

Restoring the Potomac: Mobilizing a Certified Green Infrastructure Workforce

A Districtwide Strategy for Spill Recovery, Community Engagement, and Long-Term Resilience.

Whitepaper from: Certification School Worldwide (CSW)

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WHITEPAPER: RESTORING THE POTOMAC - MOBILIZING A CERTIFIED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE WORKFORCE FOR DISTRICTWIDE SPILL RECOVERY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recent Potomac River sewage spill represents one of the most significant environmental disruptions the region has faced in decades. Within the tens of millions of gallons of raw sewage released daily there is an opportunity to respond with remediation services led by DC residents already trained by DC Water and DOES, as well as, provide experience and workforce development to trainees. CSW can immediately execute with limited competition DC Training Supply Schedule CW98324 which avoids a lengthy solicitation process to immediately address the estimated discharge exceeding 1.2 billion gallons. CSW is the only provider of both National Green Infrastructure Certifications and Storm Water Pollution Prevention training in the District to combat the ecological, public health, and community impacts will last well beyond the immediate containment phase. Early reporting indicates that river activities may be disrupted for the remainder of the year.

This white paper outlines how Certification School Worldwide (CSW) can support the District's response through rapid workforce mobilization, community communication, and the deployment of certified Green Infrastructure (GI) professionals. CSW's proven performance with the DC Water/University of the District of Columbia's Green Infrastructure Certification Program, along with its coordination of Storm Water Pollution Prevention (SWPPP) training with the District Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE), demonstrates readiness to assist with both short-term mitigation and long-term recovery.



Figure 1: The Challenge & CSW's Solution

2. UNDERSTANDING THE SCALE OF THE POTOMAC SPILL

The spill involved the release of tens of millions of gallons of raw sewage per day over multiple weeks. Comparable watershed contamination events indicate a long road to recovery:

- **Ecological Recovery:** 12–24 months are often required for full recovery.
- **Sediment Contamination:** Often persists for 18 months or longer.
- **Recreational Impact:** Restrictions frequently last an entire season.

The scale and duration of this spill require a coordinated, sustained response that integrates workforce capacity, community communication, and strict environmental compliance.



Figure 2: Understanding the Scale of Potomac Spill

3. CSW'S PROVEN CAPABILITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Since 2016, CSW has delivered full-spectrum program administration for the DC Water/UDC Green Infrastructure Certification Program and DOEE's Returning Citizen Green Infrastructure Training Programs. These efforts are anchored in three operational pillars—Rapid Mobilization, Community Communication, and Workforce Deployment, which enable CSW to respond decisively to evolving environmental and public health challenges.

CSW's responsibilities span:

- Community outreach and recruitment
- Screening, interviewing, and onboarding
- Certification exam preparation
- Field training and hands-on instruction
- Job placement and employer engagement

These pillars directly support impact domains of Ecology, Public Health, and Community Impacts, forming a braided system of recovery and resilience. For example:

- Ecological Recovery often requires 12–24 months of sustained effort.
- Sediment Contamination can persist for 18+ months, demanding long-term monitoring and mitigation.
- Recreational Impact restrictions frequently last an entire season, affecting community access and trust.

To meet these timelines and scale effectively, CSW deploys a 1099-certified workforce pipeline that augments existing staff and supports surge capacity. This flexible deployment model ensures rapid onboarding, compliance-ready stipend administration, and field readiness, whether for seasonal training, emergency response, or long-term restoration.

Documented Performance Outcomes:

- **Highest National Pass Rate:** CSW led all 13 pilot cities in NGICP exam success.
- **High Job Placement:** 87% of certified graduates entered green careers within six months.
- **Scalability:** CSW adapted swiftly to expanded scopes, assuming full stipend and tax compliance administration.

CSW's workforce is not only technically skilled but deeply embedded in the District's environmental, civic, and community landscape, ready to mobilize, communicate, and deploy in service of long-term ecological and public health recovery.

Leadership with Proven Spill-Response Expertise:

CSW's executive team brings direct, high-stakes environmental response experience. Dr. Robert Jordan, President & CEO, and Carl Davenport, Vice President, both served on Booz Allen Hamilton's seven-person rapid-response team during the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. In that role, they helped stand up a fast, responsive national solution-intake site that gathered and evaluated ideas from scientists, community leaders, engineers, and citizens. Their work ensured that credible, community-informed solutions were surfaced quickly and routed to decision-makers during one of the largest environmental disasters in U.S. history.

This experience directly informs CSW's ability to mobilize trained residents, coordinate multi-stakeholder communication, and stand-up operational systems under urgent environmental conditions.

4. A COORDINATED DISTRICT RESPONSE REQUIRES A SKILLED, PREPARED WORKFORCE

The District's response must be a coordinated effort between DOEE and DC Water, supported by a trained, environmentally literate workforce. The DC Water/UDC Green Infrastructure Training Program, administered by CSW, has evolved into a regional, national, and global model for environmental workforce development.

The program:

- Engages District residents
- Partners with leading environmental agencies (UDC, DC Water, DOEE)



- Builds community level environmental literacy
- Creates pathways into sustainable careers
- Supports the District's long term environmental resilience

This foundation makes CSW uniquely positioned to support the Potomac spill response. CSW strengthens this system through a **risk-mitigation and accountability framework** that governs recruitment, screening, onboarding, and field deployment. By maintaining a compliance-ready 1099 surge pipeline, CSW reduces operational risk, ensures regulatory alignment, and provides scalable staffing that can expand or contract as recovery timelines evolve. This approach keeps the District's response coordinated, transparent, and resilient, whether addressing immediate spill impacts or long-tail risks such as sediment contamination, seasonal recreational restrictions, and ecological recovery that can span 12–24 months.

5. COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION & RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

CSW's training model is not solely about employment; it is about building community resiliency, awareness, environmental literacy, and generational engagement.

CSW collaborates with community and nonprofit partners including:

- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Chesapeake Bay Trust
- Anacostia Watershed Society
- University of Maryland
- Friends of Oxon Run Park
- Green Spaces for DC
- Rock Creek Conservancy
- RiverSmart Programs (installations and contractor training)
- Anacostia Parks and Community Collaborative
- VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)
- Chesapeake Conservation Landscape Council
- Local and regional organizations, civic associations and neighborhood groups.

These partnerships create pipelines for resident training and ensure environmental information flows back into communities.

CSW's Certified GI Professionals Can Support:

- Door-to-door outreach
- Public safety and multilingual communication
- Community briefings and workshops
- Distribution of advisories and updates

Applicable Awards & Contracts

- Mayors Sustainability Award-2013
- RiverSmart Community Award 2012
- Best Urban BMP in the Bay Area Award (BUBBA) 2016
- DDOT Landscape Urban Forestry Depart (2019-2024),
- University of Maryland Green Infrastructure 2024

This multifaceted approach strengthens community trust and accelerates mobilization.

6. RAPID WORKFORCE MOBILIZATION & DEPLOYMENT

Through the DCSS CW98324 - “Limited Competition” Contract Vehicle, CSW can integrate programs like the one-day River Cleanup Response Unit (RCRU) certification, the Leave No Trace Awareness Course, and short-format River Rescue Technician (Awareness-level) trainings into our accelerated workforce pipeline. These rapid-completion, field-ready programs enable District residents to quickly qualify for river and waterway cleanup operations.

CSW already maintains a fully built, GI-aligned safety and compliance workforce pipeline that can be deployed immediately. By leveraging a portfolio of fast-turnaround, field-ready certifications, rather than relying on a single provider, the District gains true operational flexibility and a steady supply of trained personnel who can support spill response, debris removal, and waterway restoration within days. Because this pipeline is pre-screened, compliance-ready, and surge-capable, CSW can rapidly scale staffing to match both immediate spill-related needs and the long-term recovery timelines associated with ecological restoration, sediment contamination, and seasonal recreational impacts.

Deployment Capabilities:

- **Field Assessments:** Immediate mobilization for erosion and sediment control and site stabilization.
- **Infrastructure Management:** Stormwater system inspection, debris management, and maintenance of existing stormwater systems to prevent additional pollution.
- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Conducting monitoring under agency supervision; incorporate (Internet of Things) IoT technology, if needed.
- **Documentation:** Infrastructure inspection and rigorous reporting.

7. STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION (SWPPP) TRAINING

CSW has successfully delivered SWPPP training with DOEE, equipping residents, contractors, and agency partners with the skills needed to prevent stormwater contamination and comply with regulatory standards.

SWPPP training includes:

- Pollution prevention practices
- Proper handling and storage of hazardous materials
- Erosion and sediment control
- Illicit discharge recognition
- Spill response and reporting protocols

This training is essential during spill recovery to prevent secondary contamination.

8. TRAINING RESIDENTS AND WORKERS ON SAFE WASTE CLEANUP PROCEDURES

CSW can train residents and field workers in safe, compliant cleanup practices, including:

- Proper PPE use
- Handling sewage contaminated materials
- Waste segregation and disposal
- Preventing cross contamination
- Clearing storm drains (under agency supervision)
- Stabilizing eroded areas
- Protecting vulnerable residents and pets

This ensures cleanup efforts do not unintentionally worsen contamination.

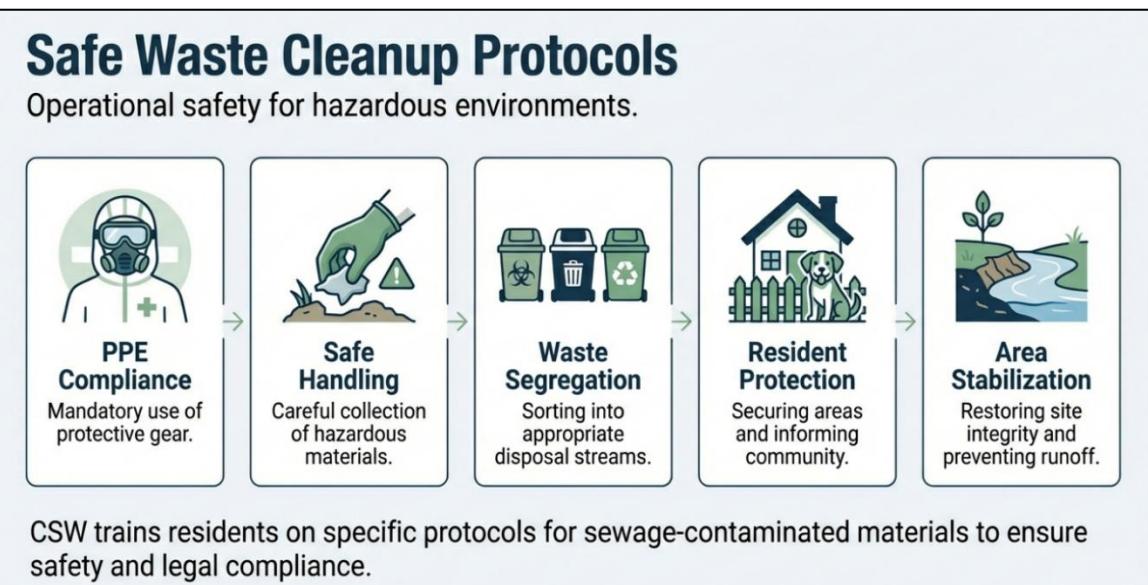


Figure 3: CSW's Safe Waste Cleanup Protocols

9. STRATEGIC VALUE TO DHS, DOEE, AND DC WATER

CSW offers a rare combination of technical expertise and community trust that is essential for a spill event of this magnitude.

- **Turnkey Solution:** A proven certification pipeline with hands-on training.
- **Community Trust:** A communication team with deep community partnerships and engagement networks.
- **Administrative Maturity:** Documented experience delivering SWPPP training and managing compliance.
- **Resiliency Focus:** Experience working with DOEE and community organizations to develop grant submissions addressing local community resiliency networks.

10. CONCLUSION

The Potomac River spill will require a sustained, coordinated response, lasting well beyond the initial containment period. CSW stands ready to support the district through:

- Certified workforce deployment

- Accelerated resident training
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention Education
- Community communication
- Long-term environmental recovery support
- Development of local resilience hubs

The Potomac spill is one of many environmental challenges the district will face. This event underscores the need for an ongoing, sustainable environmental workforce and resilience strategy embedded in the district's long-term infrastructure and community development pathways. -term infrastructure and community development pathways.

