

Potomac Interceptor Spill



House Environment & Transportation Committee
Lee Currey, Director, MDE Water & Science Administration
February 13, 2026



Incident Overview

- **Incident Timeline:** Breach occurred Jan 19; incident has been active for 25 days with remediation ongoing.
- **Spill Magnitude:** Estimated 243–300M gallons of raw sewage released into the Potomac River from a 72-inch DC Water main.
- **Public Health:** Emergency shellfish closures in effect (Charles Co. to 301 Bridge); health advisories active in Montgomery, Prince George's, and Charles counties.
- **Water Safety:** All MD drinking water intakes are upstream and unaffected; MDE on-site today (Feb 13) for critical water quality sampling.
- **Containment Status:** Bypass is operational but not 100% contained; secondary overflows continue due to pump clogs and snowmelt.



Roles and Responsibilities

U.S. EPA (PRIMARY REGULATOR)

Lead federal enforcement and compliance authority.

Permitting lead for DC Water/Blue Plains; holder of Consent Decree.

DC WATER (OWNER/OPERATOR)

Responsible for bypass, repairs, cleanup, and public signage.

Operational updates to state and federal partners.

MARYLAND ENVIRONMENT (MDE)

- Regulates unauthorized discharges into waterways and wetlands.
- Shellfish closures and harvesting monitoring.
- Drinking water safety and enforcement.

MARYLAND HEALTH (MDH)

- Water contact (recreational) advisories.
- Coordinates local health departments

REGIONAL PARTNERS (DOEE, NPS, VA)

- DOEE: D.C. environmental oversight and sampling coordination.
- NPS: Management of impacts to C&O Canal and National Park land.



Immediate Impacts at a Glance

Category	Status	Details
Drinking Water	SAFE	Intakes are located upstream of the spill.
Shellfish	ONE AREA CLOSED	<u>Precautionary</u> closure <u>from Charles County to Nice Bridge</u> . No active leases and no closures further downstream.
Recreation	AVOID	Health advisories active in <u>three counties</u> (Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles).
Containment	PARTIAL	Bypass installed; most flow is diverted but occasional disruption.



Overview of MDE Actions

Coordination, Directions and Inspections: Daily coordination. Completed five site visits as of today to oversee containment and assess environmental damage.

Shellfish Protections: Issued a precautionary harvesting closure from Charles County to the Route 301 Bridge to ensure consumer safety.

Ongoing Monitoring: Coordinated monitoring. With ice clearing more samples in open water will be collected. Two boat crews out next week.

Health Coordination: Supported state and local health departments on public safety advisories in three impacted counties.

Long-Term Recovery: Review and approve the restoration plans in coordination with the US EPA and NPS



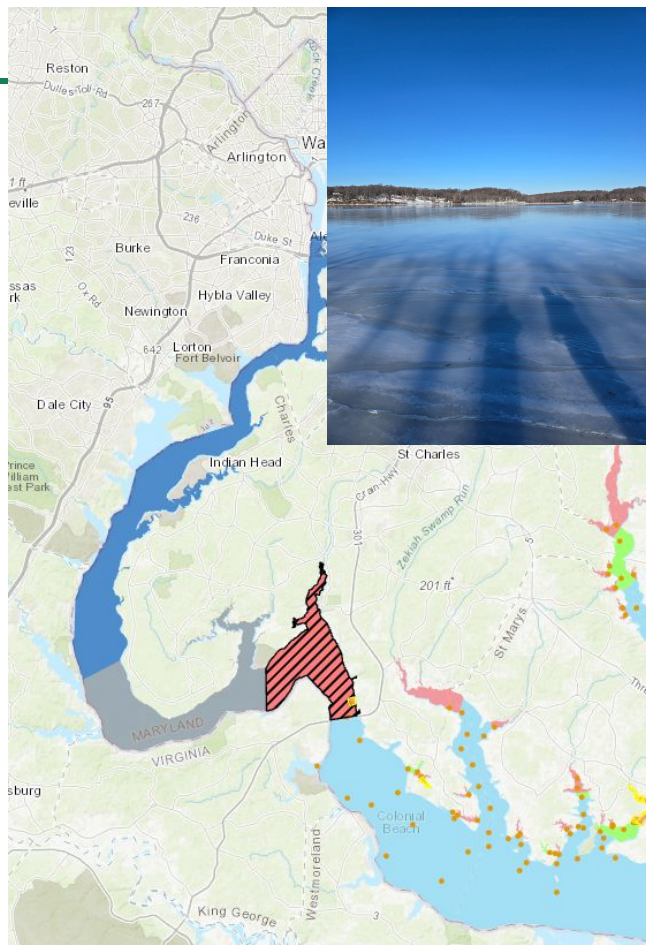
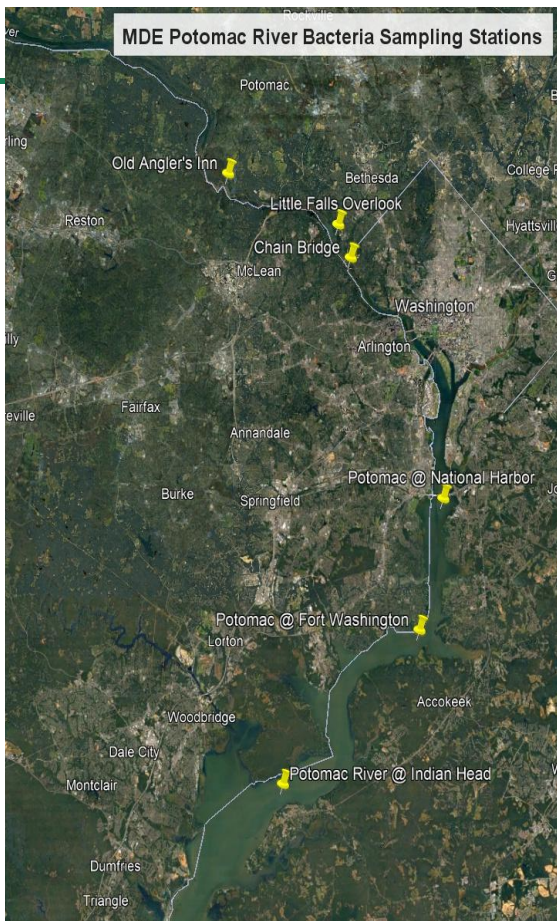
Sampling Results



Sample Date	<i>E. coli</i> (MPN/100 ml)					
	Old Anglers Inn (upstream of collapse)	Near Drainage Channel @ Overflow (Swainson Island)	Fletcher's Boathouse	Georgetown @ Wisconsin Ave	National Harbor	Anacostia @ S. Cap St
1/29/2026	11	570,000	14,300	18,600	<1	2
1/30/2026	4	60,000	3,000	2,700	3	11
1/31/2026	3	30,000	1,200	5,100	2	6
2/1/2026	27	80,000	488	300	4	21
2/2/2026	6	242,000	397	173	31	6
2/3/2026	4	460,000	68	53	15	30
2/4/2026	5	210,000	49	48	178	45
2/5/2026	1	77,000	38	84	33	16
2/6/2026	22	242,000	108	238	10	23
2/7/2026	15	86,600	79	114	24	16
2/8/2026	15	130,000	260	43	27	47
2/9/2026	16	730,000	20	20	<1	5
2/10/2026	7	600,000	17	20	2	2



Monitoring Along the Potomac



Legend

MDE Closed Safety Zones

Closed Safety Zones



MDE_Emergency_Closures

Shellfish Emergency Closure



MDE Shellfish Harvesting Classifications

Shellfish Sampling Stations with last 30 samples



Conditionally Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas



Restricted Shellfish Harvesting Areas



Seasonally Restricted Shellfish Harvesting Areas



Unclassified Shellfish Harvesting Areas



Non-Shellfish Waters



Rainfall



Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas

Approved Shellfish Harvesting Areas





Ongoing and Long-term

- Coordination with federal government on recovery and restoration
- Reopening closed shellfish harvesting area
- Support for lifting health advisories
- Messaging on impacts
- MDE regulatory oversight of the restoration of affected resources





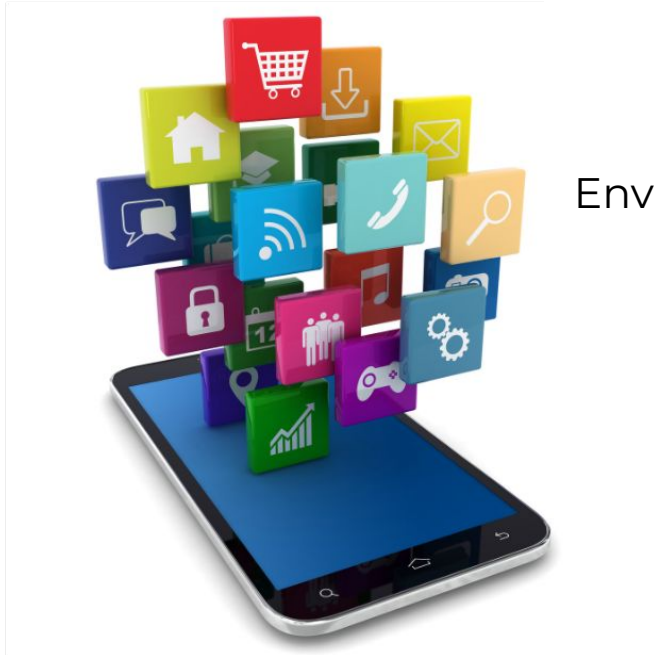
Our Enforcement Role

- Coordinate with US EPA on enforcement actions
- Approve restoration plan that includes a schedule for corrective and mitigation actions.
- Monitor the restoration actions to ensure they are sufficient, timely and completed according to the approved plan.





Contact Us



Website
mde.maryland.gov

Environmental Emergency Reporting
Hotline
866-633-4686

Social Media
@md_environment

