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# WATERSHED WATCH

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

July 4, 2018

## Celebrate Independence Day!

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### Impact of Low Salinity

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>>Bagging Shell and  
Planting Oysters



With the recent heavy rain events we've experienced in the region, salinity in the St. Mary's River has hovered around 6-7 ppt (parts per thousand) from mid-May through June. Low salinity reduces oyster larvae survival and spat strike, which is most successful with a minimum salinity of 9 ppt or higher. This low salinity does, however, bode well for the health of oysters already past their larval state. Low salinity suppresses the two most common diseases, Dermo and MSX, which have been ravaging oyster populations for fifty years. Low salinity also reduces presence of jellyfish.

Crabs, too, will avoid the fresher water and may migrate northward of St. Mary's River while salinity is low in our area and the Potomac River. This may mean fewer crabs in our area for the time being. As always, a mix of positive and negative



consequences of change serves as a reminder of the importance of balance in the St. Mary's River ecosystem. Good news is that the salinity is going up daily as rainfall has been minimal for over a week. This morning salinity was 8.5 and our oyster nursery is up and running. On Friday morning around 11 am, we will introduce 2.5 million larvae.



## Volunteer Weekend

June 16—Fifteen hardworking eager volunteers, including students from the Natural Resources Management Program at the James A. Forrest Tech Center, gathered for a couple hours Saturday morning



bagging 200 bushels of oyster shells on June 16th. The bags of shell were placed into our nursery tank (photo above) and will be struck with spat this coming weekend. The resulting spat-on-shell will be loaded into 700 cages on August 24 for distributions to more than 100 volunteers who will steward them through their first vulnerable year of life.

June 17—Volunteers from GMHS STEM Academy and the Forrest Center gathered again the following day, Father's Day, planting over 395,000 oysters at our restoration site in the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary. The oysters were reared in 643 cages placed at over 100 docks around St. Mary's River as part of last year's Marylanders Grow Oysters program. We emptied the cages into the river, and stored the cages in preparation for the next round of distribution.



Oysters reared in a protected environment for 10 to 12 months have increased survival rates. Over the last seven years, our MGO plantings resulted in an average 95% survival—a huge success for the health of our river. As always, we invite new volunteers to join

the MGO program in August and throughout next season. Every dock and every cage counts! If you are interested, please give us a call (301-904-2387) or drop an email ([info@stmarysriver.org](mailto:info@stmarysriver.org)). Also, check out our Facebook page for more photos from the day, and for info on future volunteering opportunities!



### 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.

We're on the web!

[www.smrwa.org](http://www.smrwa.org)



[Join or Renew Today!](#)

### Upcoming Events:

- MGO Cage Building - Need Volunteers  
Tentative - Friday July 13  
Tentative - Saturday July 14  
8:30 to 11:30 am  
Please [RSVP](#)  
For details (email or text 301-904-2387)
- [Governor's Cup](#)  
August 3-5  
We exhibit 11:00 to 5:00  
on Saturday  
SMCM waterfront
- MGO Cage Fill & Distribution  
Friday, August 24  
SMCM waterfront

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