(3) Work with Montgomery and Prince George's Counties to establish watershed-wide public education, monitoring, and enforcement programs.** Collaboration between the District and surrounding jurisdictions can make such efforts both broader and more efficient. Task forces with members from all jurisdictions should be set up to find ways to keep trash out of waterways, preserve forests, stream buffers, and wetlands, support sustainable development, and develop other initiatives.

*For more information, contact Nancy Stoner, Natural Resources Defense Council.*

### III. Safe Drinking Water

*Prepared by Clean Water Action and Food and Water Watch*

As the nation's capital city, Washington, DC should be a leader in providing one of the most basic necessities in life: safe and affordable drinking water. The District should also be a leader in addressing the many complex challenges related to water systems through the United States, from pollution to affordability to aging infrastructure. But instead, the city has failed to address a number of critical issues. As a result, **the District suffers from a lack of public confidence in its ability to protect public health and follow 21<sup>st</sup> century drinking water standards for protection, treatment, and distribution practices.**

Several issues characterize drinking water concerns in the District. First, companies and industries continue to use the upper Potomac River, the District's primary drinking water source, as a discharge zone for polluting substances. At the same time, a lack of adequate federal and regional funding, as well as political and socioeconomic limitations on placing the burden on ratepayers, has resulted in a pattern of shortchanging drinking water treatment options and neglecting to repair, upgrade, and replace antiquated drinking water pipes.

This situation has been made worse by reluctance on the part of the Washington Aqueduct Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for providing safe drinking water in the District, to conduct a top-to-bottom review of options for treatment of the water taken from the Potomac. Both the Army Corps and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has the main oversight responsibility over the DC Water and Sewer Authority (WASA), are federal executive branch agencies, with little accountability to District residents and local government.

For its part, WASA, which runs the District's water distribution system, tends to focus on public relations as a form of response to water quality issues, rather than increasing transparency of information and including the public in its decision making process.

Despite these complex political realities and resulting problems, the District can take many actions to address its drinking water challenges and demonstrate leadership in this area. **To this end, it will be critical to conduct a comprehensive review and create a long-term plan; address affordability and rate structure concerns; and establish a citizen-based water board.** Each of these areas is addressed in turn below.

#### **Conduct a Comprehensive Review and Create a Long-Term Plan**

A comprehensive review of the District's drinking water system is necessary in order to fully understand current problems and conditions and, in turn, respond with adequate long-term planning that aims to protect public health. A clear review and planning process would also help to mobilize public support for raising the revenues needed to execute a long-term drinking water plan.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Develop best management practices for source water protection.** Measures should be taken to protect the District's drinking water supply in the broader Potomac River watershed upstream of the intakes for the Washington Aqueduct. The land that drains directly into the Dalecarlia Reservoir (where soil tests have uncovered arsenic and perchlorate) should also be protected.

**(2) Ensure a state-of-the-art drinking water treatment process.** A thorough review of the best drinking water treatment systems available nationwide should be conducted in order to determine the potential for adopting such systems in Washington, DC. Public involvement should be a cornerstone of this process.

**(3) Expedite improvements in water infrastructure.** With billions of dollars invested in wastewater management, there is a risk that improving the District’s drinking water infrastructure itself will be delayed. The city needs a clear plan for the regular, thorough repair and upgrade of the entire drinking water distribution system.

### **Address Affordability and Rate Structure Concerns**

The District’s official policy should be to ensure clean, affordable drinking water for all residents, and to make it affordable for those with the least resources.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Survey water rate structures.** The District should conduct a comprehensive review of current rates in order to find the most progressive measures available. Such a survey should include a review of WASA’s Supporting People by Lending a Supportive Hand (SPLASH) program (which provides assistance to needy families for maintenance of essential services). The program, which is managed by the Salvation Army, should be assessed with regard to its management, the transparency of its procedures, and the information provided to low-income customers. In addition, the survey should address whether the District’s current utility discount program—which reduces the water bills of low-income households by \$7.32/month—is sufficient to address the affordability needs of Washington residents.

### **Establish a Citizen-Based Water Board**

Many cities and states nationwide have established independent, autonomous entities to represent and fight for the interests of residents with regard to the provision of basic utilities. Washington, DC residents would benefit greatly from the work of such a body—appointed by the City Council and made up of engineering and public health experts and citizen activists—tasked solely with understanding and addressing drinking water concerns.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Appoint a board to oversee all water-related systems.** A citizens’ water board should oversee not only the steps necessary to improve Washington, DC’s drinking water system, but also WASA’s stormwater and sewer obligations. This comprehensive approach should be taken in light of the overall competition for scarce water infrastructure dollars and the practical necessity of focusing on effective solutions for the District’s entire watershed and “sewer shed.”

**(2) Fund the board through utility bills.** Many citizen-based boards created by cities and states to oversee electricity and other utilities are funded through a small surcharge on water and sewer bills. This approach should be followed in the District and would enable the water board to be wholly independent of DC WASA and the Washington Aqueduct/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These funds should help produce an annual progress report on WASA’s and the Washington Aqueduct’s performance, progress, and problems.

*For more information contact Paul Schwartz or Andy Fellows, Clean Water Action or Maj Fiil, Food and Water Watch.*

## IV. Parks and Trees

### Standards for Parks

*Prepared by Washington Parks & People*

The oft-quoted African proverb says that it takes a whole village to raise a single child. In the context of Washington, DC, one can say that "It Takes a Village *Green*." The city's parks are places to advance healthy, sustainable communities, reconnect with our natural and cultural heritage, and provide a sense of hope, possibility, and respect for all life to every child growing up here.

DC's park system, the crown jewel of the capital, is in need of urgent and sweeping overhaul. Mayors across the country and beyond have discovered that investing in green spaces reaps massive economic, cultural, educational, civic, and environmental rewards. Great parks make cities more safe, smart, solvent, attractive, visited, populated, sustainable, and healthy. Yet while cities everywhere have been running massive transformational park partnerships for decades, from Brooklyn's Prospect Park Alliance to St. Louis's Forest Park Forever, DC is lagging far behind in its support for basic park protection, maintenance, programming, and partnerships.

#### **The District is home to an urban park system of significant scale and tremendous potential.**

More than 25% of the city's acreage is public parkland of one kind or another—a vast network of priceless green assets that could galvanize broad community revitalization of the entire city. It also could provide a vital mechanism to link neighborhoods together through both physical connections and programmatic ties. Unfortunately, despite some improvement, vast areas of the District's public green spaces are still physically inaccessible and disconnected, programmatically abandoned, environmentally unsafe, and bureaucratically unaccountable to the adjoining communities that depend on them. Public funding for these parklands is inadequate, and governmental support for public/private partnerships to protect and advance them is in many cases almost non-existent.

The District government lacks any staff positions to monitor federal uses of parkland. Most of the open space under city jurisdiction is inadequately maintained, and no city agency has responsibility for maintaining streams. The Metropolitan Police Department does not train its force to patrol parkland, leaving many areas of both city and federal parkland with little enforcement, and in some cases completely unpatrolled. Oversight for parks in the City Council is merely part of the Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation. At the same time, green space stewardship is spread across numerous city and federal agencies, with little to no coordination or collaboration underway. The result of all of this is a severe lack of focus and accountability for the vast majority of the public lands and waterways in the city.

Home rule begins with the land we call home. Our city must claim its right to hold all public landowners accountable to the people who live here. Transforming the city's parks is a major task that will take the work of the entire city government, not any one city agency. But it can produce a legacy of natural and human impact that will last for generations. **The Mayor and City Council should take actions to ensure that the city's parks are cleaner, safer, attractive, connected, and well-maintained. A key way to do this is to adopt standards and guiding principles for revitalizing parks and apply them to city-wide programs and policies.**

#### **Adopt and Apply Standards for Revitalizing Parks**

As Washington, DC faces and seeks to counter suburban sprawl, urban parks can be vital engines for restoring both the beautiful core and the economy of the city. Setting standards is a way to guide policymakers and agencies in determining what actions are needed and to set goals for improvement.

A clear set of standards and principles would help facilitate this process with regard to public green spaces across Washington, DC. (Also see page 31)

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Increase Funding for Parks.** In order to begin to reach the level of park stewardship found in other major cities, the mayor will need to allocate a minimum of \$5 million annually in operational funds to rebuild the District's park maintenance systems and other programs, and to invest in planning, staff training, and volunteer and partnership programs throughout the park system. In addition, the District's recreational landscape maintenance (which has been sorely neglected) needs a major increase in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and capital budget support.

Similarly, the city's national parklands that lie beyond the National Mall and the downtown area receive significantly less funding than their counterparts in other major cities. Finally, the Mayor can and must develop stable, dependable, long-term sources of new dedicated revenue for parks. These could include: permanently designating a percentage of the property tax rate for parks, (as applied successfully in Chicago and other cities); creating a "City of Parks" vanity license plate to support community parks partnerships, modeled after the Chesapeake Bay and Yosemite plates; and launching a philanthropic initiative to challenge the 1100 foundations and hundreds of major corporations based in and around the city to lead the way in investing in charitable programs to strengthen and reconnect parks and to use them to help advance the District as a sustainable and livable city.

**(2) Keep Parks Clean.** The Mayor should set a new standard for park cleanliness and environmental health by investing in additional maintenance staff, equipment, and community-based partnerships of all kinds, as well as thorough and constant inspections to ensure that every park meets the standard. The Mayor and the Department of the Environment should direct the DC Water and Sewer Authority to present an immediate action plan to correct the long-time contamination of non-combined sewer overflow (CSO) waterways by aging sewer lines, and the Mayor should direct that stream valleys with combined sewers be targeted for extensive tree planting so that these areas can serve as urban stormwater "sponges" that can mitigate the CSO problem. (See Clean Rivers section.)

In addition, the Mayor should broaden and strengthen the present interagency task force led by the Department of Health to reclaim the riparian areas of parklands and waterfronts in order to give children a safer introduction to the natural world. The Mayor should consider designating one agency to maintain all of the city's trees and urban forests and to hire qualified staff and equipment. The Department of the Environment and the Environmental Enforcement Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department should be strengthened to stop all dumping and environmental crimes on parkland. Modeled after very successful programs in other cities, such a program in the District should bring together city agencies and organizations to launch a "Village Green" Community Garden Program to reclaim vacant lots across the city.

**(3) Make Parks Safe.** The Mayor should direct that Metropolitan Police Department to step up bike and foot patrols of all District parkland. High-crime park areas should be targeted for community policing and programming partnerships modeled after community-based projects at Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park and Marvin Gaye Park. Parks and playgrounds must be established as reliable safe havens for children. Play equipment should be safe, parks planned and maintained with environmental security and lines of sight in mind, and trails, crosswalks, and other entry points clearly signed and visible day and night.

**(4) Manage Parks Well.** The Mayor should consolidate all natural resource and green space management functions into one city agency. Every park employee and volunteer should be trained, supported, and accountable for the vital work of reclaiming green spaces to serve communities. Unfit, unresponsive, and underperforming employees and volunteers should be let go. Effective public lands management should be based on the following strategies:

- Broad public engagement in green space planning, protection, partnerships, and programs.
- Aggressive removal of invasive weeds and private encroachments, acquisition of inholdings, and long-term expansion and ecological restoration of the park system to ensure that it is connected, cohesive, and comprehensive.
- Strong, equitable city-wide standards and consequences for addressing environmental crimes such as littering, dumping, and unlawful and unlicensed land use.
- Dedicated integrated leadership from the highest levels (i.e., the Mayor, City Administrator, Deputy Mayors, Cabinet) to the City Council and District agencies.
- Thorough retraining and demonstration programs to advance best management practices.
- Sustained monitoring, benchmark performance measures, and public accountability for managers, line staff, and partners.

**(5) Have Active Parks.** Much of the District's local and federal park and recreation land is grossly unused or misused, and characterized by a lack of adequate community programming. While tens of millions of the District's dollars have been invested in constructing large new recreation center buildings in recent years, very little funding has been invested in making the surrounding parks come alive. The Mayor should ensure that the city's park programs serve all ages and cultures through a wide range of athletics, hiking, camping, climbing, nature walks, fitness courses, heritage trails, environmental education, ecological restoration, junior rangers, tours, story-telling, arts programs, performances, community service, and civic engagement. At both city and federal sites, innovative concessions should be established that enhance the park experience and surrounding neighborhoods while protecting natural resources, and should be considered as potential youth enterprise and job training programs. Successful models include audio tours, healthy food cafés, community farm markets, eco-tours, adventure and discovery playgrounds, bike rental and repair, and native plant nurseries.

**(6) Make Parks Attractive.** According to the Board of Trade and others, Washington, DC's park system is its single most compelling quality-of-life feature for attracting new residents. Parks are more than just pretty places, and can be pivotal in stimulating neighborhood revitalization, small business retention and job creation, economic development, and tourism based on historical heritage and ecology. For these reasons, parkland must be expanded, not destroyed. The Mayor and appropriate city agencies should launch a campaign to promote the District's park system with new maps, public service advertising, signage, and other materials.

**(7) Maintain Parks.** Landscape planning, monitoring, maintenance, and restoration must be made a top priority with appropriate levels of funding and accountability. It is critical to continue to restore the native tree canopy and eradicate aggressive invasive exotic plants. The Mayor should ensure that more aggressive and innovative efforts be made to enhance landscape maintenance and reclamation through the broad use of non-profit organizations and private-sector partners in managed competition, community-based management, and in-kind and volunteer support. The District should make the expansion of well-supervised after-school and vocational job training opportunities a priority in park maintenance and programming, modeled after the city's successful Student Conservation Association and Earth Conservation Corps programs. This process also offers opportunities for programs to enable youth to participate in improving and maintaining parks.

**(8) Ensure Access to Parks.** Vast portions of the District’s parkland are disconnected from nearby schools and local recreation centers, difficult to access without a car, or simply fenced off. (Examples include the east side of Rock Creek Park, the McMillan Reservoir, the upper Anacostia River, Kingman and Heritage Islands, the Soldiers and Airmen's Home, the west campus of Saint Elizabeth's, and many of the unsigned links along the 23-mile Fort Circle). Yet these areas could be vital venues for community programming and recreation of all kinds. The Mayor should direct that all public green spaces across the city be made more accessible.

**(9) Connect Parks.** Most of the District’s parks were intended to be linked together by rivers, streams, and trails (“greenways and blueways”), but today public park spaces lack both physical and programmatic connections to communities. The Mayor should direct that all District agencies incorporate concerns related to parks, recreation areas, and trails into their programs and priority task areas. The Mayor should convene a National Capital Park Commission to link together all of the parks and recreation areas of the nation's capital. A regional park authority tying in the surrounding counties should be explored as a second step. The Mayor should direct that the city advance such greenways as the Anacostia Riverwalk, Fort Circle, and Escarpment (or Washington Ridge Crossing) Trails, as well as connections to such larger trail systems as the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and the East Coast Greenway.

**(10) Leverage Resources for Parks.** Building a constituency of involved citizens can help ensure that the city’s parks provide a healthy and sustainable natural and human environment for the lasting benefit of children and communities. The mayor and all park-related agencies should lead the way in expanding public/private park partnerships that will use all available resources to help protect and advance the city’s parks and to help use parks to meet vital urban needs. Community organizations and businesses should be encouraged to partner with or support parks and community-based management of park sites should be increased wherever possible. Park staff should be augmented by significant leadership and help from volunteers, “friends of parks” groups, and other local partners. The city should contract with a non-profit organization to establish and fund a Park Volunteer Support and Training Center, with an adequate staff and tool bank to support thousands of maintenance and program volunteers. Exemplary volunteers and partners, of which there are many across the city, should be recognized and given the chance to expand their work.

*For more information contact Steve Coleman, Washington Parks and People.*

## **Protect Open Space (Fort Circle Parks)**

*Prepared by Friends of the Earth*

Preserving and protecting Rock Creek Park has always been a focus and priority for the DC Environmental Network (DCEN). Working with the Peoples Alliance for Rock Creek—an effort recently spearheaded by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association—The Network has fought hard to implement weekday road closure on Beach Drive. Our primary motivation has always been to protect Rock Creek Park’s environment while expanding opportunities for children and seniors to utilize this important natural and recreational resource. Hundreds of District activists have also spent years campaigning to protect Klinge Road, adjacent to Rock Creek Park, from unnecessary development. Rock Creek Park has benefited from a unique and active coalition of organizations that are committed to the environmental health of the District’s parks and the interests of all residents.

**Unfortunately, Fort Circle Parks, part of the 1902 McMillan Commission plan, has not benefited from as much public support. Even with good intentions on the part of the National Park**

**Service, Fort Circle Parks suffers from neglect.** In 2003, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City wrote that “The National Park Service's management of the Fort Circle Parks is divided among the parks west and east of the Anacostia River (administered respectively by Rock Creek Park and National Capital Parks-East) and in Virginia (administered by the George Washington Memorial Parkway.) Because of this arrangement and also because the Fort Circle Parks lack statutory authorization from the Congress, the Fort Circle Parks have, with a few exceptions, never received the care and attention they deserve. The situation appears to have gotten worse in the past several years, as the budgets for park operations, maintenance and development have plummeted. Park staffs struggle to find creative ways to carry out their responsibilities.”

Key examples of the severe problems that the Fort Circle park system faces are:

- Development and construction.
- Dumping.
- Invasive species.
- Dirt Bikers and subsequent erosion at Fort Totten.
- Poor road maintenance and limited public access.
- Inadequate patrolling by Park Police.
- A shortage of staff and funding.

In order to address these problems, the District will need to ensure passage of federal legislation on Fort Circle Parks. Doing so would be an important first step toward creating a structure to more efficiently and effectively protect this resource.

### **Pass Federal Legislation to Protect and Maintain Fort Circle Parks**

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

#### **(1) Pass Federal Legislation to Establish Fort Circle Parks as part of the National Park System.**

The U.S. Congress should pass and the President should sign into law legislation to establish the Fort Circle Parks (or other name, see below) as part of the National Park System. At a minimum, the legislation should do the following:

**a. Recognize that Fort Circle Parks are nationally significant resources** that contain important natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of value to all Americans. Also recognize their local and regional significance as parks and outdoor recreation resources for both District residents and visitors.

**b. Require that the parks be managed as a distinct unit of the National Park System.** Such language is essential to assure that priority is given to these parks within the National Park Service's system of setting priorities, allocating budgets and staff, and making the key decisions that affect their management, maintenance, interpretation and development. For this purpose, one of two management mechanisms could be used:

- *Establish a separate national park unit with a new name*, such as “National Fort Circle Civil War Parks” (which could still be informally referred to as the Fort Circle Parks), and with staffing, in number and grade level, that properly match the significance of this park unit (at a minimum, the grade requirement of the Superintendent should be at the level of Grade 15 or Senior Executive Service).

- *Establish a national heritage area* with a new name, such as “Civil War Fort Circle Parks National Heritage Area,” with authorization for a management entity composed of members from the private sector and local government agencies to work in cooperation with the National Park Service.

**c. Create roles for the private sector.** Whether Fort Circle is established as a park unit or a national heritage area, the federal legislation should include specific roles for the private sector, including:

- *Fundraising* by a non-profit land or historical heritage conservancy.
- *Establishment of a citizens advisory committee* that would reflect a range of national and local interests, and with fair geographic and demographic representation, to provide an ongoing mechanism to review and advise on the management of all national park units within Washington DC, with a special subcommittee focusing on Fort Circle Parks.
- *Leasing arrangements* for some park buildings to offset maintenance costs, provide staff at the site of the park, and minimize further deterioration of resources.
- *Cooperative arrangements* with community organizations that can serve as “friends” of the Fort Circle parks and provide support through volunteers, educational programs, and donations of funds.

**d. Other mandates** would include, as necessary and appropriate, items to be listed under “Management Plan.” In particular, this would include the *authorization of appropriations* necessary to carry out management activities.” - *A Call to Action on the Fort Circle Parks Draft Management Plan*, *Committee of 100 for the Federal City*.

*For more information contact Chris Weiss, Friends of the Earth.*

## **Trees**

*Prepared with substantial input from the Casey Trees Endowment Fund*

The benefits of healthy urban forests are many and well-documented. In addition to the beauty they bring to neighborhoods, trees shade and cool homes, buildings, and streets, helping to lower energy costs. They produce oxygen and remove carbon dioxide (a primary greenhouse gas) and other harmful pollutants from the air. Trees also reduce the amount of polluted stormwater runoff that reaches waterways and provide habitat for birds, small animals, and insects. The presence of trees helps reduce noise and stress and improve mental health. Trees also increase property values and retail sales and contribute to community identity and pride.

A 2005 study produced in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service used sample plots to calculate that almost 30% of the District is covered by trees. The report showed that the city has an estimated 1.92 million trees, 56% of which are smaller than 6 inches in diameter. These trees store 523,000 tons of carbon and remove 540 tons of air pollutants annually (a service valued at \$2.5 million), and save the city and residents \$2.6 million a year in energy costs.

**Achieving the valuable benefits of trees requires a long-term commitment to a healthy tree canopy on the part of city government and residents.** We need to care for street trees, trees in parks, on school grounds, and other public places, as well as trees on private lands. Fortunately, the first *Environmental Agenda* released in 1999, together with reports that year from American Forests

and the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, laid the groundwork for substantial increases in public and private resources committed to tree and forest protection and maintenance in Washington, DC.

In the last few years, the District has made credible strides toward restoring the city's tree canopy. This shift came about in part because of a 1999 study by American Forests on Washington, DC's tree canopy. Satellite images showed that the District lost 64% of its area of heavy tree cover between 1973 and 1997. These images inspired philanthropist Betty Brown Casey to give \$50 million to establish an organization that would work to restore the city's tree cover. The Casey Trees Endowment Fund was established in 2001, joining a dedicated group of tree organizations in the District that includes DC Greenworks, Greenspaces for DC, and neighborhood tree groups.

For its part, in 2002 the District government established the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) as part of the reorganization of the cabinet-level Department of Transportation (DDOT). UFA's primary tasks are street tree planting, pruning, and removals. The ongoing commitment of Mayor Williams, the City Council, and DDOT has resulted in a substantial increase in the budget for street trees.

On Arbor Day 2003, Mayor Anthony Williams announced a commitment to fill the city's 23,000 empty tree box spaces in ten years. The UFA and nonprofit organizations are on track to meeting this goal ahead of schedule. By 2003, street tree plantings had increased to 4,000 trees per year, and during the 2005-2006 planting season, the UFA planted 8,000.

Today, significant and wide-ranging efforts that will help benefit the city's trees are underway, involving local policymakers and officials, residents, and professionals. These include the development of a new Comprehensive Plan for the District; the Great Streets, Main Streets, Anacostia Waterfront, Public Space Plan, and New Communities initiatives; and adoption of standards for green infrastructure and building and low-impact development. All these efforts provide a catalyst for tree-friendly principles to become the framework for development and community building in the District.

Looking ahead, **restoring and protecting Washington, DC's tree canopy will require taking action on several fronts, including to support strong tree policies, set and pursue urban tree cover goals, secure dedicated tree funding, and restore trees.** Each of these approaches is discussed in turn below.

### **Support Strong Tree Policies**

The District should develop and adopt comprehensive, detailed policies to guide the protection, maintenance, and restoration of trees and native woodlands throughout the city. Policies should be based on coordination among city agencies and organizations and state-of-the-art environmental and "green development" standards.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Adopt an urban forest management plan.** An Urban Forest Management Plan should be adopted to coordinate urban tree and forest management activities on public lands managed by the city (e.g., on streets, in city parks, and on public school grounds), and promote collaboration with the National Park Service, the Department of Defense, the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation (AWC), and other significant public land owners/managers in the District. The plan should include comprehensive management strategies for insects and diseases (such as Dutch elm disease) on both public and private property. The development of this plan should be coordinated, and its implementation monitored, by the District Department of the Environment.

**(2) Develop street tree standards.** Using local and national expertise, UFA, DDOT, the AWC, and other partners should develop and periodically update street tree standards for tree box design and tree selection, planting, pruning, utility work, tree removal, and tree protection during construction. Design guidelines should specifically include provisions to add more tree spaces where possible and appropriate and to increase the size of tree boxes to improve tree health and longevity.

**(3) Implement the Tree Bill.** In 2002, the City Council successfully passed the Urban Forest Preservation Act (the Tree Bill). However, because of opposition from some business entities, it took almost three years for the regulations to be enacted. Recently enforcement activities have increased, but should be improved. Now that the UFA is positioned to fully implement and enforce the Tree Bill and related construction guidelines, a public education campaign should be launched to improve public awareness about “special trees” and the city’s Tree Fund, which was established to provide additional resources for tree planting and assistance to low-income residents for the maintenance and removal of trees.

### **Set and Pursue Urban Tree Cover Goals**

A baseline of information makes it possible to set sufficient goals for environmental protection. To this end, the District needs to fully understand the current state of its tree resources and set appropriate goals to maintain and improve them.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Assess the tree canopy.** The District should determine the condition and extent of the existing tree canopy cover at a level of detail that is sufficient to permit communities, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, government agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, and other interested parties to set specific tree canopy goals for each community. Doing so will increase the social, economic, and ecological benefits that trees provide.

**(2) Expand the tree database and management system.** In the summer of 2002, Casey Trees, in partnership with the UFA, mobilized nearly 500 volunteers to conduct an unprecedented inventory of the District’s 106,000 street trees and 23,000 empty tree spaces. The resulting street tree Geographical Information System (GIS) database was an important step forward in the effort to convert UFA to an electronic system to plan and manage tree planting and maintenance programs and to track changes in street trees over time. District agencies should continue and strengthen this effort through partnerships with the federal government, utility companies, and the non-profit sector—with the goal of developing a live database and management system for the District’s trees using GIS mapping. Effort should be made to inventory trees on District and federal land, as well as along city streets.

### **Secure Tree Funding**

In 2005, the District’s Parks Department, with oversight of 800 acres of land, spent only \$47 per acre on tree management—less than \$40,000 in total. (By comparison, Seattle and Philadelphia each spent more than \$270 per acre.) Increases in funding for tree protection will be essential to ensuring the District’s environmental health.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Establish dedicated funding.** All District agencies that manage or own land in the city should have adequately funded line items in their budgets for tree management and care, in particular the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and DC Public Schools (DCPS). These agencies should

have professional urban foresters on staff or, at a minimum, under contract. Dedicated tree funds should be used to pay for maintenance by these staff or outside experts (or potentially the UFA).

### **Restore Trees**

Many of the trees and wooded areas in Washington, DC are in need of care. As development proceeds at a rapid pace, attention must be paid to the health and strength of existing trees.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Protect natural areas.** Tree canopy assessments, as well as studies such as the 2005 Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's *Anacostia Watershed Forest Management and Protection Strategy*, should be used to identify, protect, and restore tree conservation areas. These include forests and trees at the St. Elizabeth's Hospital site, the Soldiers Home, and along streams and parklands such as those in Oxon Run and Marvin Gaye Parks.

**(2) Develop with trees in mind.** Commercial and residential development should first be directed to redevelopment sites, rather than to areas with significant trees and forests. All commercial, residential, and business development should include tree and greenspace planting and maintenance plans that are closely monitored both during and well past installation. In addition, there should be strict enforcement of penalties for damage to city trees during construction projects, even if the trees affected are small in size and number.

*For more information, contact Heather Whitlow, Casey Trees Endowment Fund.*

## V. Homeland Security

*Prepared by the Safer Neighborhoods Campaign*

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, concern has mounted over a relatively simple but potentially deadly method for a terrorist attack: a toxic cloud of chlorine or other gas released by sabotaging cargo trains. Such a strategy would be both less expensive and easier to carry out than a nuclear or bioterrorism attack—particularly because cargo trains that are clearly marked with placards identifying their chemical contents pass day and night through Washington, DC (as well as other major cities considered to be prime terrorism targets). In addition, access to rail cars is dangerously easy—as illustrated most clearly by widespread graffiti on rail cars.

Research and modeling studies indicate that an attack on just one rail tank car of chlorine, for example, could release a wind-blown poison gas cloud more than 40 miles long that would blanket the District. During the 2004 City Council hearings on legislation to re-route trains carrying hazardous cargo, a scientist from the U.S. Naval Research Labs testified that just one chlorine rail tank release over the National Mall could potentially kill 100,000 people in half an hour.

Federal officials have indicated for many years that intelligence data points to the strong possibility that terrorists intend to use explosive, toxic gas cargoes in similar ways as they used jetliners in the 9/11 attacks. For example, an Al Qaeda operative detained in Columbus, Ohio, was, according to reports, specifically tasked to derail a train in Washington, DC. Concerns are mounting that in the absence of strong immediate action, carriers of chemical cargo will essentially continue to place potential weapons in accessible, high-target areas, and allow terrorist groups to plan for gas releases to ensure maximum impact in terms of loss of human lives.

With this in mind, **it is critical to mitigate the risk of a terrorist attack in the District by means of chemical cargo transport. Key among these are steps to enforce legislation to re-route trains; improve disaster prevention and emergency response planning and capabilities; and develop efforts to educate the public and share information.** Each of these is addressed in turn below.

### **Enforce Legislation to Re-Route Trains**

In February, 2005, the City Council passed the Terrorism Prevention in Hazardous Materials Transportation Emergency Act, which Mayor Williams then signed. The law prohibits shipments of highly hazardous chemicals by truck or train through a “Capitol exclusion zone” covering all locations within 2.2 miles of the U.S. Capitol Building. Transport of any chemical shipments would require a special permit issued by the District government.

Due to opposition to the new law by the railroad and chemical industries and the Bush Administration, legal action ensued—resulting in both a victory for the city in Federal District Court and a U.S. Court of Appeals action that has halted enforcement of the law. (In the meantime, CSX Transportation, which runs the trains in question, is re-routing gas shipments away from tracks within blocks of the U.S. Capitol, but continuing shipments on a line crossing the District for 8 miles through residential neighborhoods and within 20 blocks of the Capitol.)

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Defend the train re-routing ordinance.** The Terrorism Prevention in Hazardous Materials Transportation Emergency Act is currently the focus of a second trial against the District in U.S.

Federal District Court, which could take years to resolve. The City Council and the Mayor (and their court representatives) should not back down from their position that the Act is both legal and necessary, and should continue to call for its acceptance by the U.S. Congress and subsequent enforcement.

**(2) Enact the Homeland Security bill [16-102] introduced by City Council members Kathy Patterson and Phil Mendelson.** The City Council should take action to ensure passage of the Homeland Security, Risk Reduction, and Preparedness Act of 2005, currently being amended after a hearing. The Act would hold CSX Transportation liable for the release of highly toxic chemicals within the District and authorize damages to be levied against the rail carrier. [The Council should hold additional hearings to protect the far-reaching security provisions for target cities.]

### **Improve Disaster Prevention and Emergency Response Planning**

Current disaster prevention and emergency response planning and capabilities for major cities such as Washington, DC are inadequate to address the serious problems posed by the release of toxic chemicals. Shortcomings in preparedness include public warning, education on vulnerabilities, accountability measures for risk reduction, public health capabilities, drills, water security, and catastrophic insurance.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Assess existing vulnerabilities in highway and rail systems to terrorist attack.** District government agencies, such as DDOT, the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Office of Emergency Services, and Metro should conduct a thorough analyses of the city's emergency preparedness and the current status of resource availability, personnel capabilities, and logistical planning. Various scenarios, including both the release of toxic gases from trains and other methods of chemical attack, should be examined in this regard.

**(2) Require that all cargo transporters be insured.** The City Council should require proof of insurance from any companies transporting hazardous cargo through the District. Insurance coverage should be sufficient to address significant accidental and terrorist-caused releases of hazardous chemicals, and include freight containers on rail cars that were not inspected upon arrival in U.S. ports.

**(3) Expand and strengthen efforts currently underway to establish a siren system.** An adequate public warning system should be ensured in order to protect public safety and facilitate a prompt emergency response.

### **Educate the Public and Share Information**

A preference not to scare the public and the misguided position that transparency would result in terrorists obtaining critical information have stood in the way of educating and informing the public. As a result, District emergency officials have neglected to sufficiently and consistently communicate the risks of and potential scenarios following a toxic gas release.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Engage District residents in a vigorous public education program.** Information on the risks of chemical releases should be carefully crafted into useful, reliable materials and messages and distributed widely. Necessary prevention measures, as well actions that residents can take to prepare themselves for problems associated with an attack, should be highlighted. Visitors and students in Washington, DC should also have access to such information.

**(2) Engage other cities in a coordinated information-sharing effort.** As a member of the National League of Cities, Washington, DC officials should work with their counterparts in other cities at high risk for terrorist attacks on the introduction and public debate on re-routing ordinances regarding through transport of hazardous chemicals through populated areas. Officials in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia have already adopted such ordinances, based on the DC ordinance, with others likely to follow suit. There is much information on conditions and experiences, as well as emergency preparedness, that should be made transparent and coordinated in order to strengthen the effectiveness of cities' efforts.

*For more information, contact: Fred Millar, Friends of the Earth, Safer Neighborhoods Campaign.*

## VI. Smart Growth, Air Quality, and Transportation

### Smart Growth and Air Quality

*Prepared by the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities*

As do all major cities nationwide, Washington, DC faces a critical challenge: ensuring a vibrant place to live with better, more affordable housing and good job opportunities to all residents while also growing and developing. After three decades of losing population to the suburbs, the population of the District is finally stabilizing, and the city is projected to gain more people and jobs. Over the next 25 years, the Washington region will grow by 2 million new residents and 1.6 million new jobs.

For the benefit of both local residents and the entire region, the city will need to take advantage of a significant share of new residential and commercial growth. The central question for elected leaders and civic groups is where and how that growth should be accommodated. **Managed well, this growth can create safer streets and public places, provide critical new housing and employment opportunities for both current and future residents, and ensure an inclusive, thriving, financially stable city.**

These goals can best be achieved by locating development around transit stations and existing services and infrastructure, rather than continuing to sprawl outwards in to ever-new places. The 2002 report of the Mayoral Task Force on Transit-Oriented Development defines this approach to development as:

*...a land-use strategy to accommodate new growth, strengthen neighborhoods, expand choices and opportunities by capitalizing on bus and rail assets to stimulate and support vibrant, compact, diverse and accessible neighborhood centers within an easy walk of transit.*

Our city and region are replete with great examples of well-designed development around transit stations and major transportation corridors, with stable single-family neighborhoods just a few blocks away from services and commercial areas. This approach to planning provides real benefits for the surrounding neighborhood and the whole city, in particular a reduction in traffic congestion, cleaner air, and more open space. To ensure that this model becomes a reality in still more places throughout the region, officials and planners will need to approach growth using the most sophisticated tools available, create a fair and open process to address residents' concerns, and conserve and enhance neighborhood character. Through these steps, we can create better neighborhoods with increased services and housing, while also protecting the environment well into the future.

Specifically, **the District government will need to take action to accommodate a significant share of the region's growth near Metro stations and in transit corridors; implement a comprehensive housing strategy; make walking, biking, and mass transit the centerpiece of transportation policies; reinvest in neglected parks and public spaces; and engage regionally to support equitable development.** Each of these issue areas is addressed in turn below.

#### **Focus the Region's Growth Near Metro Stations and in Transit Corridors**

Today, District residents walk, bike, and take mass transit more than neighboring jurisdictions—nearly 40% of District households don't even own a car. In light of the growth projected for both the city and the region as a whole, the District will need to expand this trend by offering more housing opportunities, better access to jobs, retail, and services, and greater transportation choices. More residents and fewer commuters can both strengthen Washington's tax base and protect the environment

through reduced driving and more walking, bicycling, and mass transit use. In turn, the quality of our air, water, and daily lives will be enhanced.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Plan for growth while conserving neighborhoods.** District agencies and the City Council should take steps to implement the recommendations from the Mayor’s Task Force on Transit-Oriented Development. (See:

<http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1282,q,569495,planningNav,l323411.asp>) This includes developing an overarching strategy to conserve the character of existing residential neighborhoods while creating more dense development to accommodate new residents and supporting existing commercial areas.

**(2) Establish standards for urban design.** Quality design standards should be followed to honor the grand planning and architectural history of Washington, DC while also adjusting to growth and change. To this end, the District should update outmoded zoning regulations and adopt state-of-the-art urban design standards in order to conserve and enhance city neighborhoods and main streets as walkable places. Such innovative approaches to development should include “form-based coding,” through which developers are required to create people-friendly sidewalks and streets when planning buildings. (See: <http://www.formbasedcodes.org/resource.html>.)

**Implement the Comprehensive Housing Strategy**

This strategy was developed through a task force to serve the needs of all communities by preventing the displacement of current residents even as the District responds to the new and growing demand for urban living. See: <http://www.dc-chstaskforce.org>.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Fully support the Housing Production Trust Fund.** This fund was established with the goal of increasing revenues dedicated to affordable housing. To date, the fund has only been partially funded.

**(2) Enact an effective, fair, and mandatory Inclusionary Zoning program. ?**

**(3) Require thresholds for affordable housing.** Residential development on publicly-owned land should be carried out using a standard of including at least 30% of units as affordable housing.

**(4) Review District land-use practices.** Current development patterns should be analyzed and revised with regard to provision of housing opportunities; for example, streamlining permitting for accessory apartments and rezoning underutilized industrial land for mixed use (i.e., joint residential and commercial) development projects should be done.

**(5) Enact new funding streams to support affordable housing.** This goal was identified in the District’s comprehensive housing strategy, but has yet to be realized. Such a strategy should include restoration of the real estate transfer tax rate and deed recordation fees to the 1.5% level and funding for a rent supplement program for the most vulnerable, low-income residents.

**Make Walking, Biking, and Mass Transit the Centerpiece of Transportation Policies**

In order to meet residential and job growth goals, District policies and investments should focus on the more efficient use of limited public right-of-way spaces and transportation funding, ensuring that

streets and sidewalks give priority to pedestrians and bicyclists and that mass transit is widely accessible and affordable.

***Recommended Actions:***

**(1) Fully fund Metro’s operating budget.** District officials should commit to adequate long-term capital improvement funding.

**(2) Expand high-performing transit service.** Bus rapid transit, streetcars, and light rail systems should receive greater support, including by utilizing signal priority, establishing dedicated travel lanes, and adopting off-vehicle fare collection, real-time travel information, and other innovations that improve the speed and reliability of mass transit.

**(3) Change street design and operations policies.** New approaches should be developed and implemented in order to create “complete streets” that serve everyone traveling on them, including by giving priority to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders through designated travel areas. Automobile-dominated roads should be redeveloped into boulevards, avenues, and streets that can accommodate other uses, which would also improve safety for all users and create attractive destinations. (See: [http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Seattle\\_Performance\\_Measures.pdf](http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Seattle_Performance_Measures.pdf).)

**(4) Reduce traffic by managing parking and travel demand.** Valuable on-street parking should be managed through pricing systems so that drivers can reliably find spaces. New development projects and large institutions should be required to create transportation demand management (TDM) plans in order to reduce traffic and parking pressures. More varied travel choices that reduce car ownership, such as car sharing with designated street parking for carsharing vehicles, should be supported. (See: [http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/articles/article\\_tdm.htm](http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/articles/article_tdm.htm) and [http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Reforming\\_Parking\\_Requirements.pdf](http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Reforming_Parking_Requirements.pdf).)

**Reinvest in Neglected Parks and Public Spaces**

Great cities are made up of great neighborhoods with attractive parks and memorable public spaces. The District should expand planning and increase resources to improve neglected public park areas, and ensure that all neighborhoods have access to high-quality open space. (Also see page 17)

***Recommended Actions:***

**(1) Create a comprehensive parks and open space strategy.** Such a plan should identify the places and neighborhoods that lack sufficient open space and recreational access and where reinvestment needs are greatest.

**(2) Create a parks and recreation impact fee.** A required fee would generate greater financial resources to support much-needed upgrades and investments. This approach would also offer an alternative when relief is sought by developers from on-site residential recreation space requirements.

**Engage Regionally to Support Equitable Development**

Washington, DC is directly impacted by the development and transportation decisions made in every surrounding suburban jurisdiction. Regional collaboration is needed to ensure that the city’s rebirth isn’t undone by poor land use decisions on its fringes, in particular with regard to ensuring support for a fully-funded regional transit system—an essential element of the economic health of both the city and the region.

## ***Recommended Actions:***

- (1) Support regional land use and transportation planning.** The District should make use of its participation in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Transportation Planning Board and other regional bodies to emphasize transit-oriented development, including the creation of walkable, mixed-use communities that reduce overall vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, air pollution, and loss of farms and forest land.
- (2) Advocate for greater regional equity.** District officials should advocate for maintaining federal and private sector jobs inside the District. They should work with their counterparts throughout the region to ensure that jobs and services are located where mass transit is accessible and that land use and transportation decisions are coordinated regionally.
- (3) Oppose outer beltway segments.** The District should take a stand against damaging large-scale road projects across the Washington region, such as the Inter-County Connector in Maryland, the "Techway" North Potomac Rivers Crossing, the Western Transportation Corridor, the Tri-County Parkway, the 234 Bypass in Virginia, and the widening of I-66 inside the Beltway. These projects promise to consume billions of dollars of limited transportation funding while scattering jobs and housing farther from the city and other transit-accessible locations.
- (4) Redirect highway funding.** Priority should instead be given to Metro, other transit services, and bicycle and pedestrian projects.
- (5) Support new transit investments.** Resources should be invested in projects that fulfill appropriate criteria for cost-effectiveness and ridership and that conform to transit-oriented development plans.

*For more information, contact Cheryl Cort, Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities.*

## **Transportation**

*Prepared by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)*

Washington, DC has unique features that are extremely conducive to bicycling for both transportation and recreation: dense development, an interconnected street grid, an excellent park system, gentle topography, and a relatively mild climate. With this in mind, bicycling is a readily available, as well as inexpensive and efficient, form of transportation throughout the city.

**Bicycling can also help address many of the problems facing District residents.** Foremost among these is relief from traffic, since creating conditions that encourage cycling also helps decrease the use of single occupancy motor vehicles (a major source of traffic congestion). Bicycling is an excellent complement to the region's mass transit system.

Equally critical is the need to prevent environmental damage in the District. About 90% of automobile emissions in a 7-mile trip are generated in the first mile (before the engine warms up), while more than 40% of all trips in the United States are 2 miles or shorter and more than 25% are under a mile—distances easily covered by bicycle.

Bicycling for recreation or commuting purposes can also help alleviate health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and issues associated with a sedentary lifestyle. Improving conditions for cycling can simultaneously foster healthier, more active lifestyles for District residents, in turn decreasing absenteeism from work and lowering health care costs.

Another major contribution of bicycling is the way that it helps promote economic equity. For many of the District's poorer residents, bicycling is the only transportation option—providing safe facilities for bicyclists will give the less affluent improved access to jobs and services.

Fortunately, since Friends of the Earth's *Environmental Agenda* for the city was last published in 1999, many changes have taken place within the District that have helped foster an environment where bicycling is increasingly seen as an accessible, affordable, and safe transportation mode for residents and visitors alike.

In March 2000, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) issued a "Call to Action for Bicycling" for the District that outlined the steps necessary to further encourage safe bicycle transportation and recreation. The three main aspects were the reestablishment of the office of the bicycle coordinator within the transportation division of the Department of Public Works; an update to the 1975 bicycle master plan; and the hiring of a project manager to oversee the completion of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. Since the call to action was issued, all of these goals have been accomplished.

However, while progress has certainly been made, much more work needs to be done before bicycling can be truly woven into the transportation fabric of the city and the full benefits of a bicycle-friendly community can be reaped. **It has become critical to adopt and implement supportive policies; provide tax incentives to encourage bike commuting; complete and improve bicycle trails; remove barriers to biking; educate cyclists and motorists; and promote bicycle-friendly communities.** Each of these strategies is addressed in turn below.

### **Adopt and Implement Supportive Policies**

Streets in Washington, DC are often not designed or built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, and lack the space and striping necessary to accommodate these groups alongside motor vehicles. Furthermore, implementation of the District's Bicycle Master Plan has been slow and inconsistent.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) The District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) should adopt a policy of routine accommodation, or "complete streets."** Such an approach should ensure that all District roadways are built or reconstructed with lanes for bicyclists and pedestrians. DDOT is currently reviewing new roadway striping guidelines that would greatly benefit cyclists. (see page 31).

**(2) Complete the DC Bike Plan.** Although revisions to the 1975 Bicycle Master Plan were completed in 2004, bike facilities (including designated lanes and parking racks) often take a back seat to other transportation choices. Bicycling should be made a stronger priority in the city's transportation planning. The revised Master plan—which calls for an extensive and interconnected network of bike facilities and signed bike routes to further encourage bicycle transportation throughout the city—should be put on a faster track toward actual implementation.

### **Provide Tax Incentives to Promote Bicycle Commuting**

Benefits are currently provided to District employees who take Metro, but these incentives are not available to walkers and cyclists.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) The City Council should extend the transportation fringe benefit currently offered to Metro riders to workers who bike or walk to work.** Both developers and employers should also be encouraged to provide ample indoor secure bike parking, and shower and changing facilities. In addition, a policy of extending parking cash outs—by which employees can “cash out” the value of employer-provided parking by foregoing parking, and receive the taxable cash value of the parking in return—be adopted so that this benefit is available to cyclists and walkers.

**Complete and Improve Bicycle Trails**

Washington, DC is blessed with an extensive trail network. However, improvements can be made to provide interconnected non-motorized transportation and recreation facilities. Greater attention to this network would make bicycling an easier, safer, and more enjoyable transportation option.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Complete the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT).** As envisioned, the MBT would connect Union Station with Silver Spring by following Metro’s Red Line. This trail has been under development since 1998, but little progress has been made in recent years to bring it to completion and full utilization. The MBT is considered to be the missing link in the bicycle beltway because it would connect to the Capital Crescent Trail in Silver Spring and to Georgetown via the trails of the National Mall. A spur trail would also be built from Fort Totten to the West Hyattsville Metro Station in order to connect with the Anacostia Tributaries Trail Network. DDOT should ensure that this key facility remains a high priority.

**(2) Ensure Access to the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail.** Non-motorized neighborhood access to Anacostia Park should be made available and a connection between the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail to the Metropolitan Branch Trail should be established.

**(3) Rehabilitate the Suitland Parkway Trail.** This existing trail should be restored and extended north to the Anacostia Metro station. District agencies should work with the National Park Service and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission to extend the trail from the District line to Andrews Air Force base, with connections to the Branch Avenue Metro and the Henson Creek Trail

**(4) Repair Rock Creek Trail.** The Rock Creek Trail has not been repaved since it was completed and is now in a near-total state of disrepair. The Rock Creek Trail should be brought up to modern design standards and resurfaced.

**(5) Protect the Capital Crescent Trail.** Development along the Potomac River waterfront threatens the Capital Crescent Trail. A direct connection from the trailhead to the Rock Creek Trail to the east should be ensured via the proposed Georgetown Waterfront Park.

**Prevent Barriers to Bicycling**

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, security measures have increased throughout the District. Some of these impede bicycling, such as physical barriers and street closings.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Coordinate with federal agencies.** District agencies should make every effort to work with the Architect of the Capitol, Department of Homeland Security, the National Park Service, and the

National Capital Planning Commission to ensure that post-9/11 security improvements don't create barriers to bicycling and walking, especially around the Capitol campus, the museums of the National Mall, and federal office buildings.

### **Educate Cyclists and Motorists**

Many District residents hesitate to bicycle due to concerns over safety and managing traffic. Education of both cyclists and motorists on the "rules of the road" is essential to promoting and improving conditions for bicycling.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Strengthen current educational efforts.** Through WABA, the District currently provides bicycle and pedestrian safety education in the city's public schools, as well as "Confident City Cycling" classes for adults. These programs should be maintained and a new education effort focused on out-of-state drivers should be aggressively pursued.

### **Promote Bicycle Friendly Communities**

In 2004 Washington, DC was named a bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). As part of the award process, the LAB recommended changes that would make the District an even better place to bicycle.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Establish a Blue Ribbon Task Force.** In order to implement the League of American Bicyclists recommendations, a Blue Ribbon task force should be created consisting of representatives from the District Department of Transportation, Office of Planning, Department of Education, and Police Department, as well as representatives from relevant federal agencies.

*For more information, contact Eric Gilliland, Executive Director, Washington Area Bicyclist Association.*

## VII. Climate Change

*Prepared by Chesapeake Climate Action Network*

Global climate change is the most significant and challenging environmental problem of our time. The effects of climate change nationwide (and worldwide) in the past decade are staggering and increasingly obvious. From destructive hurricanes to the alarming rate at which polar ice caps are melting, climate change has had a more direct impact on lives and natural environments in the past decade than ever before in human history. One clear sign of change is that 2005 surpassed 1998 as the warmest year on record.

Climate change has led to severe and destructive weather patterns around the world, including in the United States. The increased temperatures of the oceans due to global warming have added to the severity, intensity, and devastation of this past year's hurricane season along the Gulf Coast and in Florida. The impacts on Washington, DC are also evident, from increased flooding, to strange weather patterns, to extreme heat waves that affect the city and its citizens. In recent years, the District's beloved cherry blossoms bloom a week earlier than they did in 1970.

**The United States stands virtually alone among the nations of the world by refusing to commit to cuts in the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.** We have no national plan to deal with the growing impacts of climate change, instead focusing on a piecemeal "emergency relief" rather than a preventative approach. But the impacts of climate change cannot be ignored any longer. Fortunately, it is by virtue of the actions of states and localities nationwide that actions to halt greenhouse gas emissions are taking place, including through innovative laws, programs, and procurement decisions that decrease greenhouse gas emissions from power sources and vehicles.

The District has made great strides in the efforts to curb the devastating effects of climate change, as detailed below. Washington, DC is moving in the right direction toward climate stabilization, but there is much more to be done. Only by working together can the residents of Washington, DC, the surrounding region, and the nation as a whole combat the negative effects of global climate change on our neighborhoods, natural environments, and communities. **The District can facilitate this process through efforts to fulfill the goals of the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement; adopt and expand clean vehicle policies; and increase clean energy and green development.** Each of these strategies is addressed in turn below.

### **Fulfill the Goals of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement**

In 2005, Mayor Williams signed the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, which establishes reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions. This is to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing anti-sprawl and urban reforestation programs that help meet or exceed the greenhouse gas emission reductions set out in the globally adopted Kyoto Protocol.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Enact laws to meet the goals outlined in the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement.** The overall goal of this agreement is to reduce global warming pollution to 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. The climate agreement outlines various means to achieving this, including investing in greater "green tag" clean energy purchases; land use policies and ordinances that encourage green space, bike paths, and walkable neighborhoods; and codes that require retrofitting buildings with energy efficient appliances and compact fluorescent light bulbs. The mayor and the City Council should encourage and require that such strategies are pursued by city agencies, businesses, and residents.

### **Adopt and Expand Clean Vehicle Policies and Programs**

Motor vehicles account for about 40% of carbon dioxide pollution nationwide, and every gallon of gas burned produces roughly 20 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), the leading greenhouse gas pollutant and a major cause of global warming. In recent years, the District has purchased more hybrid and low-emission vehicles for the city government fleet and city buses. This approach to reducing the harmful effects of air pollution and reducing the District's climate change impact should be expanded to include new programs and policies.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Adopt a DC Clean Cars Bill.** Ten states have adopted similar legislation, which would require all new vehicles registered in the District to meet high California standards for tailpipe emissions. The Mayor and City Council should adopt a Clean Cars bill, which will help the District realize a significant reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> and other harmful air pollutants (such as sulfur dioxide, ozone, and nitrogen oxide) that have negative health and environmental effects throughout the District.

**(2) Require new cars registered in the District to display “Global Warming Impact” stickers.** The City Council or the new DC Department of the Environment should develop a program to ensure that every new car registered in the District prominently displays a “global warming performance” sticker. This program would educate consumers and residents about the driving-related contribution to global warming and help them make the link between their cars and increased CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Stickers would also serve to educate other residents about which cars are best in lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This program would be relatively easy and inexpensive to implement and would enable District residents to take personal responsibility for the global warming impacts of the vehicles they drive.

**(3) Issue a Mayoral executive order that all District fleet vehicles using conventional diesel fuel be retrofitted to use biodiesel.** A 1998 biodiesel lifecycle study, jointly sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, concluded that biodiesel reduces net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 78% compared to petroleum diesel. All new vehicle purchases by the city should be hybrid-electric vehicles and the entire city fleet should be either biodiesel or hybrid electric vehicles by 2015. Setting this goal is a reasonable way to meet the overall requirement of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as set out in the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement.

### **Increase Clean Energy and Green Development**

Less reliance on fossil fuels and a greater use of clean, renewable energy sources is the greatest single contribution that individuals, cities, states, and the nation as a whole can make to alleviating the impacts of climate change. The District's approach to and regulations on energy use and development should be part of this critical process.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Raise the percentage in Washington, DC's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) legislation to 20% by 2020.** In 2004, Washington, DC joined 20 other states with an RPS by passing legislation that mandates 11% of the city's power provided to residents come from clean energy resources by 2011. Many states that have enacted RPS legislation are now considering raising their percentages in response to growing demand for renewable energy. The Mayor and City Council should do the same.

**(2) Adopt legislation with incentives for District Universities to buy clean power and clean vehicles.** Washington, DC has eight major universities within the city limits. On average, students from these institutions emit the equivalent of about 640,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. By coordinating with universities and providing financial and program-related incentives to make the switch to clean energy and clean cars, the Mayor and the City Council can help decrease emissions in the city and the region.

**(3) Support initiatives to promote green building and sustainable communities.** Legislation requiring greater energy efficiency in new buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings with energy-efficient technology will ensure reductions in the consumption of fossil fuels. The cost of solar and geothermal technologies used in green buildings has decreased because of their popularity among developers and consumers, making it a more viable option for cities and residents. By requiring that District buildings use energy efficient appliances and heating and cooling systems, both utility bills and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced.

*For more information, contact Diana Dascalu, Chesapeake Climate Action Network.*

## VIII. Budget Transparency

*Prepared by the DC Fiscal Policy Institute*

The push to establish a District of Columbia Department of the Environment (DOE) —a goal achieved in 2005—was sparked by a desire for better coordination and management of the delivery of environmental services in the District. An added advantage of creating the Department of the Environment is having a more centralized budget with which to provide these services. **Because budgets are the strongest expression of a government’s real priorities, a better understanding of the financial resources devoted to environmental protection is an important step toward environmental protection.**

Simply having a series of line items for the Department of the Environment in the District’s budget, however, does not guarantee that the information provided will be meaningful and useful. Policymakers and residents also need access to accurate, clear, and timely budget information. The existence of *transparent* budgets—for both the Department of the Environment and other District agencies—would promote a healthy discussion of budget priorities, enable the City Council to perform its agency oversight functions, and empower residents and advocates to hold public officials accountable for the delivery of public services.

**The establishment of the Department of the Environment provides a unique opportunity to develop a truly transparent budget** that meets the needs of the agency, elected officials, and residents. Steps to do so are discussed below.

### **Develop a Transparent Department of the Environment Budget**

An improved budget process will benefit the Department of the Environment and facilitate stronger environmental protection throughout Washington, DC. It will also provide a model for other local agencies, particularly because in many ways the overall District budget fails to be transparent. With this in mind, many of the following recommendations for achieving a transparent budget for the Department of the Environment could be applied to the city’s budget process as a whole.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Match the line items of the Department of the Environment budget to major services and programs.** Too often, numerous services are combined into one budget line item, making it difficult to track funding for individual program categories. While Department of the Environment has developed a budget structure for Fiscal Year 2007, the agency should seek input from residents as to whether this structure appropriately distinguishes funding for the services that they consider to be most important.

For example, the \$8 million “water resources” activity monitors stormwater runoff, assesses drinking water quality, and oversees clean-up of the Anacostia River, among other things. Although these services are related, it might make more sense to report funding for some of these services separately. Another possible concern is that stormwater runoff services are mentioned in both this activity area and in the “land development and remediation” activity, which makes it difficult to thoroughly track these services.

In addition, the District should take steps to make sure that environmental services that have not been transferred to the Department of the Environment but remain under the auspices of other agencies (such as the Department of Health) are delineated clearly.

**(2) Provide sufficient detail in the budget on funding trends by source of funds.** The District's budget provides only a limited set of financial information for agencies and programs. For example, it provides only one year of historical spending data with regard to specific activity, and these figures fail to distinguish between federal and local funds. District budget officials have access to detailed historical budget information through the "Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Source" information system. Advocates should also have access to this tool or be able to make requests of the CFO's office for detailed information when it is not included in budget documents.

**(3) Highlight funding changes in the annual budget that reflect increases or decreases in services.** The District develops a "baseline" budget every year, which details the funding needed to maintain current services while also taking into account increases in salary costs, utilities, and other factors. Each fiscal year budget should clearly state the baseline budget for every program and indicate when a program's proposed funding for the upcoming year is above or below the baseline. In those cases, the fiscal year budget should indicate the impact of the funding increase or decrease on service delivery.

**(4) Include detailed measures of agency outputs in the budget.** This information should be included in addition to information on progress toward meeting performance goals. The Fiscal Year 2007 budget for the Department of the Environment does not include any performance measures, but notes that they will be developed for the Fiscal Year 2008 budget. Performance measures should be developed in collaboration with the advocacy community, in order to ensure that they are the most important ones for actually tracking Department of the Environment's performance. In addition, the budget should track agency *output levels*, not just progress toward performance goals. For example, one performance measure in the District's 2007 budget is the "percentage of teens in the Training Program in Aftercare (TPA) program receiving pregnancy prevention services." The goal is set at 100%, but the budget leaves out the most critical information: *how many* teens are being served by the program.

*For more information, contact Ed Lazere, DC Fiscal Policy Institute.*

## IX. Food Safety and Security

Prepared by Friends of Earth

Food safety and security is guaranteed, consistent access to fresh, healthy food regardless of one's income. **Ensuring food security for every U.S. citizen would help to combat malnutrition, severe hunger, and the obesity problems that face our nation today.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2004 nearly 12% of all U.S. citizens were "food insecure" and 4.4 million of those surveyed were classified as "severely hungry" because of insufficient resources to obtain an adequate amount of food each day. The number of households facing food insecurity has increased by over 3 million since 1999. In Washington, DC, nearly 4% of all households are considered insecure with "extreme hunger," or severe deficient daily food intake due to a lack of adequate resources.

Multiple problems arise from living in food-insecure households. For example, children who are malnourished experience greater frequency of immune suppression, stunted growth, impaired mental alertness, and even decreased learning capacity. Other symptoms arise from simply not eating a nutritionally balanced diet, such as irritability, fatigue, constant headaches, and diminished productivity.

A market system that more directly and closely links producers with consumers in the greater DC region would help combat food insecurity. An environmentally sustainable, regionally based market system would also help improve human health in the District. This could be achieved through, for instance, increased protection of working farms through conservation easements and Community Supported Agriculture sites (CSAs) and support for community gardens and farmer's markets. Nutrition education could also be integrated into school curricula to promote healthy eating habits at a young age.

Specific actions should be taken in Washington, DC to ensure continuous access to fresh, healthy produce and guarantee the quality of food consumed. **Critical steps include bringing local farmers' produce to school cafeterias; improving the affordability of healthy foods in low-income communities; opposing passage of uniform food safety legislation; and providing local government funding for Community Supported Agriculture programs.** Each of these strategies is addressed in turn below.

### **Bring Local Farmers' Produce to School Cafeterias**

A "Farm to Cafeteria" program would require Washington, DC schools to serve primarily local produce in all cafeterias, incorporate nutrition education into the academic curriculum, and even promote hands-on learning opportunities through school gardens and field trips to local farms, farmer's markets, and CSA sites. By providing nutrition education and fresh produce in school cafeterias, better eating habits among children could be established and sustained. Approximately 65% of all U.S. citizens are overweight, and over 30% are obese. Developing healthy eating habits at an early age would help counteract such pending health risks in children throughout the District. According to the Food Research and Action Center, eating healthy food regularly improves test scores and increases attention spans. By providing local produce in District school cafeterias, the food served to students would also more accurately reflect the cultural diversity of surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition, serving local produce significantly decreases the environmental impacts of packaging and transporting food for cafeterias. At a time when the United States faces soaring gas prices, over-consumption of oil, and air pollution problems, using local produce for school cafeterias could help reduce the environmental and economical impacts associated with large-scale food production and

transportation. Having students interact with local farmers would help to establish and sustain a relationship between producers and consumers, thereby improving the health of future generations and securing markets for local farmers.

The goal of serving local produce in school cafeterias is highly attainable. Overall, 22 states and over 400 school districts already participate in farm-to-school programs, and the numbers simply keep growing. In 2004, a “Farm-to-Table” program was created in Rappahannock County, Virginia. The program is run through classes in horticulture and culinary arts and allows students to grow, eat, and sell what is produced in their own garden. Students also share meals prepared in class with the local senior center and help to landscape the school grounds. A “Farm-to-College” program at Pennsylvania College of Technology is successfully integrating local dairy products into all campus cafeterias. As a result, milk sales increased 25% in the first three months of the program, indicating the profitability of converting cafeterias to serve local produce. In addition, all schools in North Carolina now have the option to eat locally grown produce in school cafeterias through the U.S. Department of Defense’s “DoD Fresh” program. (Also see page 50)

***Recommendations for Action:***

- (1) Purchase, prepare, and sell locally produced and nutritionally healthy food.** This should be a high priority for the Washington, DC School District. Funding for this effort is available through the seed grant fund program in Section 122 of the U.S. Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004.
- (2) Provide funding for the “Farm to Cafeteria” grant program of the Community Food Security Coalition.** The funds available would specifically support equipment expenses, labor costs for food preparation, and researching local and seasonal crop availability.
- (3) Support local farmers by buying into shares at local CSAs.** This would create a holistic community support system in which the Washington, DC School District would provide a steady and secure market for local producers while, at the same time, supplying school cafeterias with fresh, local produce.
- (4) Create a monetary award program.** Such a program, which could be launched by the City Council and the Mayor, would support and provide an incentive for schools demonstrating the most success at integrating Farm to Cafeteria concepts and strategies.
- (5) Post the nutritional content of food served.** Signs should include calories, calories from fat, sodium content, and vitamin and mineral values. If possible, labels should include where the items were harvested and whether they are organic.
- (6) Create a nutrition committee to oversee the execution of a Farm to Cafeteria program within schools.** The committee should consist of school administrators, faculty, parents, students, local community members, and nutrition experts, and be established and coordinated by the Washington, DC School District.
- (7) Assist in the creation of extracurricular opportunities in food nutrition education.** These could include collaborating with local farmers to create an after-school work study program for students and hands-on nutritional education through cooking classes using edible gardens so that students learn to cook what they grow.

### **Improve Affordability of Healthy Foods in Low-income Communities**

The Washington, DC Commission on Food and Nutrition should increase local development of grocery stores that sell affordable, healthy foods in low-income areas. Throughout the District, there is a large gap between the number of health food-related grocery stores in affluent neighborhoods and grocery stores in lower-income communities stocking far less healthy food products. According to the Sustainable Washington Alliance, residents living east of the Anacostia River have one-sixth the level of access to fresh, local, and healthy produce as those living west of Rock Creek Park. Even more alarming, there are currently no grocery stores at all in Ward 8.

Although there has been a slight increase in farmer's markets throughout the District (due to work of local organizations), residents in low-income neighborhoods still have little access to healthy food, in particular fresh produce, quality meat and poultry, and whole grains. Expansion of farmer's markets and public markets would increase tourist revenues by creating more attractions, support local producers by increasing their retail options, generate employment opportunities, and generally improve access to quality food in low-income neighborhoods.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

##### **(1) Increase the number of local food vendors in low-income neighborhoods.**

(a) The District zoning office should provide incentives for developers to establish public markets within their buildings as a public service, for example by increasing building density or allowing zoning variances.

(b) Development of new public markets, healthy grocery stores, and community gardens in lower-income communities could be funded through Section 108 of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development code, as well as through Community Development Block Grants and Tax Increment Financing.

##### **(2) Support the acceptance of food stamps at local farmer's markets by increasing the number of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) units and food vouchers available at each market.**

(a) The District government should increase information about and accessibility of the application process so that additional farmer's markets can receive Electronic Benefits Transfer technology and accept food stamps.

(b) The District government should subsidize the purchase of wireless EBT technology (each machine costs around \$1,000) for local vendors.

(c) The DC Commission on Food and Nutrition should recommend that the Congressional Representative work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Congress to increase federal funding for the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program.

### **Oppose Passage of Federal Uniformity for Food Act**

The National Uniformity for Food Act is proposed federal legislation that will merge all food safety laws into one "uniform" national system governed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Any existing regulations or warnings that are not used by the FDA already will be eradicated. In other words, the power of local and state governments to execute food standards or public warnings will be stripped away and only those that the FDA determines are pertinent to investigate, or those identical to already existing FDA regulations, will be allowed. For example, certain local regulations on the lead levels of local drinking water supplies will be eradicated because they are not identical to or "uniform" with current FDA standards. The National Uniformity for Food Act takes away the power of local

governments and citizens—including in Washington, DC— to create laws and regulations in all areas of food safety.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Create laws that protect the authority of local governments to maintain and improve food safety standards.** The City Council and Mayor should develop legislation to mandate warnings on food labels and uphold current food safety regulations, even if the National Uniformity for Food Act passes the U.S. Congress and becomes federal law.

**Implement Local Government Funding for Community Supported Agriculture Programs**

Community Supported Agriculture Programs (CSAs) have been in existence in the United States since the 1980s, and are continually growing in popularity. CSAs operate by having members buy shares in a local farm and receive portions of that season's harvest through weekly deliveries (on average). Community supported agriculture is a way for citizens to ensure consumption of safe, naturally grown food that has a minimal environmental impact, and to support local markets and sustainable agricultural methods. With greater government funding, CSAs could increase harvest output to support an ever-growing demand for fresh and organic produce. The District government's involvement in community supported agriculture would make locally grown produce available to more Washington, DC residents. CSAs would also be able to increase distribution locations for shareholders, reaching more low-income neighborhoods as a result.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Fund a CSA grant program.** Such a program should be developed by the DC Commission on Food and Nutrition and the City Council to ensure needed financial support for CSA farms throughout the Washington, DC area.

**(2) Promote the use of conservation easements throughout the Washington, DC region.** This step would help support and protect working farms and preserve locations for CSAs in which District residents can become shareholders.

*For more information contact Meghan Beach (author) or Chris Weiss, Friends of the Earth.*

## X. Green Schools

*Prepared by DC Smart Schools, Casey Trees Endowment Fund, DC Environmental Education Consortium, and the Alliance to Save Energy.*

Washington, DC's public schools have been strongly criticized for poor performance. Studies indicate that the physical condition of school buildings and grounds affect student learning as much as other factors commonly given more attention, such as teacher competency and the number of computers available. **A comprehensive environmental approach would help transform the buildings and grounds of public schools into healthy places of learning that would result in a far better education for our children.**

During the summer of 2006, the Washington, DC school system prepared a Master Facilities Plan for public schools—essentially a blueprint for how \$3 billion is to be spent on new and modernized facilities over the next 20 years. It will be highly beneficial to incorporate high-performance design, construction, operations, and maintenance into the Washington, DC Public Schools Master Facilities Plan. In short, the Green School strategies discussed below could ultimately save the school system 20–30% of the more than \$30 million it spends every year on energy and water

The policies discussed here are system-wide and should therefore become part of the Master Facilities Plan. To this end, the District's Mayor, City Council, and School Board should ensure that the Plan incorporates the recommendations on Green Schools provided in this *Agenda*.

A 2005 report prepared for the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, *National Review of Green Schools: Costs, Benefits and Implications for Massachusetts*, found that redesigning schools to embrace high-performance, environmental design and operations yields substantial financial benefits. This review of 30 high-performance schools found that while these facilities, on average, cost 1.5–2.5% more than traditional schools, the financial benefits they produce are 10–20 times larger. In other words, every dollar invested in green technologies saves \$10–20 in operational and maintenance costs.

Green School strategies are not intended to impose an additional cost on Washington, DC's already burdened school system, but rather to help realize extraordinarily large savings. Because operating expenses typically account for almost half the total expenditures over the 20-year life of a school building, such savings can underwrite the kind of high-performance buildings that provide proven educational benefits, including better student performance on reading and math tests; increased average daily attendance; higher teacher satisfaction and retention; reduced liability exposure; a positive influence on the environment; and opportunities to use a facility itself as a teaching tool.

Privately-funded schools should not be the only places in our city that feature the high-performance buildings and outdoor learning landscapes that significantly benefit both students and communities. **A Green School task force should be established by 2008 to complete a pilot high-performance public school with a comprehensive, effective environmental education program, building on successful programs (such as in Montgomery and Arlington Counties and at Sidwell Friends Middle School in the District).**

Broadly speaking, Washington, DC's Mayor, City Council, and School Board should support measures to achieve the vision of healthy, energy-efficient, environmentally-conscious public schools. To do so, they will need to promote environmental education and schoolyard habitats; ensure clean energy and

energy efficiency and conservation; improve indoor environmental quality; improve school location and usage; promote water conservation and stormwater management; facilitate waste management and recycling; and provide healthy foods at schools. Each of these strategies is discussed in turn below.

### **Promote Environmental Education and Schoolyard Habitats**

Research has shown that green schoolyards and outdoor learning can provide substantial academic, developmental, and social benefits to children. Specifically, these approaches have been shown to boost reading and math scores, help students perform better in science and social studies, improve students' ability to make connections and transfer knowledge from familiar to unfamiliar contexts, and reduce classroom discipline problems.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Create outdoor learning opportunities at schools by providing clean and safe green spaces for learning, play, and reflection year-round.** To make this a reality, two new positions should be established within the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS): an Environmental Education Director (in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction) and a Schoolyard Greening Project Coordinator (in the Office of Facilities Management).

**(2) Utilize landscape design principles and materials that positively impact the urban ecosystem and its local watershed.** Low Impact Development (LID) practices for stormwater management can reduce polluted runoff from school grounds, including through tree planting, removal of impervious surfaces, and installation of green roofs, rain gardens, and rain barrels. (See the stormwater section below.) Food gardens, composting programs, schoolyard wildlife habitats, and the use of integrated pest management on school grounds will also facilitate both healthier schools and valuable educational lessons.

**(3) Encourage environmental stewardship and a sense of responsibility for sites by multiple users, including students, teachers, staff, and community members.** Key staff at each school should be trained on the utilization and care of the schoolyard as an outdoor classroom, and in how to establish a Schoolyard Stewards program (for students) and an Adopt-A-Schoolyard program (for community members) to encourage monitoring and maintenance.

**(4) Fulfill the Chesapeake Bay Program's *Chesapeake 2000* agreement (signed by Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania).** To do so, support and funding should be provided to every District student to enable participation in a meaningful watershed educational experience.

**(5) Establish an environmental studies academy at a Washington, DC public high school.** This measure would help prepare students for “green collar” jobs after high school and for college studies in environmental professions. Such an academy should include internship and apprenticeship opportunities, as well as project-based learning experiences through environmental restoration projects in the students' communities.

*For more information, contact Heather Langford, DC Environmental Education Consortium, [hlangford@caseytrees.org](mailto:hlangford@caseytrees.org); Gilda Allen, DC Environmental Education Consortium, [gilda.allen@dc.gov](mailto:gilda.allen@dc.gov).*

### **Ensure Clean Energy, Energy Efficiency and Conservation**

DCPS spends more than \$20 million a year on energy— more than the cost of supplies and computers combined. Energy-efficient facilities and energy conservation measures could reduce operating

expenditures by an estimated 30%. (When Montgomery County Public Schools created a Utility Conservation Team, immediate annual savings of \$1.5 million were achieved through adoption of the Alliance to Save Energy's Green Schools Program.) Energy-efficient system upgrades and new and modernized facilities will multiply these savings in years to come— if the current trend in energy prices continues, such savings could be exponential.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Mandate that Washington, DC's Master Facilities Plan comply with leading federal energy standards.** Specifically, all new and modernized facilities should follow the joint U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Energy Star Program.

**(2) Provide oversight and ensure timely completion** of the DCPS bidding process on and implementation of energy performance contracts at schools by energy service companies.

**(3) Work with dedicated staff to institutionalize environmental and energy-efficient design.** This step would help cut school energy costs through implementation of state-of-the-art efficiency methods, and the savings could be used to begin the phased-in purchase of clean, alternative (renewable) energy. This ambitious goal should involve students and the community in efforts to cut energy waste and monitor performance. DCPS and the DC Office of Property Management should publish energy use data on the DCPS website and meter all facilities in order to ensure accountability by and provide incentives to individual schools.

**(4) Incorporate clean, alternative (renewable) energy technologies into new, modernized facilities.** Such methods include increased day light, solar hot water and electricity generation, geothermal heating and cooling, and wind-generated electricity.

**(5) Mandate training for facility managers in high-performance operation and maintenance.** This should be done in partnership with city agencies and non-profit organizations.

*For more information, contact: Merrilee Harrigan, Alliance To Save Energy, [www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org)*

**Improve Indoor Environmental Quality**

According to the U.S General Accounting Office, 50% of all schools are affected by poor indoor air quality that has negative effects on people and their performance. To make schools healthier places to work and learn, indoor air quality must be improved and toxic chemical usage reduced. This has been proven at Charles Young Elementary School in Washington, DC, which successfully implemented "green cleaning" and indoor air quality programs—remarkable results included improved attendance and math and reading scores.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Dedicate a staff position within DCPS for Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Management.** This staff member would prioritize proper systems maintenance and preventive design and direct and assist schools in their compliance with District IAQ regulations. The position would also involve developing and promoting a "Best Practices Manual" for design, construction, and maintenance and an IAQ Management Plan for all construction projects. District and school self-assessments would also be conducted in order to ensure that regulations are followed and obvious problems are remedied.

**(2) Utilize the U.S. EPA’s IAQ “Tools for Schools” Kit as a phased-plan.** Doing so would involve school staff and the community in preventing problems before they occur. This process would start with a pilot school project in each Washington, DC Ward in the first year, with five more projects added each year.

**(3) Mandate the use of durable, non-toxic, low-maintenance materials and supplies in all existing, modernized, and new facilities and properties.** There are a growing numbers of cleaning products available that don’t contain petroleum and toxic ingredients.

**(4) Implement and strengthen the California Healthy Schools Act of 2000.** This legislation requires schools to notify parents of pesticide use and consider the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), with the long-term goal of dramatically reducing pesticide use on school grounds.

**(5) Maximize the safety and security of students and staff by incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles at all facilities.** This approach relies on changes in the physical landscape (such as improved lighting, entrances, and walkways) around a building to deter crime.

For more information, contact: Claire Barnett, Healthy Schools Network, [www.healthyschools.org](http://www.healthyschools.org); Michelle Roberts, Beyond Pesticides, [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org)

### **Improve School Location and Usage**

With the District closing and consolidating schools and creating new charter schools, it is important to avoid waste and duplication, to minimize transportation costs by preserving the city’s system of neighborhood schools to which kids can walk, and to ensure greater utilization of existing school facilities.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Enforce policies on co-locating charter schools and traditional public schools.** This strategy would help decrease duplicate school sites. Schools that are near Metro stations should be retained and preserved as both system-wide schools and “expeditionary learning” (i.e., active, project-based) schools.

**(2) Promote development of excellent special education programs at all DCPS schools.** Doing so would eliminate the \$45 million annual expenditure and pollution resulting from bussing special education students to private facilities.

**(3) Encourage community use of schools from 7 a.m.–11 p.m. year-round.** Such operating hours would help promote recreation, adult education, community meetings, and after-school care.

**(4) Reduce use of motor vehicles.** This can be achieved by limiting parking, preventing parking from encroaching on school play space, not offering free parking, providing bicycle parking, and giving Smart Benefits transit passes to school employees.

## **Promote Water Conservation and Stormwater Management**

Basic efficiency measures can reduce a school's water usage by 30% or more. Such reductions both help the environment and lower a school's operating expenses.

Stormwater runoff pollution is a severe problem throughout the District and continues to plague the Anacostia River, which has recorded some of the highest cancer rates in fish nationwide (see the Clean Rivers section of this *Agenda*).

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Implement a water conservation program at every school, including audits to determine waste and inefficiency.** Student involvement should be an integral part of this effort, starting with the water audits, continuing with fixing leaks and installing water-saving low-flow fixtures, and then monitoring water usage. EPA's new programs and training in water conservation should be fully utilized during this process.

**(2) Set a goal of zero runoff of unfiltered stormwater from the District's 147 school facilities and properties.** The first steps toward reaching this goal is the utilization of proven techniques such as tree planting, removal of impervious surfaces, installation of vegetated roofs and rain gardens, placement of rain barrels, and use of graywater for irrigation. This initiative could serve as a demonstration project for the District to show what is possible to achieve in curtailing stormwater runoff, and to solicit grants for pilot projects utilizing alternative stormwater treatment technologies.

*For more information, contact: Neil Weinstein, [www.lowimpactdevelopment.org](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org)*

## **Facilitate Waste Management and Recycling**

The adoption of a waste management and recycling plan can support both schools and students in implementing a cost-effective recycling program at each facility.

In the San Jose and Alameda school districts of California, for example, the city department of recycling effectively collaborated with the school district to implement such a program.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Require the DC Department of Recycling to assist schools in identifying and managing waste streams.** This should include suggesting waste reduction strategies and establishing recycling and composting programs at each school.

**(2) Require the DC Recycling program to provide training materials and conduct outreach.** Such actions should include trainings for facility maintenance staff, presentations at school assemblies, and tours of the District recycling center.

**(3) Require schools to recycle.** This would involve placing recycling bins in every classroom and incorporating recycling and composting areas into all new and modernized facilities.

**(4) Employ proper deconstruction techniques.** Doing so would ensure that materials from all demolished school facilities are reused and recycled.

**(5) Implement recordkeeping by the waste management contractor.** Such a system would make it possible to measure changes in the level of recycling and composting at each school

For more information, contact: Neil Seldman, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, [www.ilsr.org](http://www.ilsr.org)

## **Provide Healthy Foods at Schools**

Studies show that putting school children on healthier diets not only improves attendance and performance, but reduces a number of behavioral problems. Given the serious national attention being paid to obesity, a healthy way of eating that is taught in schools could make a major contribution to solving the problem. (See the Food Safety and Security section of this *Agenda*.)

### ***Recommendation for Action:***

**(1) Establish a school lunch program based on serving fresh, locally grown food, as recommended by the Center for Ecoliteracy.** This program sets a goal of having school meals prepared, to the greatest extent possible, using fresh, seasonal, sustainably grown produce and products from local and regional sources. The program also involves using the dining facility as a learning center where connections among nutrition, health, wholesome food, and the sources of food are made. (See the Food Security section of this report.)

*For more information, contact DC Smart Schools, Casey Trees Endowment Fund, Center for Ecoliteracy, DC Environmental Education Consortium, and the Alliance to Save Energy. For information specifically on high-performance facilities for the District's public schools, contact Jeff Wilkes, DC Smart Schools, [www.ThisOldSchool.net](http://www.ThisOldSchool.net).*

## **XI. Trash, Toxics, and Recycling**

The management of trash and toxic waste in the District can be greatly improved. New approaches to these old problems are available at less cost to the city than current approaches, and would have a lower impact on neighborhoods and natural resources. Implementation of these measures can save millions in tax dollars and reduce the chemical exposure of people who live and work in DC, as well as improving environmental conditions throughout the city.

**Four key steps are needed to advance the reduction of trash and toxic waste throughout the District, including enactment of a bottle bill; expansion of recycling; use of “deconstruction” before development occurs; and implementation of integrated pest management on all public streets, green spaces, and grounds.** Each of these approaches is considered in turn below.

### **Pass a Bottle Bill**

*Prepared by the Container Recycling Institute*

If every beverage container sold in the city was worth a nickel or a dime, we'd have cleaner streets, streams, and parks, and Washington, DC would be a more pleasant environment in which to live, work, and visit. But nearly 60% of District residents don't have access to recycling (see below) and many beverage containers are consumed away from home, in restaurants, bars, hotels, offices, and schools where there is very little or no recycling.

States that have adopted bottle laws requiring a 5 or 10-cent refundable deposit on beverage bottles and cans are recycling the containers covered by the law at an average rate of 80%. Bottle bills are a proven, sustainable method of capturing beverage bottles and cans for recycling because the refund value provides a monetary incentive. Most of the citizens in states with effective bottle bills also have access to curbside recycling, proving that these two program approaches are complementary.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Develop and Implement a Bottle Bill.** The City Council and Mayor should enact a container deposit law to help the city government and businesses realize costs savings from litter cleanup and disposal costs. Citizens would realize savings from avoided injury and damages from broken glass and other container litter and bottles would be diverted from the city's waterways. Such legislation could contain steps to help create jobs for bottle collection.

*For more information, contact Pat Franklin, Container Recycling Institute.*

### **Expand Recycling**

Recycling can save money, energy, and natural resources, reduce air pollution, create jobs, and minimize the need for landfills. It can also generate local jobs at a higher rate (on a per ton basis) than trash disposal. For this reason, cities nationwide have employed successful recycling programs. For example, Baltimore recycles 40% of its waste, San Francisco near 50%, and Portland, Oregon more than 50%. Counties surrounding the District have achieved recycling rates of 30–50% of all solid waste. However, the District's high water mark was 22% in 1995.

More than 18 years after enactment of the DC Solid Waste Management & Multi-Material Recycling Act of 1988, recycling is barely just getting started, and the Williams Administration has failed to

enforce this law. The city's residential collection program achieves only a 15% diversion rate, and recycling systems in DC government office buildings and schools perform poorly.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment has been the Department of Public Works' refusal to enforce the recycling law against commercial property owners, which generate 75% of the city's trash but recycle less than 10% of that. Spot-checking of private-sector solid waste facilities (i.e., downtown dumpsters) indicates that recycling is generally not being conducted in these buildings. Similarly, relatively little recycling takes place in the city's public school system, even though contract waste haulers have offered the system a reduction in costs if recycling were introduced.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Expand recycling in public schools.** Recycling in schools has been slow since the 1999 *Environmental Agenda* was released. Although some schools have recycling programs due to the initiative of students, teachers, and principals, the District government needs to require all DC Public Schools to develop and implement on-site recycling programs. (See the Green Schools Section)

**(2) Expand recycling in District government offices.** District offices generate approximately 2.5 tons of recyclable materials per year, most of which is office paper. Because of the high grade of this material, the District could generate revenues of \$400–\$800,000 per year by recycling it.

**(3) Promote and enforce commercial-sector recycling laws.** A combined education and enforcement campaign would significantly increase recycling in the District. Such a program should include the provision of technical assistance to building owners and tenants that conveys the economic benefits of recycling and provides lists of commercial recycling services. Enforcement actions should be instituted against businesses that refuse to obey the 1988 Recycling Act. The District should hire and train six recycling inspectors, the work of whom would generate revenues that would entirely or largely pay for their salaries.

**(4) Conduct a pro-recycling public education campaign.** Through the use of free media and public-private partnerships, the rate of public participation in recycling activities could be significantly increased, at very little public expense, by educating and motivating residents, employees, and visitors.

**Encourage Deconstruction before Demolition**

Demolishing a building of 10,000 square feet puts about 40,000 tons of material into a landfill or incinerator at a cost of \$50,000 to \$160,000. The implosion itself creates toxic dust containing particulates, heavy metals, mold, and other polluting substances. Deconstruction is a highly beneficial alternative or complement to the full demolition of unwanted structures. Deconstruction dismantles buildings piece by piece and makes the components available for resale and reuse.

Deconstruction makes use of tons of materials that would otherwise be sent to a landfill. It also creates jobs and supports community-based businesses. The process of “reduce, reuse, recycle” inherent in deconstruction saves trees, industrial fuels, and other natural resources. Importantly, it helps protect both human health and land, air, and water quality. For all these reasons, the District would benefit greatly from being a pioneering city in deconstruction during development.

***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Enact legislation requiring a reasonable waiting period for the salvage of usable materials from buildings approved for demolition by the District government.** Such a law would prevent

land, air, and water pollution, and further promote economic development. The City Council should ensure that this legislation provides fully-insured and indemnified salvage contractors with access to the premises to harvest building materials not wanted by the property owner.

### **Implement Integrated Pest Management**

Toxic pesticides are used in and around schools, public housing, hospitals, and other government agencies and are often applied directly to kitchens, living spaces, and work areas. Yet many epidemiological studies link pesticides to a wide range of acute and chronic illnesses, including cancers, neurological and behavioral problems, reproductive dysfunction, developmental disabilities, immune system disorders, psychological disorders, asthma and other respiratory diseases.

A strong Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy is one of the best ways to minimize or eliminate exposure to pesticides. IPM is a program of prevention, monitoring, and control, which offers the opportunity to eliminate or drastically reduce pesticides and minimize the toxicity of and exposure to any products that are used. IPM prevents pest problems by reducing or eliminating sources of food, water, and shelter to the pest and by maintaining healthy lawns and landscapes. Preventive strategies include improving sanitation, making structural repairs, and using physical and mechanical controls. A less hazardous chemical is used only when other strategies have failed.

Although Integrated Pest Management has been integrated into the District's Department of Health mosquito (West Nile disease) and rodent control programs, huge gaps still exist in the use of IPM for many of the District's public areas and building grounds. The District should therefore develop and implement a district-wide Integrated Pest Management program in an effort to provide comprehensive protection for residents and natural environments.

### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Issue an Executive Order on pesticides.** A Mayoral order should require the development of an Integrated Pest Management strategy for all District government-owned facilities and reduce the total application of conventional pesticides at these facilities by 50% citywide within three years.

**(2) Enact legislation aimed at reducing toxic pesticides.** The City Council and Mayor should pass legislation that requires the development of an Integrated Pest Management strategy for all District government-owned facilities, including schools, parks and playing fields, hospital and health care facilities, and housing.

**(3) Substantially increase the District's tax on pesticide products and application services.** Funding for this process should be used to increase the DC Pesticide Division's inspection service in public housing and public schools.

*For more information, contact Michele L. Roberts, Beyond Pesticides/National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides.*

## **XII. Environmental Health**

*Prepared by Friends of the Earth*

In 2004, the *Washington Post* broke the alarming news that 4,000 of 6,000 District homes tested contained lead levels in excess of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “action level” for lead—the safety level at which federal law requires prompt action to protect public health. This finding indicated that drinking water in thousands of the District’s homes posed a serious health threat, with risks particularly high for women and for children under the age of six.

Friends of the Earth and the DC Environmental Network jumped into action to help form a large coalition called LEAD (Lead Emergency Action for the District). LEAD immediately put together a list of demands, or an action plan for the EPA, the DC Water and Sewer Authority, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and the District government. These efforts and subsequent public oversight of these agencies resulted in real improvements. But much work still needs to be done.

Early on in this campaign, it became clear that available data could not verify how much lead actually was in the bodies of District residents. In addition, by not knowing who was contaminated, it was difficult to determine which part of the city the majority of the pollution occurred.

As LEAD continued to look at the potential impacts of lead and other man-made chemicals on District residents, disturbing facts became evident, including:

- More than 300 man-made chemicals are present in human bodies.
- All these chemicals are present in fetuses.
- Man-made chemicals are more dangerous than naturally occurring ones.
- The presence of these chemicals is dangerous even at low levels.
- Man-made chemicals are linked to birth defects in humans.
- Children can be more contaminated than adults despite being exposed to these chemicals only a fraction of the time that adults have been.
- Chemicals can pass from mother to fetus during pregnancy and mother to child while breastfeeding.
- Children have been found to be contaminated with chemicals that were banned years before they were born.

It has become clear to many environmental and health organizations across the country that biomonitoring programs need to be enacted to measure the “pollution in people.” Biomonitoring is the analysis of biological samples (such as urine, fat tissue or blood) to identify the presence and levels of specific substances in the body. It provides a record of the chemicals to which a person has been exposed and which have been retained or metabolized by the body. Biomonitoring programs can yield the data necessary to make informed decisions when addressing a public health crisis such as lead poisoning.

Biomonitoring is not new. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) already uses biomonitoring as a scientific health tool. The CDC has regularly expressed an interest in offering financial support in the form of in-kind testing to states that develop new programs. (Such funding would be available to Washington, DC.) In addition, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has implemented biomonitoring three times, on individuals, family units, and elected officials. Individuals were tested in 13 locations in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales through blood samples from 155

volunteers. The results (analyzed by Lancaster University) found that Every person tested was contaminated by a cocktail of known highly toxic chemicals that were banned from use in the United Kingdom during the 1970s but which continue to pose unknown health risks. The tests found 70 of the 78 chemicals that WWF was looking for, and every person was contaminated with chemicals from each group.

The message to the public was clear: government and the private sector need to do more testing if public policies are going to be sufficient to protect citizens and public health. Whether in England or Washington, DC, society needs to do a better job of getting the data necessary to create policies and programs that work. The data produced through biomonitoring can help agencies and organizations indicate trends in chemical exposures, identify disproportionately affected and particularly vulnerable communities, assess the effectiveness of current regulations, and set setting priorities for legislative and regulatory action. Biomonitoring research can also help scientists, medical professionals, and community members make more informed decisions and policies to better protect public health.

**With all these important benefits in mind, the District should pass legislation to establish a program to test for toxics in people.** The city has a unique opportunity to be the first jurisdiction in the United States to pass a comprehensive law on biomonitoring, which would serve to improve public and environmental health for generations to come.

#### **Pass Biomonitoring Legislation in the District**

Legislation to create a biomonitoring program in the District should be based on the following actions and goals.

#### ***Recommendations for Action:***

- (1) Establish a city-wide biomonitoring program to measure “pollution in people.”** Participation in the program would be voluntary, and individual results would remain strictly confidential.
- (2) Establish a multidisciplinary, multiconstituency advisory committee** to oversee the design and implementation of a community-based and participatory biomonitoring program. This would be similar to the District’s Lead Emergency Action advisory committee formed in 2004.
- (3) Create educational and outreach materials** that explain the basics of toxic exposure and absorption, including body burden analysis, routes of exposure, potential health effects, and steps necessary to regulate, minimize, and eliminate exposures to environmental toxins.
- (4) Create training models and protocols** for scientists, health professionals, and department staff to ensure that biomonitoring programs are implemented in a community-based, participatory, and ethical manner.

*For more information, contact Chris Weiss, Friends of the Earth.*

### **XIII. Noise Pollution**

*Prepared by Friends of the Earth*

District residents often complain that it is unpleasant to sit on a porch in the summertime because gasoline-powered lawn mowers and leafblowers create significant air pollution and noise. Many people hire lawn services, which arrive in force to mow and blow, creating a relay of noise from yard to yard throughout entire neighborhoods.

This problem is not just a matter of personal comfort. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 10 million Americans suffer permanent noise-induced hearing loss. A typical gas-powered mower causes prolonged exposure to 90 decibels of noise. Sounds in excess of 85 decibels can damage hearing, but even noise levels of 65–75 decibels can cause hypertension, stress, heart damage, and depression.

Because of these health-related problems (as well as concerns over air quality), many cities have taken decisive action to reduce the noise pollution generated by lawn care equipment. More than 300 cities nationwide, including 40 in California alone, have banned leafblowers. Washington, DC would also be well-served to take steps to mitigate the negative effects of lawn equipment, as discussed below.

#### **Reduce Noise Pollution from Leaf Blowers and Mowers**

##### ***Recommendations for Action:***

**(1) Ban the use of leafblowers.** This should be done throughout the District. The District government should provide information to residents on options to gasoline-powered lawn mowers, such as quieter and energy efficient battery-powered mowers that meet the clean air requirements of many states.

**(2) Restrict hours of lawn equipment use.** An ordinance should be put in place to control noise in residential areas from lawn mowers and other powered lawn maintenance equipment. It should read as follows:

*Between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., in any residential zone of the City or within 500 feet thereof, no person shall operate or cause to be operated any powered lawn or garden equipment or powered hand tool that produces a maximum noise level exceeding 65 decibels at a distance of 50 feet from the point of usage.*

*Both the user of such equipment as well as the individual who contracted for the services of the user, if any, shall be subject to the requirements of and penalty provisions for this ordinance. Violation of the provisions of this section shall be punishable as an infraction in an amount not to exceed \$100.*

*For more information, contact Friends of the Earth.*

## CONTACT LIST:

### Alliance To Save Energy

Merrilee Harrigan  
(202) 857-0666  
mharrigan@ase.org  
1200 18th Street, NW Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20036  
<http://www.ase.org/>

### American Rivers

Betsy Otto  
(202) 347-7550  
botto@amrivers.org  
1101 14th Street NW, Suite 1400  
Washington, DC 20005  
<http://www.americanrivers.org>

### Anacostia Coordinating Council

Phillip Pannell  
(202) 889-4900  
acc01@aol.com  
2401 Shannon Place, SE  
Washington, DC 20020  
<http://www.anacostiacc.org/>

### Anacostia Garden Club

Diane Fleming  
(202) 582-6583  
1624 U Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20020

### Anacostia Watershed Society

Robert Boone  
(301) 699-6204  
robert@anacostiaws.org  
The George Washington House  
4302 Baltimore Avenue  
Bladensburg, MD 20710  
<http://www.anacostiaws.org/>

### Audubon Naturalist Society

Neal Fitzpatrick  
(301) 652-9188  
neal@audubonnaturalist.org  
8940 Jones Mill Road  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
<http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/>

### Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch

John Capozzi  
(202) 544-0821  
johncapozzidc@aol.com  
1619 G Street, SE  
Washington DC 20003

### Beyond Pesticides

Michele L. Roberts  
(202) 543-5450  
mroberts@beyondpesticides.org  
701 E St, SE #200  
Washington DC 20003  
<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>

### Casey Trees Endowment Fund

Heather Langford  
hlangford@caseytrees.org  
Heather Whitlow  
hwhitlow@caseytrees.org  
1425 K St NW, Suite 1050  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 833-4010  
<http://www.caseytrees.org/>

### Center for Food Safety

Heather Whitehead  
(202) 547-9359  
office@centerforfoodsafety.org  
660 Pennsylvania Ave, SE, Suite 302  
Washington, D.C. 20003  
<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org>

### Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Doug Siglin  
(202) 544-2232  
dsiglin@cbf.org  
725 8th Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
[www.cbf.org/](http://www.cbf.org/)

### Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Diana Dascalu-Joffe  
(703) 772-2472  
diana@chesapeakeclimate.org  
Claire Douglass  
(301) 891-6833  
claire@chesapeakeclimate.org  
PO Box 11138  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
<http://www.chesapeakeclimate.org/>

### Clean Water Action

Andy Fellows  
afellows@cleanwater.org  
Paul Schwartz  
pschwartz@cleanwater.org  
4455 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite  
A300  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 895-0420  
<http://www.cleanwateraction.org/>

### Coalition for Smarter Growth

Laura Olson  
laura@smartergrowth.net  
Stewart Schwartz  
stewart@smartergrowth.net  
4000 Albemarle Street, NW Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 244-4408  
<http://www.smartergrowth.net/>

### Container Recycling Institute

Pat Franklin  
(202) 263-0999  
pfranklin@container-recycling.org  
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,  
Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20036-1904  
<http://www.container-recycling.org/>

### DC Environmental Education Consortium

Heather Langford  
(202) 833-4010  
hlangford@caseytrees.org  
Casey Trees Endowment Fund  
1425 K Street, NW Suite 1050  
Washington DC 20005  
<http://www.caseytrees.org/>

### DC Environmental Education Consortium

Gilda Allen  
(202) 535-2239  
gilda.allen@dc.gov  
DC Dept. of the Environment  
51 N Street, NE, Room 5025  
Washington, DC 20002

### DC Fiscal Policy Institute

Ed Lazere  
(202) 408-1080  
lazere@dcfpi.org  
820 First St, NE suite 610  
Washington DC 20002  
<http://www.dcfpi.org/>

### DC Greenworks

Dawn Gifford  
(202) 518-6195  
info@dgreenworks.org  
1701 6th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<http://www.dgreenworks.org/>

### DC Smart Schools

Jeffrey Wilkes  
(202) 387-2525  
jwilkes@thisoldschool.net  
1736 Columbia Rd, NW #106  
Washington DC 20009-2846

### DC Statehood Green Party

Jenefer Ellington  
(202) 546-0940  
jellington@greens.org  
1739 Irving Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20010  
<http://www.dcstatehoodgreen.org/>

### Earthjustice

David Baron  
(202) 667-4500  
washingtondcoffice@earthjustice.org  
1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,  
Suite 702 Washington, DC 20036  
<http://www.earthjustice.org/>

**Food & Water Watch**

Maj Fiil-Flynn  
(202) 797-6550  
mfiiil@fwwatch.org  
1400 16th Street NW #225  
Washington DC 20036  
[www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)

**Frederick Douglass Gardens, Inc.**

Diane Dale  
(301) 794-7050

**Friends of the Earth**

Chris Weiss  
cweiss@foe.org  
Meghan Beach  
mbeach@foe.org  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 600  
Washington, DC 20036-2002  
<http://www.foe.org/>

**Global Green USA**

Paul Walker  
(202) 222-0700  
pwalker@globalgreen.org  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,  
Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036-2002

**Green Spaces for DC**

Sally Boasberg  
(202) 363-2147  
sboasberg@aol.com  
3149 Sixteenth St., NW  
Washington, DC 20010-3302  
<http://www.greenspacesfordc.org/>

**Healthy Schools Network**

Claire Barnett  
(202) 543-7555  
cbarnett@healthyschools.org  
110 Maryland Avenue NE Suite505  
Washington, DC 20002  
<http://www.healthyschools.org/>

**Howard Environmental Law Society**

Winston Brathwaite  
(202) 806-8000  
wbrathwaite@beyondpesticides.org  
2900 Van Ness St. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
<http://www.law.howard.edu/259>

**Institute for Local Self Reliance**

Neil Seldman  
(202) 898-1610 x210  
nseldman@ilsr.org  
927 15th St NW, 4th Fl.  
Washington DC 20005  
<http://www.ilsr.org/>

**Natural Resources Defense Council**

Nancy Stoner  
(202) 289-6868  
1200 New York Ave., NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
<http://www.nrdc.org/>

**No DC Taxes for Baseball**

John Capozzi  
(202) 544-0821  
johncapozzidc@aol.com  
1619 G Street, SE  
Washington DC 20003

**Kingman Park Civic Association**

Frazier Walton, Jr.  
(202) 584-7572  
Frawalton@worldnet.att.net  
1913 D St. NE  
Washington DC 20002

**Safer Neighborhoods Campaign**

Fred Millar  
(703) 979-9191  
fmillar@erols.com  
915 Buchanan St.  
Arlington VA 22204

**Save Klingle Valley Campaign**

Jason Broehm  
(202) 299-0745  
[www.klinglevalley.org](http://www.klinglevalley.org)

**Sierra Club**

Lisa Swanson  
(202) 291-5972  
melatar@yahoo.com  
<http://www.dc.sierraclub.org/>

**Sustainable Buildings Industry Council**

Ellen Larson Vaughan  
(202) 628-7400 ext.211  
elanson@sbicouncil.org  
1112 16th Street NW Suite 240  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
<http://www.sbicouncil.org/>

**Sustainable Community Initiatives**

Jim Schulman  
(202) 544-0069  
jschulman@igc.org  
631 E St. NE  
Washington DC 20002

**Washington Area Bicyclist Association**

Eric Gilliland  
(202) 518-0524  
gill@waba.org  
1803 Connecticut Avenue NW, 3rd  
Floor  
Washington, DC 20009  
[www.waba.org](http://www.waba.org)

**Washington Parks and People**

Steve Coleman  
(202) 462-7275  
washingtonparks@aol.com  
2437 15th St., NW  
Washington DC 20009  
[www.washingtonparks.net/](http://www.washingtonparks.net/)

**Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (WRN)**

Cheryl Cort  
(202) 244-1105  
ccort@washingtonregion.net  
4000 Albemarle St., NW, Suite 305  
Washington, D.C. 20016  
<http://www.washingtonregion.net/>

**Wholeness for Humanity  
Greg Drury**

(202) 686-9813  
4545 42nd Street NW Suite 300  
Washington DC 20016  
<http://www.wholenessforhumanity.com/>