



2017 Year in Review & Action Plan 2018



Our Mission: To **Protect, Improve,** and **Promote** the sustainability of the St. Mary's River Watershed through the collaborative efforts of economic, agricultural, environmental, social, cultural, and political stakeholders in the community.

Our 2017 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to maintain our programming, credibility, and effectiveness in 2017. We stood firm in our belief that healthy waterways and a clean environment are essential to a high quality of life today and a fundamental right of future generations. Our successes are your successes because it is you who provide the moral and financial support that make this all possible. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Outreach and Education

- ⇒ Our outreach to youth from the Chesapeake Public Charter School, Capital City Public Charter School, GMHS STEM Academy, Tech Center's Natural Resource Class, and Ridge Elementary School provided hands-on opportunities to diverse communities.
- ⇒ Outreach festivals and events like Juneteenth, Crab Festival, Oyster Festival, RiverFest, and STEM Expo attracted new volunteers, informed the public of our work, and engaged people in discussions on sustainability.
- ⇒ Earth science students at Fairlead Academy I partnered with us to design and build a rain garden in front of the school. (front cover photo)
- ⇒ Staff members Meghan Webster & Bob Lewis installed rain gardens as capstone projects and graduated from the St. Mary's County Watershed Steward's Academy.



Three Dimensional Oyster Reef

- ⇒ The five-acre Oyster Reef Project is a partnership project of the Leonardtown Rotary Club, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and St. Mary's River Watershed Association.
- ⇒ Four more reef mounds were installed—one made with rocks and three with reef balls. To date, we have 42 reef mounds and our project is thriving with diverse lifeforms.
- ⇒ Our oyster nursery produced five million spat which we planted on our reef site.





Future Bay Leaders - Summer Interns

- ⇒ We recruited one high school student and five college students: one STEM intern and one graduate from the Tech Center.
- ⇒ Each intern learned skills applicable to life situations as well as gained experience in a field directed toward their future professions. Each gained knowledge on how to be a successful advocate for the Bay.



Monitoring Oysters and Water Quality

- ⇒ Underwater observation and photography provided data to evaluate natural recruitment vs. plantings, survival, and growth on our reef restoration site. 2017 was another above-average year for wild spat recruitment.
- ⇒ St. Mary's College students Meg Gitter and Emma Green surveyed and recorded data on the oyster bio mass of each reef. Funded through a partnership with the College.



River Friendly Neighborhoods

- ⇒ Dedicated volunteers, professionals, and our interns worked together to install drains to reroute erosion-causing runoff into a wooded area. Native plants and organic soil components provide filtration of storm water runoff before it reaches our streams.



Advocacy for Oyster Restoration

- ⇒ Members and staff attended monthly meeting of the Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission to advocate for the St. Mary's River to be designated as a federal partnership restoration project.
- ⇒ We recruited our county commissioners in the call for the St. Mary's and Breton Bay to become restoration projects.
- ⇒ Partnership rivers undergo large-scale oyster restoration on at least 30% of restorable river bottom.
- ⇒ We entered into a formal partnership with the newly formed Friends of St. Clement's Bay.

Top Challenges for 2018

Protecting the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary

- ⇒ 2018 will be a pivotal year as we develop public support for and continue to advocate for permanent protection of our oyster sanctuary through designation as a federal partnership oyster restoration tributary.

Sharing Our St. Mary's River

- ⇒ Our education and outreach programs are integral to our mission and provide a greater understanding of our dependence on clean and healthy waterways.
- ⇒ Field trips for youths provide opportunities to develop interest in and concern for our natural resources. And they are fun!

Future Bay Leaders

- ⇒ Our paid student summer internship program continues to prepare and encourage youths to pursue collegiate studies in environmental sustainability and resource management.

WIP Implementation

- ⇒ We will maintain a strong relationship with county officials who will be key in getting funding to support restoration and retrofit projects throughout the county.

Oyster Restoration & MGO

- ⇒ Our MGO program grew this past fall and we will continue to support more than 160 volunteers hosting oyster cages at more than 100 piers along the St. Mary's River.
- ⇒ We will continue to support college and high school experiments and long-term monitoring of our oyster restoration projects.

River Friendly Homes & Schools

- ⇒ We will be recruiting schools to learn about, install, and maintain rain gardens.
- ⇒ We will continue to engage homeowners installing rain gardens and greening their lifestyles.

Expanding Our Reach

- ⇒ We will continue to build effective partnerships to fund and implement oyster restoration in Breton Bay.

Thank you for your support and dedication as a member of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.

COVER PHOTO: Fairlead Academy I students from the earth science classes proudly pose in the rain garden they designed and built in front of their school on Great Mills Road.

