

# Potomac Electric Power Company Potomac River Substation Oil Spill

## Annual Report



*(NPS Photo: Janet Greene and Mireya Stirzaker)*

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PREPARED BY:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Park Service

District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment



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January 2020 – December 2020

## *Background*

On January 23, 2011, a pipe break at the Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco) Potomac River Substation in Alexandria, Virginia, resulted in the discharge of 17,000 gallons of petroleum hydrocarbon mineral oil used for electrical insulation. An underground secondary containment reservoir overflowed, resulting in a discharge of approximately 4,500 gallons of oil into the Potomac River, causing injury to natural resources, including birds, fish, and benthic habitat. The resulting oil sheen was reported from the Washington Sailing Marina to National Harbor, a distance of 3.5 miles, and closed a portion of the Mount Vernon Trail, located within the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP), a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). This discharge is referred to as the Pepco Potomac River Substation Oil Spill, hereinafter referred to as the Pepco Potomac Spill.

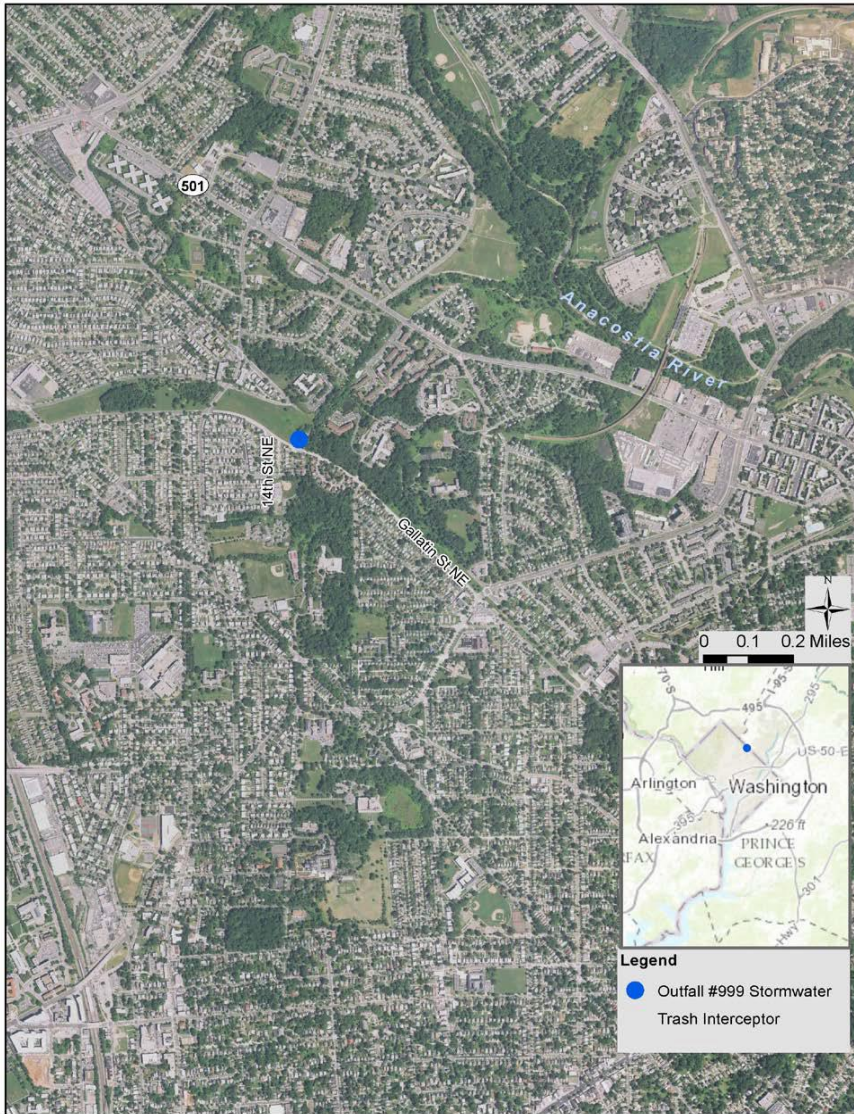
Oil from the Pepco Potomac Spill injured fish and wildlife and their habitats, and other natural resources in and around the Potomac River. Closure of the Mount Vernon Trail in GWMP and public sites along the river resulted in lost visitor use.

The United States Department of the Interior, acting through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and, the National Park Service; and the District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) are the natural resource Trustees for this spill<sup>1</sup>. The Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Environmental Compliance Analysis ([Final DARP/ECA](#)) was prepared by the natural resource trustees to restore natural resources and resource services injured or lost due to the discharge of oil from the Pepco Potomac River Substation and spill response activities. The DARP informed the public about the natural resource and lost visitor use injuries caused by the Pepco Potomac Spill and restoration alternatives that compensate for those injuries.

The Trustees evaluated a range of restoration alternatives that address specific injuries associated with the Pepco Potomac Spill that may compensate the public for the injury to natural resources and the loss of resource services pending restoration. The Trustees selected two restoration alternatives: 1) operation and maintenance (O&M) of stormwater outfall trash cage, and 2) Potomac River Boundary Channel Restoration. The O&M of stormwater outfall trash cage involves the operation and maintenance of a trash interceptor (“trash cage”) and collection system. The trash cage is located within the stormwater collection system at the intersection of Gallatin Street and 14th Street, NE, in Washington, DC (Figure 1). The Potomac River Boundary Channel restoration involves the removal of invasive species and the planting of native plant species along the Boundary Channel area within GWMP (Figure 2).

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<sup>1</sup> NOAA participated in the assessment phase but withdrew from restoration activities.



**Figure 1. Location of Outfall #999 Stormwater Trash Cage, Washington DC(DARP/ECA October 2018).**



**Figure 2. Location of Potomac River Boundary Channel Restoration Project Arlington, Virginia (DARP/ECA October 2018).**

A settlement agreement reached on October 4, 2018, among the Trustees and the parties responsible for the spill, resolved claims for resource damages. The settlement included a total payment of \$376,532 to the Trustees for the following: \$156,500 for the Boundary Channel Restoration Project, \$170,032 for O&M of the stormwater outfall trash cage, and \$50,000 for administrative costs associated with restoration planning, implementation, and monitoring.

## ***O&M of The Stormwater Outfall Trash Cage***

### **Project Overview**

This project involves the operation and maintenance of a trash interceptor (“trash cage”) and collection system. The trash cage is located within the stormwater collection system at the intersection of Gallatin Street and 14th Street, NE, in Washington, DC (Figure 1), within Rock



Creek Park (a unit of NPS not within GWMP) on the Anacostia River, a tributary to the Potomac River. The under-street box culvert located here is the termination spill-point for a network of city storm pipes and drains along street curbs and elsewhere that extend over approximately 660 acres of urbanization. Consequently, a large volume of water-borne litter, trash, and street debris flows through this outfall. The trash cage consists of two screened cages mounted across the downstream culvert openings of the stormwater outfall (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Photo of Outfall #999 Stormwater Trash Cage, Washington, DC (Living Classrooms, 2015).**

### **Project Status**

Construction of the trash cage was completed in June 2019 under the authority and oversight of DOEE, pursuant to a prior settlement agreement between the District of Columbia and Pepco, LLC (D.C. Superior Court Consent Decree, March 2014). Funding for the project included construction and initial operation and maintenance for a three-year period post-construction (Living Classrooms of the National Capitol Region Design Report, 2015). The trash cage became fully operational as of December 31, 2019, and the first year of operation and maintenance began on January 1, 2020. The Rock Creek Park issued a special use permit for its construction and operation and for maintenance of the trash cage for a three-year period post-construction (NPS, 2016 Special Use Permit). The \$170,032 settlement funds will enable the trash cage to be operated for up to an additional three years potentially starting January 1, 2023.

### **Funding Summary**

The funds for the O&M Trash Cage Project remain in the DOI Restoration Fund, Project 1121 – Pepco/Potomac River Trustees Acct, VA. No funds have been withdrawn or expended as of the end of calendar year 2020.

<b>Table 1. Trash Cage O&amp;M Funding<sup>1</sup></b>	
Approved project budget:	<u>\$170,032</u>
Funds allocated in FY 2020:	<u>\$0</u>
<b>Funds Spent:</b>	
Funds Spent in FY 2020:	<u>\$0</u>
<sup>1</sup> DOI Restoration Fund Project 1121 - Pepco/Potomac River Trustees Acct, VA	

## ***Boundary Channel Restoration***

### **Project Overview**

Compensatory damages were received for lost human use due to closure of the Mount Vernon Trail during response activities. The selected restoration alternative in the DARP/ECA describes the removal of invasive species and planting of native plant species along the Boundary Channel area within GWMP (Figure 2).

The Boundary Channel project is located on the west side of the Potomac River adjacent to the Pentagon just north of Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary (Figure 2). The Boundary Channel Project is designed to address invasive non-native species, such as Bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera mackii*), which is allowing various vines including Porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) and Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), to grow into the tree canopy, damaging and killing trees in the existing riparian buffer. After treatment of invasive non-native plants, native plants will be planted according to the GWMP planting plan. A limited amount of monitoring and maintenance will be done after planting to aid in survival of the new plants and evaluate the success of the project.

### **Project Status**

Since signing of the DARP/ECA, an unrelated project conducted by a volunteer group working with NPS completed restoration of the DC (east) side of Boundary Channel. The focus of this restoration effort will be conducted on the Virginia (west) side of Boundary Channel. This includes the restoration of approximately 5 acres of riparian forested/shrub habitat.

The withdrawal of \$151,805 in restoration funds and \$24,250 for restoration planning, implementation, and monitoring was completed in September 2020. The statement of work and independent cost estimate were prepared late fall of 2020 for the invasive plant removal and planting of native species along the Virginia side of the Boundary channel. Solicitations for bids are planned to go out early spring 2021 with a subsequent award.

**Funding Summary**

The Trustees signed Resolution #1 on August 28, 2020 that authorized the release of funds from the DOI Restoration Fund. The Resolution included funds for restoration as outlined in the DARP/ECA along with funds for restoration planning, implementation, and monitoring. Table 2 shows allocation and funds spent as of the end of calendar year 2020.

<b>Table 2. Boundary Channel Funding<sup>1</sup></b>	
Approved project budget:	<u>\$181,500</u>
Funds allocated in FY 2020:	<u>\$181,500</u>
<b>Funds Spent:</b>	
Funds Spent in FY 2020 <sup>2</sup> :	<u>\$9,528.70</u>
<sup>1</sup> DOI Restoration Fund Project 0861 - Pepco/Potomac River Mineral Oil Spill, VA	
<sup>2</sup> Includes \$4,083.70 for DOI Indirects and \$5,445.00 for DOJ.	