

U.S. Government Announces Settlement to Clean Polluted Area along Anacostia River

Payments from Washington Gas Will Help Restore Anacostia as a Great Urban Park

WASHINGTON – The U.S. government and the District of Columbia today announced that the Washington Gas Light Company has agreed to begin clean up of a polluted area along the Anacostia River in Southeast Washington formerly managed by the National Park Service and owned by the United States, and now owned by the District of Columbia. Washington Gas, which once manufactured gas nearby, will also pay for a comprehensive investigation of groundwater and sediment contamination caused by their adjacent gas plant, among other requirements, as part of the settlement.

Today's announcement sets the stage for further acceleration of efforts underway to restore the Anacostia River Watershed and transform it into a model urban waterway and park – including several projects to reconnect Washington, D.C.-area residents and visitors to the great outdoors. The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail is expected to traverse the site once the cleanup is completed.

The settlement reached between Washington Gas, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and National Park Service (NPS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the District of Columbia requires Washington Gas to excavate and remove from the edge of the Anacostia River up to three feet of contaminated soil and subsurface soil covering the entire "government property" portion of the site.

Washington Gas will also conduct a comprehensive investigation to determine if groundwater is an ongoing source of contaminants to the river. Cleanup of contamination in groundwater and sediments in the Anacostia will be addressed in a future settlement or enforcement action when actions to remedy that contamination have been selected by NPS.

"Today's agreement is a milestone for our efforts – in partnership with the District of Columbia – to transform what was once known as America's forgotten river into a model urban park," Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. "Cleanup and restoration of the Anacostia River is a priority for the Obama administration as part of the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative. This settlement is a major step forward in restoring this vibrant river, increasing public access, protecting habitat and wildlife, and educating and employing our youth."

"The responsible cleanup of contaminated land has the power to revitalize neighborhoods," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Today's settlement will ensure that sites along the Lower Anacostia are cleaned up and create new recreational opportunities for the local community."

"This settlement provides for the cleanup, cost recovery, and comprehensive investigation of historic contamination by manufacturing activities at the Washington Gas Light Company's East Station Facility," said Ignacia S. Moreno, Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division. "It is good news for the environment and the health of residents of Southeast Washington, and the settlement marks progress towards more significant restoration efforts and the expansion of public access along the Anacostia River Watershed."

In addition to investigation, remediation and oversight costs, this settlement requires Washington Gas to pay \$500,000 to the NPS, \$160,000 to EPA and \$70,673 to the District to reimburse the agencies' costs in investigating the site and associated enforcement costs.

Washington Gas manufactured gas at the East Station Facility from 1888-1948 and intermittently until the mid-1980s. Coal and oil were the principal manufactured gas feed stocks. By-products and wastes generated by the gasification process included polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and other contaminants and hazardous substances including benzene, arsenic, heavy metals, tar, oil, coal, lampblack, and coke.

The East Station Facility was demolished in 1986, and aboveground oil storage tanks were removed in 1997.

The settlement stems from an investigation conducted by NPS to address contamination that had migrated on and under NPS property adjacent to the East Station Facility. This investigation found that surface soils, subsurface soils, groundwater and Anacostia River sediments are contaminated with coal tar, heavy metals and other pollutants.

NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis hailed the settlement agreement as an effective collaboration between government agencies to require the party responsible for pollution to be accountable for the costs of cleanup. "The National Park Service has worked closely with our partners to ensure that this agreement will protect the Anacostia River from further contamination resulting from past operations at the Washington Gas facility, at no cost to taxpayers."

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