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## Environmental Site Design Key To Preventing Toxic Stew Accumulation in Region's Drinking Water

*Each regional jurisdiction faces different barriers to implementation*

Today the Potomac Conservancy released a report (<http://potomac.org/esdscorecard>) to equip regional jurisdictions in Maryland and Washington DC with guidance on using Environmental Site Design to prevent dangerous contamination from stormwater run-off in the Potomac River.

Growth pressures and urbanization in the area have replaced forests, wetlands, and meadows that once served as a filtering buffer for polluted rainwater run-off. Without this natural filtering system, when it rains, the water washes pollution into our local creeks, creating a toxic stew.

The report stresses the importance of Environmental Site Design, an approach to land development that seeks to minimize the negative impacts of impervious cover on local waterways, as a solution in the face of such growth and development. Not only is Environmental Site Design a preferred method, but it is also legally mandated in the area to maintain water quality. At the same time, the report identifies regulatory obstacles that prevent or prohibit the installation of these solutions and offers tips to overcome such barriers.

"When it comes to water quality and drinkability in our region, polluted run-off is public enemy number one," says Hedrick Belin, President of the Potomac Conservancy.

"We're currently over-fertilizing our rivers and streams, which is the same overfeeding of algae that led to water constraints in Toledo, Ohio a few months ago."

"Simple and cost-effective design solutions like protecting existing green space, planting more trees, and installing green roofs on buildings would have a huge impact on water quality. Our report provides each county with guidance to move towards this approach," he adds.

"In order to assess the counties' strengths and weaknesses, we categorized them by future growth demands and current level of urbanization," says Karen Capiella, Director of Research at the Center for Watershed Protection. "It's important to note that more urbanized areas have different needs than rural ones, and growth appears to be a good predictor of a region's preparedness for environmental design implementation."

The amount of developed land has doubled since 1970, with related losses in forest and agricultural land. The most rapidly urbanizing areas include the Monocacy and Lower Potomac subwatersheds, particularly the Frederick County, MD; Prince William, VA; and Charles County, MD. In the last three decades, many areas of the watershed have more than doubled in population. Based on the 2010 census, the population is approximately 6.1 million, with nearly three-quarters residing in the Washington metropolitan area (ICPRB, 2013). The Potomac River is an important resource to this region as it supplies almost 90% of the drinking water to the District Metropolitan area.

"In Prince George's County, we are already highly developed so our focus is on making our older communities more green and sustainable," says Adam Ortiz, Director of the Department of Environmental Protection, Prince George's County. "Since we are more urbanized already, we can use sustainable stormwater practices to beautify existing neighborhoods and create local jobs."

In addition to **Washington, DC**, the report provides recommendations and actionable tools to improve

each compliance with stormwater standards for the following counties: **Montgomery, Charles, Frederick, Carroll, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Allegany, Washington, Garrett.**

**BACKGROUND:** Since 1993, Potomac Conservancy has safeguarded the Potomac River and its tributaries and connected people to this national treasure. As the Voice of the Nation's River, the Conservancy's primary focus is to restore water quality by advocating sound policy and promoting thoughtful land management. The Conservancy protects and restores Potomac landscapes by enhancing a network of rivers, forests, and natural areas. Since healthy lands and rivers reflect the quality of life in our communities, the Conservancy promotes enjoyment of the river in ways that foster a genuine conservation ethic. For more information, visit [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND VIEW FULL REPORT,** please visit [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org) or contact Patricia Brooks at 202-351-1757.

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