



POTOMAC
RIVERKEEPER®
NETWORK

For Immediate Release
June 6, 2018

3070 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Contact: Fritz Schneider, 301.728.4811
fritz@prknetwork.org

CLEAN WATER ADVOCATES FILE LAWSUIT TO GUARANTEE TIMELY SEWAGE PLANT IMPROVEMENTS

Potomac Riverkeeper Files Lawsuit Against Frederick Over Pollution of Monocacy River

Washington, D.C. – The Potomac Riverkeeper Network today filed a lawsuit against the City of Frederick, Maryland, over chronic pollution violations at the city’s sewage plant that have been fouling the scenic and historic Monocacy River.

The point of the legal action, filed by attorneys with the Environmental Integrity Project, is to make sure that a frequently-delayed \$45 million upgrade project underway at the Frederick City Wastewater Treatment Plant, which was originally scheduled to have been completed in 2011, is actually finished by late July, as planned.

“Historically, a lot of sewage plant upgrade projects miss their deadlines – and some don’t work,” said Dean Naujoks, the Potomac Riverkeeper. “So we are filing this lawsuit as an insurance policy to make sure that the city actually completes its improvements to the Frederick Wastewater Treatment Plant this summer, and that the new system works to create a cleaner Monocacy River.”

In 2017, the 32-year-old sewage plant, which is located at 100 Treatment Plant Road in Frederick, discharged 160,114 pounds of nitrogen pollution into the Monocacy River, which was 64 percent over the plant’s permitted limit, according to state and federal records.

The Monocacy River – a popular destination for kayaking, fishing and wildlife photography -- flows through protected Civil War battlefields into the Potomac River and then the Chesapeake Bay. Nitrogen pollution is a leading cause of algal blooms and low-oxygen “dead zones” in the waterways.

From 2013 through 2016, the Frederick Wastewater Treatment Plant discharged an average of 172,125 pounds of nitrogen per year into the Monocacy River, which was 77 percent over the permitted limit. The amount was also higher than interim standards established by state regulators for the years 2013-2016 during the construction process.

The Frederick plant also released an average of 12,417 pounds of phosphorus pollution each year from 2013 through 2016, which was almost 70 percent over the plant’s permit limit. Last year, that figure dropped to 5,706 pounds of phosphorus, within the permitted limit – showing an improvement.

“We praise the city for heading in the right direction with its sewage plant improvements,” said Naujoks. “But because this upgrade project has experienced so many delays and complications, we want to provide additional legal oversight to make certain that it gets completed in a timely manner. Everyone who loves the scenic Monocacy River deserves that kind of guarantee. If the city finally finishes this project and the river gets cleaner, we’ll drop the lawsuit.”

About Potomac Riverkeeper Network

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches: Potomac Riverkeeper, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper and Shenandoah Riverkeeper. Our mission is to protect the public's right to clean water in our rivers and streams. We stop pollution to promote safe drinking water, protect healthy habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.

For more information, visit <http://www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org>.

About Environmental Integrity Project

The Environmental Integrity Project is a 16-year-old nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, based in Washington D.C., dedicated to enforcing environmental laws and holding polluters and governments accountable to protect public health.

#