



Testimony of Chris Weiss,  
Director, D.C. Environmental Network

**At the Public Roundtable on PR18-953, the “Director of the District Department of the Environment Christophe A.G. Tulou Confirmation Resolution of 2010”**

July 6, 2010

Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson  
Committee on Government Operations & the Environment

Thank you for holding this public hearing. My name is Chris Weiss and I am the Director of the DC Environmental Network. I am testifying in support of PR18-953, the “Director of the District Department of the Environment Christophe A.G. Tulou Confirmation Resolution of 2010”

Over the last month many of us have had an opportunity to meet with Director Tulou to discuss river restoration and energy issues. On June 24<sup>th</sup> over 30 environmental leaders had an opportunity to meet with Christophe Tulou and get to know him a little better at an informal DC Environmental Network Brown-bag. We all enjoyed spending time talking with the Director about our environmental concerns. What became clear over the course of the discussion was the understanding that Christophe Tulou had the appropriate background, experience, and environmental sensibilities to serve as the Director of the District Department of the Environment (DDOE).

Initial communication with DDOE by the broader environmental community has been good. We are hoping we can set up a slightly more formal process to meet with Director Tulou on a regular basis to discuss our concerns and communicate our priorities.

What I would like to briefly address today are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of a successful tenure for Director Tulou. I strongly believe the success of the District Department of the Environment is not solely dependent on Tulou but on how much of a priority DDOE is to Mayor Fenty.

Many in the environmental community are concerned that recent budget decisions and program priorities by the Mayor have shown an unclear commitment to core environmental programs:

- **BUDGET:** As you know Mayor Fenty's proposed FY2011 budget cut sustainable energy spending in half and all but eliminated one of the most important programs of DDOE, the Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU). Mayor Fenty's proposed budget also raided both the Anacostia and Tree Fund and reduced the local budget of DDOE by the highest percentage of any of the main agencies. Thanks to the Council much of the funds were restored protecting the viability of numerous DDOE programs. These moves by the Mayor to gut this fledgling agency surprised many environmentalists in the District. We continue to be concerned and cannot envision a successful DDOE without adequate funding for its core programs.
- **SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM:** The summer jobs program run by DDOE is one of the largest programs of the agency and taps several of DDOE's top managerial staff for 25-30% of the year. Because of this we have observed over the last few years managerial deficits and other challenges for other critical programs of DDOE. We hope that this program will eventually become a serious green jobs training and placement program and become a model for other agencies and jurisdictions. In the meantime it is important that the summer jobs program be structured in a manner that does not negatively impact all the other important programs at DDOE.

These are just two of numerous potential obstacles that could hinder the success of Director Tulou at DDOE. We believe these obstacles can be overcome with clear support by Mayor Fenty for core environmental programs, like the Sustainable Energy Utility, that not only can help improve the health of District residents but can also result in the jobs of the future.

The DC Environmental Network has been supportive of DDOE and its programs in the past three and a half years and has tried to give the Fenty administration room to grow the fledgling agency. Our focus in the next four years will be to generate the grassroots support and political leverage necessary to finally start making significant progress. To facilitate this progress we also are hoping DDOE can start to develop real benchmarks and performance measures for the agency as a whole. More to come.

Thank you.