

'Literally drowning:' Cherry trees impacted by flooding at Tidal Basin require protection

By Alison Starling *April 8, 2021*



WASHINGTON (7News) — The famed cherry trees in D.C. are slowly fading ending another spectacular bloom. Now, 7News On Your Side is looking into the long-term future of these cherry trees and why experts say they're literally drowning.

7News Anchor Alison Starling spoke to Catherine Townsend from the Trust for the National Mall.

"Thank you for joining us, you are the CEO of the Trust for the National Mall. As we say goodbye to the blossoms at least for this year, what do you want people to know about the status of our beloved cherry trees?" Starling asks.

What happens now is these beautiful trees need to be cared for and maintained for the full year and they need to have some tender loving care," Townsend says. "We are dealing with a current crisis in the Tidal Basin, because of urbanization and sea waters rising and several factors over time, use, the Tidal Basin is compromised and the trees in some parts of the Tidal Basin get flooded twice daily, people don't know that. So these trees are very fragile."

"We have more than 3,000 of these trees along the Tidal Basin and the National Mall and like you said only 12 of the originals from 1912 still exist so is the answer here to replace these trees or should they be moved all together?" Starling asks.

"We are trying to look at what do we need to do to shore up the sections of the Tidal Basin that are flooding twice daily, what do we do with the cherry tree walk? Do we need to widen it do we need to create better systems and structures because when it gets crowded down there as we all know visitors actually stand on the roots so that's damaging those beautiful trees. We want to keep these trees here and we want them to thrive," Townsend says.

Starling asks "For those of us who live here and are so proud of these cherry blossoms every year what can we do to help?"

"You can go to the website nationalmall.org and you can learn about our cherry tree endowment you can learn about our adopt a tree campaign," Townsend replies.

The average life span of the cherry trees is 40 to 50 years, but those 12 originals are over 100 years old now!