

POTOMAC RIVER

dc  
water is life<sup>®</sup>

# Briefing on the Potomac Interceptor

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

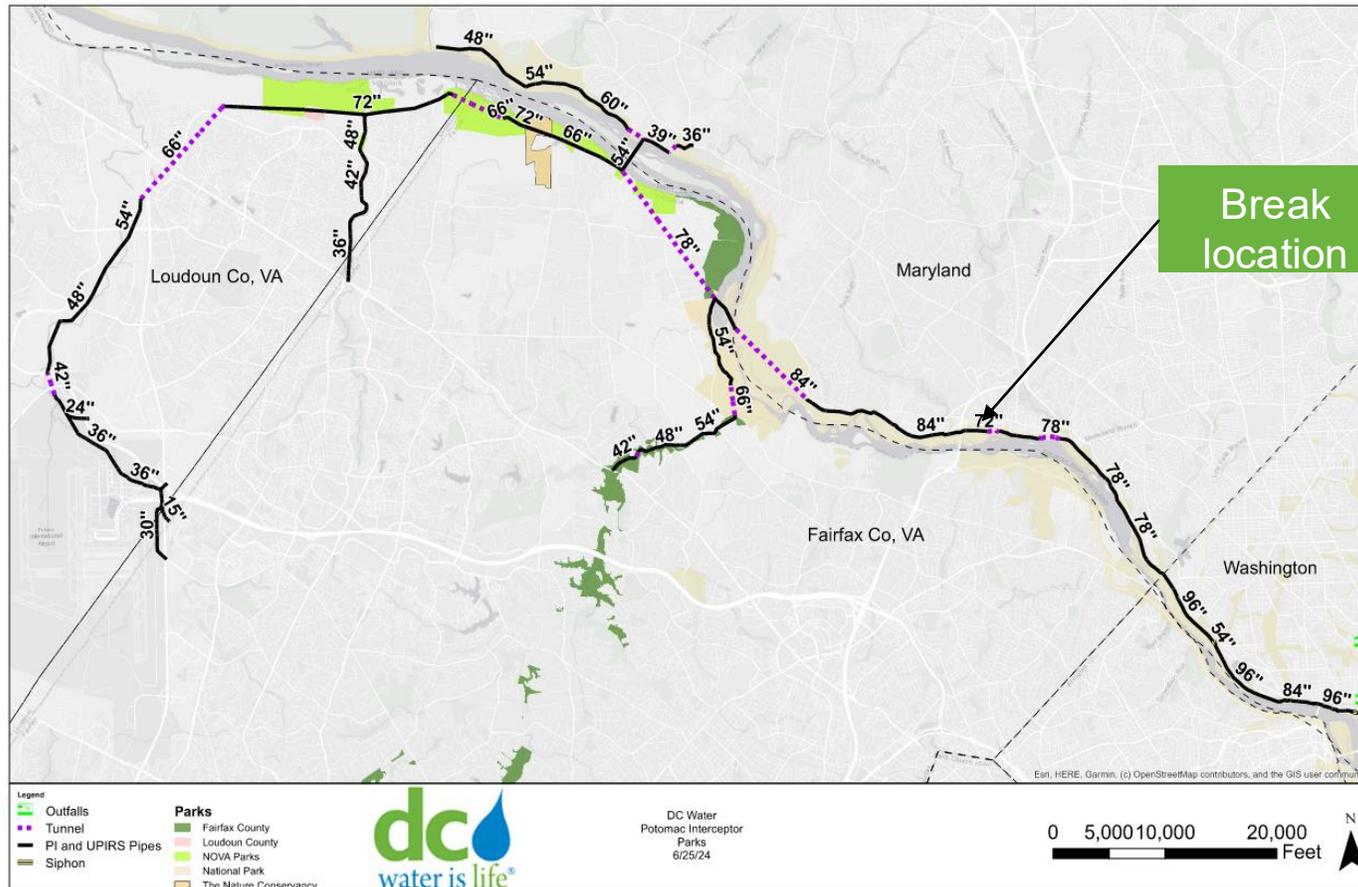
# Potomac Interceptor



- 86th U.S. Congress authorized Public Law 86-515 for the funding of the construction of the Potomac Interceptor (PI) on June 12, 1960, to serve Dulles Airport and safeguard the Potomac River
- Serves 376 square miles (511,000 people)
- Serves Fairfax & Loudoun Counties, Town of Vienna, Herndon, Dulles Airport in VA, and Montgomery County, MD



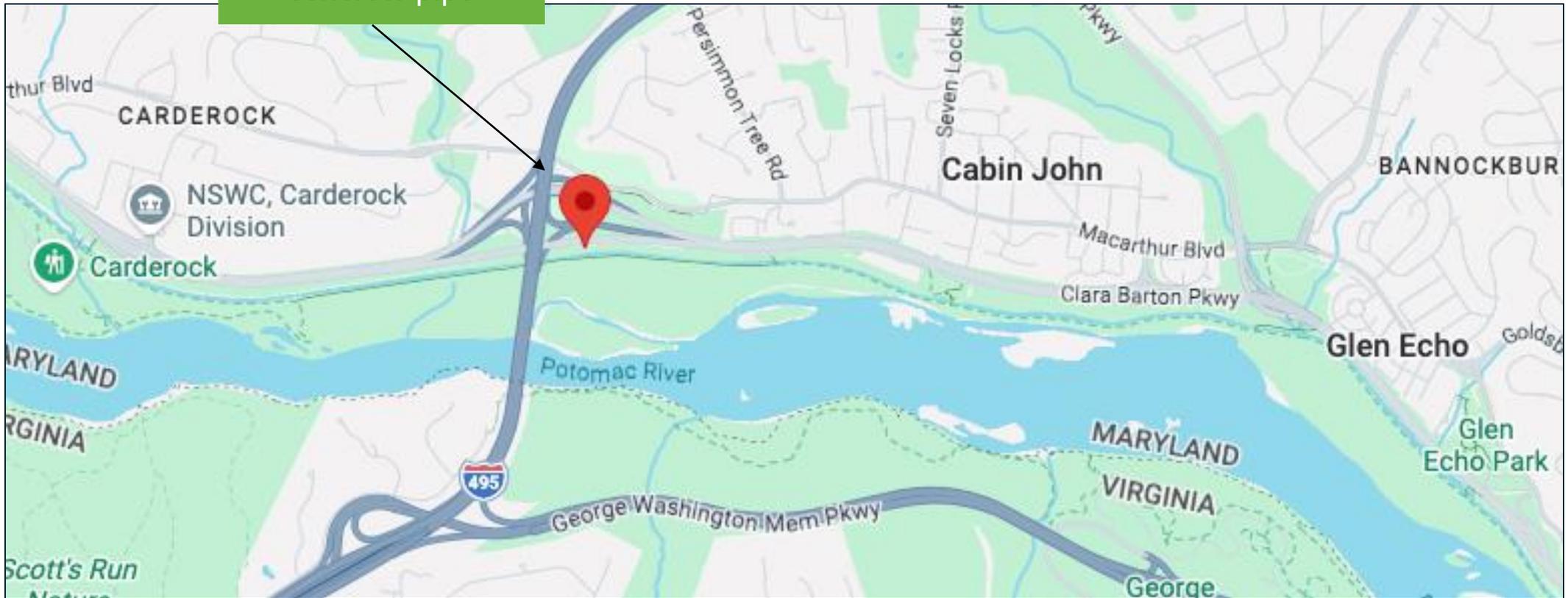
# Potomac Interceptor



- About 54 miles long
- 30" to 96" diameter
- Conveys 60 million gallons per day sanitary sewage (average)
- Constructed in early 1960's
- Flows treated at Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant

# Pipe Break

Pipe break: 72"  
diameter reinforced  
concrete pipe

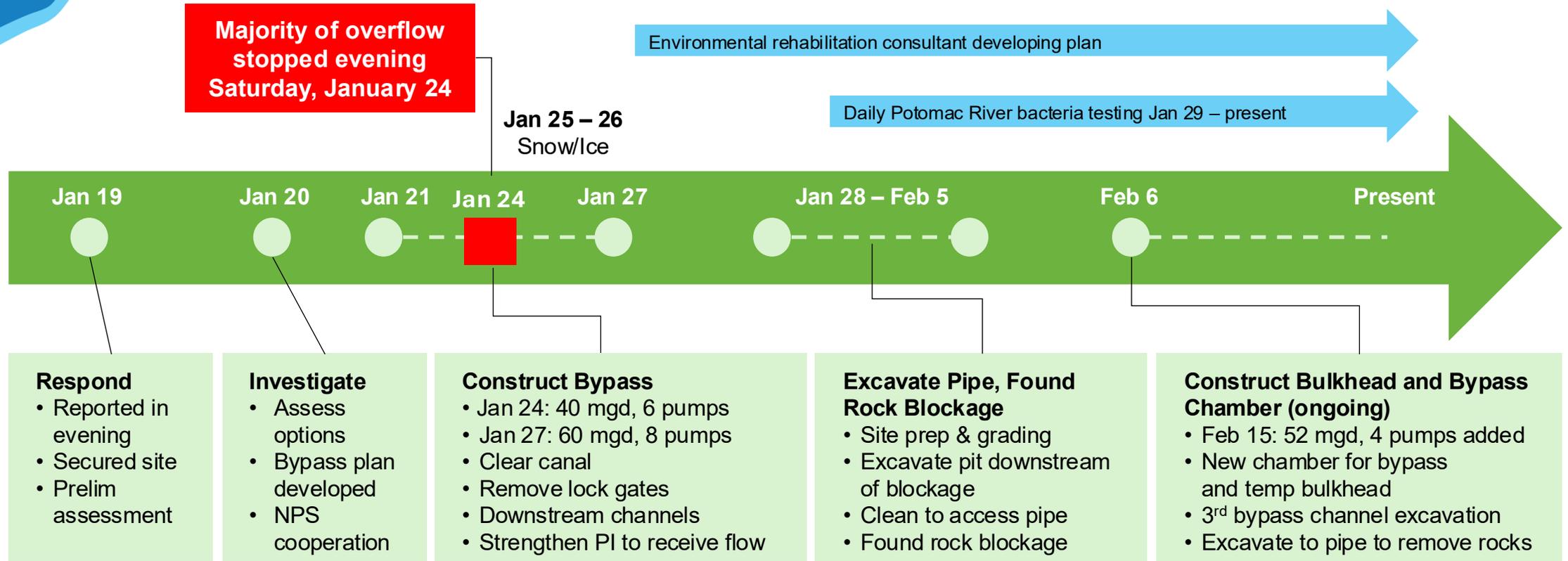


# Response and Repair

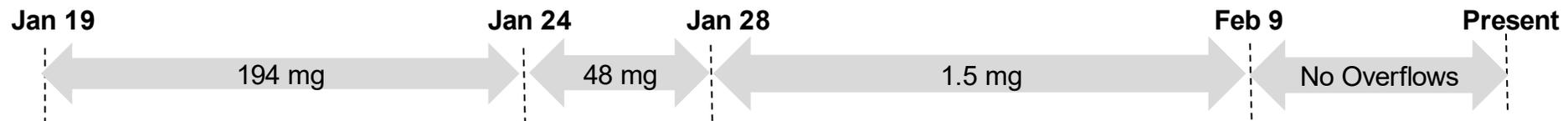
CURRENT

STEP	ACTIVITY	TIMELINE
1	<b>Bypass Installation</b> - Install temporary bypass pumping to reroute flow through canal around damaged pipe section	Completed
2	<b>Investigation and Excavation</b> - Excavate downstream of pipe, clean and identify scope of blockage	Completed
3	<b>Repair and Flow Restoration</b> – Install bulkhead and bypass chamber; remove rock dam and repair collapsed section to restore flow	February to mid-March
4	<b>Environmental Rehabilitation</b> – Restore affected areas including drainage channel, C&O Canal and Potomac River shoreline to Swainson Island	Following repair

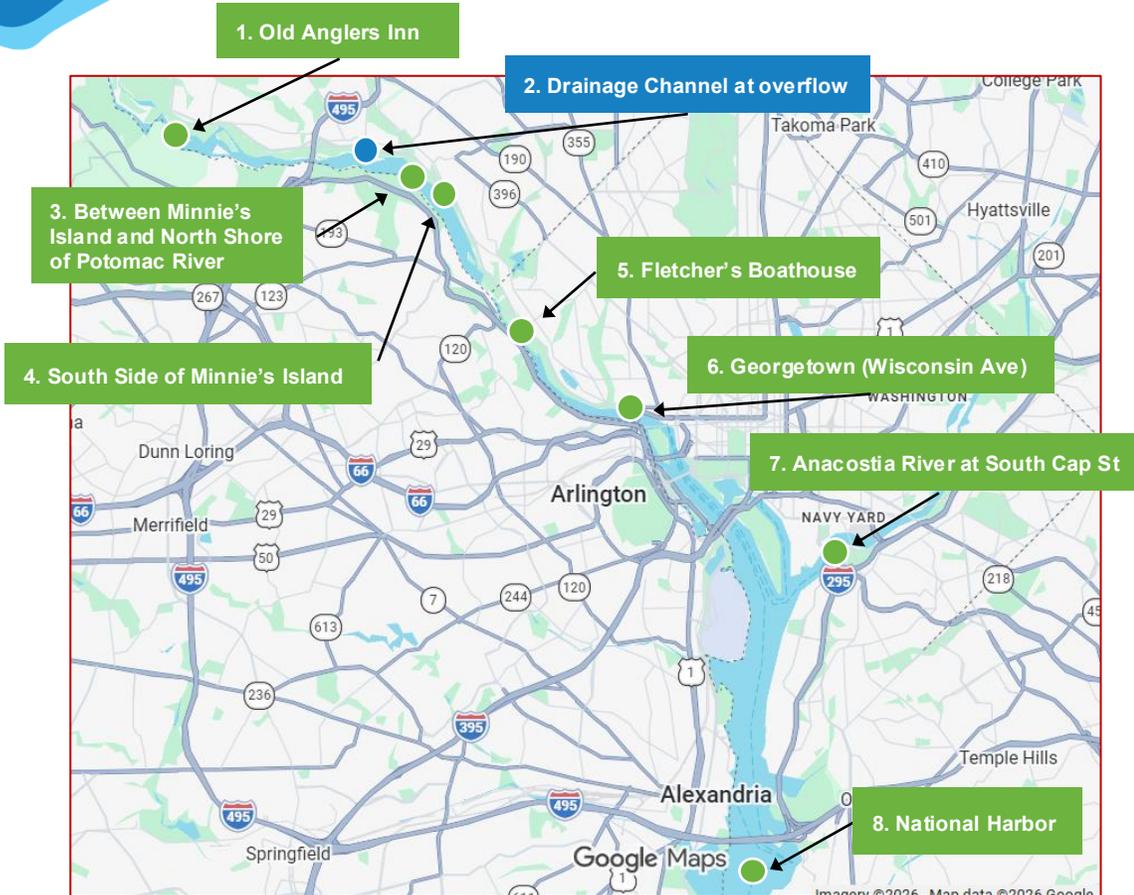
# Timeline



Estimated overflow volume to surface waters:



# Potomac River Bacteria Sampling

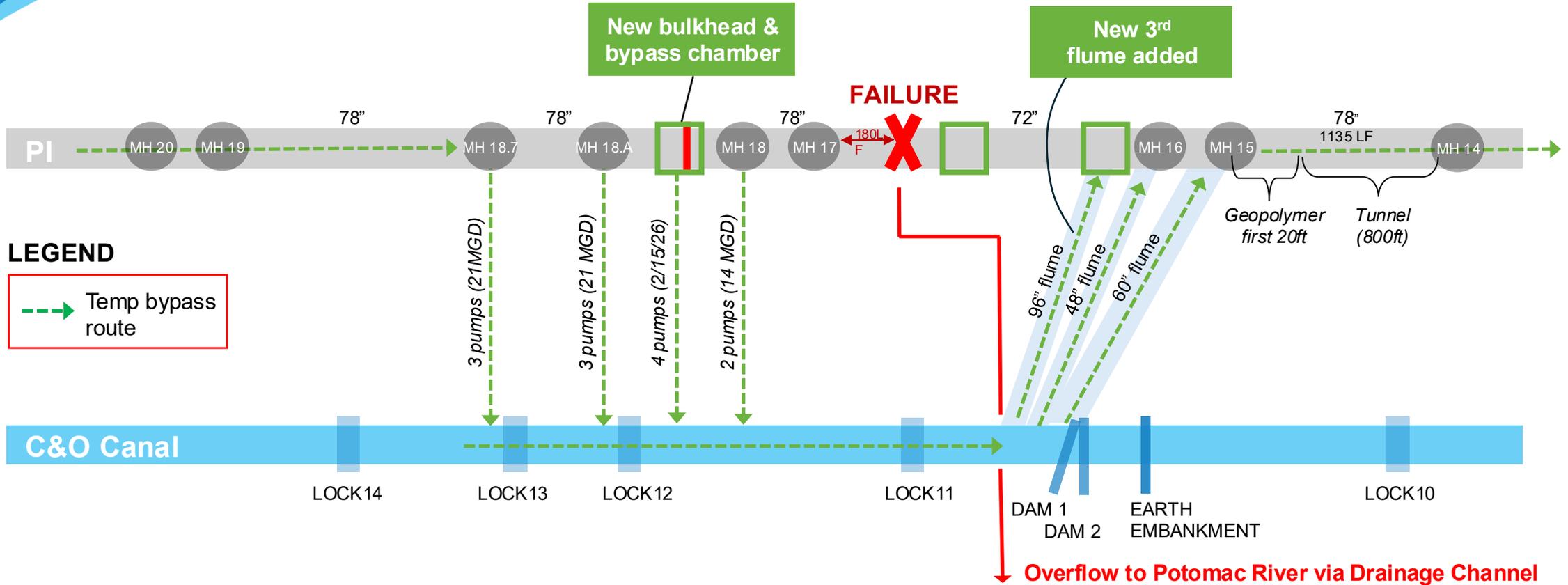


Sample Date	E. Coli (MPN/100 ml)							
	Old Anglers Inn	Near Drainage Channel @ Overflow (Swainson Island)	Between Minnie's Island and north shore of Potomac River	South Side of Minnie's Island	Fletcher's Boathouse	Georgetown @ Wisconsin Ave	Anacostia @ S. Cap St	National Harbor
1/29/2026	11	570,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	14,300	18,600	2	<1
1/30/2026	4	60,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	3,000	2,700	11	3
1/31/2026	3	30,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	1,200	5,100	6	2
2/1/2026	27	80,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	488	300	21	4
2/2/2026	6	242,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	397	173	6	31
2/3/2026	4	460,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	68	53	30	15
2/4/2026	5	210,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	49	48	45	178
2/5/2026	1	77,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	38	84	16	33
2/6/2026	22	242,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	108	238	24	10
2/7/2026	15	86,600	Not sampled	Not sampled	79	114	24	16
2/8/2026	15	130,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	260	43	47	27
2/9/2026	16	730,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	20	20	5	<1
2/10/2026	7	600,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	17	20	2	2
2/11/2026	8	155,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	3	19	<1	6
2/12/2026	5	105,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	7	75	8	14
2/13/2026	7	155,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	33	548	23	8
2/14/2026	3	141,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	<100	153	17	2
2/15/2026	2	199,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	58	84	18	3
2/16/2026	76	173,000	Not sampled	Not sampled	111	238	1,550	138
2/17/2026	59	16,700	Not sampled	Not sampled	3	387	23	88
2/18/2026	43	5,000	3,300	1,600	105	162	40	121
2/19/2026	49	15,200	17,800	14,800	387	435	128	62
2/20/2026	53	7,600	1,550	770	365	4,400	172	326
2/21/2026	135	1,700	727	1,200	107	190	205	345
2/22/2026	285	1,000	261	238	365	517	1,050	238
2/23/2026	204	1,100	299	299	461	613	687	304
2/24/2026	178	1,100	186	172	178	345	276	260
2/25/2026	58	500	58	63	66	249	210	105

Note: MPN = most probable number

\*Consistent with public health and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards, swimming is not recommended when E. coli levels exceed 410 MPN/100 mL.

# Emergency Response



**LEGEND**

---> Temp bypass route

Potomac River

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# Initial Overflow



MH Upstream of Collapse



Overflow in Drainage Channel

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# Emergency Response



Setting Up Bypass Pumps



Coffer Dam in Canal



Channel Back to PI

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# Bypass in Operation



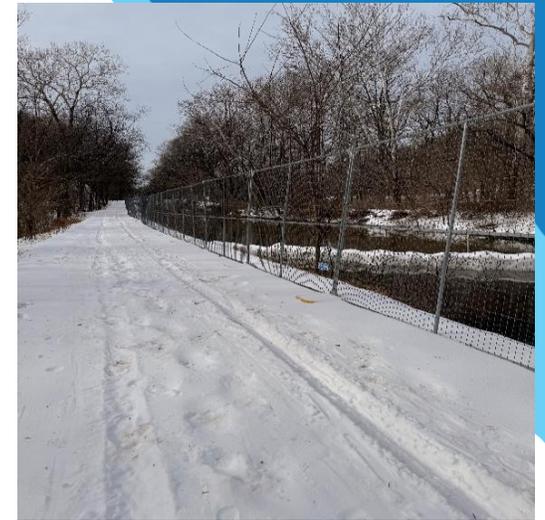
Bypass Pumping



Flow in Discharge Channel



Flow Dropping Back in PI



Fencing Along Canal

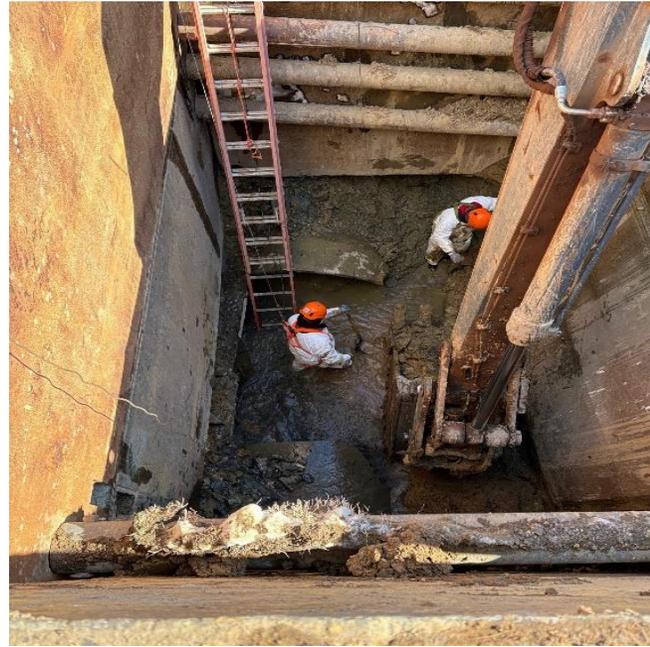
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# Excavating to Pipe



Failure Site



Excavation to PI



Rock Block in Failed Pipe Section

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# New Chamber and Discharge Channel Under Construction



Bypass Pumping Chamber Under Construction and Made Operational

# Communications, Coordination and Public Engagement

## Immediate & Ongoing Updates

- Public notification issued within hours; **daily updates** and real-time milestone reporting (bypass activated Jan. 24)
- DC Water web page created to include all Press Releases and Updates, along with daily water quality monitoring data

## Public Safety Guidance

- C&O Canal access, boating, and recreation guidance issued in coordination with **NPS and U.S. Coast Guard**

## Media Engagement

- Fact-based information across local and national outlets
- Avoidance of speculative or comparative labels
- Press Releases and Updates posted daily to DC Water website and circulated to members of Media
- Management of media interview requests (virtual and on-site)

## Social Media Management

- Use social media platforms to communicate updates and monitor community sentiment

## Government Coordination

- Engagement with **federal, state, and local partners**, including formal briefings with Congress and affected jurisdictions





# Planned Capital Improvement Program for the Potomac Interceptor

## NEAR TERM PROJECTS

PROJECT	REHABILITATION	APPROX. COST	CONSTRUCTION
PI-01A	2,700 LF (Slipline and Geopolymer)	\$30M	Spring – Fall 2026
PI-01 Rock Run (Lock 10 / Cabin John)	7,300 LF (Geopolymer)	\$95M - \$135M	Spring 2027 – Fall 2029
PI-02 Broad Run / FFX	3,300 LF (Geopolymer) 2,700 LF (CIPP)	\$6M - \$9M	Spring 2027 – Summer 2028
PI-03 Cabin John / MH 4252	16,000 LF (Geopolymer)	\$150M - \$210M	Summer 2028 – Winter 2030

\$350M OVER NEXT 5 YEARS, MORE THAN  
 \$600M OVER 10 YEARS

# Planned Capital Improvement Program for the Potomac Interceptor

## NEAR TERM PROJECTS

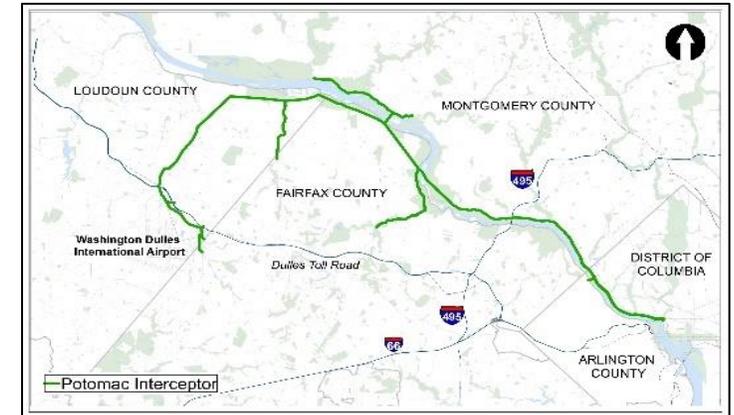
**PI FAILURE  
LOCATION**



PI-01/ PI-01A



PI-02



PI-03

# Potomac River Break

- Potomac River watershed includes 14,670 square miles through Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District
- During the overflow incident, approximately 2% of the total river flow was impacted.
- With time and increasing river flows, bacteria levels are decreasing at and near the overflow site
- No overflows since February 9
- DC Water committed to cleaning/rehabilitating impacted areas



# Environmental Clean-Up

- Working with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Park Service (NPS), Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and other agencies to determine means, methods and scope
- Environmental consultant retained, assessed conditions and submitted an Environmental Rehabilitation Plan
- Targeting cleanup as soon as possible to minimize impacts to high-use areas before weather turns warm
- DC Water has installed a sandbag and pumping diversion at the tributary at the overflow site to prevent the further discharge of pollutants to the Potomac River

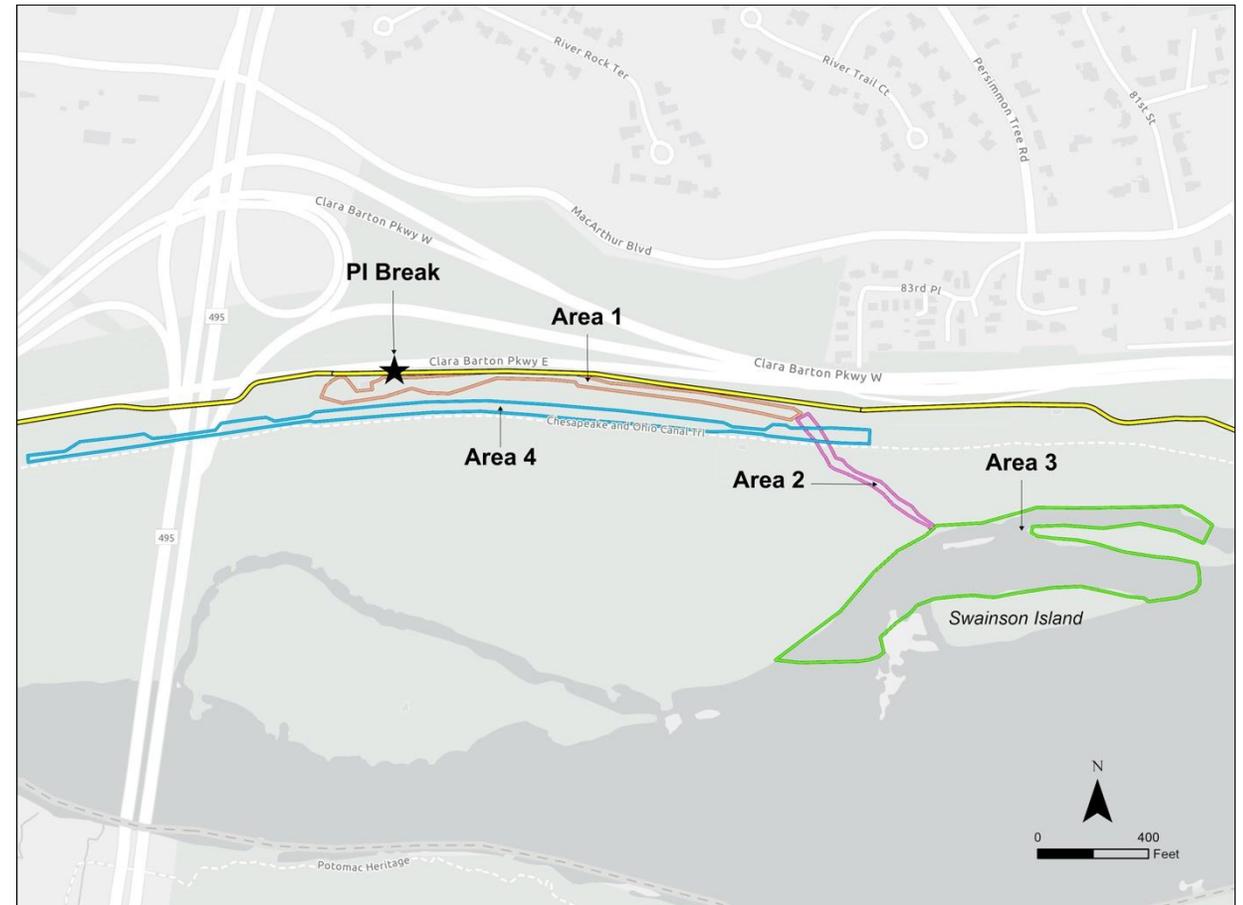
# Clean-Up Areas

## Uncontrolled Overflow Areas

- Area 1 = Drainage channel along Clara Barton Parkway
- Area 2 = Culvert under C&O Canal and tributary to the Potomac River
- Area 3 = Potomac River from shore to Swainson Island

## Controlled Bypass Area

- Area 4 = C&O Canal



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# Rehabilitation Plan

## Initial Coordination

- Install clear water diversions
- Pump water in Clara Barton channel to PI
- Coordinate Environmental Rehabilitation Plan with EPA, USACE, NPS, MDE, and DOEE
- NPS Special Use Permit
- Identify Waste Subtitle D landfill
- Conduct pre-construction meetings
- Keep Canal's intake closed (NPS)
- Stake out Limits of Disturbance and access routes
- Identify and locate trees that will be removed

## Rehabilitation will be completed in 2 phases

### Uncontrolled Overflow Areas

- Phase I = Immediately
- Phase II = After PI flow is restored

### C&O Canal Rehabilitation

- Phase I = After PI flow is restored
- Phase II = After Final Coordination with NPS

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# Rehabilitation Plan

## General Activities

- Phase I
  - Material Removal
  - Vegetation Management
  - Re-establish stable, natural streambeds
  - Inspect historical structures and begin repairs
- Phase II
  - Final repair and/or replacement of historical structures
  - Final seeding, planting and stabilization

## Best Management Practices

- Perform work during dry weather conditions
- Use of low-impact equipment and manual removal
- Use daily pump-around to manage work-zone
- Limit vegetation/tree removal
- Goal is to keep towpath open

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# Next Steps



- Repair and Flow Rehabilitation
- Environmental Rehabilitation
- Continued Rehabilitation





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# Kishia Powell

Chief Executive Officer  
and General Manager  
WSSC



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# Adam Ortiz

Deputy Secretary

Maryland Department of the Environment

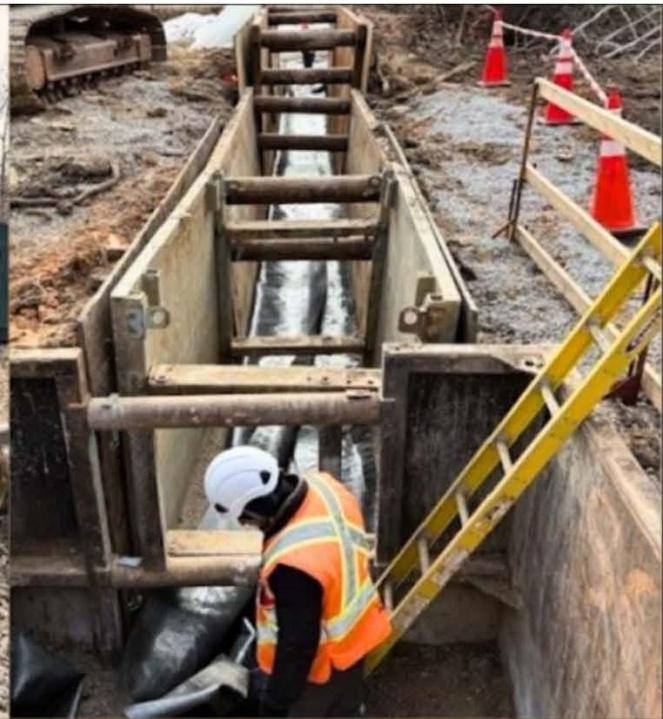
[adam.ortiz@Maryland.gov](mailto:adam.ortiz@Maryland.gov)



# Potomac Interceptor Collapse Update

## Maryland Department of the Environment

### February 26, 2026





# Roles and Responsibilities

## U.S. EPA (PRIMARY REGULATOR)

Lead federal enforcement and compliance authority.  
Permitting lead for DC Water/Blue Plains; holder of Consent Decree.

## DC WATER (OWNER/OPERATOR)

Responsible for bypass, repairs, cleanup, and public signage.  
Operational updates to state and federal partners.

## MARYLAND ENVIRONMENT (MDE)

- Regulates unauthorized discharges into waterways and wetlands.
- Shellfish closures and harvesting monitoring.
- Drinking water safety and enforcement.

## MARYLAND HEALTH (MDH)

- Water contact (recreational) advisories.
- Coordinates local health departments

## REGIONAL PARTNERS (DOEE, NPS, VA)

- DOEE: D.C. environmental oversight and sampling coordination.
- NPS: Management of impacts to C&O Canal and National Park land.



# Immediate Impacts at a Glance

Category	Status	Details
Drinking Water	SAFE	Intakes are located upstream of the spill.
Shellfish	OPENING ON MARCH 10	<u>Precautionary closure from Charles County to Nice Bridge.</u> Data shows no impacts
Recreation	AVOID	Health advisories active in <u>three counties</u> (Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles).
Containment	PARTIAL	Bypass installed; most flow is diverted but occasional disruption due to pump failure. No overflow events impacting surface waters have been reported since February 9, 2026



# Maryland Roles and Actions

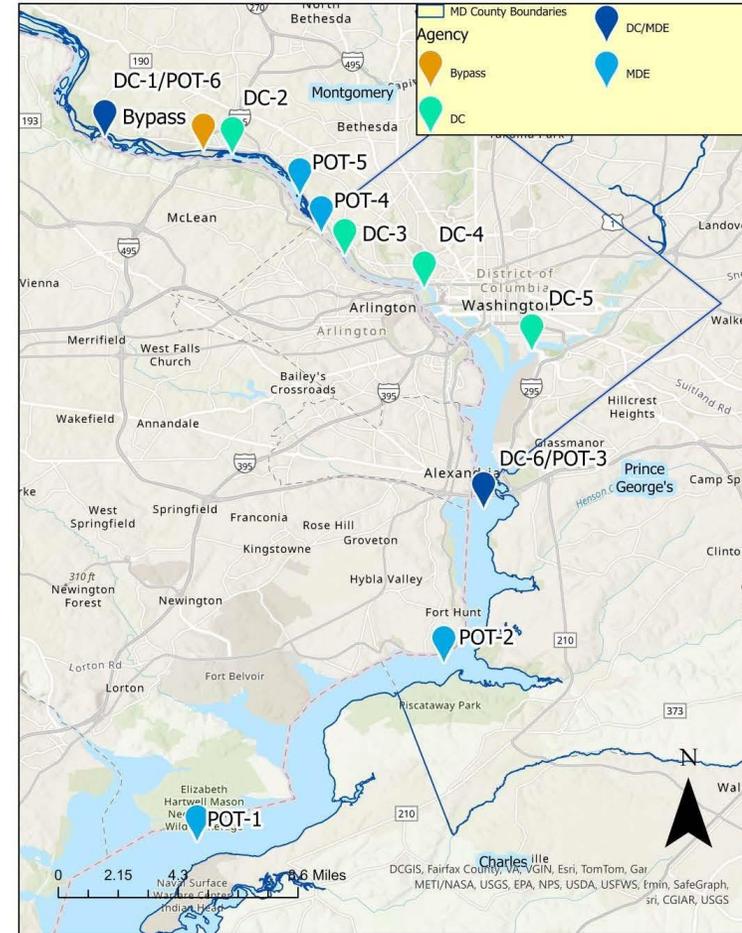
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- **Leadership:** Coordination with federal and local govt for coordinated response
- **Accountability:** Enforce state laws protecting river and residents
- **Engagement:** Onsite the day after the incident, daily inspections
- **Environmental Protections:** Permitting for construction and restoration of wetlands and waterways
- **Data Collection:** Coordinate with partners for water quality monitoring
- **Public Health:** Collect data and share with health officers
- **Oversight:** Review and approve restoration plan. Includes a schedule for corrective and mitigation actions
- **Restore:** Ensure restoration actions are sufficient, timely, and completed according to the approved plan.



# Coordinated Post Incident River Monitoring

- Gather evidence of water quality and sediment effects from the Interceptor Bypass incident
  - At the site
  - In the Canal
  - Downstream
- Partners
  - DC Water
  - MDE, DNR, DC DOEE, VA DEQ, UMD
  - Montgomery, Prince Georges, Charles and St. Mary's



Potomac Interceptor Bypass - Post Incident Monitoring Locations





# River Bacteria Levels Trending Down

Sample Date	<i>E. coli</i> (MPN/100 ml)					
	Old Anglers Inn (upstream of collapse)	Near Drainage Channel @ Overflow (Swainson Island)	Fletcher's Boathouse	Georgetown @ Wisconsin Ave	National Harbor	Anacostia @ S. Cap St
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*Bacteria levels continue to be high near the site and decrease downstream*



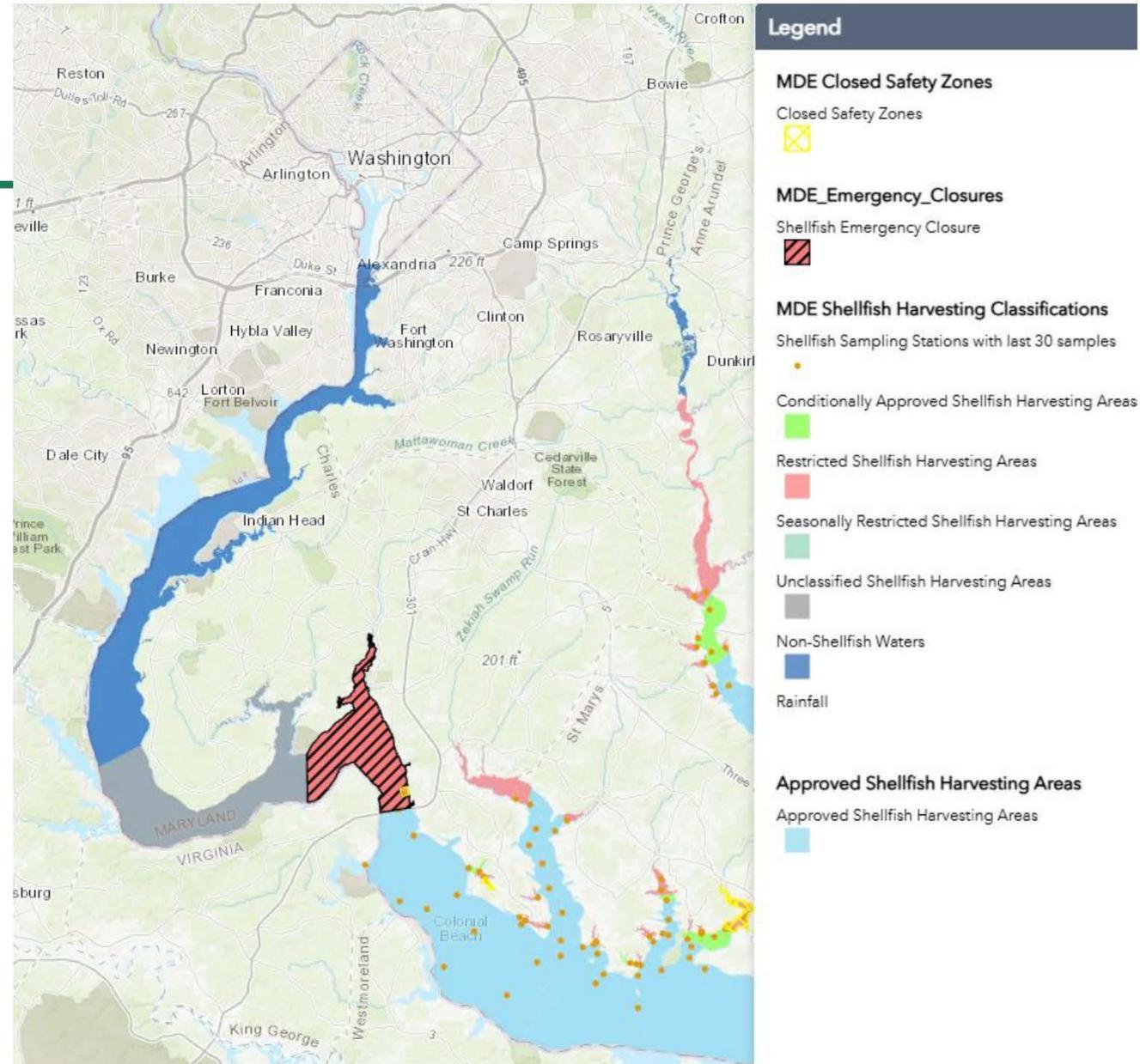
Note: MPN = most probable number

\*Consistent with public health and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards, swimming is not recommended when *E. coli* levels exceed 410 MPN/100 mL.



# Shellfish Harvesting

- MDE issued *precautionary* harvesting closure from Charles County to the Route 301 Bridge to ensure consumer safety. Coordinated with FDA and VA
- MDE monitoring
  - Unofficial: Feb 4
  - Official:
    - Feb 12 - All non detect for fecal coliform
    - Feb 17 - All non detect for fecal coliform
- Start 21 day clock for reopening on 2nd round of data (March 10)





# Water Contact and Recreation

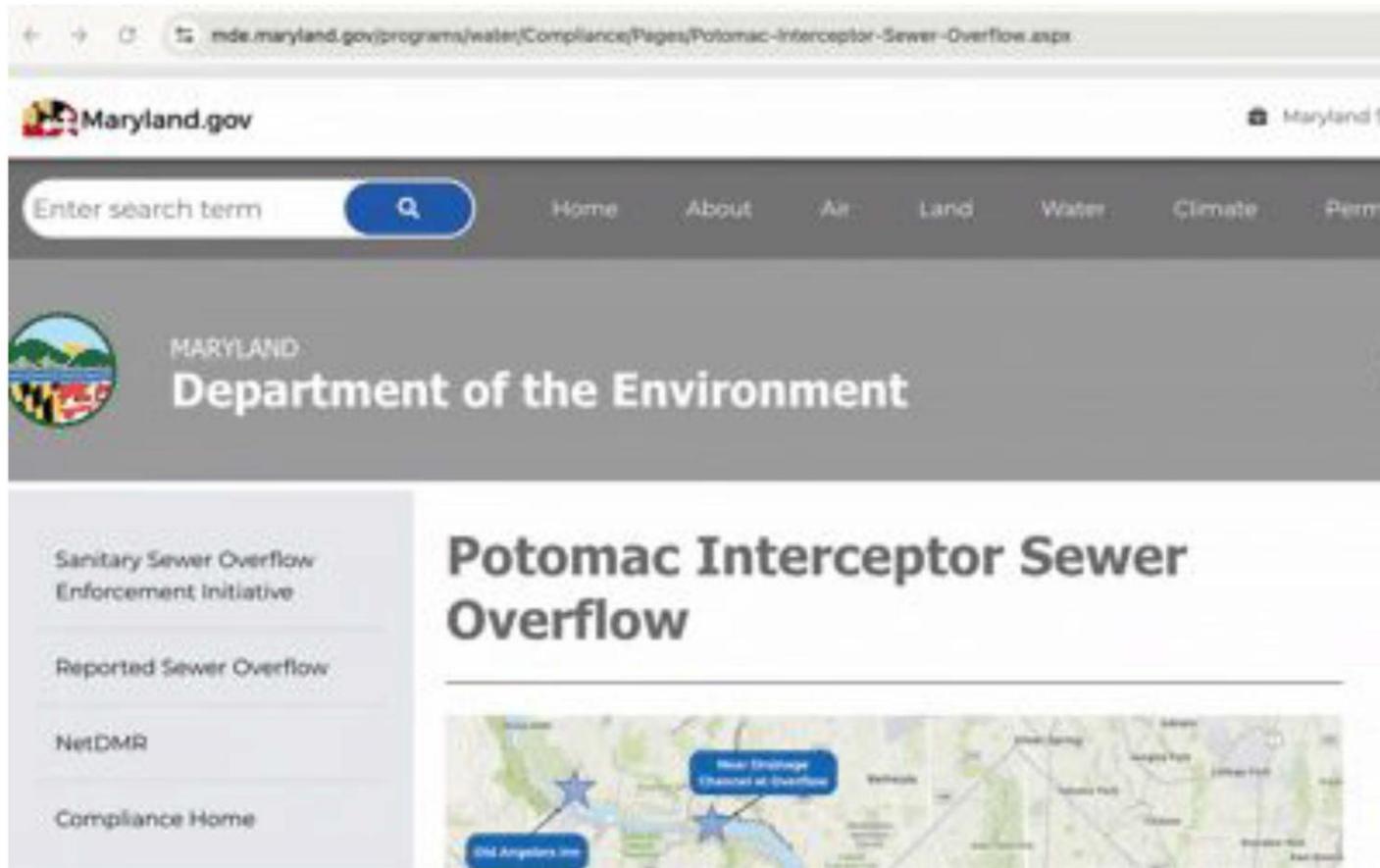
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- Advisories issued by local health departments
- Advisories in place for Montgomery, Prince George's and Charles County
- DNR has not closed parks or banned boating or fishing
- DNR has reported no effects on waterfowl



# Transparency

## [Potomac Interceptor Web Updates and Information Clearinghouse](https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/Compliance/Pages/Potomac-Interceptor-Sewer-Overflow.aspx)



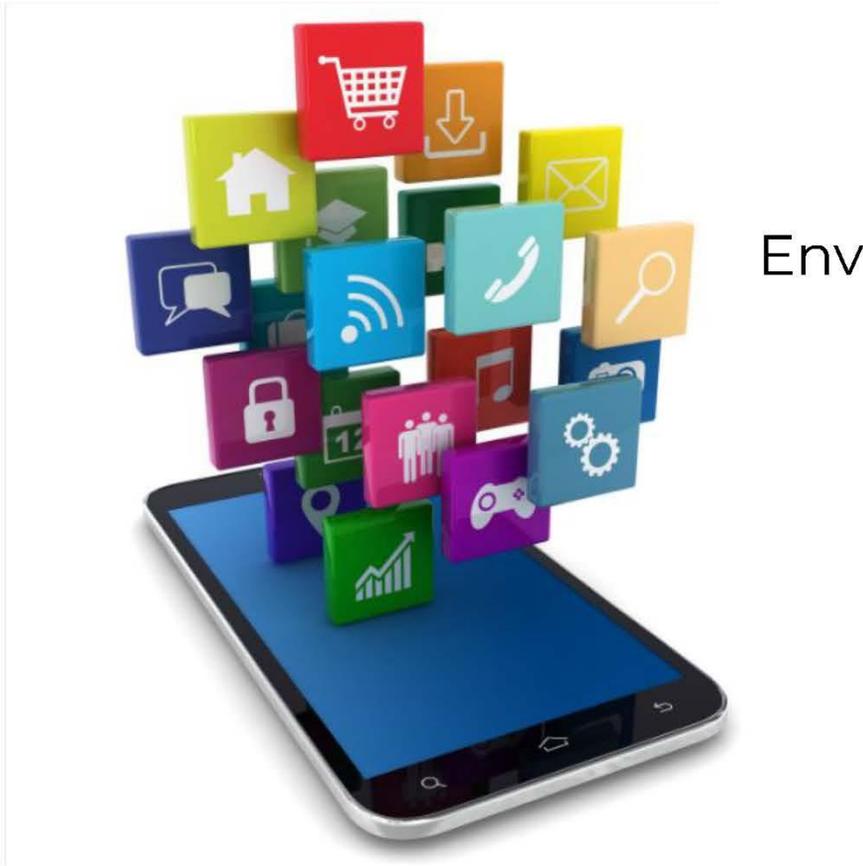
Scan and bookmark:





# Contact Us

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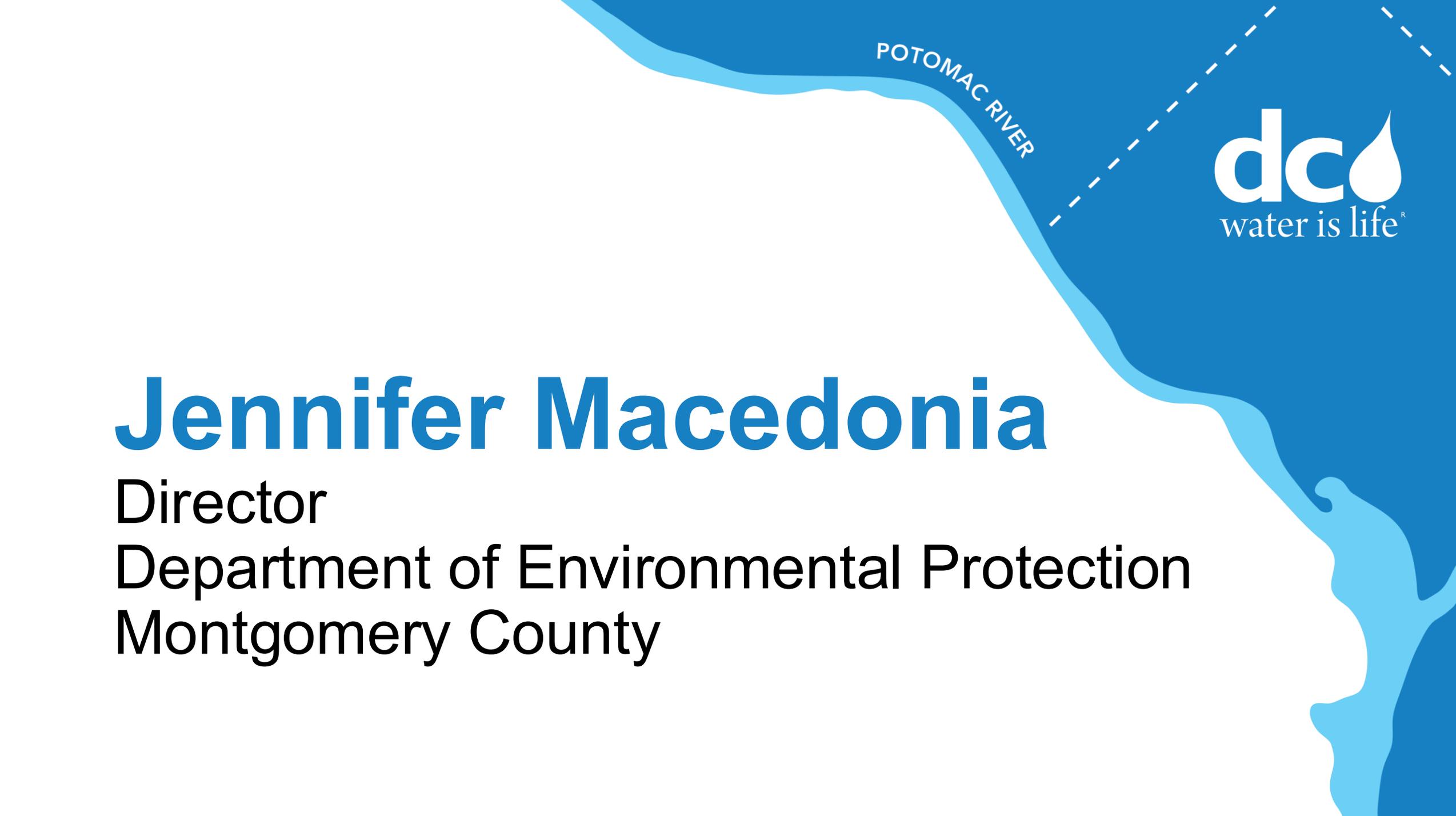


Website  
**[mde.maryland.gov](http://mde.maryland.gov)**

Environmental Emergency Reporting  
Hotline  
**866-633-4686**

Social Media  
**@md\_environment**





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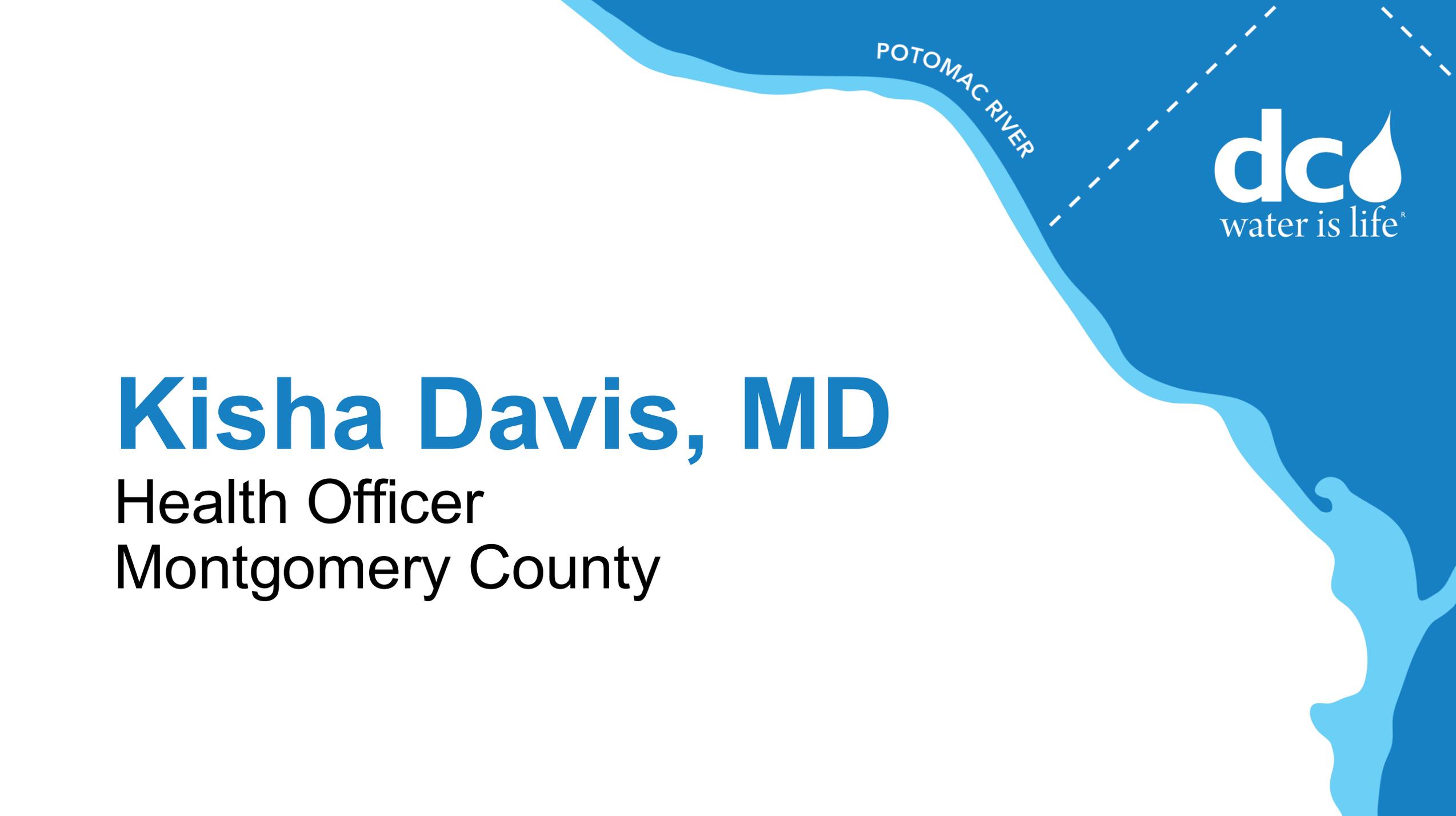


# Jennifer Macedonia

Director

Department of Environmental Protection

Montgomery County



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# Kisha Davis, MD

Health Officer  
Montgomery County

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# Questions?