

WATERSHED WATCH

ST. MARY'S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
PO Box 94, St. Mary's City, MD 20686

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2
SEPTEMBER 2012

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT—

Dear Friends of the St. Mary's,

I hope this letter finds you all well and enjoying these blessedly cooler mornings, days, and evenings as we put this brutal summer behind us and slowly glide into another glorious Southern Maryland fall.

It's been another very busy spring and summer out on the St. Mary's River. Our hardworking staff has been on and in the river so much that I'm sure that there have been times when Bob Lewis, Allison Rugilla, Paula Riner, Bobby Witkop, and David Wood all have felt that they were growing gills – or perhaps shells....?

Our work to restore the St. Mary's River oyster sanctuary continues unabatedly.

For the first time, this summer we established an oyster hatchery on the banks of the river at St. Mary's College and successfully set over three million oyster spat on shell which will find a permanent home in the river this fall. Marylanders Grow Oysters is well underway again, engaging hundreds of our neighbors as we work together to reach our goal of restoring the St. Mary's River. You just have to know that we can do this!

We've also entered into a partnership with our local and regional Rotary Clubs and the College to construct a three-dimensional oyster reef in Horseshoe Bend. This 5-acre living classroom and "wet"

research center will add to our knowledge and skills in learning how to make the river once again a thriving resource for generations to come.

Fall also means that it's time once again for RiverFest. It's hard to believe that this will be our 8th annual RiverFest - time really flies....

This year RiverFest will be held on Saturday, October 13th from 11 AM -5 PM along the banks of the St. Mary's River at Historic St. Mary's City. As always, admission is free, so bring your family and friends. And also as usual, you'll be able to enjoy great music, food, and friendship as we celebrate the St. Mary's River together.

Senator Bernie Fowler, our first Champion of the Chesapeake, will be with us again to lead us in the last wade-in of the season. I don't think we'll need wet suits, but I'll lay odds that it won't be long before we'll all be wading in over our heads in the river and still be able see our sneakers.

Because of you, RiverFest just keeps getting better every year, so please mark your calendars for October 13. I really hope to see you all there

Thanks, and see you on the river.

Joe Anderson



Joe Anderson

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *RiverFest—SAVE THE DATE! 11 AM to 5 PM, October 13, at Historic St. Mary's City*
- *Money available to upgrade your septic system.*
- *More oyster restoration projects underway.*

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SAVE THE DATE



Saturday, October 13
Historic St. Mary's City
www.SMRWA.org

Cage Refill– Marylanders Grow Oysters

Hats off to the more than two dozen volunteers who showed up on Saturday, September 15, to refill cages with spat on shell and helped distribute to our volunteer oyster caretakers throughout our watershed. Thank you to all the grower volunteers! The river is the main benefactor, and we all get to ride the wave to cleaner waters.

With more than 100 volunteer caretakers, this marks the 4th year of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association's participation in the Marylanders Grow Oysters program, where dock owners act as caretakers for baby oysters during their first year of life. There are now 31 tributaries statewide involved in the Marylanders Grow Oysters program.

Nearly 600 cages have been distributed but there are still a few looking for homes. If you are interested in participating or were not able to pick up your cages, please contact SMRWA.



Volunteer Clint Patrick fills cages with spat-on-shell for distribution to volunteer dock owners.

Raffle

Don't miss your chance to win a brand new Kayak, Paddle, and Fishing Outfit for just \$2 at RiverFest or on our web page www.smrwa.org.



Raffle tickets are available for purchase for \$2 each, 6 for \$10, or 13 for \$20. The drawing will be held at 4 PM at RiverFest on October 13. Need not be present to win.

Pathfinder 100, by Potomac Sport, 10' long, 28" beam, weighs 37 lbs, and holds up to 275 lbs. Hull material is RAM-X. Includes paddle. Equipped with a Eagle Claw lightweight fishing rod and rod holder, donated by Ken Lamb of the **Tackle Box** in Lexington Park.

Reef Balls to Increase Oyster Habitat

Six reef balls have been constructed and are awaiting placement in the river to create an artificial reef and increase hard surface for larval oysters to settle. A reef ball is a structure used for artificial habitat that oysters and other aquatic creatures can use to make their home.

Youth groups are sought to engage in manufacturing the reef balls followed by excursions to the shoreline to learn about oyster culture and witness restoration efforts first hand.

The Reef Ball Foundation provided 40 % off the cost of two reef ball molds, in addition to the **Constellation Energy Group Foundation** award of a \$4,000 EcoStar Grant (Boeing match) to fund a comprehensive youth program restoring oyster habitat in the St. Mary's River.



Allison Rugila, Bob Lewis, and David Wood build a reef ball by adding cement to the orange mold.



News Briefs

Volunteers helped to bag oyster shells on several occasions this summer so our baby oyster have a place to settle in their nursery.

The St. Mary's River Watershed Association staff manned the Oyster Nursery Setting Facility, located at the St. Mary's College of Maryland waterfront, as people docked their boats and made their way in towards the shore during the Governor's Cup celebration on August 4.

Regardless of the blistering heat on June 9, visitors from the area attended Crab Festival at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds. Greeting the crowd with the only living crabs on the premises, the SMRWA demonstration tanks roused attention as they featured Maryland blue crabs, striped blennies, naked gobies, an American eel, and, most, importantly oysters.

The Association also attended the 9th annual Juneteenth celebration at Freedom Park on June 16 where delightful weather and a seemingly larger than normal turnout of St. Mary's County locals were able to witness the filtering ability of oysters.

The SMRWA has secured a variety of **permits** to increase the acreage of oyster habitat in the St. Mary's River. Maryland Department of the Environment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Coast Guard have issued three permits to build a three-dimensional oyster reef on five acres in front of St. Mary's College, under a formal partnership with several Rotary Clubs, Rotary District #7620, and St. Mary's College of Maryland. Plans are underway to begin this five-year reef project in October. Three-dimensional reefs provide more habitat than a flat surface because of the increased surface area. Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) awarded three permits this year. A Shellfish Import Permit allowed SMRWA to purchase oyster shell from Virginia, which was used to strike oysters in the nursery tank and to expand oyster habitat by hardening river bottom. The Shellfish Nursery Permit provided authority to strike oyster larvae in our nursery tank at the College waterfront. A Scientific Collections Permit allows SMRWA to catch-and-release animals for exhibiting at various festivals and events, and to do surveys in the river to assess the success of our restoration programs



Volunteer Reagan Morris takes a break from shell bagging.



LEAD students count oysters prior to release to the sanctuary.



Student intern Bobby Witkop represents SMRWA at Crab Festival.

Oyster Nursery at College Waterfront—three million spat produced

Last August, the beach at St. Mary's College was filled with more than the usual excitement because it was home to the St. Mary's River Watershed Association's new "spat-on-shell" oyster nursery.

The nursery allows SMRWA to grow oysters from larvae to spat-on-shell for planting in the St. Mary's River oyster sanctuary.

The 8 ft round nursery tank holds approximately 175 bags of oyster shells. Each week, oyster larvae were introduced into the tank and grown on oyster shell for four days before being stockpiled in the river. The spat-on-shell will be planted in the St. Mary's

River oyster sanctuary this fall.

The SMRWA enlists the help of local volunteers to assist with loading the tank, bagging the shell, and transporting spat-on-shell to each site.

"It's been a lot of hard work getting the project started, and there's still more to come," says Paula Riner, a student board member and summer intern at SMRWA. "We're doing this to help rehabilitate the St. Mary's River, and ultimately, help save the Bay. It's a small step, but a noticeable one."

Boeing Global Corporate Citizenship provided all of the funding for this exciting project.

Project Steps:

1. Filling bags and cleaning aged oyster shell
2. Loading the Nursery Tank with bags of oyster shell
3. Examining eyed larvae and acclimating them to river water
4. Introducing the larvae to the tank and allow them to settle
5. Relocate spat on shell to St. Mary's River for continued growth
6. Moved to their final destination — the St. Mary's River oyster sanctuary



Volunteers fill bags with shells (Step 1).



Student interns David Wood and Allison Rugila power-wash the shells (Step 1).



Bags of shell are added to the nursery tank (Step 2).

Oysters Find New Home on St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary

Oysters from the 100 piers of our Marylanders Grow Oysters volunteers found their new home in the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary on June 26.

Students participating in the LEAD Teen Leadership Conference at St. Mary's College of Maryland helped empty the 600 cages adding approximately 115,000 new oysters to the river. The students also spent that morning learning about the river by conducting oyster counts, seining, and dissecting oysters.

Approximately 65 students participated in the four-day program which promotes strengthening future skills in communication, planning, working in groups, and leadership.

With funding from Boeing, we plan to continue this partnership in the upcoming years.



LEAD students ready to depart to the oyster sanctuary.

A River Affair

Senator Bernie Fowler was honored at the 2nd annual A River Affair on Sunday, May 20 hosted by SMRWA at Woodlawn Farm overlooking Calvert Creek in Ridge, MD.

Fowler’s life accomplishments in stopping pollution and changing the expectations for the Chesapeake Bay’s clean up were honored. The former state senator and river advocate is well known for wading into rivers across the state to measure water clarity (Wade-Ins), and he arrived at A River Affair wearing his signature white sneakers.

“Senator Fowler is relentless. He is driven by his desire to again witness clean, healthy waters and thriving fishing communities. His legacy will be a healthy Chesapeake Bay for our future generations,” said Joe Anderson, president of the St. Mary’s River Watershed Association.

Join Senator Fowler for the St. Mary’s River Wade-In at RiverFest, Saturday, October 13 at Historic St. Mary’s City at 3 PM.

Many thanks to those who donated auction items, attended the event, and whose hard work made this event a success. We raised more than \$32,000 in proceeds that will be put towards the preservation of the St. Mary’s River through the mitigation of storm water runoff, habitat restoration, and education and outreach programs.



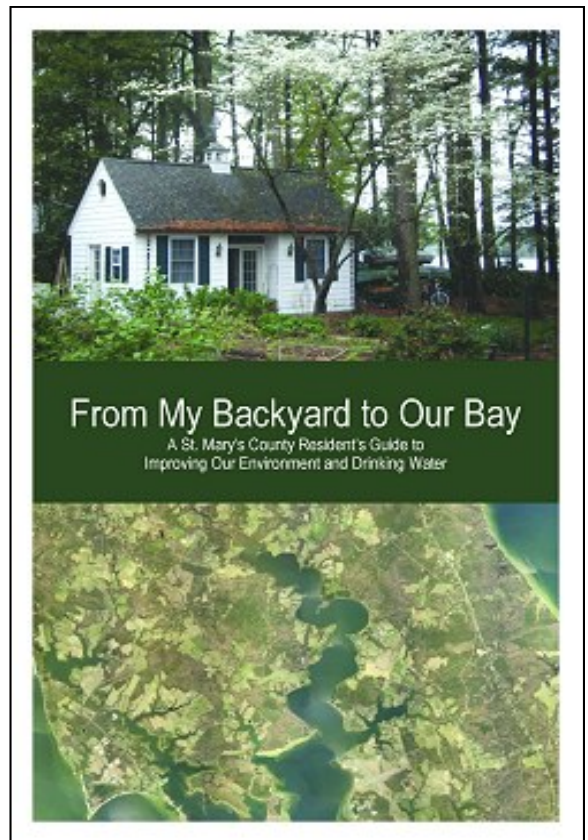
Senator Bernie Fowler speaks passionately after being recognized and honored at A River Affair.



Participants at A River Affair enjoy drinks, food, and good company while being entertained by volunteer auctioneer, Dan Raley.

Learn how you can help protect the Chesapeake Bay and St. Mary’s River by making changes in your own backyard in our free homeowners guide, *From My Backyard to Our Bay.*

Get your copy at RiverFest, Saturday, October 13.



River Friendly Neighborhood Program Underway

We are looking for a second neighborhood (self-defined of at least six homes) to launch a second pilot project in fall-winter 2012 for the new neighborhood rewards program underway.

This program was launched August 1, 2012 via a pilot project in the South Snow Hill Manor neighborhood defined by the 11 homes from Cardinal Pines north to Horseshoe Point.

The River Friendly Neighborhoods Program is a neighborhood-scale certification program that recognizes communities and its homeowners for their commitment to reducing their impact on the St. Mary's River.

Homeowners are allotted points for adopting various environmental friendly practices that help protect the St. Mary's River. Homeowners in a participating neighborhood can fill out the checklist and submit it to a designated neighborhood representative who will, in turn, send it to the St. Mary's River Watershed Association for evaluation. The watershed association will award certification based upon point totals. All those who qualify will receive recognition in the form of a certificate and signage to place in their yard.

This program is funded by a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant. For more information visit www.SMRWA.org.



Examples of River Friendly Practices

- Maryland Baywise Certification
- Keep a compost pile
- Energy Star appliances
- Timely clean out of septic tank
- Pick up pet waste and dispose at landfill
- Grow oysters at your pier
- Use no fertilizers or manage use
- Use no pesticides or integrated pest management
- Canopy cover above impervious surfaces
- Aerate the lawn
- Test soil every 3 to 5 years
- Install rain barrels and rain gardens
- Use a cistern and harvest rain water
- Upgrade to a nitrogen reducing septic system
- Porous pavers/pervious driveway
- Living shoreline
- Innovative storm water control

Septic Upgrades

In partnership with St. Mary's County Health Department, SMRWA has launched an effort to get waterfront property owners to upgrade their septic systems to new, nitrogen-reducing or "BAT" systems.

Excess nitrogen and phosphorus are the leading cause of low oxygen (hypoxia) in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, such as the St. Mary's. The new technology in these septic systems will reduce the amount of nitrogen entering the Bay and its tributaries.

The best part—you may be able to upgrade your septic system at NO COST with the help of funding from the Bay Restoration Fund Grant Program.

If you are even the slightest bit interested in an upgrade, please contact SMRWA by email or by phone during office hours at 301-737-2903, and we can provide further information on the grant program, and the benefits of an upgraded, nitrogen-reducing system. Act now, the money will likely run out next spring.



Donate
Online!

www.SMRWA.org

Working with Developers to Promote Low Impact Development

The watershed association continues its efforts working with developers to improve the health of our watershed. We have begun a project with two local developers, Marrick Homes and Stanley Martin Homes, to promote the adoption of low impact development ,or LID practices, to prospective homebuyers.

Funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant, LID practices will be integrated into two model homes in the hope that homebuyers will incorporate these practices into their own properties. These practices include building rain gardens and even picking up after your pet.

The ultimate goal of the project is for homebuyers to realize they have a responsibility to our waterways and an obligation to protect our watershed.

Additional grant money from the Chesapeake Bay Trust will be used to determine the benefits and barriers to adopting these LID practices through surveys and interviews to measure perceptions and receptiveness of homebuyers.

In order to do this, we have enlisted the help of two social psychologists who specialize in surveying attitudes and behaviors, behavior change, and marketing these new behaviors.

St. Mary's County's primary development district is centered in the St. Mary's River watershed and is projected to add 17,290 additional residents in the next 10 to 15 years due to employment growth from base realignment. With this amount of growth, it is imperative that we use low impact development practices in order to protect our river.



Rain garden installed by SMRWA at model home in Wildewood.

I would like to become a member of the SMRWA

Annual Membership Options	Price
<input type="checkbox"/> Guardian	\$1,003.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Steward	\$303.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$103.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Limited Income	\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate <i>suggested</i>	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	_____

Total: _____

I prefer an electronic newsletter.

Please make checks payable to:
St. Mary's River Watershed
Association and mail this form
along with your check to:

SMRWA
PO Box 94
St. Mary's City, MD 20686

Name

Address

Email Address

Phone



OUR MISSION

To protect, improve, and promote the well-being of the St. Mary's River Watershed through the collaborative efforts of economic, agricultural, environmental, social, cultural, and political stakeholders in the community.



Saturday, October 13th

11AM to 5 PM

at Historic St. Mary's City

Noon - Indian Summer

1:00 - Magpie

2:00 - Charter School Chorus

3:00 - Wade-In with Bernie Fowler

3:00 - Joseph Norris

4:00 - Don Kenefick

Noon to 4:00 - Waterfront Activities including:

Sailing, Kayaking, Seining, & Tonging

Food & Drinks Available

