



of the Anacostia River

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**Testimony in Opposition to Bill 10-13,
Excise Tax, Disposable Carryout Bags, Scope
June 18, 2013**

Neighbors of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River strongly opposes Bill 10-13, the partial roll-back of our far-sighted carryout bag fee.

Neighbors of the Northwest Branch is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to restoring the health of the Northwest Branch. Among our activities is removing the litter of our throw-away culture from the stream banks and water.

When Bill 10-13 was proposed, **excluding from the bag fee 89% of retailers currently covered**, I reread our 2011 testimony supporting the fee. It applauded the at-the-source, market approach, the wide and fair coverage, and the conservation resources the fee would generate initially while having a neutral or positive effect on county businesses. Has something changed since 2011?

Not the threat to wildlife and water quality that litter poses. Not our MS4 trash reduction requirements for the Anacostia watershed. Certainly not our need to reduce our use of petroleum and forest products in light of diminishing resources and climate change.

Indeed, some things HAVE changed: we find many fewer plastic bags and shreds hung up on trees and stream banks, many fewer of those fast food and nonfood store bags that this bill would exempt. And although the bag fee was not established for revenue, it has provided our Dept. of Environmental Protection with needed funds to seriously address our Clean Water Act requirements.

All the sponsors of this bill signed the pledge for a Trash Free Potomac by 2013. You were wise to sign this pledge and wise to institute the bag fee. The Council has demonstrated that it wants to make Montgomery County a model of environmental sustainability.

Some councilmembers have suggested that people relieved of this fee will then be ready to accept deep changes to their lifestyle on behalf of environmental protection. But realistically, what large inconvenient behavior change on behalf of environmental protection do you expect people to accept in exchange for such a minor inconvenience as taking a bag along to buy toothpaste or batteries, or paying 5 cents for a department store bag large enough for pillows or a winter coat?

And will property owners be pleased to make up the missing \$700,000 annually with another increase in the Water Quality Protection Charge?

We urge you to preserve the gains we've already made in reducing environmentally and economically damaging bag litter. Wouldn't it be far more embarrassing to miss our MS4 requirements than to carry a reusable bag into an upscale store? Please proudly carry one of our beautiful logo bags that will advertise your concern for our threatened waterways. No embarrassment there!

You made the correct decision in 2011. Please hold the course. Vote NO to Bill 10-13. Thank you.

Anne Ambler
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