

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release—November 4, 2014

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## St. Mary's environmental group wins another federal grant – seeks homeowners to install rain gardens

NOVEMBER 4, 2014—St. Mary's River is one of more than thirty waterways in the region that will benefit in the current round of grants under the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund. Administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the \$34,840 Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant will provide funding for installation of more than a dozen small storm water mitigation projects, such as rain gardens, that will move St. Mary's county forward in meeting the goals of the local watershed implementation plan (WIP).

The two-year grant project seeks small resident groups or neighbors who desire to reduce their impact on the Bay by installing rain gardens or similar practices. Grant funds can reduce homeowner expense by as much as 50% of the total cost to design and install each practice. Ideal candidates will be approximately ten contiguous single family homes where a majority of the homeowners wish to participate in this cost-sharing program. Streets, cul-de-sacs, or sections of major subdivisions are eligible. Participating neighborhoods are evaluated and awarded River Friendly status once they reach a certain level of stewardship.



Other key partners in the project, that are not named in the grant proposal, will be St. Mary's County government departments and agencies, St. Mary's County public schools, Master Gardeners, and St. Mary's College of Maryland.

"We are excited to be a recipient of this award," said SMRWA president Joe Anderson. "St. Mary's River is one of the most important rivers in Maryland's history and for centuries this river has provided a living for our watermen. Unfortunately, the river no longer supports thriving fisheries. Our watermen have to travel farther or seek alternatives to fishing in order to make ends meet."

St. Mary's River is contained entirely within St. Mary's County. Local experts say that it is an embarrassment that we have idly stood by and allowed the river to become so degraded.

"Shame on us for not taking care of this beautiful river," said Bob Lewis, director of the River Friendly program. "Most of our pollution comes from run off from roads, parking lots, buildings, agriculture, and lawns. Every one of us contributes to the rivers decline. We all have to step up. What happens on the land ends up in our river."

Interested homeowners should contact Lewis at 301-737-2903. Visit [www.SMRWA.org](http://www.SMRWA.org) for more information.

"Through the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund, NFWF and our partners continue to invest in efforts across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to accelerate the achievement of ambitious state and local water quality improvement goals and strengthen local communities in the region," said David O'Neill, Vice President for Conservation Programs at NFWF.

From 1999 to 2014, the Stewardship Fund awarded over 872 grants totaling roughly \$103 million. These investments leveraged more than \$202 million in grantee matching funds to support a wide range of conservation projects throughout the Bay basin. In total, these grants have restored over 6,194 acres of wetlands and 1,475 miles of forested riparian buffers, installed over 252 miles of livestock exclusion stream fencing, re-connected over 148 miles of rivers and streams for fish passage, established 142 acres of oyster reefs, and preserved 519,000 acres of forest and farmland.

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**Caption:** Rain garden installed spring 2013 collects rain runoff after a strong thunderstorm, keeping the polluted water from directly entering our waterways.