



COMMISSIONERS
T. Eloise Foster, Chair
Mark J. Smith, Vice Chair
Fausto R. Bayonet
Lynnette D. Espy-Williams
Jonathan Powell
Regina Y. Speed-Bost

GENERAL MANAGER
Kishia L. Powell

March 26, 2025

Friends of Sligo Creek
P.O. Box 11572
Takoma Park, MD 20913

Dear Friends of Sligo Creek,

Thank you for your ongoing environmental protection and advocacy efforts and for highlighting the important issue of rising chloride levels in local waterways. We also thank you for your analysis and suggestions for improvements to environmental stewardship in our region. We appreciate the efforts of Friends of Sligo Creek and are aligned with your goal to decrease salinity levels in our area's waterways.

WSSC Water shares your concerns and remains committed to addressing the impacts of chloride levels on watersheds, drinking water, and our infrastructure. We recognize that the need to apply salt around water main breaks exemplifies the challenging balance of public safety and environmental protection.

We all acknowledge that salt is effective in melting snow and ice. What many people may not realize is that once salt enters our drinking water sources - the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers - we cannot remove it during the water filtration process. As a matter of fact, salt levels (chloride) at the intake within one of our Patuxent River reservoirs have increased more than 100 percent in the past 30 years. At our raw water intake along the Potomac River, salt levels have increased more than 40 percent in the same timeframe. As you know, salt is also corrosive and can impact the integrity of our water mains, possibly contributing to breaks/leaks and discolored water issues for our customers. This is why WSSC Water has been heavily involved in protecting our sources of drinking water for decades.

We are happy to share some promising contributions WSSC Water is making toward salt reduction.

Partnerships: WSSC Water uses a multi-barrier approach to protect our water supply in the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. One challenge we face is that the water in these rivers comes from areas far upstream, where there are multiple land uses and potential pollution sources. Due to the size of the watershed surrounding the rivers, it is important for WSSC Water to form partnerships with regulatory and administrative agencies for each river. This allows us to participate in discussions related to land use policy, promote source water protection and raise awareness and concern about water quality, like chloride levels, and safety.

WSSC Water belongs to these two major water source protection partnerships:

- The Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership (DWSP), coordinated by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB). This partnership utilizes a collaborative approach bringing together over two dozen water suppliers and government agencies to help ensure that people's most basic need for clean, safe and abundant water is reliably met.
- The Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection Group (PRWPG) was established in 1996 to cooperatively protect the long-term biological, physical and chemical integrity of the Patuxent Reservoirs and their watershed. These two reservoirs are created by WSSC Water's Brighton Dam and T. Howard Duckett Dam. WSSC Water is a very active member of this group and handles the administration. Other members include numerous county (Prince George's, Montgomery, and Howard) and state agencies interested in protecting this watershed.

We appreciate the thoughtful solutions you proposed and commit to passing these along to our source water protection partnerships to consider how we may all align in advocacy for salt reduction.

Public education: In January 2025, we hosted our fourth annual Salt Summit, which brought together local, regional, and national experts to discuss salt management issues. Through our involvement in the Potomac River Basin DWSP, we are also raising awareness of salt pollution through many different organizations across Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C.

We continue to engage the community with our smart salting message, including our Salt-Wise webpage and participation in Salt Week in January 2025, organized by the Izaak Walton League of America and the ICPRB. For the past several years, we have also partnered with Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection to push out Salt-Wise messaging. Additionally, we have co-hosted media events; created videos, fliers, and social media content promoting the fact that a little salt goes a long way in de-icing.

Best management practices: WSSC Water has also implemented the following best management practices for salt reduction in recent years:

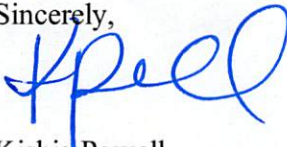
- In 2024, we successfully gained support from surrounding county agencies to reduce salt application and apply best salt management practices in the Patuxent watershed while maintaining safety, a significant achievement through the PRWPG.
- All WSSC Water staff applying salt at our facilities or project sites have completed or are scheduled to complete the Maryland Smart Salt Applicator Training this year.
- On the topic of operational improvements during winter water main breaks, before the start of next winter, we will train Utility Services staff (our employees responsible for repairing water mains breaks/leaks) on smart salting best practices
- We have begun sweeping up remaining rock salt at our facilities after storms. Early efforts by county partners have suggested sweeping salt can be a very impactful practice in salt reduction.

- We primarily use salt brine on our properties within the Patuxent Watershed, which significantly reduces the amount of salt applied and eliminates the need for excess salt cleanup.
- We have also ordered a second brine truck that will allow us to apply brine in more areas during the 2025-2026 winter season.

WSSC Water remains committed to identifying and pursuing opportunities to reduce salt – through partnerships, public education, and operational improvements. Through our research partners and community partners like you, we continue to look for alternatives and improvements to reduce salt application.

Thank you again for reaching out on this critically important matter. We are committed to working with Friends of Sligo Creek to reduce chloride levels in our waterways. Please let me know how else we can be helpful to you in these efforts.

Sincerely,



Kishia Powell
General Manager/CEO

cc: Jon Monger, Director, DEP
Chris Conklin, Director, MCDOT
David Dise, Director, DGS, Montgomery County
Miti Figueredo, Director, Montgomery Parks
Stan Edwards
Amy Stevens
Steve Martin
Ryan Zerbe
Jodi Rose
Steven Shofar, DEP
Richard Dorsey
Frank Kingsley
Jeffrey Knutsen
Daniel King, MCDOT
Gregory Boykan, DGS
Matt Harper
Andrew Frank, Montgomery Parks