January 10, 2011

Dear County Executive and County Council Members:

The Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group (WQAG) recommends that the County Executive and Council jointly ask our local congressional delegation, representing the Anacostia River, to help fund the Anacostia Restoration Plan through Congress. With 34% of the Anacostia's total drainage area residing in Montgomery County, the Anacostia Restoration Plan identifies much needed improvements in the Sligo Creek, Northwest Branch, Paint Branch, and Little Paint Branch subwatersheds.

The Anacostia River currently faces severe impairments. Pollutants, such as legacy toxics, untreated sewage, and stormwater, all threaten its livelihood. But thanks to the work of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, the Anacostia also offers great opportunity for Montgomery County. At the request of Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC), the partnership worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a thorough watershed restoration plan. The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership and the Anacostia Restoration Plan have already received a great deal of support from Congress. However, to implement the recommendations will require significantly more. Recognizing the economic constraints faced in Montgomery County, the WQAG recommends that the County Executive and Council come together to ask our local Anacostia congressional delegation, including Sen. Chris Van Hollen, Rep. Donna Edwards, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Rep. Steny Hoyer, Sen. Barbara Mikulski, and Sen. Ben Cardin, to help fund the implementation of the Anacostia Restoration Plan through Congress.

Members of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, including Montgomery County, have committed already to meet the goals of restoration. With the new goals and legal requirements established in Montgomery County's new MS4 permit, Montgomery County has leveraged the common interests of the permit and the Anacostia Restoration Plan by incorporating its projects into the watershed restoration plan for the County. To realize water quality standards throughout the Anacostia, Montgomery County must achieve an approximately 82% reduction in nitrogen loadings, an 81% reduction in phosphorus loadings, and an 86% in sediment loadings from baseline conditions. Meeting these goals will require implementing projects covering the scope of the nearly 900 projects identified in Montgomery County, estimated cost of approximately $466 million.

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Two Anacostia Restoration Plan projects are already underway in the Sligo Creek subwatershed: a targeted restoration of the Breewood tributary, which includes environmental site design retrofits for public property and roadways, and one on private property through financial incentives. The WQAG strongly supports the implementation of these projects and recognizes the great effort and support by the County leadership and Department of Environmental Protection for ensuring their placement.

However, the WQAG also recognizes that funding nearly 900 projects identified in the Anacostia Restoration Plan will be difficult and that funding support is critical. Because of the role of the Army Corps in creating the Anacostia Restoration Plan, a potential opportunity exists for federal funds to assist the County directly in meeting its water quality improvement requirements. Federal funds would enable the County to be more flexible in reallocating its own funds to support other priority water quality improvement projects. In addition, a well-funded Anacostia Restoration Plan would also increase the use of next generation environmental site design techniques, helping spur the creation of green businesses and jobs and improving the County's reputation and image as a green center.

Thank you for your attention our recommendation. We would be pleased to have further discussions at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Daphne Pee
WQAG Co-Chair

Carol Henry
WQAG Co-Chair

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