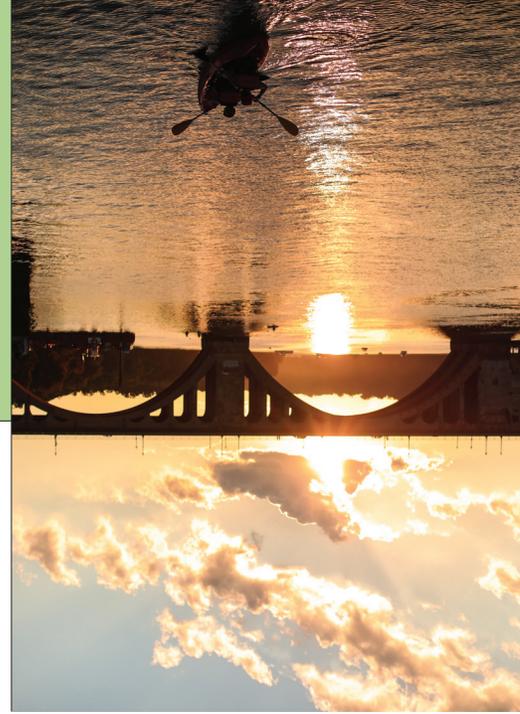


# CLEAN RIVERS PROJECT NEWS

CONTROL ACTIVITIES  
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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY



## Slope Stabilization Project Completed to Improve Safety and Prepare for Potomac River Tunnel

In December 2025 and in advance of the start of the Potomac River Tunnel Project work at Georgetown University, DC Water completed an important public safety project along Canal Road NW. The sloped area on Canal Road between the Glover-Archbold Trailhead and Georgetown's entrance was deemed an area of public safety concern by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) due to repeated landslides and falling rocks. Because of this known hazard, DC Water needed to stabilize the slope prior to constructing a tunnel shaft at this location as part of the Potomac River Tunnel Project.



Slope Stabilization Process

DC Water began the slope stabilization work in September 2025. This included removing trees, vegetation, and loose materials from the slope drilling and grouting steel dowels into the slope and covering the area with steel mesh to hold everything in place. Approximately 725 steel dowel anchors were used in the process. Finally, grass seed was applied that will begin growing in the spring once the weather warms up again.

The sidewalk along Canal Road between the Glover-Archbold Trailhead and Georgetown's entrance was closed for the duration of the work and DC Water offered a free shuttle during that time. DC Water understood the importance of the sidewalk to the community and was able to complete the work 1.5 months earlier than expected.

This work is important to keep the area safe and to prepare for a bigger project—the Potomac River Tunnel—which will help reduce combined sewer overflow discharges to the Potomac River. DC Water will construct a deep drop shaft at the top of the slope as part of the Potomac River Tunnel Project to reduce the amount of untreated sewage and stormwater entering the river and improve water quality.



Views of the Slope on Canal Road NW Before Slope Was Stabilized

Stabilizing the slope creates a safer passageway for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. Areas of the sidewalk that were previously covered with vegetation and debris are now clear, exposing wider, safer sidewalk.



Slope and Sidewalk at Completion



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**BIANNUAL REPORT SPRING 2026**

**COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW (CSO)  
CONTROL ACTIVITIES**

## **CLEAN RIVERS PROJECT NEWS**

### **TBM Mary Assembly Begins Below Ground**



DC Water reached a major milestone with the successful lowering of the cutterhead and the front and middle shields into a 99-foot-deep underground shaft for one of the two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that will mine the Potomac River Tunnel. This achievement marks a critical step toward tunnel excavation for the project.

This milestone represents the transition from site preparation to active tunnel mining and lining. Once TBM Mary is fully assembled underground, she will begin excavating the Potomac River Tunnel—an essential component of DC Water’s Clean Rivers Project that will significantly reduce combined sewer overflows into the Potomac River.

The TBM is lowered in pieces and assembled below ground, where it will begin its journey. Large components—including the cutterhead and the front and middle shields—are lowered individually into the shaft and then carefully joined together. This complex operation requires precise coordination and heavy lifting, as each component weighs hundreds of tons and must be positioned within inches of its final location.

The front shield was the first piece lowered into the shaft on January 12, 2026, and placed on the bottom of the shaft—a 10-foot-thick concrete slab reinforced with more than 50 tons of steel, roughly equivalent to the weight of 35 full-size pickup trucks. The following day, the cutterhead—the face of the TBM that cuts through rock and soil—was carefully lowered and positioned ahead of the front shield for connection. Weighing approximately 105 tons, the

cutterhead required meticulous handling. On the third day, the middle shield—the final and largest of the front sections, weighing 290 tons—was lowered into the shaft and connected to the cutterhead and front shield in the starter tunnel.

Once fully assembled, TBM Mary will stretch 705 feet long and excavate 2.4 miles north through rock to the entrance of Georgetown University on Canal Road NW. Her sister machine, TBM Emily, will mine 3.1 miles south primarily through soil to Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, where she will connect to the Anacostia River Tunnel System. Together, the two TBMs will construct one of the largest and most complex underground infrastructure projects in the District. Excavation to the north is scheduled to begin in spring 2026, and TBM Emily will arrive from Germany at the West Potomac Park site later this summer with mining to the south expected to begin in Fall 2026.

As excavation progresses, each TBM will cut through underground rock and soil while simultaneously installing concrete tunnel lining segments as it advances. The excavated material will be conveyed back through the tunnel and lifted out of the shaft for removal and proper disposal.

Once operational, the Potomac River Tunnel will provide underground storage for stormwater and wastewater during heavy rain events, preventing millions of gallons of untreated sewage from flowing into the Potomac River. The project is a key element of DC Water’s Clean Rivers Project, a long-term initiative designed to improve water quality in the District’s rivers while protecting public health and the environment.

## DC Water and National Park Service Coordinate Projects in West Potomac Park



Few park visitors realize that two major infrastructure projects—led by different agencies with distinct missions—are unfolding side by side on some of the District’s most visited and historic parkland. DC Water’s tunnel construction and the National Park Service’s seawall rehabilitation must be carefully coordinated to safely and efficiently share limited space.

In a field in West Potomac Park, at the intersection of Ohio Drive and Independence Avenue, DC Water is constructing the Potomac River Tunnel, a key component of the District’s Clean Rivers Project. At the same time, the National Park Service (NPS) is rehabilitating the historic Potomac River seawall as part of an effort to address flooding and climate-related impacts in West Potomac Park and the Tidal Basin. West Potomac Park falls under NPS jurisdiction, requiring close collaboration between the two agencies.

To address the combined impacts of aging infrastructure, sea level rise, and twice-daily tidal flooding, NPS initiated a comprehensive seawall rehabilitation project in 2024. The project includes approximately 6,800

linear feet of seawall within the Tidal Basin and along the Potomac River in West Potomac Park. Reconstruction of the Tidal Basin seawall was completed in December 2025, and rehabilitation of the Potomac River seawall is expected to be completed in the spring of 2026.

As part of the Potomac River Tunnel Project, DC Water is constructing an emergency overflow structure integrated into the existing seawall. If the capacity of the tunnel system is exceeded during extreme rain events, the structure will release excess flows into the Potomac River in a controlled manner to prevent flooding upstream. To accommodate this work, DC Water temporarily demolished a portion of the existing seawall that was scheduled for replacement by NPS.

Although the tunnel project and the seawall rehabilitation are separate and independently managed efforts, the two teams coordinated closely on design and construction interfaces. While the design of the Potomac River Tunnel preceded the seawall design, early collaboration helped ensure compatibility between the projects and minimized construction conflicts.



Where the projects physically intersect, DC Water and NPS shared design elements. When completed, DC Water’s new overflow structure will feature a stone veneer designed to match the rehabilitated NPS seawall, maintaining visual continuity along the riverbank. Turf pavers will cover the surface area, and trees and vegetation removed during construction will be replaced.

Construction of the Potomac River Tunnel began in 2023 and will be completed in 2030.

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE



In the Spring of 2025 DC Water began its Green Infrastructure (GI) Project Rock Creek C (RC- C) as part of the DC Clean Rivers project. RC-C is the third of four GI projects installing permeable pavement alleys to control stormwater runoff during rain events and reduce the load on the combined sewer system in the Rock Creek sewershed.

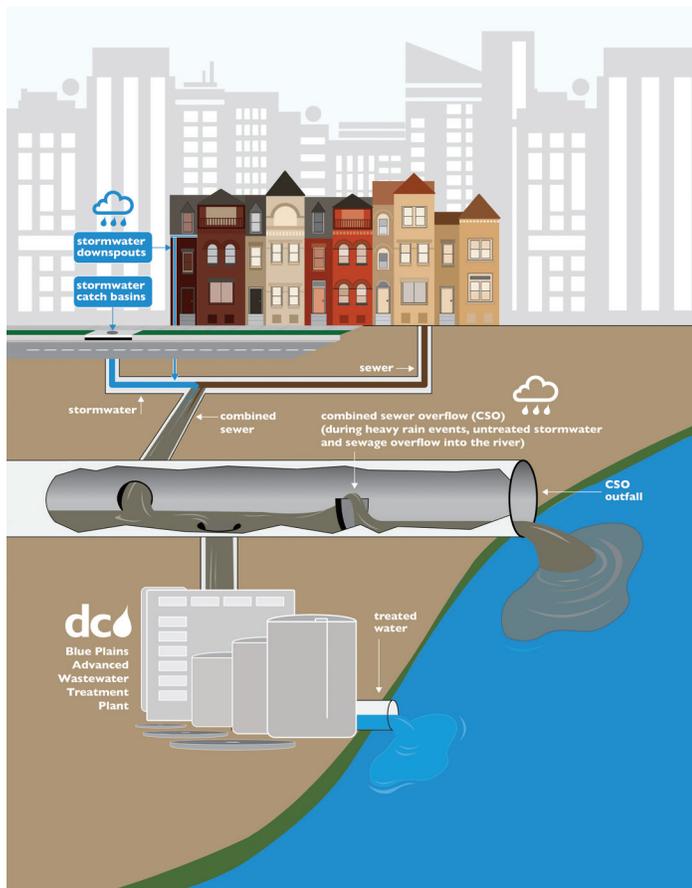
Since last year, the project has constructed 17 permeable pavement alleys managing about 12 acres of impervious surface to date. The project is 45% complete and well on its way to meeting the Rock Creek C scheduled goal of 43 permeable alleys by 2027.

Upon completion, the DC Clean Rivers green infrastructure projects will manage 92 impervious acres in the Rock Creek sewershed to reduce combined sewer overflows to the District’s waterways and improve water quality.

## FAQs About the Combined Sewer System

### What is a Combined Sewer?

A combined sewer is a single pipe that carries both sanitary wastewater and stormwater runoff. Most older cities in the United States are served by combined sewers. In the District, the combined sewer system was designed and built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Modern practice is to build two pipes in the street—one for stormwater runoff, and one for wastewater from homes and businesses.



### What is a CSO and why does it occur?

A CSO is a combined sewer overflow. During dry weather, sewage from homes and businesses is conveyed to the District's wastewater treatment plant at Blue Plains, where the wastewater is treated to remove pollutants before being discharged to the Potomac River. During certain rainfall conditions, the capacity of a combined sewer may be exceeded. When this occurs, the excess flow, a mixture of wastewater and stormwater runoff, is discharged to the Anacostia River, Potomac River, Rock Creek and tributary waters. The Federal Clean Water Act and the Environmental Protection Agency requires that communities develop a plan to address and reduce overflows. There are 48 potentially active CSO outfalls listed in DC Water's existing discharge permit from the EPA.

### When do CSOs occur?

CSOs occur during wet weather and are more frequent in wet years than dry years. During years with average rainfall, combined sewers overflow into Anacostia River about 2 times annually and the Potomac River about 72 times annually, spilling approximately 54 million gallons into the Anacostia and 639 million gallons into the Potomac. Rock Creek averages 25 CSO events and 45 million gallons of overflow a year.

### Where are CSO Outfalls?

There are 10 CSO outfall locations on the Potomac River, 15 on the Anacostia River and 23 along Rock Creek and its tributaries. DC Water has posted signs for each outfall location.

### What are the possible public health impacts of CSOs?

CSOs pose a danger to the public because of the rapid flow of water exiting the outfalls and the harmful substances and bacteria they carry. The public is advised to stay away from any sewer pipe discharge. CSOs could affect the receiving waters for up to 24 hours during small rainstorms and for up to three days when it rains one inch or more.

### What are the environmental impacts of CSOs?

CSOs can adversely affect the quality of rivers and streams by contributing to high bacterial levels and low dissolved oxygen levels, which are harmful to fish and other aquatic life.

### What is a Dry Weather Overflow (DWO)?

In dry weather, sanitary wastewater normally flows to the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant through pipes with regulators. During wet weather, regulators are designed to let the excess flow discharge directly to a river or creek. If regulators become blocked by debris or trash, wastewater can also overflow during dry weather. This is called a dry weather overflow (DWO). DC Water has an extensive maintenance and inspection program to prevent DWOs from occurring. If you see a CSO outfall discharging during dry weather, call DC Water at **(202) 612-3400**.

### Where can you get more information?

You can learn more by visiting DC Water's website at **[dcwater.com/cleanrivers](http://dcwater.com/cleanrivers)**. You may also contact DC Water's Office of Marketing and Communications at **(202) 787-2200**.

The complete text of the Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewer Overflows can also be found on DC Water's website at **[dcwater.com/FinalLTCP](http://dcwater.com/FinalLTCP)**.