



# CHESAPEAKE CURRENTS

Spring 2016 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

## VIRGINIA

### Northern Virginia Healthy Communities

Clean Water Action has worked in Northern Virginia for over 30 years to protect and restore local waterways. Partnering with local grassroots members to educate and empower, sharing information on key issues, and helping connect residents with their elected officials, Clean Water organizes action in support of local waterways, the environment and public health.

Humans are fundamentally dependent on ecosystems and urban environments for survival, yet our awareness and understanding of this critical connection is fragmented. For too long, public health and environmental justice have been disconnected in the public dialogue and in organizing and advocacy on air, water and land use issues. As environmental and health problems become more severe and pervasive, there will be more negative impacts on the health and well-being of our communities. In addition, environmental harms and risks consistently and disproportionately affect minority and low-income communities.

To make meaningful change, the environmental community and Clean Water Action needs to align our efforts and build power in new ways, and take a *continued on page 2*

## MARYLAND

### *Incinerator Win!*

Public health, environmental, and fair development advocates in Baltimore scored a major victory this spring when the Maryland Department of the Environment revoked permits to construct what would have been the nation's largest trash-burning incinerator, planned to be built in South Baltimore less than a mile from homes and schools. Students at one of those schools, Benjamin Franklin High, organized a group called Free Your Voice in order to fight against this incinerator adding to the other polluting facilities already causing their neighborhood to have some of the dirtiest air in the state of Maryland. Clean Water has supported their campaign — joining their very first march, part of a years-long grassroots effort.

This spring, 20-year-old Destiny Watford, a former student at Benjamin Franklin High School who began organizing Free Your Voice when she was just 15, won the Goldman Environmental Prize for her work organizing her community against the incinerator. At the awards ceremony, Destiny said, "I'm from Baltimore, a place that is on the front *continued on page 2*

### Have you seen the new [CleanWaterAction.org](http://CleanWaterAction.org)?

[CleanWaterAction.org](http://CleanWaterAction.org) has always been THE resource for information about the fight to protect clean water; to learn how we can put drinking water first; and the ways you can hold polluters accountable for their pollution. You can do that and more at the new [CleanWaterAction.org](http://CleanWaterAction.org). And you can do it on the go if you have a smart phone or a tablet.

**Take a tour today. Check out the action center, read our new blog, or make a donation.**



Trail crossing over the Difficult Run near Great Falls Park, Virginia

### **NOVA Healthy Communities** *continued from page 1*

more holistic and collaborative approach to our work. Healthy communities depend on sustainable land use, transportation, and green infrastructure to guarantee access to clean air, clean water, healthy food, and productive soil. Identifying and engaging residents at the local community level and around health and environmental issues will guarantee better outcomes in environmental policy and safeguard the health of local residents. Collaborative campaigns can also build a sense of empowerment, helping build stronger communities, and make democracy work.

Towards the end of 2015, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund helped establish a new coalition, Northern Virginia Healthy Communities, and led the effort to develop a broad and diverse collaborative of organizations and community leaders. The coalition's mission is to ensure all people in every community have the tools and resources to easily get involved with meaningful activities that make Northern Virginia a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work.

*For additional information on how to get involved, please contact Michael Bochynski, Virginia Program Organizer and lead partner to the coalition, at (202) 895-0420 x106, or [mbochynski@cleanwater.org](mailto:mbochynski@cleanwater.org).*

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### **Incinerator Win** *continued from page 1*

lines of many injustices — from police brutality, racial discrimination, economic violence, and environmental injustice. All of these stem from a system that is morally unjust and threatens our lives and future of our planet... This is why we have to take the lead. Those directly impacted by the injustices we face and who know firsthand that this is matter of survival, understand that there is a need

for a new vision that is based on our basic human rights, environmental justice, and the [belief] that all life is sacred. We decided that it isn't the fate of our community or our planet to be a dumping ground."

The fight to replace the trash incinerator with community-controlled, sustainable alternatives isn't over, as Energy Answers still retains the lease to the site.

*Contact Maryland Program Organizer Jennifer Kunze, 410-235-8808, or [jkunze@cleanwater.org](mailto:jkunze@cleanwater.org) to learn more.*



PHOTO: NESKEZ / SHUTTERSTOCK

## **ACTION ALERT**

# Virginia's Big Ash Problem

Last year Clean Water Action, along with Virginia Conservation Network, EarthJustice and the Virginia League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, released a report describing documented harm from coal ash in Virginia and identifying critical gaps in the state regulatory program. The report highlights solutions presented in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) coal ash rule that address deficiencies in the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) coal ash regulatory program that have contributed to the coal ash contamination across the Commonwealth described in the report and to the ongoing threat posed to communities.

Despite the abundant evidence of groundwater contamination and the long history of spills and mismanagement of coal ash ponds in the Commonwealth, VDEQ issued Dominion Power

permits to release coal ash wastewater into the Potomac and James Rivers at the Possum Point and Bremono power stations in Prince William and Fluvanna Counties respectively. Wastewater from coal ash ponds at Possum Point have contaminated local ground water and Quantico Creek which feeds directly into the Potomac River. Dominion's own documents revealed that unpermitted and untreated coal ash waste has been discharging into Quantico Creek for over 30 years! Instead of requiring the removal of the coal ash and a permanent halt to the discharge of pollutants, VDEQ intends to allow Dominion to bury the remaining toxic ash in unlined ponds situated directly next to our rivers. This "cap-in-place" closure plan compounds the problem of existing contamination and places additional risks on local ecosystems and groundwater wells.

**TAKE ACTION** today at [cleanwater.org/VaCoalAsh](https://cleanwater.org/VaCoalAsh) to send a message to Attorney General Mark Herring, Governor Terry McAuliffe, and VDEQ Director David Paylor. Tell them our water needs better protections from coal ash! Virginia has made great strides to restore years of industrial damage to the delicate ecosystem of tributaries and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay. Let's not reverse that momentum. Urge Attorney General Herring to revoke these permits, and ensure that "coal ash wastewater is treated with the best available technology and that coal ash is stored in dry, lined landfills away from waterways."

## VIRGINIA

### 2016 General Assembly Legislative Victories

Elections matter — First time Senator Jeremy McPike is a strong voice in the General Assembly on environmental issues like protecting the Potomac and James Rivers from toxic coal ash waste water pollution, and promoting renewable energy and green technology.

Clean Water Action members and allies successfully helped protect the Chesapeake Bay, open space, farmland, and historic sites during Virginia 2016 General Assembly session. The allies fought hard to protect funding for land preservation and Chesapeake Bay clean up. Although the Senate eventually cut Governor Terry McAuliffe's budget for land preservation in half, to approximately \$10 million per year, this is still the largest funding for land preservation ever in Virginia. The final budget also contained \$63 million to fund agricultural best management practices (BMPs) which help reduce and prevent polluted farm runoff.

### 2015 State Senate and House Race Victories



In 2015 Clean Water Action endorsed Senators Jennifer Wexton and Jeremy McPike, and Delegate Kathleen Murphy in Northern Virginia's 33rd, 29th and 34th districts respectively — and all three won, thanks to Clean Water members. In fact Kathleen Murphy won by 191 votes, directly attributable to Clean Water Action's GOTV efforts and the clean water votes of its members.

## MARYLAND

### Clean Water Action Endorses Four Winning Candidates in Baltimore City Council Race

This past April, dozens of Baltimore city council candidates were considered for endorsement by the Clean Water Action. But, there were four candidates who demonstrated an exceptional commitment to Baltimore communities and a deep understanding of the environmental challenges that they face as a city. They faced very competitive primaries but thanks to the support of voters like you, all four candidates endorsed by our committee won their races. The Clean Water Action team looks forward to working with them. These candidates are:

- **Ryan Dorsey, District 3** – A lifelong resident of District 3, Ryan has led the way in efforts to improve the safety and effectiveness of transit for Baltimore City residents.
- **Kristerfer Burnett, District 8** – As a community organizer and resident of Edmondson Village, Kristerfer has fought to eliminate blight and bring a farmer's market to the area.
- **John Bullock, District 9** – John is committed to strengthening the environmental justice movement in Baltimore City and addressing income inequality by supporting local training for green jobs.
- **Shannon Sneed, District 13** – Shannon has worked for years to increase the tree canopy and bring more green space to her community.

Ryan, Kristerfer, John, and Shannon are committed to inclusive processes to engage residents and protect communities and the environment so families, neighborhoods, and local economies thrive. They are strong leaders who are committed to fighting for you and are dedicated to improving Baltimore's green spaces and infrastructure.



## MARYLAND

### 2016 Legislative Wrap-Up

The Maryland Legislative session is over and there is a huge victory to celebrate: the passage of the Pollinator Protection Act (*see story below*). Thanks to the tireless efforts of Clean Water members and the dedication of our champions in the legislature, Maryland is the first state in the country to restrict consumer use of toxic neonicotinoid pesticides.

This commonsense bill had broad bi-partisan support because neonicotinoids contribute to bee mortality, as well as to declines in other native pollinators, including birds and butterflies. The Pollinator Protection Act (SB 198/HB211) protects Maryland agriculture and our food supply by greatly reducing the state's exposure to neonics.

A huge thanks goes to bill sponsors Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam and Delegate Anne Healey, along environment committee chairs Senator Joan Carter Conway and Delegate Kumar Barve. These legislators

were leaders in the fight against harmful bee-killing pesticides and this legislation would not have been possible without them.

Unfortunately, not every Clean Water supported bill passed. House Bill 1328, which would have banned wheel weights containing the potent neurotoxins lead and mercury, passed overwhelmingly in the House, but the Senate chose not to act on the bill. However, significant progress was made in advancing this legislation, as well as promoting environmental justice with House Bill 820/Senate Bill 398. The groundwork has been laid for victories on both next year!

There is a lot more work coming up for the rest of 2016 and we're already planning for the 2017 legislative session. So stay tuned! We look forward to working with you to fight for our water, environment, and communities throughout Maryland.

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## Maryland Becomes First in the Nation to Restrict Bee-Killing Pesticide

Maryland took a major step for aquatic and public health, when the General Assembly passed the Pollinator Protection Act by large bipartisan majority. The Pollinator Protection Act goes into effect in 2018 and reduces exposure to pesticides by taking products containing neonicotinoid pesticides (neonics) off the shelves at retailers, and out of the hands of consumers that frequently overuse them.

It is estimated that homeowners misuse neonics by applying anywhere from twenty to one-hundred-twenty times the amount listed on the label and during times that wind is blowing or bees are currently foraging.

Research confirms that neonics harm bees and other pollinators, including butterflies and birds. This class of pesticide poses a serious threat to our food supply,

public health, and environment. Maryland bees in particular have been dying at an alarming rate: last year, Maryland beekeepers lost 61 percent of their bees, about twice the national average.

These pesticides have also been linked to the death of molting blue crabs. A 2015 USGS study found that over half of the samples tested nationwide contained neonics. Neonics were detected in 59% of the samples collected from Antietam Creek, Big Pipe Creek, and Chillisquaque Creek of the Chesapeake Bay.



As co-founder of the Smart on Pesticides coalition, Clean Water Action has coordinated the collection of over 21,000 supportive emails, letters, and calls from Maryland residents in the past two years. While the Governor did not sign or veto the bill, it officially became law as of May 27, 2016.

## MARYLAND

### *Testifying for the REDUCE Act*

As a field manager for Clean Water Action, Troiano Riveria crisscrossed the State of Maryland many times, knocking on doors and recruiting Marylanders to join Clean Water Action's fight to protect our communities and environment. He says that, while he meets a lot of really interesting people when he canvasses, this year he had the chance to do something extra special — share Clean Water Action's mission with members of the Maryland General Assembly!

Here's what Troi had to say about his trip to Annapolis: "I was honored to testify before the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee in support of the REDUCE Act (Senate Bill 398). This Bill supported information sharing about diesel trucks to enhance community engagement in decision about new industrial

development. The goal was (and is) effective community engagement between neighborhoods, industry, and government when new air pollution permits are being considered."

He continued, "Supporting this bill was a no-brainer for me. Many of the communities I have worked in know the effects of pollution firsthand and they are eager to have their voices heard. They also know where their kids play, the route they take as they walk to school, and where they hang out. This is why their input on new air pollution permits is vital."

"I'm proud to work for an organization that believes that one's health and quality of life should not be determined by his or her zip code and I was proud to support the REDUCE Act in Annapolis."

### **New Program Coordinator Joins the Clean Water Action Team in Maryland**

Clean Water is pleased to announce the hiring of Anna Mudd as Maryland Program Coordinator. Anna comes with a background in politics, having worked extensively on state and local campaigns in Maryland over the past decade. Anna also has experience in the non-profit sector, where she worked on several initiatives with the Governor's Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, a coalition of non-profit organizations, state agencies and foundations dedicated to ending hunger in Maryland.

"I'm very excited to join Clean Water Action, an organization that has a long and successful history of protecting the environment," said Anna. "I look forward to working with the environmental community, partner organizations, and communities across the State to preserve our natural resources and maintain Maryland's excellent quality of life for future generations."

Anna brings impressive experience to Clean Water Action at a perfect time with 2016 shaping up to be a landmark year for the environment in Maryland.

### **Welcome Maryland Organizer Jennifer Kunze**



Jennifer is a lifelong Maryland resident who grew up next to the Catoctin Mountains in Frederick, graduated from St. Mary's College of Maryland on the beautiful St. Mary's River, and moved to Baltimore City nearly four years ago. Before joining Clean Water Action, Jennifer worked as the Environmental Programs Organizer at the Center for Grace-Full Living in East Baltimore, where she coordinated community gardens, taught environmental education courses, and organized rain garden and other stormwater remediation projects. Jennifer has also been active in a wide variety of environmental and human rights campaigns in Baltimore, and as Maryland Program Organizer, she works to build networks and power in communities throughout Maryland to protect our health and environment.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



PHOTO: BRENT BOLIN

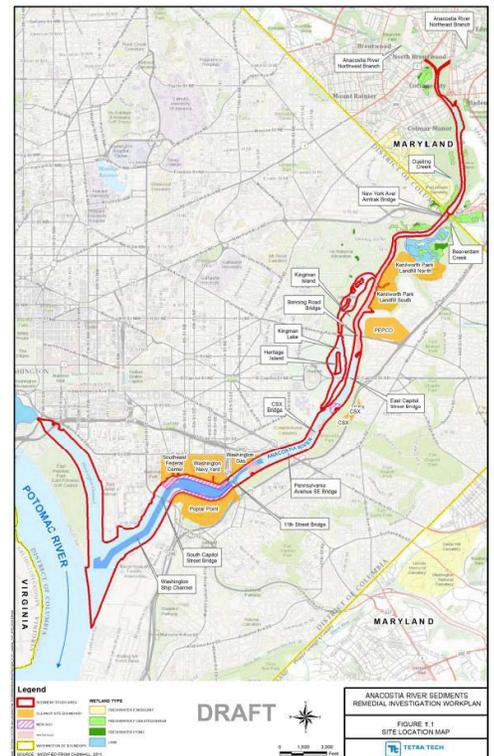
Above: Rowers on the Anacostia River. Below right: The Anacostia River Sediment Project Boundary Map.

# Anacostia River Toxics: Let's Finish the Job!

Once called the forgotten river, the Anacostia River of Washington, DC and its Maryland suburbs has been rediscovered thanks to decades of advocacy by local communities and groups like Clean Water Action. After regularly appearing on lists of the nation's most polluted rivers, the Anacostia is beginning to experience a long-awaited renaissance.

But there is still work to be done. The Anacostia River is impacted by four primary pollutants: bacteria, polluted stormwater runoff, trash, and toxics. Clean Water and our partners have achieved significant regulatory victories on the first three, and mechanisms are now in place that are already reducing the amount of bacteria, polluted runoff, and trash reaching the Anacostia and its tributaries. Only legacy toxics remain as a major pollutant without a cleanup plan.

Fortunately, that is changing thanks to the efforts of local communities, Clean Water, and other partners. Three of the six legacy pollution sites have cleanups underway, and the DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) has just completed a massive study of the polluted sediments in the entire 8.5 mile tidal length of the Anacostia. Clean Water Action will be working to engage the public in the importance of funding this cleanup to finish the job DOEE started with the sediment study.



Track DOEE's efforts at: <http://doee.dc.gov/anacostiasediment> and stay tuned to the Clean Water Action DC page for more on our work to finish the job on toxics.



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*Left: The Anacostia River adjacent to the US National Arboretum. See p.7 for article detailing efforts to rid the river of pollution.*

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA

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