



November 19, 2025

Lauren T. Buckler, DPWT Director
County Office Building, 111 West Chesapeake Ave., Towson, MD 21204
Lbuckler@baltimorecountymd.gov

Baltimore County 2005 Sanitary Sewer Overflow Consent Decree Compliance & Accountability

Dear Director Buckler,

The Friends of The Jones Falls (FTJF) is a 700+ member, volunteer-based organization incorporated in 2018 to support and sustain the quality of life and long-term stewardship of the central Jones Falls Stream Valley in Baltimore City and County.

The 2005 Baltimore County Sanitary Sewer Overflow Consent Decree was entered in September 2005 and was supposed to be implemented by March 2020. The 2006 Maryland Department of the Environment Total Maximum Daily Loads of Fecal Bacteria for the Non-Tidal Jones Falls Basin stated under Section 5.0 ASSURANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

“The most significant planned implementation measures in the Jones Falls watershed involve the separation of combined sewer systems in Baltimore City and the elimination of sanitary sewer overflows in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Each of these jurisdictions is obligated under a judicial consent decree and judgment to adopt and implement a Long Term Control Plan (“LTCP”) to eliminate sewer overflows.”

“The judicial decrees and judgments require the jurisdictions to implement these LTCPs by January 2016 for Baltimore City and by March 2020 for Baltimore County.”

The expectation was clearly the Consent Decrees would be successfully implemented long before now. Minutes of a July 7, 2025 County Council meeting reflect unanimous approval of a Legal Services contract to provide legal services and assisting [sic] with negotiation of modifying the Sanitary Sewer Overflow Consent Decree.

We understand the need for this renegotiation and transparency. Through Maryland Public Information Act requests, Jones Falls stakeholders learned about MDE and EPA taking issue with the County compliance relating to project completion, prematurely submitted Performance Assessments, and SSO stipulated penalties.

The Jones Falls has had two adjudications finding its sewers to be inadequate. The 2021 JFS Performance Assessment was submitted indicating SSOs were predicted *for every storm evaluated post-rehabilitation*, yet didn't indicate any corrective actions required to eliminate SSOs. A \$10 million 3.7 mile Lake Roland Sewer Rehabilitation project was subsequently approved by the County Council to reduce infiltration and the likelihood of SSOs.

FTJF urges County agencies to hold public hearings to enable better outcomes. We also urge a higher level of transparency and accountability by County agencies as their work progresses on this life-sustaining modified consent decree and associated County remediation work. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Sandy Sparks, President
Friends of The Jones Falls
2942 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218
srsparks@verizon.net 410-980-5844

CC: County Executive Katherine A. Klausmeier, Baltimore County Council, Maryland State County Delegation, Maryland Department of the Environment, EPA— Region 3, Blue Water Baltimore