

My name is Neal Fitzpatrick. I am Executive Director of Audubon Naturalist Society.

Enforcement of the Clean Water Act is of primary importance to Audubon Naturalist Society and its 10,000 members in the Washington metropolitan area.

For the past ten years, we've sent out teams of water quality volunteers to collect data about aquatic insects and habitat conditions in the streams of Montgomery County. This program puts citizens into regular contact with the water in the stream, as they collect insects with a net, and identify them to class, order, or family. Volunteers also record information about water temperature, pH, and the composition of the stream-bed material, and turn over this data to local authorities to assist their environmental programs. This map shows the location of our monitoring sites in Montgomery County.

Bacteria pollution from leaking WSSC sewer lines has been ignored by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and the state and federal regulators for years -- even though it is against the law. The WSSC sewer lines are not the only source of bacteria contamination in the WSSC service area. Vast amounts of stormwater runoff, pets and wildlife also contribute, and in the District of Columbia, bacteria from the Combined Sewer Overflow system can become a significant source of bacterial pollution. We have a long way to go in getting these problems under control.

Business as usual at WSSC is making a mockery of the Clean Water Act's objective -- "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." This state of affairs is unacceptable. While the public spotlight has focused on the controversy regarding the members of the Commission, and various reforms of the WSSC administration, serious attention should be given to why the Commission has failed in its central mission of keeping our water clean. We live in an extraordinarily wealthy region that boasts hyper-fast telecommunications ... but our sanitation system and polluted waterways resemble those of a Third World nation. It's time we take action, and that's why the Audubon Naturalist Society has joined this effort.

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