



Muriel Bowser
MAYOR

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Through: Lilian Hutchinson, Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 3
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Request for Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration

Dear Mr. President,

Pursuant to Section 501 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121–5207, and as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.35, I respectfully request that you declare a Major Disaster for the District of Columbia in response to a sewer line collapse impacting the Potomac River, in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. I am also seeking 100% reimbursement for costs incurred by the District and the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water), such that emergency response, repair, and remediation costs are not incurred by ratepayers in any impacted state or the District.

On Monday, January 19, 2026, a section of a 72" diameter sewer line collapsed near the Clara Barton Parkway in Montgomery County, Maryland on National Park Service (NPS) land. The sewer line, called the Potomac Interceptor, is managed by DC Water and carries up to 60 million gallons of wastewater daily from Virginia and Maryland to Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant in Washington, DC.

Due to this collapse, a significant quantity of untreated wastewater flowed into the Potomac River between January 19, 2026, and January 24, 2026, when DC Water erected a temporary repair (bypass). A major concern with untreated wastewater is the presence of a bacteria commonly called "E. coli." E. coli, when it exceeds EPA-mandated levels, is dangerous to human health. Sewage also contains other bacteria, viruses, and harmful chemicals.

Multiple state and federal agencies are cooperating to oversee the repair operations and protect the environment, including the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE), and National Park Service (NPS). DOEE and EPA are inspecting the bypass weekly to ensure that DC Water is doing everything possible to prevent overflows, contain and mitigate any overflows that occur, as well as plan for comprehensive environmental restoration.

In response to this incident, I declared a State of Emergency on February 18, 2026. I authorized implementation of the District of Columbia Emergency Operations Plan, and the mobilization of District agencies and resources.

I have designated Clint Osborn, Director of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), as the Mayor's Authorized Representative (MAR), and Justin B. Brown, Deputy Director of HSEMA, as the District Coordinating Officer (DCO). They are authorized to work directly with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and to provide any additional information or justification needed in support of this request.

Thank you for your continued support and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Muriel Bowser", written over a horizontal line.

Muriel Bowser
Mayor, District of Columbia

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13

Maryland Operational Briefing