DC COMMUNITY MEETING

POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR RESPONSE

February 25, 2026

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

Briefing on the Potomac Interceptor

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

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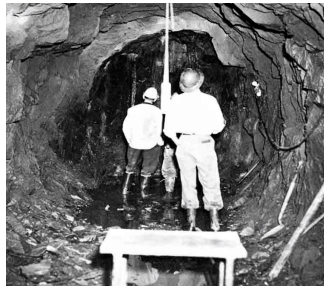
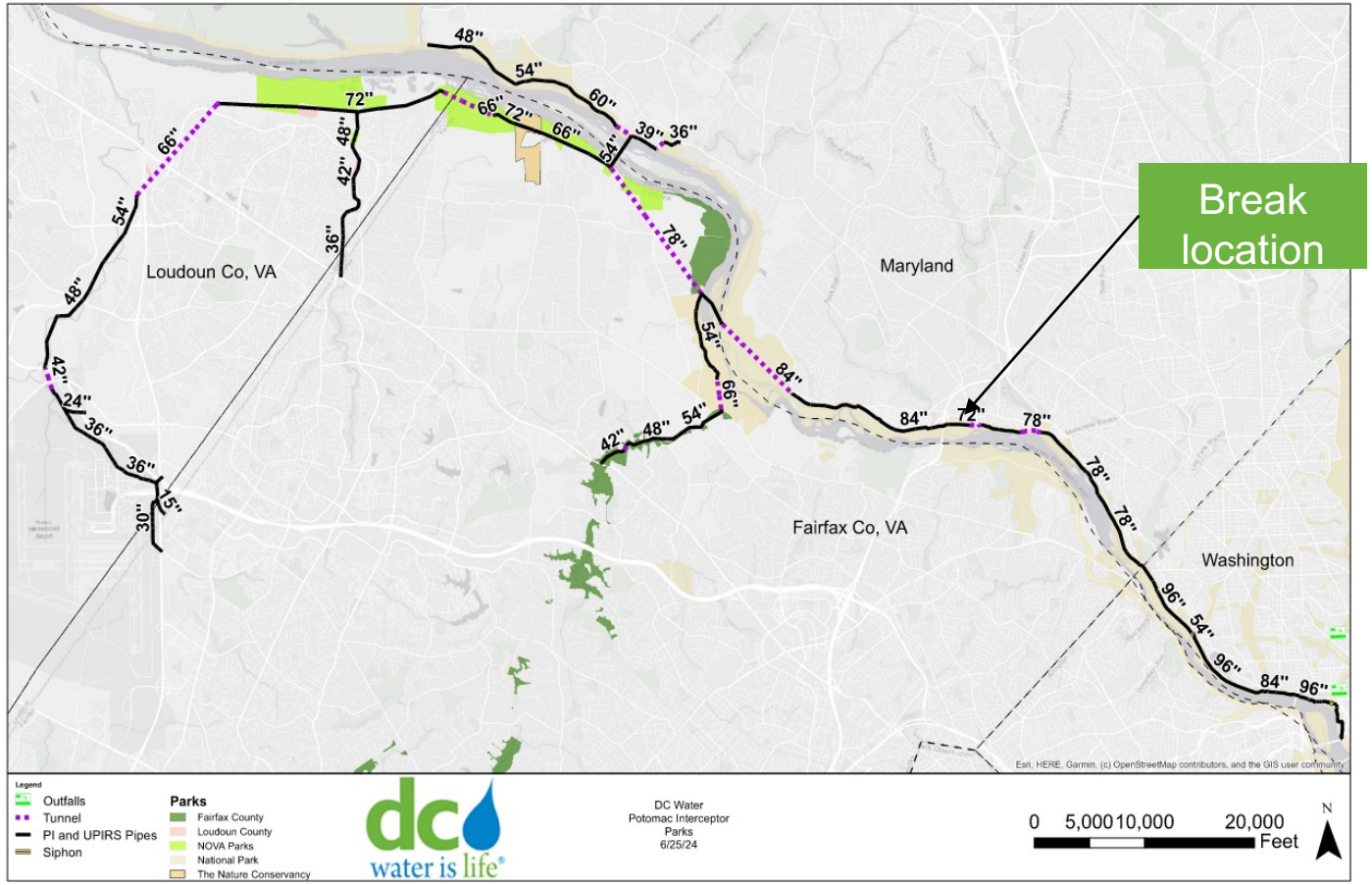
BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

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

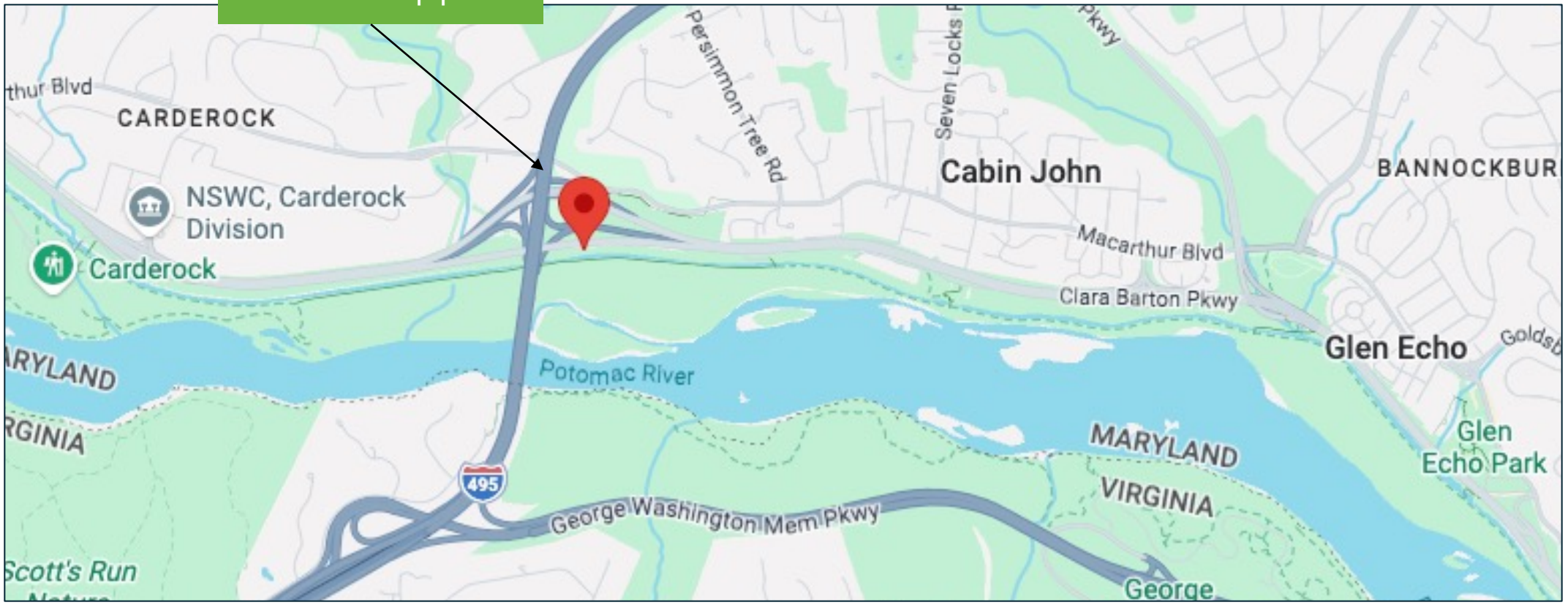


- About 54 miles long
- 30” to 96” diameter
- Conveys 60 million gallons per day sanitary sewage (average)
- Constructed in early 1960’s
- Flows treated at Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Pipe Break

Pipe break: 72” diameter reinforced concrete pipe



BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Response and Repair

CURRENT

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

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Timeline

Majority of overflow stopped evening Saturday, January 24

Environmental rehabilitation consultant developing plan

Daily Potomac River bacteria testing Jan 29 – present

Jan 25 – 26
Snow/Ice

Jan 19 | **Jan 20** | **Jan 21** | **Jan 24** | **Jan 27** | **Jan 28 – Feb 5** | **Feb 6** | **Present**

Respond
- Reported in evening
- Secured site
- Prelim assessment

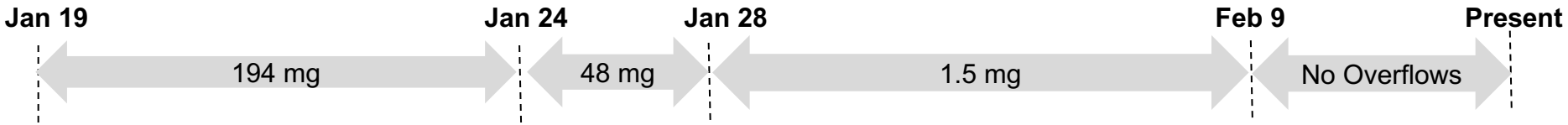
Investigate
- Assess options
- Bypass plan developed
- NPS cooperation

Construct Bypass
- Jan 24: 40 mgd, 6 pumps
- Jan 27: 60 mgd, 8 pumps
- Clear canal
- Remove lock gates
- Downstream channels
- Strengthen PI to receive flow

Excavate Pipe, Found Rock Blockage
- Site prep & grading
- Excavate pit downstream of blockage
- Clean to access pipe
- Found rock blockage

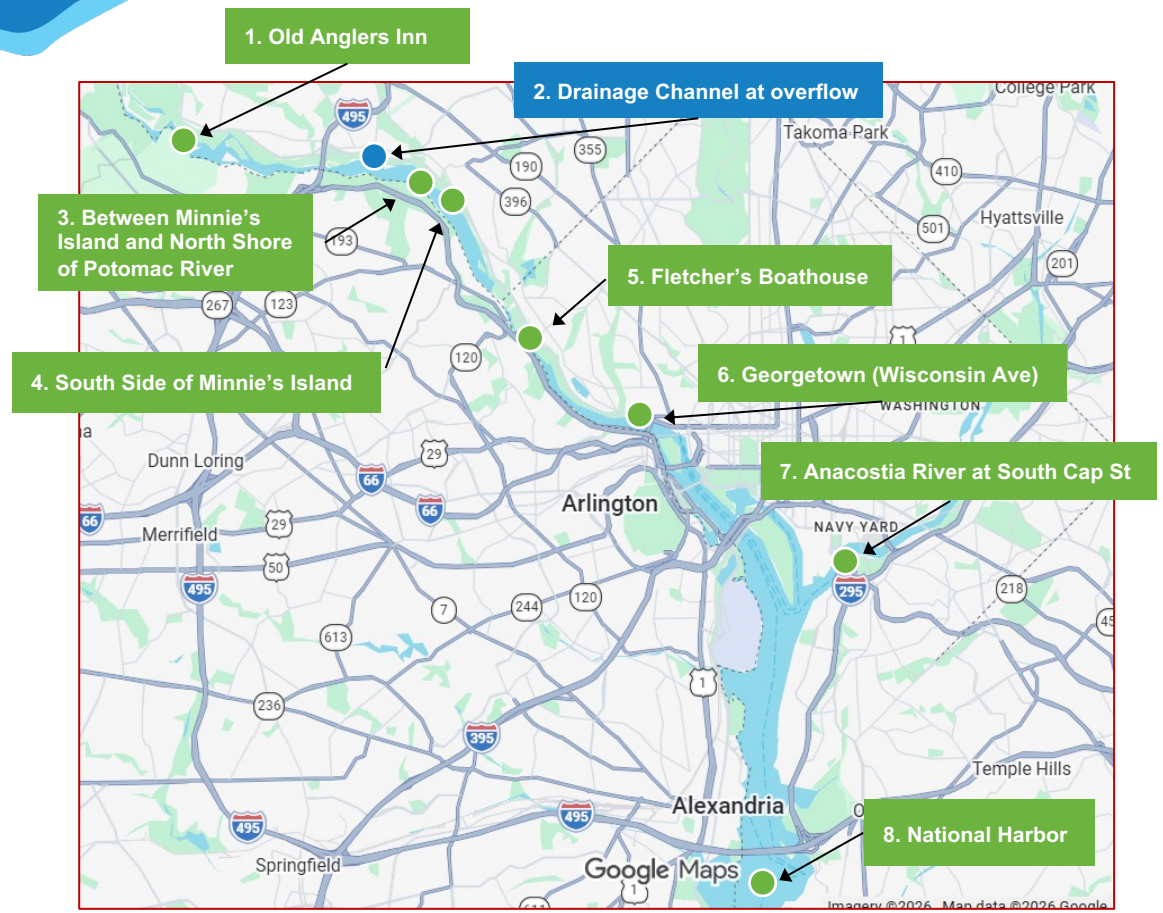
Construct Bulkhead and Bypass Chamber (ongoing)
- Feb 15: 52 mgd, 4 pumps added
- New chamber for bypass and temp bulkhead
- 3rd bypass channel excavation
- Excavate to pipe to remove rocks

Estimated overflow volume to surface waters:



BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Potomac River Bacteria Sampling



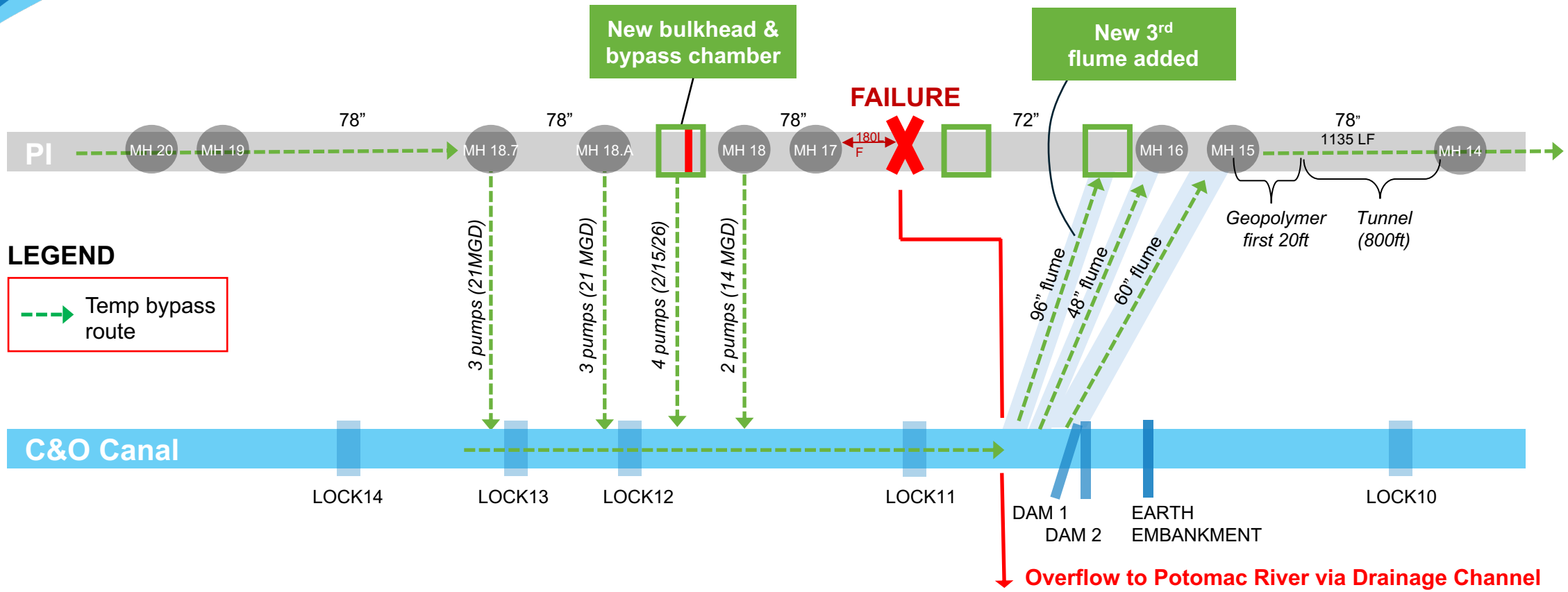
	E. Coli (MPN/100 ml)							
Sample Date	Old Anglers Inn	Near Drainage Channel @ Overflow (Swainson Island)	Between Minnie's Island and north shore of Potomac River	South Side of Minnie's Island	Fletcher's Boathouse	Georgetown @ Wisconsin Ave	Anacostia @ S. Cap St	National Harbor
1/29/2026	11	570,000	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

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.

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Emergency Response



BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Initial Overflow

POTOMAC RIVER

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MH Upstream of Collapse

Overflow in Drainage Channel

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Emergency Response

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Setting Up Bypass Pumps

Coffer Dam in Canal

Channel Back to PI

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Bypass in Operation

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Bypass Pumping

Flow in Discharge Channel

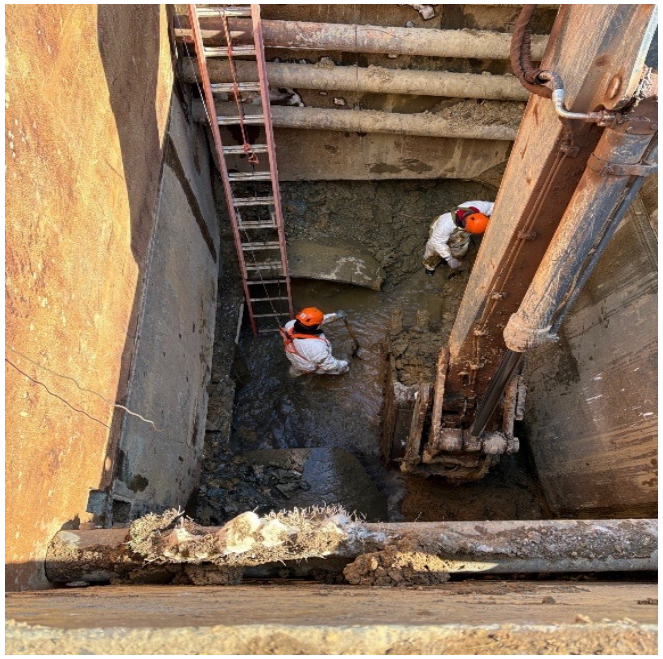
Flow Dropping Back in PI

Fencing Along Canal

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Excavating to Pipe

Failure Site



Excavation to PI

Rock Block in Failed Pipe Section

POTOMAC RIVER

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

New Chamber and Discharge Channel Under Construction




Bypass Pumping Chamber Under Construction and Made Operational

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

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Potomac River Break

- Potomac River watershed includes 14,670 square miles through Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and 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/restoring impacted areas

Environmental Rehabilitation

- DC Water committed to cleaning/restoring impacted areas
- Working with National Park Service, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and other agencies to determine means, methods and scope
- Environmental consultant retained, has performed site walks to assess conditions and drafted an Environmental Rehabilitation Plan
- Impacted areas:
  - C&O Canal
  - Drainage channel along Clara Barton Parkway to Potomac River
  - Potomac River from shore to Swainson Island
- Targeting cleanup as soon as possible after emergency ends to minimize impacts to high-use areas before weather turns warm

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Rehabilitation Plan

Initial Coordination

- Install clear water diversions
- Pump water in Clara Barton channel to PI.
- Coordinate Concept Plan with 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 = Immediate
- Phase II = After PI flow is restored

C&O Canal Rehabilitation

- Phase I = Removal of materials, initial repairs
- Phase II = Final rehabilitation and repairs

BRIEFING ON THE POTOMAC INTERCEPTOR

Next Steps

- Repair and Flow Rehabilitation
- Environmental Rehabilitation
- Continued Rehabilitation

HOW THE DISTRICT IS RESPONDING

The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) is evaluating the overflow impacts and sharing information with the public.

Established an **Incident Management Team**, similar to when we've had other large scale emergency responses, comprised of DC Gov agencies & DC Water to coordinate and lead the District's response to the Potomac Interceptor break and remediation.

Performing **weekly water quality testing**, released publicly. In the upcoming weeks, DOEE will start daily testing.

Performing **weekly site inspections** with state and federal partners.

Evaluating other causes of fluctuations in E. coli levels in the Potomac, such as snow melt and urban runoff.

Beginning in March, DOEE will conduct regular fish and wildlife surveys to monitor the impacts on the ecosystem.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

2011

	Min	Max	Avg
Fletcher's Boathouse	12	980	292
Key Bridge	16	1046	304
14th Street Bridge	3	1300	302
Washington Ship Channel	7	867	271
Pennsylvania Ave Bridge*	49	1733	514
South Capitol St Bridge*	91	>2420	523

2025

	Min	Max	Avg
Fletcher's Boathouse	2	93	32
Key Bridge	2	>2420	305
14th Street Bridge	6	>2420	255
Washington Ship Channel	1	>2420	202
Pennsylvania Ave Bridge*	30	1300	330
South Capitol St Bridge*	6	921	165

**Anacostia River testing sites.*

- *E. coli* in urban rivers is highly variable and high *E. coli* values can be caused by many different sources of pollution.
- *E. coli* levels can increase when it rains or when snow melts, because this creates stormwater runoff.
  - Stormwater runoff carries bacteria from pet and wildlife waste to waterways.
- Water quality, especially in the Anacostia River, has improved in recent years, through significant investments in the Clean Rivers Project and improvements in stormwater management.

EPA Standard for E. Coli Recreation Contact <410 MPN/100 mL**

**corresponds to the risk of gastrointestinal illness

LATEST DOEE DATA

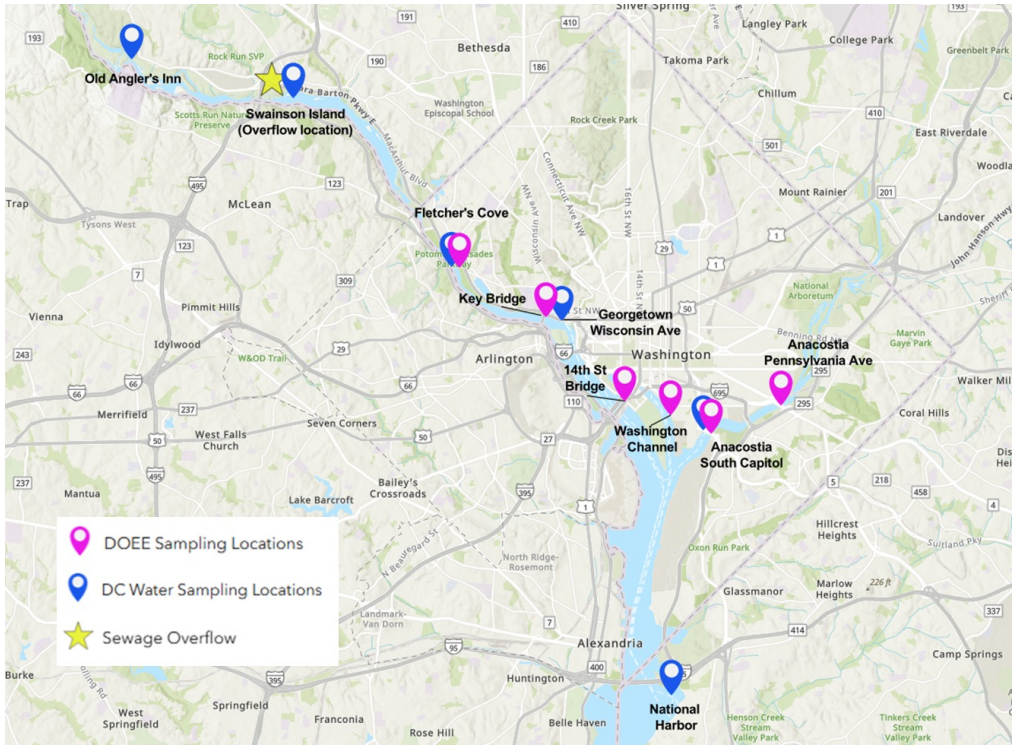
E. Coli (MPN/100mL)

	2/9-2/10 2026	2/17/26
Fletcher's Boathouse	387	238
Key Bridge	203	326
14th Street Bridge	93	22
Washington Ship Channel	19	58
Pennsylvania Ave Bridge*	1	82
South Capitol St Bridge*	9	1,203

E. coli levels vary due to weather.

Rain runoff carries animal waste, raising E. coli levels.

Comparisons to other data suggest that the Anacostia result is unlikely to be spill-related, and likely due to recent rain.



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Anacostia River testing sites. DOEE testing sites are only in DC along the Potomac River as well as the Anacostia River (to monitor whether any bacteria is getting pulled upstream).

REQUEST FOR FEDERAL SUPPORT

The EPA is supporting DOEE with staff and supplies from their Ft Meade lab facility. This will help DOEE increase to a daily monitoring frequency. On Wednesday, the Mayor requested federal support through a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration request. In order to make the request, the Mayor first declared a local public emergency. In addition to seeking **100% reimbursement for costs incurred by the District and DC Water**, the Mayor has requested federal support in the following areas:

Immediate and Near-Term Actions:

- Direct FEMA to establish regular interagency coordination calls among federal agencies, affected states, and the District
- Provide additional federal technical and testing assistance for expanded water quality monitoring, environmental modeling, and engineering support, as needed.
- Direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct and share a comprehensive assessment of the Little Falls intake and Dalecarlia Treatment Plant regarding water quality protection, treatment capacity, backup power, and operational resilience.
- Support consideration of a Small Business Administration declaration if economic impacts meet applicable thresholds.

Long-Term Resilience and Infrastructure Actions:

- Accelerate U.S. Army Corps of Engineers capital improvements to the Washington Aqueduct.
- Direct the National Park Service, and other relevant federal agencies, to collaborate with DC Water to remediate impacted portions of the C&O Canal and adjacent federal lands once repairs are substantially complete.
- Support DC Water's Clean Rivers Project.
- Fully fund flood protection improvements at the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, which treats approximately 300 million gallons of wastewater per day and serves both local and federal populations.

DRINKING WATER

Drinking water is not impacted.

DRINKING WATER IS NOT IMPACTED

How do we know that drinking water isn't impacted?

- DC Water's drinking water system is separate from the wastewater/sewage system. River water goes to the Washington Aqueduct to be prepared for drinking water.
- Sewage water goes to Blue Plains to be cleaned and then re-distributed into the river.
- The water used for our drinking water is being pulled from upstream of the break (at Great Falls). Any sewage that went into the river because of the break in the Potomac Interceptor flowed away from the water intake and not towards it.
- An intake site for drinking water does exist downstream from the break, at Little Falls, but it was not in operation during the spill and it remains closed.
- Once pulled from Great Falls, the river water goes to the Washington Aqueduct, which is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to be cleaned and distributed by DC Water for residential use. Residents should also know that all DC drinking water is cleaned, purified, and constantly tested for safety before it comes to Washington, DC.

GUIDANCE FROM DC HEALTH

Until further notice, DC Health is advising:

Avoid unnecessary contact with water from the Potomac River while emergency repairs are ongoing and additional testing is performed.

Avoid fishing.

Avoid boating with personal watercraft and/or non-motorized vessels (sailboats, paddle boards, kayaks, and canoes).

Keep pets on a leash and prevent them from drinking or wading in the Potomac.

Wash hands, clothing, or other gear that comes into contact with Potomac River water.

GUIDANCE FROM DC HEALTH

When will we lift the DC Health guidance?

The last overflow was February 9. At 21 days of continued normal levels downstream over changing weather conditions and no additional substantial overflows, DC will lift the advisory on March 2.

Reminder:

Under District law, swimming without a special permit is never allowed in the Potomac River or the Anacostia River.

Drinking water is not impacted.

There is no overflow into the Potomac; the last reported overflow was February 9.

DC Water and DOEE are monitoring E. coli levels; results will be published weekly.

Until further notice, avoid contact with water from the Potomac River.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

dc water is life®	DC Water's daily updates posted at **dcwater.com**
dc water is life®	DC Water in-person community meeting scheduled for February 25
★ ★ ★ DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT	DOEE Frequently Asked Questions and weekly water quality testing updates posted at **doee.dc.gov**