



Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Initiative

Councilmember Tommy Wells

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**An estimated 20,000 tons of
trash enter the
Anacostia River every year**



According to data from a 2008 DDOE report, plastic bags, Styrofoam products, snack wrappers, and bottles and cans comprise nearly 85 percent of the trash in the Anacostia River.



In the tributary streams, plastic bags dominate, making up **nearly 50%** of the trash.



Current cleanup efforts

- To date, Anacostia Watershed Society volunteers have removed more than 842 tons of debris from the watershed.
- DC WASA removes 477 tons of trash from the Anacostia River each year. This is critical work, but cleanups only target existing trash.
- DC accepts many types of plastics in its recycling program, but recycling alone can't keep trash out of the river

We need source point reduction.

Goals

1. Reduce the number of bags that enter the Anacostia River and its tributaries
2. Improve the health of the Anacostia River and its impact on nearby neighborhoods

Initiatives Outside DC

- **New York City:** In Nov. 2008, Mayor Bloomberg proposed charging shoppers 6 cents per bag, with one cent returned to the store. In February, the bill as introduced includes a 5-cent fee and no return to the retailer.
- **Seattle:** In July 2008, the Seattle City Council approved a 20-cent "green fee" on paper and plastic bags, which is expected to raise approximately \$3.5 million annually. Postponed pending outcome of 2009 ballot initiative.
- **Ireland:** In 2001, Ireland adopted a "PlasTax" fee, currently 22 Euro cents (34 U.S. cents) per bag. Disposable bag usage dropped 94 percent.

International Efforts

Bans

- Eritrea
- Rwanda
- Tanzania
- Bangladesh
- Brazil

Fees

- Belgium
- Denmark
- Uruguay
- Italy
- Taiwan

Why a fee?

- Charging for bags puts the choice before those who use them
- Provides incentive to bring reusable bags or to refuse bags for small, consumable purchases
- Creates a new revenue stream to be used to clean up the Anacostia River

The Age-Old Three "R"s

- **Reduce** (Best)
- **Reuse** (Better)
- **Recycle** (Good)



To what result?



The DDOE report estimates a fee on all “free” bags could effectively remove **47%** of the trash from the tributaries and **21%** from the river’s main stem.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Monetary Costs to the District

- EPA is establishing a new Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of allowable trash in the Anacostia River
- Violations are likely to occur with each rainfall event, potentially costing the District millions of dollars annually

Cost of Doing Nothing: Monetary Costs to the District

Each “free” bag that becomes litter already costs District residents:

- District agencies already spend over \$50 million each year picking up trash and litter rather than programs for people
- District rate payers already foot part of the cleanup costs through their monthly water bill

Cost of Doing Nothing: Environmental Costs

- Continued pollution of the Anacostia River
- Dangers posed by plastic bags to wildlife and marine life



Cost of Doing Nothing: Health Costs

- Plastic bags do not degrade, but instead break into tiny pieces, which are then ingested by the fish we eat
- Preliminary endocrine studies suggest alarming potential consequences

The Time is Now

We can't afford to continue putting trash in the Anacostia River:

- What are we telling our children about what we value and how we value them?
- What does a neglected Anacostia River keep from us?
 - A neighborhood asset for public use and enjoyment
 - A healthy river
 - Additional economic development

Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act of 2009

- Place a 5-cent fee, paid by consumer, on all disposable recyclable plastic and paper carryout bags from Retail Food Establishment license holders (includes grocery stores, food vendors, convenience stores, liquor stores, and drug stores, among others)
- Ban non-recyclable plastic carryout bags; require that if a plastic bag is used, it must be recyclable and clearly labeled as such

How the 5¢ fee is used

- The bulk of the fee is deposited into a new Anacostia River Cleanup & Protection Fund
- To the retail establishment:
 - 1 cent of fee returned to retailer
 - Retailers who offer a carryout bag credit to customers retain 2 cents

Economic Impact on Businesses

Creates a positive economic impact for local businesses:

- Supply-side -- 1 cent back to the retailer cuts costs of "free" plastic bags by 50%; "free" paper bags by 20%
- Demand-side -- As shoppers bring more reusable bags or decline extra bags, costs of demand will decrease.

Current retail bag initiatives

No plastic bags sold or distributed:

- Whole Foods
- Costco
- IKEA

Retailer charges fee for bags:

- ALDI
- Save-a-Lot

Education & Outreach

Prior to the effective date, DDOE shall conduct:

- Intensive public information campaign
- Outreach campaign that includes:
 - A public-private partnership to provide reusable carryout bags to residents
 - Working with service providers for seniors and low-income residents to distribute multiple reusable bags to low-income households (e.g. OA, DCHA, IMA)

Anacostia River Cleanup & Protection Fund

Activities include:

- Continued public education campaign about the impact of trash on DC's environmental health
- Distribution of additional free reusable carryout bags to DC residents
- Monitor and record pollution indices for the River
- Support job training that supports a "green economy"
- Install garbage traps, wetlands and other plant life to protect the health of the River
- Fund community cleanup events
- Fund Circuit Rider with neighbor jurisdictions to focus clean up efforts upstream

Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act of 2009 - Goals

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The Future...

