

TESTIMONY OF JESSICA L. KRAMER, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

OFFICE OF WATER, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

MAY 20, 2026

Good morning, Chairman Joyce, Ranking Member Clarke, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Jess Kramer, Assistant Administrator for Water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about EPA's role in leading a successful, coordinated federal response to the Potomac Interceptor collapse.

On May 6, the federal government completed its remediation of the Potomac Interceptor collapse area and fully demobilized its presence onsite. The goal of this federal assistance was to expeditiously remediate the collapse site and surrounding area. I am proud of the work EPA, along with our federal partners, did to ensure this was completed in time for America 250 festivities and deliver on the agency's commitment to restore the Potomac to pre-collapse conditions. Throughout this process, EPA maintained open and transparent lines of communication with our partners at all levels and with the public. As you are likely aware, several weeks ago, the Department of Justice, on behalf of EPA, also filed a civil complaint in federal court against DC Water and the District of Columbia for Clean Water Act violations. In keeping with longstanding agency practice, EPA does not comment on pending litigation.

BACKGROUND

The Potomac Interceptor is a sanitary sewer line managed by DC Water that conveys up to 60 million gallons of wastewater every day from parts of Virginia and Maryland to DC Water's Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. On January 19, 2026, a portion of the pipe, which was 72-inches in diameter, collapsed, causing an estimated 240 million gallons of raw, untreated sewage to overflow into the Potomac River.

EPA'S ROLE IN LEADING THE FEDERAL RESPONSE

Following the collapse, EPA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (Region 3) performed inspections in coordination with state and local partners and issued a Clean Water Act Section 308 information request to DC Water.

EPA took on a heightened role in coordinating and leading the federal response to the collapse in mid-February when DC Mayor Muriel Bowser declared a public emergency and requested federal assistance to address the pipe collapse. President Trump immediately approved Mayor

Bowser's request, and, on February 21, 2026, assigned EPA as the lead federal agency to respond to the emergency. I was designated as the Senior Response Officer overseeing the effort by Administrator Lee Zeldin. Senior EPA officials—including Administrator Zeldin and myself—have been consistently engaged and on-site as appropriate.

Throughout the repair and remediation process, EPA actively coordinated with partners at all levels to ensure appropriate and expeditious measures were utilized to protect public health and prevent additional overflows.

For example, the Army Corps of Engineers installed a stormwater diversion system, which allowed crews to remediate the collapse through wet weather while mitigating further contamination from stormwater runoff. Additionally, federal partners led the remediation and rehabilitation of soil impacted by the overflow with soil sampling beginning on March 9, 2026.

Thanks in part to the coordinated federal actions onsite, wastewater flow was returned to the Potomac Interceptor on March 14—a full week ahead of schedule. This allowed the focus of ongoing work to fully center on the remaining environmental remediation. EPA continued to lead the federal components of that remediation, in coordination with FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and other federal partners.

Remediation and rehabilitation activities included:

- Water and soil sampling;
- Raking and removing contaminated material, including sewage-impacted soils;
- Covering disturbed soil with seed mix and erosion-control blankets;
- Removing branches, fallen trees, brush and debris; and
- Flushing the C&O Canal with fresh water from the Potomac.

Additionally, on March 16, EPA assumed responsibility for water quality sampling previously conducted by the DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). The daily sampling results were processed at EPA's Environmental Science Center located at Fort Meade, Maryland. The results for each day's sampling were evaluated and quality assured before being posted publicly on DOEE's Potomac Interceptor Monitoring webpage.

A top priority for EPA throughout this response was ensuring continued drinking water safety. Fortunately, the sewage overflow occurred downstream of the Washington Aqueduct's primary drinking water intake. In addition, other than the Aqueduct's secondary intake, which has been closed since the Fall of 2025, there are no other drinking water intakes along the Potomac River downstream of the overflow site. As a result, the overflow did not significantly threaten safe drinking water.

CLOSING

From the onset of this response, we made clear that EPA would be on the ground, working at full speed, until the Potomac Interceptor site and surrounding area were fully remediated. Thanks to President Trump's decisive action and leadership, and a coordinated effort across

federal agencies, we kept that promise and restored the Potomac River to pre-collapse conditions for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to our nation's capital region this summer.

Thank you again, Chairman Joyce, Ranking Member Clarke, and Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to discuss this important issue. I look forward to answering your questions.