



## THE POTOMAC RIVER: #1 MOST ENDANGERED RIVER

Our friends at American Rivers have put the Potomac at the top of America's Most Endangered Rivers list. With this year being the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, it is a good time to review some of the many pollution problems our river faces.

Thanks to the Clean Water Act, you no longer see and smell most of the problems in the river, and no president is currently calling the Potomac a "national disgrace," but the hidden problems are many and in some ways worse than when the problems were palpable. The acid mine drainage issues, problems from industrial agriculture, sewer overflows (after a storm in DC, it is truly the "Pootomac") may all have worse examples on other rivers, but the Potomac has them all. The urban, suburban, and agricultural stormwater runoff causes serious problems throughout the watershed, at times impairing the use of the river. The past fish kills and pervasive intersex fish issues due to the "chemical soup" the fish swim in have made national headlines for years.

Except for a very few members who understand the seriousness of the issue, Congress is doing nothing meaningful to fix the problems in this, our nation's river, or in other rivers across the country. In fact, many members of Congress are doing their best to either gut the Clean Water Act or limit the EPA's ability to enforce it. If this were to occur, the promise of "fishable, swimmable, and drinkable" would be lost; we would be heading backwards, towards the days when rivers caught on fire.

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<http://greenoc.freedomblogging.com/>

## DC's Stormwater Permit Will Now Meet Clean Water Goals

Potomac Riverkeeper and other clean water advocates reached an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over a clean water permit for Washington, D.C.. This permit will require the city to develop a plan for reducing its discharges of polluted stormwater to local waterways.

This agreement resolves a legal challenge to the permit filed in November by public interest law firm Earthjustice (representing Anacostia Riverkeeper, Potomac Riverkeeper, and Friends of the Earth) and the Natural Resources Defense Council. The appeal to the EPA alleged that the permit failed to meet legal requirements for clean water.

"The rivers in our nation's capital should be restored to their full potential, not be the dumping ground for bacteria, metals and other waste," said Jennifer Chavez, Earthjustice attorney. "This permit marks a major, though seriously overdue, milestone in this 40th year anniversary of the Clean Water Act."

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## Valley Wastewater Treatment Plants Achieve Strong Progress in Nutrient Reductions

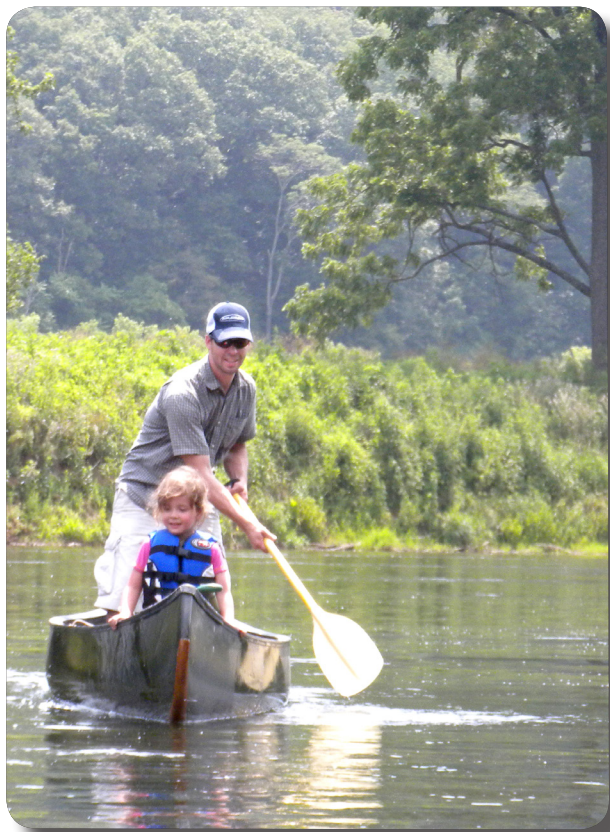
Across the Shenandoah Valley, twelve public Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) operators have completed or nearly completed major facility upgrades to remove “nutrients” like nitrogen and phosphorous which fuel noxious algae blooms in local rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Though these improvements will contribute to improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay, local communities will be the first to enjoy the results – in the form of improved recreational opportunities on a local stream or river, increased property values, reduced cost to produce safe drinking water, and increased levels of regional tourism.

However, these improvements were extremely expensive. In the Shenandoah Valley, twelve WWTPs took advantage of Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) grants in order to install nutrient reduction technology upgrades to their facilities. Many of the facilities also financed projects to increase plant capacity during the construction process.



***Large pollution reductions have been achieved by WWTPs in the Shenandoah Valley***

These facilities are now delivering impressive performance numbers. For example, the Woodstock WWTP is achieving a 95% reduction efficiency. Read that again! 95% reduction in nitrogen and phosphorous. That’s something to celebrate – and should translate into improved conditions in certain sections of our local waterways which have been choked by an excess of nutrients for decades.



***Shenandoah Riverkeeper Jeff Kelble paddling on the Shenandoah with his daughter***

City residents and other ratepayers connected to public water utilities are now shouldering a greater financial burden to make these facility improvements. In addition to paying construction loans, the utilities have also seen increased operational costs associated with the added technology and those costs have “stung” as they have been passed down to consumers. Our back of the napkin estimates show several localities where each household will be paying between \$10,000 and \$18,000 aggregate over the next 15 years (coinciding with the Chesapeake Bay Cleanup) for the nutrient removal upgrades and maintenance.

“As farmers are asked to do more and more to protect local streams, I wanted to let them know they are not alone in sharing responsibility to protect local water quality,” Shenandoah Riverkeeper Jeff Kelble comments. “People in the towns and cities have just seen doubling and tripling of sewer rates but the result is that they’re using state of the art technology to remove the great majority of the pollution coming from that waste stream.”

At this point, citizen ratepayers in towns and cities have done just about all they can do to reduce their wastewater nutrient discharges.

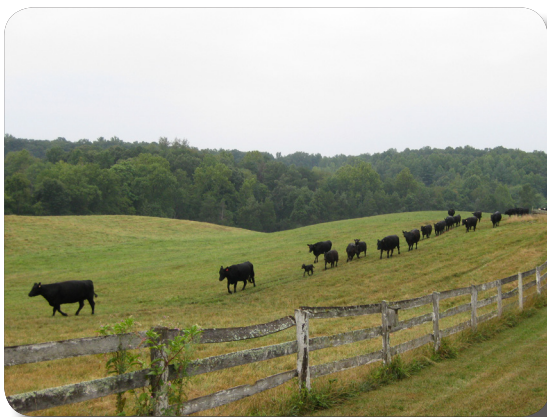
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## Wastewater Treatment *continued from page 2*

Since WWTPs are at or near the maximum technological limits for nutrient pollution reduction, we're going to have to accelerate our work on farms and in our small cities to address the remaining major source of pollution - runoff from streets and farmland.

Sadly, despite these major improvements, the science shows us that the majority of pollution in the Valley still comes from overland runoff—not from wastewater and industrial discharges. Were these technology upgrades wasteful? “No, not at all,” Jeff quickly replies, “We have to do all we can in our cities and towns to minimize our wastewater stream. This is clearly what is required by the Clean Water Act, it's what citizens overwhelmingly want, and it makes sense”. Now we need the same kind of commitment from our government and from stakeholders to make the same kind of dent in runoff pollution from farms and cities. “This will be the biggest lift of all,” states Jeff.



*Well maintained farmland is not only good for animals, it protects everyone's resources*

## DC's Solution to CSOs Being Debated

Over 13 years ago, Earthjustice with a number of other local nonprofits filed a lawsuit to stop the combined sewer overflows (CSOs) that dump over 2 billion gallons of water and raw sewage in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and Rock Creek. Under a consent decree, DC Water is now building massive underground tunnels that will hold the stormwater before flowing into the sewage treatment plant. The first tunnels on the Anacostia are now being constructed. The consent decree also included research of Green Infrastructure to reduce the flow of stormwater.

Currently, DC Water is proposing a Green Infrastructure (GI) pilot project which would delay the second phase of building tunnels on Rock Creek and the Potomac. Many in the environmental community believe we should move forward with GI pilot programs and should take more time to make an informed decision about amending the consent decree. We need both Green Infrastructure and tunnels because the tunnels do not solve the problem. Go to [www.dcen.net](http://www.dcen.net) for more information.

## Report Pollution

301-POTOMAC & 540-837-1479 (Shenandoah)  
[www.potomacriverkeeper.org/report-pollution](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org/report-pollution)

### On the River



**Ed Merrifield**  
President  
& Potomac  
Riverkeeper



**Jeff Kelble**  
Shenandoah  
Riverkeeper



**Brent Walls**  
Upper Potomac  
River Manager



**Alan Lehman**  
Agricultural  
Project Manager

### DC Staff

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## Most Endangered River *continued from page 1*

You can help by making sure your legislators know how important our rivers and streams are to you. Let them know you want them to keep the Clean Water Act strong. Let them know that by living in this area and drinking the water and everything made with water, they and their families have the Potomac running through their veins. And finally, remind them that their best and safest drinking water will come from healthy rivers and streams.

Go to [www.potomacriverkeeper.org](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org) to take action.

About the report:

American Rivers reviews nominations for the America's Most Endangered Rivers® report from river groups and concerned citizens across the country. Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria: A major decision (that the public can help influence) in the coming year on the proposed action; The significance of the river to human and natural communities; The magnitude of the threat to the river and associated communities. The report highlights ten rivers whose fate will be decided in the coming year, and encourages decision-makers to do the right thing for the rivers and the communities they support.

## Riverkeeper supporters Set Sail for Clean Water!

On Saturday, April 28th, a group of Riverkeeper supporters and friends gathered at Gangplank Marina on the District's Southwest Waterfront to participate in our Set Sail for Clean Water event, a community sailing race. The event was part of the Waterkeeper Alliance SPLASH Event Series, presented nationally by Toyota in partnership with national founding sponsor, KEEN.

After a few words from the speakers on the health of the Potomac, corporate sustainability, and accessible recreation on the river, participants were led by volunteer DC Sail instructors to the first race mark. All three sailing heats were filled with eager participants, from veterans to first-timers, despite the lack of strong winds and an eminent rain forecast. We want to thank Calleva for being a sponsor and for filling three boats with enthusiastic sailors!

The event was a success, but it would not have been one without the generous support from our sponsors, donors and community exhibitors. Thank you to everyone who made it out to Set Sail for Clean Water! We look forward to future on-the-water events to connect the community with their precious water source.

## Waterkeepers Chesapeake Tells Maryland to Strengthen Manure Regulations

Potomac Riverkeeper along with Waterkeepers Chesapeake, a coalition of all of the Waterkeeper programs in the Chesapeake watershed, called on the Maryland Department of Agriculture to strengthen proposed regulations for applying manure on farm lands and to make sure that the new rules include enforceable implementation deadlines based on sound science.

After being provided a preview of the proposed regulations, the Waterkeepers Chesapeake expressed concern that the requirements will be less than those required by the Clean Water Act, less than those required to meet Maryland's obligations under its Watershed Implementation Plan, and less than those contained in a draft circulated by the Department last year. More importantly, the proposed regulations will not be strong enough to protect the rights of all Marylanders to clean water.



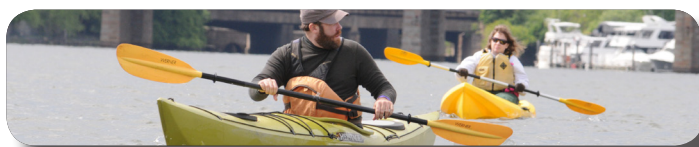
***Proposed manure regulations would leave waterways vulnerable to runoff pollution***

## DC Stormwater Permit *continued from page 1*

In 2002, the EPA's Environmental Appeals Board ordered EPA's Region 3 to strengthen an earlier version of the permit so that it would ensure compliance with the District's water quality standards. In October 2011 the EPA released a long-overdue and flawed permit that stopped short of what is required by law and needed to fully clean up the District's waters. Key parts of the permit contained muddled and ambiguous language and exceptions that made clean water standards extremely difficult to enforce.

Because of the new agreement, EPA will revise the permit to require the District to develop a comprehensive plan to meet pollution reduction goals according to a schedule with enforceable deadlines and to ensure the public can participate in the development of the plan. Adopting those changes will mean cleaner waterways throughout the District.

"For years we have been calling for comprehensive, enforceable implementation requirements and deadlines for cleaning up polluted runoff into our rivers. This permit is a major step in the right direction," said Potomac Riverkeeper Ed Merrifield.



## Maryland bans arsenic-based chicken feed

Maryland has passed legislation that prohibits the use of arsenic in chicken feed, a practice already in place in Canada and Europe, addressing the public health and environmental consequences of the neurotoxin. Since the 1940s, roxarsone, an arsenic-based drug, has been used in poultry feed to fight parasites in the animal. Later it was shown to increase the growth period in chickens and make the meat appear pinker and plumper.

Arsenic is a known carcinogen that contributes to heart disease, cancers and diabetes. Last year, the Food and Drug Administration tested 100 chickens that were fed roxarsone feed and discovered half of the chickens had traces of inorganic arsenic in their livers. Poultry farms on the Eastern Shore produce billions of pounds of waste that is often used as fertilizer and run-offs into the Chesapeake Bay, adding even more pollutants into our waterways. For more information, visit [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org).

## 100,000 Paddle Strokes Project Update

We're still paddling – Potomac Riverkeeper is working with attorneys from Akin Gump, led by counselor John Sopko, as part of Potomac Riverkeeper's 100,000 Paddle Strokes project to improve access for kayakers and other recreational paddlers making day trips or camping overnight on the tidal Potomac, from Washington D.C. to the Chesapeake Bay. Stay tuned for more info this summer!

## Alexandra Cousteau's "Our Nation's River: A System on the Edge"

Explorer, filmmaker and water advocate, Alexandra Cousteau investigates the ongoing challenges the Potomac River faces in her latest short film "Our Nation's River: A System on the Edge."

"From these interviews, it is clear that the river and its tributaries -- and the people and communities that depend on them -- are still in jeopardy, because, today, the Potomac River barely sits on the edge of recovery," Cousteau said, following the release of American River's Most Endangered Rivers Report. We look forward to working with Cousteau in the near future, doing outreach with her film and promoting a healthy Potomac.

You can view the film on Blue Legacy's website: [www.alexandracousteau.org](http://www.alexandracousteau.org).

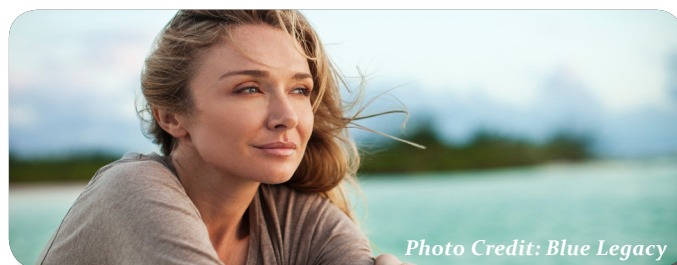


Photo Credit: Blue Legacy



## Get Involved with Potomac & Shenandoah Riverkeeper this Summer!

Mark your calendar to participate in our many events and activities this year. Learn more about volunteering by contacting us at 202-222-0707 or [volunteer@potomacriverkeeper.org](mailto:volunteer@potomacriverkeeper.org). For more information please visit [www.potomacriverkeeper.org/get-involved](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org/get-involved)



**June 3 - June 17** -- Buy a Bee Natural HoneyPot Candle and 50% of your purchase will be donated to Potomac Riverkeeper- visit [www.beenatural.com](http://www.beenatural.com)

**June 10** -- Potomac River Gala, House of Sweden

**June 21** -- Fishing Awareness Day

**July 4 Weekend**-- Swimming Awareness day

**July 14** -- Shenandoah River Rodeo

**August 11** -- Shenandoah Riverfest

**August 17- 25** -- 2nd Annual Island to Island Paddle

**September 15** -- Clean Water Act 40th Anniversary Rally in DC, hosted by Waterkeeper Alliance



### Shenandoah River Rodeo

Saturday, July 14th, VA

The Shenandoah River Rodeo is a celebration of the Shenandoah Valley's best resource: the river! Shenandoah Riverkeeper Jeff Kelble will be the host for an afternoon of live music, fishing, camping, and a giant BBQ!

### Shenandoah Riverfest

Saturday, August 11th, Shenandoah River State Park

Join Shenandoah Riverkeeper and a number of other community groups and businesses for a full day of river activities for the family! This event is designed to connect people with the river through activities such as canoe trips, fishing, live music, and so much more!

### 2nd Annual Island to Island Paddle

August 17-25

It's time again for Whit Overstreet and Joe Hage's epic canoe and kayak trip! This year from August 18th through August 25th, 2012 they will paddle down the Potomac River from Sycamore Island all the way to Smith Point!



*Join the Shenandoah River Rodeo and paddle your way down the river!*

## Big THANK YOU to Calleva!

We are highlighting a longstanding partner of ours, Calleva, for their ever-growing support of Potomac Riverkeeper. Calleva was a generous sponsor and participant of our Set Sail for Clean Water event and is sponsoring our upcoming Annual Potomac River Gala. We were overwhelmed by the success of another membership drive during their summer camp registration. Support Calleva and their mission to get people of all ages outdoors, personal growth, group cooperation and environmental stewardship through educational and challenging experiences on the river, trail and farm ([www.calleva.org](http://www.calleva.org)). Thank you, Calleva!



## Warm Welcome to Our New Staff

### **Shelley Alingas, Education & Outreach Coordinator**

She comes to us from California where she began her environmental conservation work as a volunteer with Surfrider Foundation, leading beach clean ups and educational programs. After graduating from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a B.A. in Community Studies, Shelley picked up and moved to the East Coast to pursue a career in environmental campaign work, working with groups such as Green Corps and Food & Water Watch.



### **Kirby Reed, Production & Membership Coordinator**

Kirby Reed came to us from the private sector with a degree in Geography from the University of Maryland and a degree in Graphic Design from Rochester Institute of Technology. After graduating and working in the private sector, she realized that she wanted to work in a field where her design skills and love for the environment will make a difference.

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## You Can Help Get Rid of Algae Blooms on the Shenandoah

Dozens of complaints were lodged by Shenandoah Riverkeeper with Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requesting that the Shenandoah River be listed as impaired due to excessive algae blooms. These algae blooms which occur year-round on all segments of the river system violate Virginia's nuisance aquatic plant life standard and interfere with the public's recreational use of the river.

But don't let the algae stop you from enjoying the river! While it is a nuisance for people and harmful to the river, it is not a health hazard for humans. We are working on stopping the algae from diminishing everyone's enjoyment of the river.

You can help us do something about it! In order to get Virginia to add the Shenandoah to the list of "impaired" waters and to get help to clean it up, we need your help.

Please write a letter thoroughly describing your experience with algae on the Shenandoah and mail it to: Jeff Kelble (Shenandoah Riverkeeper), P.O. Box 405, Boyce, VA 22620 or you can email [jeff@shenandoahriverkeeper.org](mailto:jeff@shenandoahriverkeeper.org). For more information on what should be included in the letter, go to [shenandoahriverkeeper.org/algae\\_action\\_alert](http://shenandoahriverkeeper.org/algae_action_alert).



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## Shenandoah Riverkeeper on the Radio, Facebook & Twitter!

Starting Friday, May 25th, Shenandoah Riverkeeper Jeff Kelble will be doing two weekly, four minute live spots to talk about the Shenandoah River on The River 95.3 FM with deejays, Lonnie Hill and Randy Woodward. The live show will be broadcast Monday and Friday mornings at 8:40am, so be sure to tune in during your morning commute! Recordings of each show will be made available on our website.

And you can follow Shenandoah Riverkeeper @ [facebook.com/ShenandoahRiverkeeper](https://facebook.com/ShenandoahRiverkeeper) and [twitter.com/ShenandoahRK](https://twitter.com/ShenandoahRK)



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## RiverWatch

The Newsletter of Potomac RIVERKEEPER, Inc.

### Save the Date!

### Potomac River Gala 2012

**Sunday, June 10 4 pm - 7 pm**

Potomac Riverkeeper will be hosting our Annual Potomac River Gala on June 10th at the House of Sweden. Join us to celebrate the Potomac River and our successes in stopping pollution and restoring clean water to our rivers and streams. This year will mark the 10th summer that friends and supporters have gathered to celebrate the Nation's River and raise money for its restoration.

This year we will be giving a salute to the 40th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act with special activities to highlight the 3 pillars of the CWA: drinking, fishing and swimming.

We are thrilled to honor **Alexandra Cousteau** with our **Protector the Potomac Award**. We will be showing her short film, *Our Nation's River: A System on the Edge*, featuring Potomac Riverkeeper Ed Merrifield. **Woody Woodrich**, a long-time Riverwatcher, will receive the **Volunteer of the Year Award**.

For more information and tickets visit- <http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org/potomac-river-gala-2012>

