

RIVER WATCH

The Official Newsletter of POTOMAC **RIVERKEEPER**® NETWORK

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FREE PADDLE TRIP PROGRAM UPDATES



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CAMPAIGN FOR A "WILD AND SCENIC" SAVAGE RIVER

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is excited to announce the launch of a new campaign to have the Savage River in Western Maryland designated as Wild and Scenic by Congress, under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This designation would provide additional protections against pollution and development on the Savage, helping to preserve this incredible river for future generations. With our partners the **Savage River Watershed Association** and the **Mid Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited**, we created the **Savage River Wild and Scenic Work Group**. *Our mission is to work as a community-led partnership to protect the special qualities and valuable resources of the Savage River so they can be enjoyed now and for many generations to come.*

Like much of the Upper Potomac River Watershed, the Savage River is dominated by state forests, parks and a rugged rural topography that has helped protect the river from development and pollution. The Savage River is the premier trout fishery in Maryland, with native Rainbow trout attracting sports fishermen from across the country. Whitewater thrill seekers flock to the river below the Savage River dam to run the same stretch of rapids that hosted the 1989 Canoe Slalom World Championships. The river is a jewel in the Potomac watershed, and deserves to be protected for future generations.

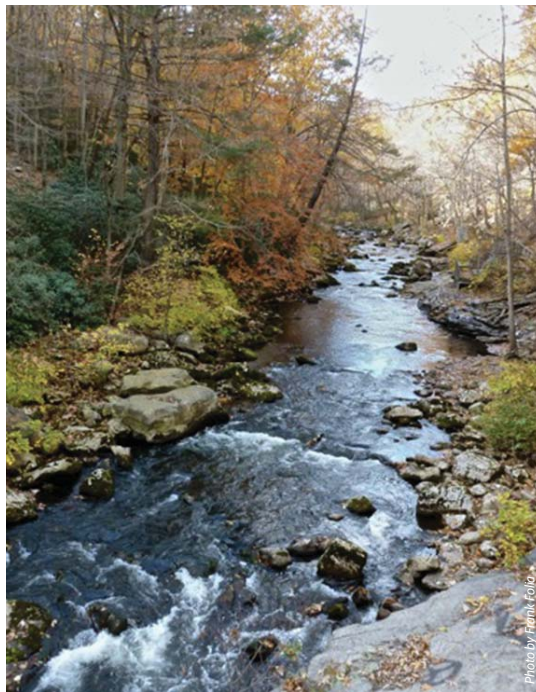
Designating the Savage River as Wild and Scenic is critically important for its future because the current patchwork of management plans fails to protect the watershed in an integrated, holistic way. Our coalition came together in the belief that the Wild and Scenic designation would be the best way to preserve the ecological, historic and cultural values of this unique river system.

There are three stages in the Wild and Scenic designation process. First, we obtain authorization from Congress to carry out a feasibility study, through the passage of a bill supported by the National Park Service and local government. For Wild and Scenic rivers in the eastern U.S., it's critically important to build

local partnerships and support from the beginning, since much of the land is privately owned. Second is the creation of the study itself, involving the formation of a local partnership committee and the development of a draft watershed management plan and public participation plan. Because the plan will involve local landowners, the Partnership Program makes gaining public support a priority. The last step is to propose a Wild and Scenic designation to Congress. The Wild and Scenic proposal could include the whole river system or segments of the river system to be designated Wild, Scenic or Recreational. **If the Savage River is designated as National Wild and Scenic, it would be the first for Maryland and the first in the Potomac Watershed.**

Our coalition has begun outreach to stakeholders by sending a survey to local landowners and public living in the Savage River area. Next will be a public meeting, where we will introduce the Wild and Scenic program, provide results of the survey, and answer any questions or concerns the public may have. Local support is a necessary action item for our congressional partners, Senator Cardin and Delegate

Delaney, who will need to recruit additional congressional supporters. For more information, follow Upper Potomac Riverkeeper on Facebook and look for a new Savage River Wild & Scenic website to be launched in the near future.



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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear members,

By most measures, Potomac Riverkeeper Network has never been stronger, more effective at protecting the Potomac, or more financially sound. We are on track for a 20% jump in revenue (to over a million dollars!) and twice that in donated legal services -- both major landmarks that we are proud of. We have three strong Riverkeepers making a difference at the local, state and regional levels, and we have expanded our efforts into the underserved portion of the Potomac from Alexandria to the Chesapeake Bay.

About a month ago, I was talking to our new board member, Bill Kerr, at his home on the banks of the Potomac about why he wanted to be on our board. Bill has served on the board of the Coral Reef Alliance and explained how their mission touched him very personally as a long time diver who witnessed the worldwide decline of coral. Bill told me how strongly he believed in protecting the Potomac, so much so, that he was compelled to join our board. He recognized the difference between highlighting the plight of coral, which is easily captured in photographs, and drawing attention to the threats to the Potomac, often hidden from view. Bill's view of the water downstream of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge is spectacular, though, and he wants to play a role in protecting it.

We talked about how PRKN can tell the stories of our members who fish the river and their passion for the work we do. Our fishermen (and our paddlers) are keenly aware of shifts in water quality, algae blooms, and swings in fish health and population. They are often the first to observe them and report back to us -- much like divers reported the decline of the coral reefs. Slowing down and looking into the water, like our fishermen do, reveals threats concealed by the beauty of the surface.

Our big challenge is reaching the millions who experience the Potomac only through the tap water they drink. They, too, are confronted by river pollution like blue-green algae blooms that cause a funky taste. The utilities aren't in a hurry to explain what's happening, so most people don't understand the cause. They may be exposed to algal toxins, and pharmaceuticals entering our rivers, suspected of causing eggs to develop in male fish, the government hasn't set standards for yet.

Most don't even know the source of their water is the river. So it's our job to "look under" the water for all residents of our watershed, and it's our job to help them see and understand the threats our beautiful river is facing.

Our staff acts with an urgency that can only be explained by having seen the kind of decay in our river that Bill Kerr saw in the reefs. I'm excited about the next year as we bring new energy and focus to achieving the "drinkable, fishable, swimmable" waterways goals established in the Clean Water Act of 1972. This is our mission, and with your continued support and dedication we will continue the fight stronger than ever. ■

Warmly,

Jeff Kelble, President

RONALD SHORB

Leaving a Clean Water Legacy

Ronald Shorb and his company American Plant Company of Bethesda were long-time supporters of Potomac Riverkeeper Network. Ronald passed away in late 2014, and we want to extend our sympathies and condolences to the Shorb family. We are also deeply grateful for the legacy gift of \$15,000 that Ronald left to Potomac Riverkeeper Network.

American Plant Company, a 90 year old locally grown company, is a thriving and popular garden center for the entire metro area. Several years ago, they made a commitment to offering environmentally friendly gardening solutions when a family member was diagnosed with cancer. The effects of chemical pesticides and fertilizers upon both people and the earth became apparent to the Shorb family.

We commend the Shorb family's commitment to leaving a safe environment and clean water legacy for their family and community. We are honored that they extended this

commitment by supporting Potomac Riverkeeper Network's mission to protect the Potomac River for future generations. ■

Legacy Gifts

A legacy gift is more than a donation. It is an expression of your desire to make a difference and a lasting legacy. Potomac Riverkeeper Network is grateful to its members and friends who pre-arrange their special gifts to support our long-term success. With your legacy gift, you help ensure that our work to protect your right to clean water can continue to benefit your children and grandchildren, and the rivers that we love.

If you are considering making a legacy gift such as a bequest in a will, we recommend that you consult with a financial advisor. For more information on how to get started, please contact Maria Barry at 202-429-3947 or by email at maria@prknetwork.org.

UPPER POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER[®]

PROTECTING OUR WATER & PEOPLE FROM FRACKING

The far western panhandle of Maryland is beautiful country, graced by deep lakes, wild forests and of course the Upper Potomac River. Unfortunately, it also contains a slice of the Marcellus Shale, the geologic basin that has been the target of the hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” industry in neighboring Pennsylvania and West Virginia for years. The resulting gas drilling boom in those states has taken a grim toll on the environment and local communities, in the form of air and water pollution, worker deaths, public health impacts and fractured “boom and bust” economies. Maryland hasn’t seen fracking yet – but it could happen as early as October 2017.



Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls, Youghiogheny Riverkeeper Krissy Kasserman and Waterkeepers Chesapeake Board Member Robin Broder joined hundreds of local residents opposing fracking to testify in front of the Maryland House Environment & Transportation committee that met in Garrett County on August 30.

To address this threat, Potomac Riverkeeper Network joined the **Don't Frack Maryland Coalition**, made up of over 100 organizations concerned about the risks posed by fracking, now well proven by other states' experience and a rapidly growing body of scientific evidence confirming the likely harm to our environment and communities that could result if fracking takes off in Maryland. Potomac Riverkeeper Network supports the Coalition's call for a statewide ban, citing the fact that no state has developed and enforced regulations protective enough of the environment and public health to warrant allowing it. In fact, Maryland's proposed regulations are remarkably weak and would put our drinking water, air and health in danger.

The two-year moratorium currently in place in Maryland is set to run out in October 2017, when fracking regulations due to be proposed in fall 2016 go into effect. Rather than use that time to conduct a thorough risk assessment of fracking, Governor Hogan's administration instead issued proposed changes to draft regulations written during Governor O'Malley's tenure that would further weaken, not strengthen state fracking rules. These changes include elimination or reduction of setbacks to protect surface and groundwater drinking water aquifers, including Deep Creek Lake, and shamefully weak air and water quality monitoring requirements. Potomac Riverkeeper Network raised concerns about the O'Malley regulations, and we are gearing up to fight these weaker standards as part of this Coalition.



While Garrett and Allegany counties would be immediately and disproportionately burdened if fracking proceeds, the long-term impacts would be felt across Maryland. Federal approval of the Cove Point liquefied natural gas export terminal will spur development of natural gas pipelines and compressor stations across the state, resulting in additional air and water impacts. [See our article on page 5 on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline for an example in Virginia.] In addition to the Marcellus Shale basin, the fracking industry could target other shale basins found throughout Maryland.

Western Maryland has already endured the tainted legacy of acid mine drainage from abandoned coal mines, which severely impact local streams and the Potomac River. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past and allow harmful fossil fuel extraction that will benefit the gas industry and burden local communities and future generations.

It's not just this coalition that's opposed to fracking. A broad range of public health professionals, businesses and community interests in Maryland have spoken out, including dozens of business owners who warned Maryland policymakers of the risk fracking posed to the state's thriving tourism and sustainable agriculture sectors. [See our article on page 1 on efforts to protect the Savage River as a high quality river system.] In addition, a 2015 poll found that a majority of Marylanders support a long-term moratorium on fracking. Local communities have used zoning laws to enact bans, including Mountain Lake Park and Friendsville in Garrett County, Prince George's, Montgomery and Charles County. Other local ban efforts are underway.



What You Can Do

Potomac Riverkeeper Network and the Coalition need your support and your voices to fight fracking in Maryland. Our message to the next General Assembly must be loud and clear – fracking endangers public health and our environment, and has no place in Maryland. We support a robust Maryland economy built on a clean environment and sustainable energy resources.

To join our campaign, sign up for our email list and follow us on Facebook. Never forget that a strong grassroots movement can win this fight! We have seen it succeed in New York, where the collective actions of thousands of people led Governor Cuomo to ban fracking permanently. Don't forget to visit www.DontFrackMD.org and follow Don't Frack Maryland on Facebook to learn more and get involved! ■

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COAL ASH CAMPAIGN NEEDS YOUR VOICE!

Our campaign to hold Dominion accountable for its coal ash pollution in Virginia is marching forward, but we need your support now more than ever, as we reach another critical stage in our fight to protect the Potomac and local communities from toxic coal ash leaks at Possum Point. Last spring we told you about Possum Point's upcoming Solid Waste Permit that will determine how the millions of tons of ash at the site will be permanently disposed of. Delays have pushed the public release date back to this Fall when it will be open for public comment. Dominion would like to drain the water from its massive coal ash pit, put a grass and dirt "cap" on it, and walk away, leaving the coal ash to leach into groundwater and continue contaminating Quantico Creek and nearby drinking water for the foreseeable future.

Governor McAuliffe and state regulators will be all too happy to sign off on this terrible plan unless we rally to compel a solution that will actually protect our river. Potomac Riverkeeper supports excavating the coal ash from the waste pit and removing it to a lined landfill away from the Potomac and local drinking water supplies. This is the surest and best way to address the history of coal ash leaks at Possum Point, which have contaminated groundwater, Quantico Creek and drinking water wells nearby with high levels of metals, including lead, cadmium and boron, a known indicator of coal ash pollution. Dominion's own groundwater sampling over the last thirty years clearly shows its coal ash ponds leaking into the local environment. To make matters worse, a recent Duke University study indicates that Dominion's "cap-in-place" plan would likely increase the concentration of arsenic in the coal ash pit, already at levels dozens of times higher than EPA safe limits.

Don't believe Dominion when it says its coal ash waste pit doesn't leak, or that it will cost too much to remove the ash. Coal ash pits in the Carolinas and Georgia are being excavated and cleaned up, often below budget and ahead of schedule. And Dominion is rebuilding its rail spur at Possum Point. If it used a rail line to bring coal in to burn, ask yourself why Dominion can't use the same rail line to transport coal ash to a lined landfill?

What You Can Do

Join our call to Governor McAuliffe to require the removal of Possum Point's coal ash waste to a lined landfill where it will no longer pollute our rivers and drinking water supplies. The Governor has a choice; he can follow the lead of other states and regulate coal ash using sound science and common sense, or he can put political interests and Dominion's influence first, and protection of our environment a distant second. Contact the Governor's office and your state legislator, and attend the public hearing on the coal ash waste permit once it's announced. **For updates, sign up at info@prknetwork.org with the subject line "I care about coal ash pollution."** ■



Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks being interviewed for new video on the plight of residents living near Possum Point coal ash ponds.



Aerial photo of Possum Point coal ash ponds, May 2015.

Photo by Alan Lehman

Possum Point Litigation Update

On September 27th, the Richmond City Circuit Court will hold a hearing on our appeal of Dominion's permit to discharge over 150 million gallons of coal ash wastewater into the Potomac River without protective permit limits on metals that will harm the aquatic environment. Instead of following the law and setting metals limits based on current water treatment technology, state regulators relied on weaker standards that won't prevent nickel, arsenic and other metals from potentially accumulating in river sediment and causing long term harm to aquatic life. Our attorneys at Southern Environmental Law Center are looking forward to making their case and proving how DEQ failed to comply with the Clean Water Act.

Possum Point Coal Ash Ponds Contaminate Local Drinking Water

Potomac Riverkeeper has been concerned about public health risks from Possum Point's coal ash ponds since we first investigated the site in Spring 2015. For PRKN members Dan and Patty Marrow and Brian West, concerns about coal ash affecting their private wells turned out to be well founded. Testing done by Virginia Tech, the same folks who uncovered Flint, Michigan's lead poisoning disaster, tested West's drinking well and found lead levels 4-10 times as high as EPA safe levels. Samples of the Marrow's and other neighbors' wells revealed elevated levels of hexavalent chromium, arsenic, cobalt, vanadium and boron, many of which are carcinogenic and all of which are found in coal ash. Given their close proximity to Possum Point's ash pits, they are rightly concerned that Dominion's toxic waste has contaminated their private wells. For these families, there is no choice but to fight Dominion's shameful plan to leave this toxic coal waste buried at Possum Point for good.

Support them by calling for independent testing of all drinking water wells near coal ash sites throughout Virginia.

SHENANDOAH RIVERKEEPER[®]

MASSIVE GAS PIPELINE PROJECT THREATENS THE SHENANDOAH

While fracking regulations move towards a showdown in Maryland and Virginia, Shenandoah Riverkeeper is fully engaged in a related battle regarding the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline that would impact the headwaters of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River by traversing the South River.

We oppose this project because its construction and operation will severely impact valuable habitat for a range of species, including the federally endangered Virginia Big-Eared Bat. The pipeline would cause fragmentation of forest habitat, isolating vulnerable populations, promoting invasive species and the spread of disease in the George Washington National Forest. Other impacts include sedimentation and stream damage caused by numerous stream crossings, affecting native brook trout and headwater streams that supply drinking water to the Shenandoah Valley. In essence, this project threatens to do irreparable damage to healthy streams and species-rich forests that make the Shenandoah Valley such a beautiful and special place.

To add insult to injury, Dominion Resources recently asked the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to abandon its stewardship role on nearly 5,000 acres of private property in western Virginia to make way for the pipeline. In its 50 year history, the Foundation has rarely granted such diversions, and only for small projects that are clearly in the public interest. Virginia Outdoors Foundation should not be asked to allow the destruction of conservation values on these properties and risk damaging its relationship with current and future easement landowners to build an unneeded pipeline that offers no local benefits and puts special cultural and ecological landscapes at risk.



In response to this massive project, 50 organizations across two states, including Shenandoah Riverkeeper, formed the **Allegheny Blue-Ridge Alliance (ABRA)** in 2014 to oppose the pipeline. Visit ABRA's website to follow the latest developments: www.abralliance.org.

In addition, the **Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition**, an organization of citizen volunteers, conservation groups, and environmental scientists was convened to focus on the 120-mile segment of the pipeline from the Tygart River in West Virginia to the James River in Virginia. The Coalition has produced a series of story maps on the negative impacts of the ACP at www.pipelineupdate.org, including one on **Dominion's Pipeline Threatens Protected Private Land**.

Local landowners have also mounted stiff resistance to Dominion's attempts to use eminent domain to survey private property. A 2014 lawsuit by a group of Virginia landowners to challenge the constitutionality of the state

law that permits natural gas companies to survey a landowner's property without permission (VA Code 56-49.01) has been granted a hearing by the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

What You Can Do

As this newsletter went to press, Dominion deferred its application to Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VOF canceled a meeting scheduled for the end of the month. But you can still urge VOF to deny Dominion's request, in order to support clean water and healthy habitats protected by conservation easements and preserve the essential trust that's been built between landowners and the Foundation.

Send your message via email or snail mail to the address below, and don't forget to send a copy to your state legislator. Comments must include the sender's name, address, and daytime phone number for the Foundation to accept into the public record.

Ms. Stephanie Ridder, Chairman
c/o Brett Glymph, Executive Director
Virginia Outdoors Foundation
39 Garrett St., Suite 200
Warrenton, VA 20186
bglymph@vofonline.org



River near Waynesboro, VA is a popular trout fishery.

Background on Atlantic Coast Pipeline

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) is a natural gas pipeline project proposed by Dominion Resources and Duke Energy to carry gas from the Marcellus Shale field in central West Virginia through Virginia to users in southeast Virginia and North Carolina, in addition to being shipped to overseas markets. The 600 mile, 42" diameter pipeline would require excavation of an 8 to 12-foot-deep trench and the bulldozing of a 125-foot-wide construction corridor for its entire length. The route would traverse steep, forested mountain slopes and fragile karst topography, presenting a significant hazard to regional water supplies without providing any benefit to local communities impacted by the pipeline's construction and operation.

With significant negative impacts to water supply, intact forests and streams, property values, and the region's economic drivers -- tourism and agriculture, the gas transmission pipeline offers scant local benefit. Further, it increases reliance on shale gas resources and diverts public resources away from investment in clean, renewable energy development.

PADDLE POTOMAC! PADDLE SHENANDOAH!

We did it! 12 paddles over 11 days! Over 300 people joined our Riverkeepers on Paddle Potomac! Paddle Shenandoah! from June 8th to 19th. [We only had to reschedule one!] We paddled stretches from the South Branch of the Potomac to the Shenandoah River to the Georgetown waterfront in DC, and down to Malloys Bay in the Lower Potomac. Each paddle trip included rich cultural and educational opportunities -- and tons of fun and lifelong memories. There was no better way to celebrate the National Park Service's Centennial than by paddling along the many national and state parks and trails on the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. We can't wait for next year!



WE WANT TO THANK ALL OF THE LOCAL OUTFITTERS WHO PROVIDED BOATS, EQUIPMENT AND SHUTTLE SERVICE.

Atlantic Kayak • Boating in DC - Key Bridge • Calleva • Downriver Canoe Company • Front Royal Canoe • Harpers Ferry Adventure Center
Marina Sailing School • River Riders • River & Trail Outfitters • Shenandoah River Adventures • Trough General Store



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CAMPAIGN FOR A "WILD AND SCENIC" SAVAGE RIVER (CONT'D)

What is a Wild and Scenic designation?

In 1968, Congress passed the National Wild and Scenic Act in response to the growing number of hydroelectric projects and other dams that were blocking the natural flow of hundreds of rivers and damaging fish habitat across the country. The goal of the Act is to preserve the free-flowing nature of rivers and streams that have "outstanding resource values," a diverse category that includes water quality and fish and wildlife habitat along with historic and cultural resources. Once a river or river segment is designated, proposed projects that threaten the established resource values have to go through a federal review and approval process.

Despite its lofty goals, the Act has only been utilized to protect about 0.25% of our nation's rivers. While over 12,000 miles of 208 rivers have been designated, over 600,000 miles of rivers nationwide are still impacted by more than 75,000 dams. In the Potomac region, only Pennsylvania has 6 river systems designated as Wild and Scenic. ■

THANK YOU TO INTERN BRI COLEMAN!

Bri Coleman joined our team in the nick of time to organize our **Paddle Potomac! Paddle Shenandoah!** For so many of our guests, she was their first contact with PRKN at the paddle registration site. Everyone praised her infectious enthusiasm, warm personality and mad organizational skills. We could not have had a better ambassador representing PRKN to our PPPS paddlers! Thank you so very much for all of your help on Paddle Potomac! Paddle Shenandoah! and good luck out West!



... BUT WAIT THERE IS MORE!



FREE South Branch Paddle Trip September 25!

Join Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls to celebrate World Rivers Day with another paddle on the South Branch of the Potomac! This paddle is FREE for the first 30 people to register! We will start at Eagle's Nest Outfitters near Petersburg, WV, and float to Brighton Park in Moorefield, about 10 miles. After a great day on the river, we will provide a buffet back at the outfitters. Register by September 23 by visiting our website under Events. We have room for 50 paddlers.

PROGRAM UPDATES

UPPER POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER

PENNSYLVANIA HOG FARM PROPOSAL

Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls has teamed up with the Big Cove Creek Alliance to fight a proposed industrial hog raising facility in Fulton County, Pennsylvania. This new "CAFO" (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) would be sited on land bound on two sides by pristine tributaries of the Potomac, on steep slopes that would undoubtedly result in discharges of hog waste and polluted water into these protected streams. With able assistance from local counsel, the Alliance has held off the proposal, but hearings on the state permit are coming up in the Fall. We are joining this fight to make sure that the destructive and polluting industrial pork industry does not gain a foothold in this beautiful corner of the Potomac River watershed.

SHENANDOAH RIVERKEEPER

MASSANUTTEN WATER PERMIT CHALLENGE

In May, Potomac Riverkeeper Network filed suit in Virginia state court to appeal the state's renewal of the Massanutten sewage treatment plant discharge permit. While our initial efforts to eliminate harmful nutrient trading at this facility succeeded in forcing state regulators to phase out trading and impose new limits on nitrogen and phosphorus discharges, the

state unlawfully gave the facility four years to meet the stricter standards, without enforceable interim deadlines to ensure progress. Excessive nutrient discharges from Massanutten contribute to harmful algae blooms in Quail Run and downstream in the Shenandoah River.

POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER

PRK FILES SUIT ON WEAK DC SEWAGE BACTERIA LIMITS

In August, Earthjustice filed suit in D.C. federal court on our behalf, challenging EPA's approval of "total maximum daily loads" (TMDLs) for fecal bacteria in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and Rock Creek, because the pollution limits fail to meet D.C.'s water quality standards for protecting public health when people recreate in and on these waterways. These pollution caps are based on a monthly average, and do not account for short term spikes in fecal bacteria concentrations that occur after rainfall, when D.C.'s outdated sewer system and stormwater runoff flush sewage and animal waste into the rivers. D.C.'s own water monitoring data from 2014 shows that protective limits for sewage bacteria were violated between 5-42% of the time. These spikes put paddlers, rowers and paddle boarders at risk of gastrointestinal illness at a time when waterborne recreation has become hugely popular in D.C. Our suit requests that the court vacate the TMDL, but keep it in place for a year while EPA develops stricter limits that truly protect river users.



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Take the Plunge!

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Consider making a recurring monthly donation to make a sustained splash.

Be part of our clean water team! Your support allows us to protect our waters so that you and your family can swim, drink and fish -- and take the plunge!

Keep the clean water flowing!

To renew, become a member or make a recurring monthly donation, return the enclosed membership envelope or make your gift online at www.prknetwork.org.