



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Serena McIlwain, Secretary
Suzanne E. Dorsey, Deputy Secretary
Adam Ortiz, Deputy Secretary

March 12, 2026

David Gaddis
CEO and General Manager
DC Water
5000 Overlook Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20032

Re: Potomac Interceptor Failure – Remediation and Restoration Plan and Related Issues

Dear Mr. Gaddis:

This letter follows the Maryland Department of the Environment's (the Department) February 18, 2026 correspondence regarding the Potomac Interceptor's sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) and the Department's Notice of Referral to Maryland's Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to support development of a plan and schedule to restore impacted surface waters, wetlands, and other natural resources within the jurisdiction of the State of Maryland.

As stated in that correspondence, the discharges from the Potomac Interceptor failure have significantly impacted Maryland waters and caused multiple downstream impacts, including precautionary shellfish closures and public health advisories. Accordingly, the Department will continue to provide oversight to ensure that plans to remediate impacted areas are consistent with meeting Maryland's water quality requirements and protecting State resources.

While the Potomac Interceptor's operations and maintenance are subject to an NPDES permit issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Water Act, the discharges from the Potomac Interceptor have affected the waters and resources of the State of Maryland and must be remediated appropriately as required by State law. The Department has independent authority under Maryland law to protect water quality, designated uses, aquatic life, shellfish harvesting areas, natural resources, and public health within Maryland waters. In addition, DC Water's operations at the site are subject to Maryland requirements, including, as applicable erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, wastewater construction, waterway construction, and wetland protection.

The Department recognizes that DC Water followed required event notification regulations and has installed and continues to operate a temporary bypass system to control flows around the damaged interceptor. The Department also acknowledges the temporary stabilization measures that DC Water has implemented to prevent further unauthorized discharges.

With immediate stabilization measures now in place, the Department is transitioning from emergency response coordination to a comprehensive evaluation of environmental impacts and restoration. The Department acknowledges receipt of DC Water's draft Remediation and Restoration Plan that is guiding preliminary site restoration efforts, and as noted in prior correspondence concurs with beginning to mitigate the most urgent impacts as quickly as possible while an appropriately comprehensive plan is developed and approved. The Department will work with DC Water to develop a plan that appropriately characterizes and addresses the impacts of the discharges to Maryland waters. The Department expects that DC Water will also use the water quality data collected in response to this event, as well as additional monitoring of waters and sediments which may yet be needed, to continue evaluating the short-term and long-term environmental impacts to designated uses in the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. This evaluation will inform the comprehensive plan for remediation, restoration, and ongoing verification monitoring under the Department's oversight.

Consistent with the addendum to this letter, the Department requests a proposed schedule for submission of a revised Remediation and Restoration Plan within ten (10) business days of receipt of this letter. Please be further advised that the Department reserves all rights related to these events, and may proceed accordingly to protect the State of Maryland, its waters and aquatic resources, and its residents.

With respect to resources, the Department expects that DC Water, in the development and execution of its remediation plans, will secure necessary funding to ensure full restoration of impacted lands, wetlands, and waterway from this event. To the extent that DC Water receives federal disaster aid, the Department likewise expects it to be used in its entirety to offset the costs of repair, remediation, and restoration directly related to the January 19 incident.

Finally, the Department requests detailed information and planned actions to ensure that no similar overflow event is likely to occur along the Potomac Interceptor or related infrastructure in the State of Maryland. To that end, and pursuant to the items outlined in section 5 of the addendum to this document, the Department requests all relevant assessment information on the structural integrity of the Potomac Interceptor, including on areas of elevated risk, as well as appropriate near-term risk mitigation measures, and timelines and funding plans for permanent repair and replacement.

The Department looks forward to continued coordination with DC Water to ensure that the impacts of this incident are fully addressed, and that all necessary steps are being taken to prevent any similar event in the future.

Sincerely,



Lee Currey
Director, Water and Science Administration
Maryland Department of the Environment

Addendum: Remediation and Restoration Plan Components

The revised Remediation and Restoration Plan should include, at minimum:

1. Comprehensive Impact Characterization

- Quantification of discharge volume and duration
- Water quality monitoring data
 - Identify parameters collected and locations
 - Determine data gaps
 - Leverage regional efforts
- Hydraulic and water quality transport modeling
- Identification of impacted Maryland waters
- Evaluation of short-term impacts (e.g., bacteria spikes, acute stressors, shoreline debris)
- Evaluation of potential longer-term impacts, including:
 - Nutrient loading effects
 - Chemical contamination impacts
 - Sediment deposition
 - Benthic community impacts
 - Aquatic life, other wildlife, and habitat impacts
 - Recreational Uses (e.g., swimming, fishing)

2. Corrective and Remedial Measures

- Actions taken to stabilize and prevent further discharge
- Measures to address identified ecological or sediment impacts
- Shoreline or drainage channel stabilization, if applicable

3. Restoration Strategy

- Proposed ecological restoration measures
- Performance standards and measurable benchmarks
- Detailed implementation schedule

4. Long-Term Monitoring and Verification

- Post-remediation monitoring plan
- Duration and frequency
- Reporting schedule to MDE
- Criteria for determining restoration success

5. Prevention of Future Potomac Interceptor Overflows - Please provide a narrative description of the following:

- Causal analysis of Potomac Interceptor failure

- Risk/Vulnerability Assessment of Interceptor to re-prioritize, as appropriate, sections for repair and rehabilitation and a schedule for those actions to occur.
- Use of advanced technology, other measures, for pipe integrity assessment.

Public Transparency and Listening Session

Given the regional significance of this incident and the public interest in ensuring full restoration of Maryland waters, it is critical that MDE be notified and have the opportunity to provide context on public statements by DC Water with respect to the status of substance of remediation plans, as well as the costs associated with recovery activities. The Department expects that DC Water will coordinate public-facing messaging prior to it being shared publicly.

Furthermore, during the remediation plan development, the Department plans to host at least one public listening session with DC Water following submission of the revised Remediation and Restoration Plan.

The purpose of the session will be to:

- Present the findings of the impact assessment
- Explain proposed remediation and restoration measures
- Describe the current and future monitoring framework
- Provide an opportunity for community questions and input on the plan

The Department will coordinate with DC Water regarding format, timing, and location to ensure meaningful public engagement for Maryland residents.

Following the public listening session, DC Water will evaluate public input received and submit a revised Remediation and Restoration Plan to the Department for final approval that addresses substantive comments and incorporates any necessary modifications.

Plan Review and Approval

The Remediation and Restoration Plan is not final until reviewed and approved in writing by the Director's Office for the Department's Water and Science Administration.

In reviewing the Remediation and Restoration Plan, the Department will determine whether the plan:

- Adequately addresses short-term and long-term impacts
- Restores designated uses
- Ensures compliance with Maryland water quality standards
- Provides sufficient long-term monitoring and verification

The Department also reserves the right to require revisions to the Remediation and Restoration Plan as necessary to ensure full protection and restoration of Maryland's waters and natural resources.