

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-72

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

June 6, 2023

To affirm the District of Columbia’s commitment to improve the water quality of its rivers and creeks, to honor dedicated community leaders and environmental advocacy groups for their efforts to restore the health of District waters, and to declare June 8, 2023 as DC Clean Waters Day in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, clean water is essential in supporting human and animal life, healthy ecosystems, commerce, and economic sectors;

WHEREAS, the Potomac River received its name from Indigenous peoples from the Patowomeck village and was first home to Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke peoples;

WHEREAS, the Potomac River was an avenue for transporting machinery and weaponry and served as a strategic location for Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War;

WHEREAS, over 100 species of freshwater fish, 60 mammals, over 100 birds, and dozens of reptiles and amphibians rely on the Potomac River for food, nutrition, and shelter;

WHEREAS, although called a “national disgrace” by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, and given a D letter grade by the Potomac Conservancy in 2011, the Potomac River earned a B letter grade on the Potomac Conservancy’s 2023 water quality report;

WHEREAS, the Nacotchtank peoples lived alongside the Anacostia River for 10,000 years and referred to the river as “anaquash,” which means village trading center;

WHEREAS, the Anacostia River was called “the forgotten river,” was a dumping ground for human and industrial waste during the Civil War era, and has been polluted by animal waste, stormwater runoff, garbage, and toxic chemicals in recent years;

WHEREAS, the Anacostia River has shown signs of a healthy ecosystem such as otters returning to the watershed and healthy underwater grass at the bottom of the river, according to ecologists;

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

WHEREAS, Rock Creek supports over 150 species of birds, 15 mammals, and 9 species of fish;

WHEREAS, Rock Creek has higher E. coli levels than the Potomac and Anacostia rivers due to animal waste in stormwater runoff from homes, sidewalks, and yards flowing into the creek;

WHEREAS, the District launched the Clean Rivers Project to reduce sewage, toxic contaminants, and stormwater runoff from entering the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and Rock Creek;

WHEREAS, Oxon Run Creek scored moderately poor on the Audubon Society's 2022 stream water quality report due to urbanization and pollution;

WHEREAS, the Ward 8 Water Watchers program was created to communicate with the District's lawmakers about Oxon Run Creek's progress and necessary requirements for further improvement and engage residents and community leaders by providing watershed education and training and opportunities for community members to remove garbage from the creek;

WHEREAS, after listening to feedback from community members, activists, scientists, and advocacy groups, DC Water, the District of Columbia's Department of Parks and Recreation, the District of Columbia's Department of Energy, and the National Park Service came together and developed the Oxon Run Stream project, which will reduce sewage from flowing into the stream, restore the stream to its naturalized state, and develop community outreach plans for community feedback;

WHEREAS, despite being harmed by decades of urbanization and pollution, the District's residents, activists, scientists, advocacy groups, and lawmakers are committed to ensuring that District waters receive the comeback that its resident and ecosystems deserve.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "DC Clean Waters Day Recognition Resolution of 2023".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia affirms the District's commitment to improve the water quality of its rivers and creeks, honors dedicated community leaders and environmental advocacy groups for their efforts to restore the health of District waters, and declares June 8, 2023 as DC Clean Waters Day in the District of Columbia.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.