



*of the Anacostia River*

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Creek

[www.neighborsnwb.org](http://www.neighborsnwb.org)

April 30, 2018

Dear Council President Riemer and Councilmembers:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. We are a nonprofit, citizen-based, all-volunteer organization dedicated to restoring the health of the Northwest Branch, the longest tributary of the Anacostia River and a former drinking water source. Our members monitor the stream four times annually for macroinvertebrates tolerant enough to live in these brown waters, remove litter washed into the stream through storm drains, and advocate for policies and practices that address the worst culprit of its degradation: excessive stormwater runoff. We who have intimate experience with the eroding and polluting effects of rapid discharge of stormwater have applauded and supported Montgomery County's forward looking efforts to capture and infiltrate or at least slow down run off from impervious areas.

But the CIP currently being developed cuts our county's stormwater management program's funds by a little more than 70%. We learned that Montgomery County officials, having recently discovered 800 acres of private land that likely qualifies as "treated," considers the requirement to treat 20% of impervious surfaces as nearly accomplished. Really? A few years ago, the sewer trunk line near Kemp Mill Rd. was almost exposed as the eroded stream bank collapsed. The costly repair involved pumping out and rerouting the entire stream, shoring up the bank, and attempting to direct the flow with rocks. Trees planted to hold the bank were washed out in the next big rain because water continued to gush down the Northwest Branch from many acres of hard surfaces. WSSC is even now reburying exposed feeder sewer pipes at multiple sites in the Northwest Branch stream valley.

We understand that the huge projected "savings" result mostly from canceling 26 projects county we residents have already invested in designing through our tax money. Another 44 projects have apparently been put on hold. Other savings are to come from efficiencies. We are not in a position to know whether projects can be satisfactorily completed using a more efficient procurement system. What we do know for sure is that our waterways need much more attention to stormwater runoff in already built areas and strict adherence to low impact development procedures in new development.

As your constituents and members of an organization dedicated to improving the health of one of our precious waterways, we insist that as you plan for capital projects over the next 6 years, whatever procurement process might be chosen, you maintain these principles:

- Transparency and public involvement, with an increase of public outreach;
- Coordination among the Parks Department, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Transportation;
- Continued commitment to the 60% green infrastructure pledge;
- Prioritization of existing investments;
- Realization of watershed-specific restoration and protection goals.

We favor efficiency as long as that does not mean cutting effective oversight and cutting the public out of the process. But does finding an additional 800 treated acres justify a sense of mission accomplished? Our streams are still polluted, stormwater still runs off parking lots, streets, and roofs directly into storm drains and then into our streams carrying dog waste, road pollutants, fertilizers, and pesticides, gouging the banks and putting sewer lines at risk. A few days ago a resident contacted me through the NNWB website asking whether the Northwest Branch was safe for his children to play in up to their waists. Sadly, I had to tell him “no.”

It is not a question of whether Maryland will require 5% additional acreage treated or 10% in the next MS4 permit; rather, it is a question of whether (or not) we intend to turn what have become gullies and draining ditches back into living streams. This will only be accomplished by continued aggressive procedures to capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff from our many impervious areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne J. Hubler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Vice President