



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
BIANNUAL REPORT OCTOBER 2020

COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW (CSO) CONTROL ACTIVITIES

CLEAN RIVERS PROJECT NEWS

Come to the Anacostia River

On a recent Friday evening, as the sun reflected off the water, and cars buzzed along the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, dozens of families soaked in the natural environment from atop the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail. They were taking part in the Anacostia Riverkeeper's Friday Night Fishing—a free, fun, family event.

Partnering with the Earth Conservation Corps, Anacostia Riverkeeper provides free instruction, all the gear, and the bait. The event introduces locals to the gem that is the Anacostia River, a wonderful outdoor recreational venue and relaxing escape. It is held in front of Nats Stadium and DC Water's Headquarters. The organizers also have a mission to educate the public on the risks of consuming fish from the District, so this program remains 100 percent catch and release. The program launched in 2013 and amid the enthusiasm, Anacostia Riverkeeper ramped up full summer programs from 2014 onward. Each year has seen more people coming weekly and altogether in the season.

To keep safe in 2020, organizers enforced the use of masks and social distance measures, while also capping the number of participants on the dock. Despite a late start and the new restrictions, more than 600 people came to the river for the event. To learn more contact the Anacostia Riverkeeper at info@anacostiariverkeeper.org.



In the same location, mini sailboats weave across the peaceful and slow-moving river. Just down the boardwalk, dog owners walk their furry friends while others enjoy outdoor dining or a scenic walk, run or bike along the Trail.

Many other organizations are also inviting folks to come to the river. In a non-COVID year, you would find festivals, concerts, skate parties, basketball and yoga, among other activities, at Anacostia Park. Yards Park invites children to play in the spray park and families to relax on the lawn. For years, the Anacostia Watershed Society has offered paddling trips on the Anacostia, as well as clean up events and educational programs. And in a normal year, the National Park Service invites you to bring binoculars and your curiosity to spy some wildlife, as expert guides from their Ranger Program navigate the landscape for you. For more information on these activities, please visit anacostia.net.

Tropical Storm Isaias: DC Water Flood Controls at Work

On a WJLA 7 *On Your Side* news segment aired on August 5, 2020, resident Gary Mendel told reporter Sam Ford, "It's no longer (the fact that) Bloomingdale floods at every big rain."

Heavy rains had just hit the region the night before, thanks to Tropical Storm Isaias. But as television cameras showed the flooding, Ford noted, "Water gushed down streets, through underpasses, and from retaining walls, but in Bloomingdale, DC Water's efforts at flood control seem to be working."

The unrelenting rain and winds from this tropical storm were reminiscent of the multiple storms that flooded streets and basements in the Bloomingdale neighborhood in the summer of 2012. Resident Betsy McDaniel recounted her experiences during that summer, "This 120-pound metal [sewer cover] plate jumped up and down because of the pressure in the system – and that's scary, very scary!"

DC Water accelerated the consent decree schedule in response to the 2012 storms and built the First Street Tunnel in the heart of the Bloomingdale and LeDroit Park neighborhoods. Since its start-up in October 2016, this tunnel, along with another stormwater storage site DC Water built at the McMillan Sand Filtration facilities, have been successful in capturing up to 3.5 million gallons of combined sewage that might otherwise have flooded streets and basements in a large storm like Isaias.

... continued on page 4



DC Water plans for a healthier Potomac River

Building on its success along the Anacostia River, DC Water is moving full steam ahead with planning and design for the next major phase of the DC Clean Rivers Project – the Potomac River Tunnel (PRT). This tunnel will capture and store large flows from the combined sewer system along the Potomac River during rain events. Rather than these flows discharging to the Potomac River, they will instead be diverted to the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment. This will reduce the volume of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) to the Potomac River by 93 percent in an average rainfall year. The project will consist of a 5.5-mile tunnel connected to each remaining outfall along the Potomac River by a series of underground structures and drop shafts.

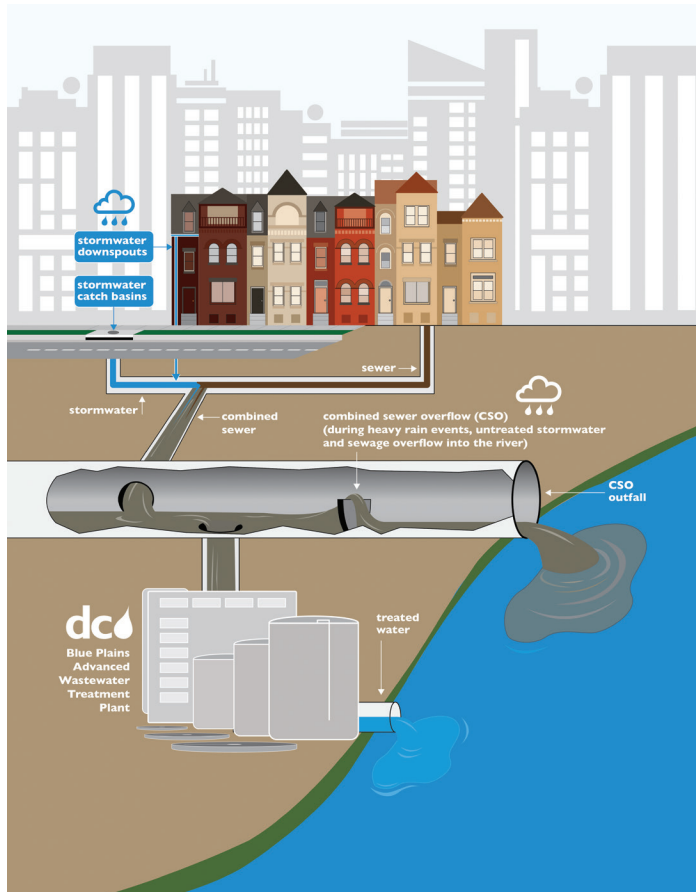
DC Water has been closely coordinating with the National Park Service (NPS), as many of the facilities will be built on NPS land. On March 30, 2020, NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the project, concluding compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and clearing the way for the project to move forward. Over the last several months, DC Water has been advancing the design for the facilities, coordinating with external stakeholders, and conducting various field investigations to support the design, including geotechnical drilling, utility test pitting, and archaeological trenching. The project is scheduled to begin construction in 2023, with completion by 2030 in accordance with DC Water's Amended Federal Consent Decree.

For more information on the project, please visit dcwater.com/projects/potomac-river-tunnel-project.

FAQs About the Combined Sewer System

What is a Combined Sewer?

A combined sewer is a single pipe that carries both sanitary wastewater and stormwater runoff. Many older cities in the United States are served by combined sewers. In the District, the combined sewer system was designed and built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Modern practice is to build two pipes in the street—one for stormwater runoff, and one for wastewater from homes and businesses.



What is a CSO and why does it occur?

A CSO is a combined sewer overflow. During dry weather, sewage from homes and businesses is conveyed to the District's wastewater treatment plant at Blue Plains, where the wastewater is treated to remove pollutants before being discharged to the Potomac River. During certain rainfall conditions, the capacity of a combined sewer may be exceeded. When this occurs, the excess flow, a dilute mixture of wastewater and stormwater runoff, is discharged to the Anacostia River, Potomac River, Rock Creek and tributary waters. The Federal Clean Water Act allows CSOs, but the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires communities to develop a plan to address overflows. There are 47 potentially active CSO outfalls listed in DC Water's existing discharge permit from the EPA.

When do CSOs occur?

CSOs occur during wet weather and are more frequent in wet years than dry years. During years with average rainfall, DC Water estimates that combined sewers overflow into the Anacostia River about 20 times annually and the Potomac River about 77 times annually, spilling approximately 391 million gallons into the Anacostia and 677 million gallons into the Potomac. Rock Creek averages 32 CSO events and 35 million gallons of overflow a year.

Where are CSO Outfalls?

There are 10 CSO outfall locations on the Potomac River, 15 on the Anacostia River and 23 along Rock Creek and its tributaries. DC Water has posted signs for each outfall location.

What are the possible public health impacts of CSOs?

CSOs may pose a danger to the public because of the rapid flow of water exiting the outfalls and the potentially harmful substances it may contain. The public is advised to stay away from any sewer pipe discharge. CSOs could affect the receiving waters for up to 24 hours during small rainstorms and for up to three days when it rains one inch or more.

What are the environmental impacts of CSOs?

CSOs can adversely affect the quality of rivers and streams by contributing to high bacterial levels and low dissolved oxygen levels, which are harmful to fish and other aquatic life.

What is a Dry Weather Overflow (DWO)?

In dry weather, sanitary wastewater normally flows to the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant through pipes with regulators. During wet weather, regulators are designed to let the excess flow discharge directly to a river or creek. If regulators become blocked by debris or trash, wastewater can also overflow during dry weather. This is called a dry weather overflow (DWO). DC Water has an intensive maintenance and inspection program to prevent DWOs from occurring. If you see a CSO outfall discharging during dry weather, call DC Water at (202) 612-3400.

Where can you get more information?

You can learn more by visiting DC Water's website at dcwater.com/cleanrivers. You may also contact DC Water's Office of Marketing and Communications at (202) 787-2200.

The complete text of the Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewer Overflows can also be found on DC Water's web site at dcwater.com/cleanrivers.

CLEAN RIVERS PROJECT NEWS

CONTROL ACTIVITIES
COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW (CSO)
BIANNUAL REPORT OCTOBER 2020
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY



DC Water supports small businesses—they need your help too

When COVID-19 prompted the closure of nonessential businesses, DC Water CEO David Gadis was already leading an effort with Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Office, Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, and the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development, to provide our Main Street partners more flexibility to assist small local businesses impacted by construction. As a result, each of our NEBT Project partners—Rhode Island Avenue Main Street NE, North Capitol Main Street, and Shaw Main Street—provided 40-plus small businesses along the tunnel alignment with direct compensation assistance and more technical support grants.

DC Water quickly delivered the funding. Upon receiving her check, one small business owner emailed, “Oh my gosh, I just screamed out loud and teared up. That is more than I could have imagined. THANK YOU!!” The businesses along the project’s construction corridor need your support, too. Please **safely** patronize the local businesses along Rhode Island Avenue. You may also donate directly to:

- Rhode Island Avenue Main Street NE: riamainstreet.org/coronavirus/
- North Capitol Main Street: northcapitoldc.com/
- Shaw Main Street, Inc.: shawmainstreets.org/home

continued from page 2 Tropical Storm Isaias: DC Water Flood Controls at Work

Unfortunately, many residents and businesses in the Northeast Boundary Drainage Area still experience chronic flooding in large storms, but as the news segment highlighted, DC Water continues its work to provide relief. DC Water’s Northeast Boundary Tunnel (NEBT) is currently under construction and on schedule to be completed in 2023. The additional storage capacity for millions of gallons of combined sewage will prevent chronic flooding at many locations (dcwater.com/nebt), and will reduce polluting overflows into the Anacostia during heavy rains.

The reality is that no tunnel is big enough to guard against every storm imaginable. However, the damage caused by the heavy storms of the past few years would have been worse without the investments from the District and DC Water. The District will be even more resilient and better prepared for torrential downpours when the NEBT is operational.



RECYCLED
Paper made from
recycled material
FSC® C021348

