



March 5, 2026

David L. Gadis
Chief Executive Officer & General Manager
DC Water
1385 Canal Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Gadis,

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition (CCWC) write to thank you for your commitment and service to Washington, D.C. and its residents. We appreciate your leadership and dedication to conservation-based solutions and prioritizing intersectional environmentalism in D.C. The Coalition is made up of more than 300 non-governmental organizations spanning the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed, which includes parts of six states and all the District of Columbia. Our members represent a variety of interests, including but not limited to climate change, environmental justice, clean energy, recreation, and public access. What connects all of our members is our collective interest and goal in restoring clean water in our rivers and streams, which includes those that flow through the District and eventually make their way into the Chesapeake Bay.

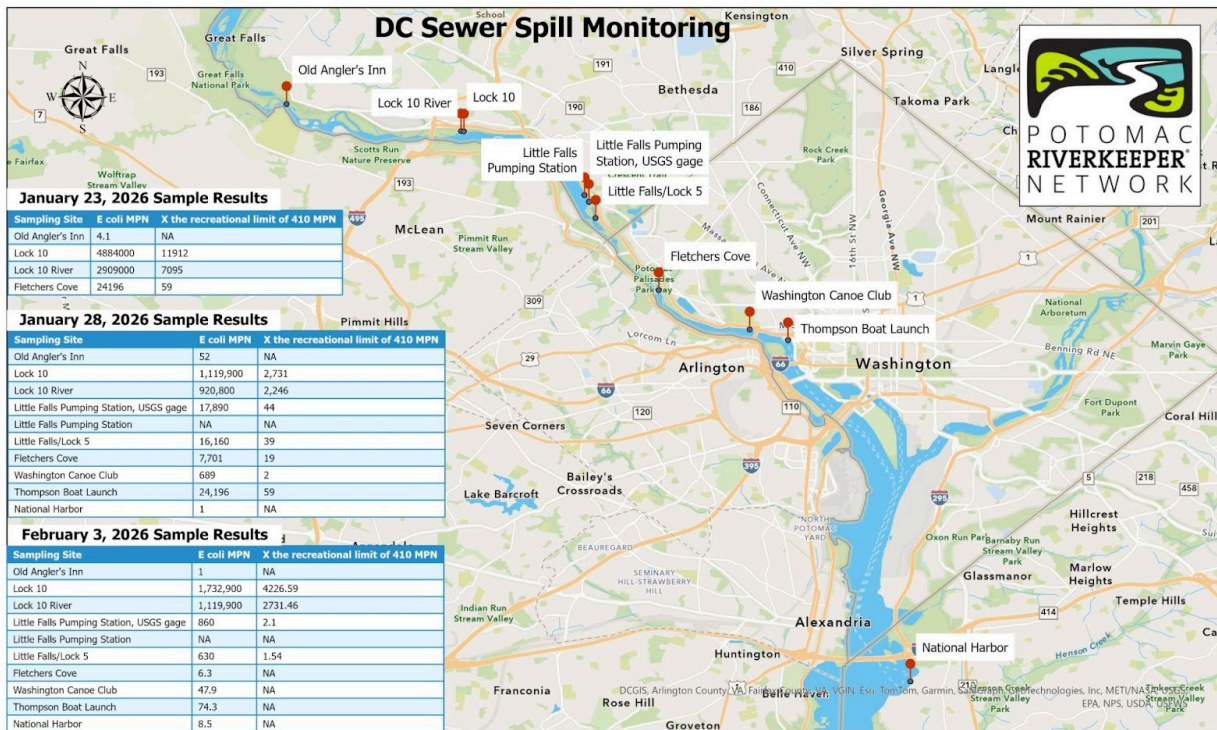
Our waterways are extremely important to our environment. D.C. is leading the nation in several proposed and ongoing initiatives. We encourage interagency cooperation as our waterways intersect with resident health, parks, waste management, economic development and so much more.

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition write to you with questions about the Potomac Interceptor Sewage Spill and ask for the agency to provide:

- Full Transparency: Provide regular and detailed updates about the ongoing contamination and efficacy of containment measures
- Monitoring: Conduct continuous monitoring of the Potomac River from Fletcher's Cove to the Potomac and Anacostia shorelines surrounding DC and downstream to National Harbor.

- Monitoring should be conducted by a DC environmental agency in collaboration with Maryland and Virginia agencies
- Environmental monitoring must investigate the numerous variables impacted by the released raw sewage: excessive nutrients, dangerous pathogens and microbes, harmful bacterial levels, environmental implications, and public health risks.
- Environmental Restoration: Conduct a comprehensive environmental impact assessment and conduct restoration to address harm to the C&O Canal and Potomac River.
- Accountability: Investigate the cause of the disaster, fix other known weak points in the system, and publish full results to ensure this horrific disaster never happens again

Please review the data below provided by Potomac Riverkeeper Network and the University of Maryland, two extraordinary groups that have been monitoring and investigating the spill since its occurrence on January 19, 2026.



University of Maryland Data

The following data was collected by UMD researchers under the leadership of [Dr. Rachel Rosenberg Goldstein](#), microbiologist and assistant professor at UMD's Department of Global, Environmental, and Occupational Health. Their investigation found:

- *E. coli* bacteria levels at the sewage spill were thousands of times above the water safety limit – 410 MPN – on Jan. 21st, Jan. 28th, and Feb. 3rd; bacteria levels remained over

100 times the contact limit on Feb. 12th. As of Jan. 28th, *E. coli* levels remained over the safety limit at a site 10 miles downstream from the sewage overflow.

- On Jan. 21st and Jan. 28th, *Staphylococcus aureus* was detected at the sewage spill and nine miles downstream in the Potomac. Overall, 33% of the sampled sites were positive for the pathogen.
- In addition to *S.aureus*, *MRSA* – an antibiotic-resistant strain of *S. aureus* – was identified at the site where the raw sewage entered the Potomac River.

For more information on the UMD results and the health implications, please see the UMD’s School of Public Health’s press release: [UMD team finds E. coli, MRSA in Potomac River after sewage spill | University of Maryland | School of Public Health](#)

Potomac Riverkeeper Network Data

The table below displays monitoring data of *E.coli* bacteria levels in Most Probable Number (MPN). The samples were retrieved by Potomac Riverkeeper Network (all dates) and University of Maryland (January 28th and February 3rd). The U.S. EPA water recreational safety limit is 410 MPN, any readings above that are signified in **red text**. For questions, please contact evan@prknetwork.org

Site Name	January 23rd, 2026	January 28th, 2026	February 3rd, 2026	February 12th, 2026
<i>Old Angler’s Inn</i>	4.1	52	1	6
<i>Lock 10</i>	4,884,000	1,119,900	1,732,900	50,400
<i>Lock 10 River</i>	2,909,000	920,800	1,119,900	68,900
<i>Little Falls Pumping Station, USGS gauge</i>	NA	17,890	860	410
<i>Little Falls Pumping Station</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Little Falls/Lock 5</i>	NA	16,160	630	410
<i>Fletchers Cove</i>	24,196	7,701	6.3	20.1
<i>Washington Canoe Club</i>	NA	689	47.9	6.3
<i>Thompson Boat Launch</i>	NA	24,196	74.3	13.4
<i>National Harbor</i>	NA	1	8.5	1

Some questions for DC Water leadership:

1. Does DC Water have in-house water quality sampling capacity? If not, should it or is using outside contractors more cost effective? Would in-house capability have speeded up the release of E. coli data for downstream sampling sites near recreational areas after the January 19, 2026 sewage spill? Would in-house water quality sampling provide one metric as to the success of their sewer rehabilitation program?
2. There have been some discussions that DC Water might be interested in buying the Aqueduct from the Army Corps of Engineers. Please provide any analysis and background to the Committee in regard to the benefits and risks of such an action.
3. Will DC Water, working with other groups such as the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), Council of Governments (COG) and other groups to create a water conservation plan for Potomac Interceptor users?
4. When will DC Water have an idea of what might have caused the January 19th sewer break? Can DC Water provide the Committee with steps to be taken that might prevent additional such breaks in the future? Some industry experts estimate that the service life of reinforced concrete pipe is 75 to 100 years. The pipes of the Potomac Interceptor were put in place between 1960-63 - about 65 years ago. Is there some factor that might be causing premature failure?
5. Industry experts recommend a replacement rate of pipes at 2 percent. What is DC Water's replacement percentage? Should DC Water consider increasing it?
6. DC Water had previously identified this Clara Barton section of the Potomac Interceptor as deteriorating and in urgent need for rehabilitation. Any indication of why this section was so affected? Does DC Water believe there are other sections similarly vulnerable?
7. What roles have DC environmental agencies and the DC Council undertaken since the Potomac Interceptor Sewage Spill? Is a DC agency conducting any environmental or bacterial monitoring, or are they relying on DC Water's monitoring results?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please reach out to our D.C. Lead Jamoni Overby at jamoni.overby@natureforward.org with your response or with any questions.

Sincerely,

Arundel Rivers Federation
Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group
Blue Water Baltimore
Catocin Land Trust

Chapman Forest Foundation
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore

Defensores de la Cuenca
EcoLatinos
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of the Rappahannock
Lake Anna Civic Association
Latino Outdoors
Little Falls Watershed Alliance
Lynnhaven River NOW
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Mattawoman Watershed Society
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Nature Forward
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
NorthBay Education
Northern Virginia Bird Alliance
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Riverkeeper
Seneca Creek Watershed Partners
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
St. Mary's River Watershed Association
Virginia Conservation Network
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Wild Virginia
York River Steward