



Councilmember Charles Allen  
Committee on Transportation and Environment  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 108  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Subject: Budget Oversight Testimony for the Department of Energy and the Environment

Casey Trees would like to thank the Mayor, Director Jackson, and the Council for their continued support of DOEE's mission. We commend the agency's ongoing work to care for our natural resources and the commitment of their staff to ensuring every Ward of our city is thriving and resilient.

We recognize that the FY25 budget is leaner than in years past, with many competing interests. However, many critical DOEE programs are set to be abandoned or severely underfunded. Our chief concern is the \$16.5 million decrease in the Watershed Protection Division. The bulk of this reduction appears to primarily be in Green Infrastructure Maintenance programming, reflecting a loss of \$12 million in funding.

This loss will result in not just a significant reduction in capacity for green infrastructure installation and maintenance – but potentially eliminate the program entirely. We want to make clear that this maintenance work is extremely important both for sustainability across the District and public sentiment towards these projects. We frequently hear that the largest concern among communities towards implementing green infrastructure projects is the need for ongoing maintenance. In addition, the program is funding needed green jobs for District residents.

Abandoning this program effectively diminishes the investments the District has already made in Green Infrastructure, reduces the District's capacity to meet MS4 permit requirements, puts into jeopardy Federal Chesapeake Bay funding that requires state match, and reduces Green Jobs and training for our residents most in need. We ask that at least half of the funds, or \$6M be restored to keep this critical program going.

The Watershed Protection Division also manages several other DOEE programs supported through the Anacostia Clean-Up Protection Fund, which is set to be swept of over \$3M. This includes the Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge Relief Fund supporting low income and faith-based institutions, which will be eliminated. The Community Stormwater Solutions program will be halved. The Nature Near Schools Grant – and the associated programs that bring environmental education to DCPS students – will also be halved. RiverSmart Homes, which provides low-cost assessments and stormwater management installation to District residents, will be reduced by a third. These programs are critical to our communities and represent a significant amount of the outreach DOEE does to assist, teach, and connect District residents to our natural resources.

Additionally, the wildlife rehabilitation grant is set to be eliminated. This grant funds the only wildlife rehab center in the District at City Wildlife. City Wildlife is a key private-public partnership that would have to close its doors if city funding was not restored. Transporting wildlife across state lines is illegal, so defunding the only wildlife rehabilitation facility in the District would fully eliminate our ability to help injured wildlife.



The investments we make today in support of our city's environmental programs will compound in community and climate resilience benefits far into the future. It is imperative that we prioritize funding the important work of the Department of Energy and Environment for the benefit of our residents and future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Andrew Schichtel

Chief Operating Officer, Casey Trees