

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 closure 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.

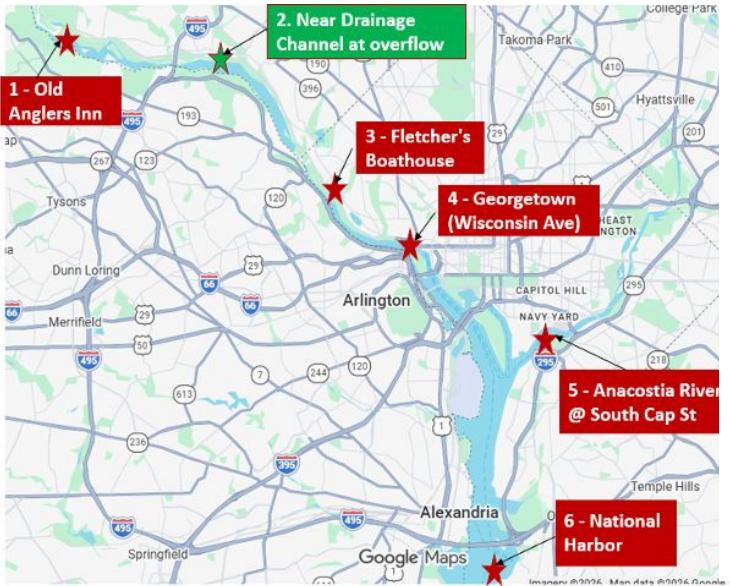
Ongoing Monitoring: Coordinated monitoring. With ice clearing more samples in open water will be collected. Two boat crews out next week.

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



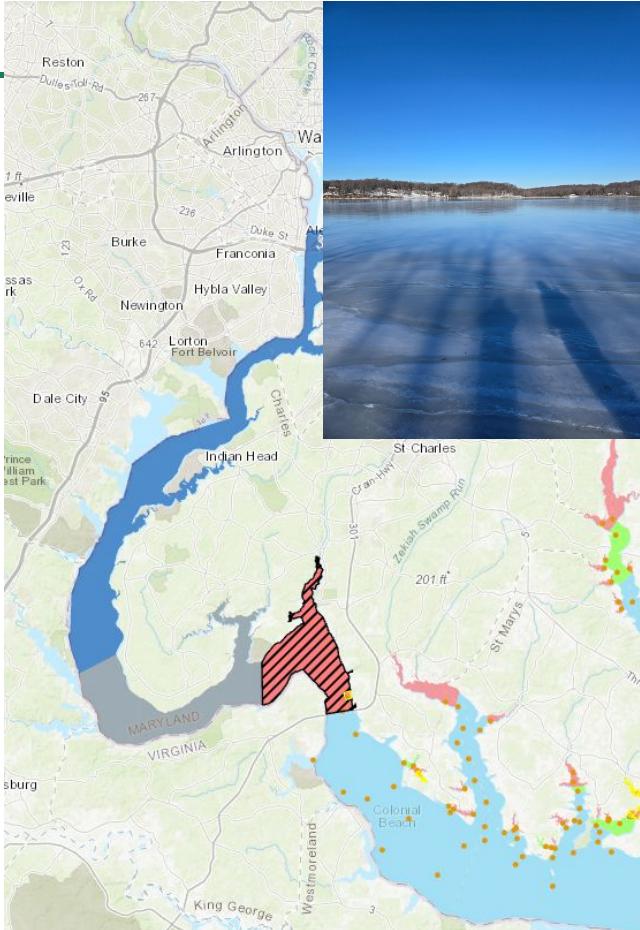
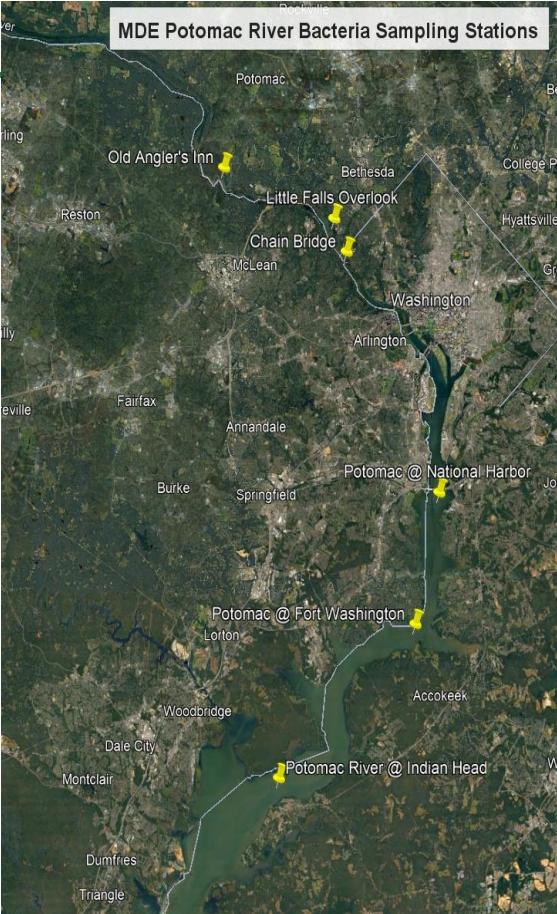
Sampling Results



Sample Date	E. coli (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





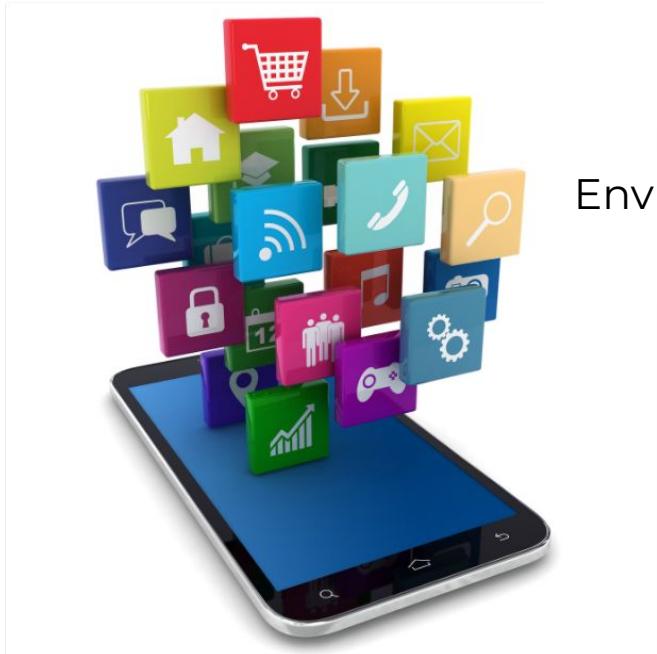
Our Enforcement Role

- 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

