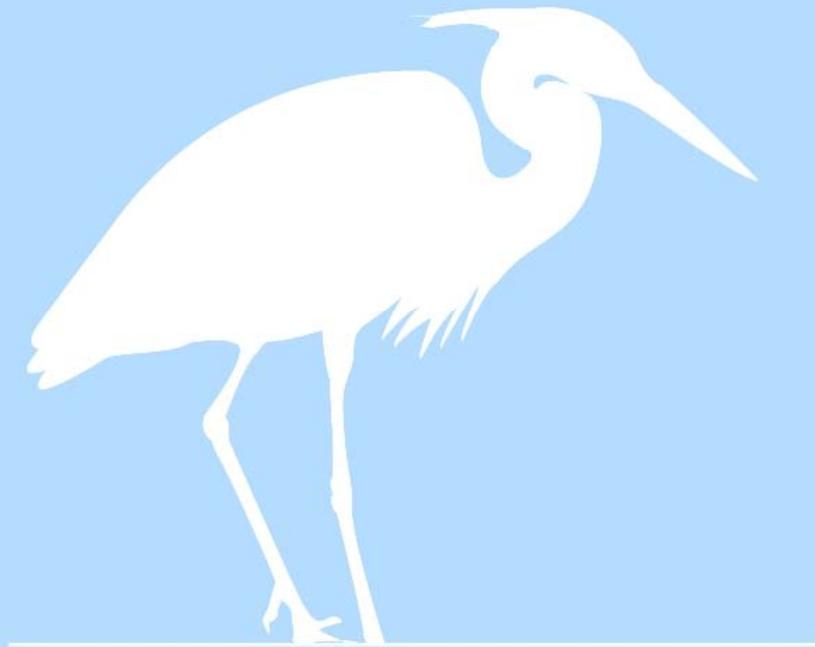


Strategic Plan

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

For the Five-Year Period from 2012 to 2016



*Promoting the Protection and Improvement
of the Communities and the Natural Resources
within the St. Mary's River Watershed*

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Strategic Plan 2012-2016

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

*A Plan to Protect and Improve the Communities
and the Natural Resources of the St. Mary's River Watershed*

Committee Members:

Joseph Anderson, chair
Patricia Samford

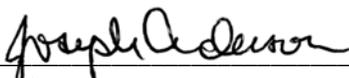
John Giusti
Suellen Keiner

Adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee March 31, 2012
Date


Signature

Joseph F. Anderson III, Chairperson

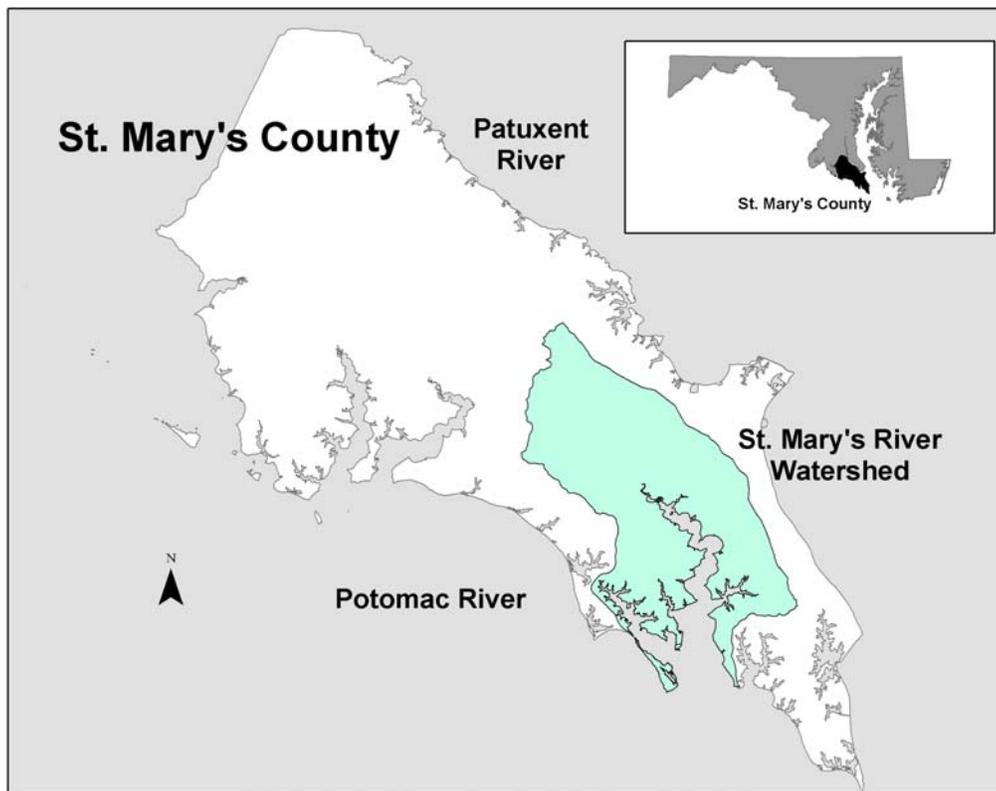
Adopted by the Board of Directors April 5, 2012
Date


Signature

Joseph F. Anderson III, President

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2016

In late 2006, the Board of Directors of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) adopted its first strategic plan for the five-year period 2006 to 2010. That plan was prepared during a careful process guided by several experienced consultants. This first plan included adoption of a mission statement, strategic priorities, and an action plan to implement those priorities, along with objectives and milestones for each priority and an analysis of the Association's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Having used this first strategic plan to guide SMRWA's activities and to think more strategically over the past five years, the Board then appointed a new Strategic Planning Committee to prepare the second plan for the next five-year period. This second plan will also coincide with the period covered by the new Comprehensive Plan for St. Mary's County, which is especially important for the Association to meet its own goals because the watershed of the St. Mary's River lies entirely within the County.

During its deliberations, the Committee has reviewed the first plan with the goal of refining and adjusting its priorities, objectives and milestones so SMRWA will be well positioned to address the Watershed's most urgent needs, build on its past successes and accomplish its updated objectives. Once this second plan is adopted by the Board, the committee and the Board intend to review it periodically during the next five years and to continue to assess the evolution of the Association. In that way, the Board hopes to ensure progress toward achieving our mission and increasing our ability to address our priorities.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

While the mission of SMRWA reflects the understanding that our work may never reach our ultimate goal of total sustainability within the entire watershed, there are certain milestones that need to be targeted and acknowledged. Shellfish harvest designations as a result of bacteria pollution should provide the most immediate indicator of progress. In 2011, both conditional waters and restricted waters in the St. Mary's River declined in acreage. Further reduction of these areas would indicate significant progress and an interim milestone. Elimination of any shellfish harvest conditions or restrictions would indicate a major milestone. Another rating commonly used as an indicator of waterway health is "fishable and swimmable." This milestone coincides with the elimination of shellfish harvest restrictions since shellfish are the most impacted by bacteria-laden waters. The ultimate milestone is achieving sufficient waterway health to successfully petition the state and EPA for removal from the impaired waters list, as sanctioned under the Clean Water Act section 303 (d). Inevitably there remains a threat that the waterways' health will erode due to new and well as currently recognized pressures and threats. Therefore our work is ongoing for the foreseeable future.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Promote sustainable practices within the watershed by all the affected stakeholders in order to achieve a vibrant and healthy river system.

- Promote implementation of Watershed Action Strategy
- Influence public policy
- Affect behavior
- Strengthen connections, expand relationships, and form alliances
- Maintain a resources toolbox

Strengthen the St. Mary's River Watershed Association's organizational capacity to protect the sustainability of the Watershed and thus achieve its mission.

- Refine best business practices
- Expand and retain membership
- Enhance fundraising programs
- Refine and add new relationships with foundation and corporate grantees

BACKGROUND

The Watershed for the St. Mary's River encompasses 47,000 acres of land and waterways, which lie entirely within St. Mary's County. Much of the watershed is covered by the Lexington Park development district, one of the three major planned high density growth areas in southern Maryland. As a result, development pressures are a significant concern because the River's tributaries and lands within its watershed are subject to increasingly negative impacts and degradation of environmental quality.

Because St. Mary's County is host to the entire watershed of the River and no other jurisdiction has a role in its care, the government officials, residents and businesses in the County must take responsibility for the future sustainability and protection of the River and its watershed.

St. Mary's County is the fastest growing jurisdiction in Maryland and is expected to add 18,100 new residents by 2020. Currently (2012) the county's population is 112,000 and about one third reside within the St. Mary's River watershed. Under county policy regarding residential growth, 70% of new homes will be built in the St. Mary's River watershed, We can anticipate 8,700 new homes by 2016—an increase of 24% in just five years.

AN ACTION PLAN WITH OBJECTIVES AND MILESTONES

Promote sustainable practices within the watershed by all the affected stakeholders in order to achieve a vibrant and healthy river system.

At the core of the SMRWA's identity is its commitment to protect, improve, and promote the sustainability of all the communities and natural resources within the entire watershed for the St. Mary's River. As our mission states, we achieve this goal through the collaborative efforts of the River's many stakeholders. We believe that we can only achieve this important goal through a balanced, whole-systems approach that will promote the watershed's well-being by incorporating the many economic, academic, environmental, agricultural, historical, social, cultural, and political assets of the region.

As a result, the sustainability of the watershed is the highest priority for our strategic plan. The following four critical tactics were adopted in the first plan, and they will continue to be the SMRWA's most important activities for achieving our core mission during the next five years. They will also be crucial for determining our effectiveness in communicating our goals and gaining increased support from prospective members, government officials, and the public in general.

§ **Promote implementation of Watershed Action Strategy & Implementation Plan**

The restoration program for the Chesapeake Bay is undergoing a makeover dictated by the Court in *Chesapeake Bay Foundation et al vs. US EPA* [June 2009], which found that the EPA had failed to enforce the Clean Water Act and needed to make significant changes in how to achieve compliance in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. The critical language in this case is "assure that management plans are *developed and implementation is begun*" by 2025. The subsequent action taken by the EPA was to assign a pollution diet, known as the TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load), to each state and watershed basin. It is the states' and local governments' requirement to develop, submit, and gain approval for action strategies, called WIPs (Watershed Implementation Plans), that are *likely* to achieve compliance with the Clean Water Act. Collectively, the localities, states, and federal agencies must implement the WIPs and achieve predetermined two-year milestones. To avoid a situation where responsibilities are shifted to the backend, 2025, EPA had mandated that each jurisdiction achieve a 70% compliance to the TMDL by 2017.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Actively participate in the EPA-mandated WIP process for St. Mary's County with special emphasis on the St. Mary's River watershed.
 - 2011-2016 SMRWA representation on the county WIP committee actively participates and provides necessary background and science, collaboration of identity and problem solving, and partnership to launch implementation.
 - Local, state, and federal adoption of plan
2. Complete the Characterization document and Watershed Restoration Action Strategy – EPA "a through i" watershed plan
 - Local, state, and federal adoption of plan

Critical Input Milestones

1. 2012 - Public process for Characterization draft and EPA "a through i" plans
2. 2013 - Finalize documents and submit to EPA and state for approval
3. 2015 - Implementation rate meets or exceeds two-year milestones (and 2017)

§ **Influence Public Policy**

SMRWA recognizes it must continue to play an essential role by influencing public policies with potential impacts on the watershed through effective interaction and collaboration with government. During the next five years, improvement in the government's approach to land use, management and development—as well as habitat restoration—will continue to need SMRWA's advocacy for new and better use of science to craft regulations, on-going and effective oversight and compliance enforcement, use of substantial penalties for noncompliance, effective requirements to redress and mitigate environmental damage and, in general, the will to make the watershed more sustainable.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. **Maintain and augment the respect** for SMRWA by county, state, and federal agencies and staff, and from our St. Mary's County Commissioners and our representatives at the state and federal governments.
 - 2012-2016 focus attention on the reliability and credibility of information that SMRWA submits by providing informed, visionary alternatives based on sound science.
 - 2012-2016 continue to request a position at the table during policy-making sessions of local officials; 2012 increase from one to two members of the Board serving on government advisory boards; 2012-2016 foster a relationship whereby government staff actively seek SMRWA's input on a routine basis for policy development and decision making.
2. **Continue to develop our ongoing formal relationships** with county, state, and federal agencies and staff through the effective assessment of local public policy making, always looking for opportunities to turn negatives into positives.
 - Increase the number of informal interactions with government through constructive analytical and advocacy-oriented papers and meetings. 2012-2016 maintain a program for quarterly interactions with government.
 - Deliver a State of the St. Mary's River Watershed address to the county commissioners and appropriate staff in a televised session. 2012-2016 continue issuing an annual report on conditions in the watershed, including metrics and milestones on land use, water quality, and progress achieving our vision; 2012-2016 start to issue a mid-year "update" reporting our specific concerns and latest scientific findings about conditions in the watershed.
 - 2012-2016 continue to take advantage as opportunities arise to formally address policies and regulations (such as policy revisions and zoning amendments) through one-on-one meetings with county and state staff, participation in public meetings, letter writing and submitting written testimony based on sound science and accurate data about conditions in the watershed.
3. **Seek Scenic River status** for the St. Mary's River in collaboration with Historic St. Mary's City and St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Critical Input Milestones

1. One member of the Board or staff serving on the county WIP committee.
2. Increase from one to two members of the Board serving on government advisory boards.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: 07/2013
3. Increase the number of informal interactions with government from two times per year to a minimum of three times per year.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: 12/2012
4. Deliver a State of the St. Mary's River Watershed address every two years.
Beginning: 09/2012 Completion: Every two years
5. Deliver a midyear "update" report.
Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: 01/2010
6. Provide formal response to policies and regulations at all relevant formal public sessions.
Beginning: 06/2006 Completion: Ongoing
7. Research , draft application, and advocate for Scenic River status for the St. Mary's River.
Beginning: 06/2014 Completion: 12/2016
8. Publish an annual report.

5. Identify one school and/or group each year that will broaden our whole systems approach and develop a working relationship with that group.
Beginning: 01/2013 Completion: 12/2016 (adding three total)
6. Identify specific points of contact and include area civic groups, business partnerships, and faith based institutions on the mailing list.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Ongoing
7. Develop one alliance with faith based institutions each year.
Beginning: 01/2013 Completion: Annual

§ Maintain a Resources Toolbox

SMRWA has succeeded in making a concerted effort to provide developers, businesspersons, homeowners, and renters with alternative behavior opportunities, which foster conservation and sustainable living principles and actions. Printed materials as well as a resource section on SMWRA's web site have been a valuable way to reach our members, other supporters and the public and has made our information and resources more accessible and relevant for local issues and individual interests.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Provide homeowners and renters with essential information about their watershed and necessary conservation techniques necessary to insure the continued health of the river system.
 - Continue to distribute the 40-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation.
 - In 2012-2016, continue expanding the resource section of our web site with a section specific to residential needs and another to foster sustainable neighborhoods through a rewards program.
2. Pursue ongoing scientific analysis of native oyster restoration.
 - Spring of 2012 through 2016, accumulate scientific knowledge on oyster restoration techniques and feasibility of implementation of restoration projects.
 - In 2012-13, editing existing footage in order to make a documentary of the Marylanders Grow Oysters in the St. Mary's River.
 - Gain knowledge of aquaculture and partner with watermen in order to establish successful operations.
3. Collaborate with the land development industry by providing them with essential information about the watershed and necessary planning and implementation techniques that foster sustainable development principles.
 - Actively provide land developers with watershed plans to include information on how to apply the methods cited to other subwatersheds, updated metrics on water quality and trends, and new research and development in storm water control management.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Continue to distribute 40-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: 12/2016
2. Add to the web site a section specific to backyard conservation tools.
Beginning: 09/2013 Completion: 09/2014
3. Report on and promote on the oyster restoration program.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Ongoing
4. Edit and publish the film documentary of the Marylanders Grow Oysters in the St. Mary's River.
Beginning: 06/2012 Completion: 12/2013
5. Publish a short film of a sustainable development project and/or neighborhood rewards program.
Beginning: unknown timeline—could as early as fall of 2014

Strengthen the St. Mary's River Watershed Association's organizational capacity to protect the sustainability of the watershed and thus achieve its mission.

SMRWA is committed to meeting the challenge of making the watershed more sustainable by working to meet our own long-term needs for staffing, equipment, technology, and financial resource that will enable the Association to sustain its mission.

Under its first strategic plan, SMRWA has been able to establish proven business practices and has responded effectively to a variety of needs both planned and unforeseen although it might have been able to do more if its resources had been greater. During the next five years, individual donations, including membership dues, and corporate donations will continue to serve as the core source of the financial support, but a successful fundraising campaign targeting foundations and corporate grants will still be needed to provide increased stability for the Association's overall budgetary needs.

§ Refine Best Business Practices

Adoption of recognized best business practices has enhanced SMRWA's structural and functional capacity and will continue to do so for the next five years. The use of time-tested techniques for the organizational structure, personnel management, financial solvency, and infrastructure development of non-profit entities have been, and will continue to be, fundamental to the Association's success.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Design and implement fundamental organizational policies and plans that will complement and augment SMRWA's Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Mission Statement.
 - In early 2012, adopt a strategic plan update with requirements for periodic reviews and rewrites.
 - In early 2013, review SMRWA's hierarchical structure, standing committee structure, and assignment of responsibilities. Incorporate changes to these structures and hierarchy into the objectives and assessment metrics of the strategic plan.
 - In early 2013, revise the fundraising plan so that it clearly meets the needs of the annual budget. Identify opportunities to apply for funds two and three years in advance.
2. Expand the knowledge base and resources of the Board of Directors and staff through training and recruitment.
 - Starting in 2012, recruit at least one Board member each year with the expansion of knowledge and resources as the main objective. Areas of weakness identified include fundraising skills, connectivity to key groups such as the land development industry, and ethnic diversity.
 - In 2012, identify appropriate Board members and provide support for training in areas where the Board has weaknesses.
 - Urge Board members and staff members to attend regional and national watershed association conventions in order to maximize networking opportunities and take advantage of unique training seminars.
3. Expand the staff positions with titles and job descriptions, and increase staffing commitments.
 - By the middle of 2012, re-institute an Program Director position and increase weekly commitment to half time.
 - In order to allow the Executive Director to spend more time in the field and on fundraising obligations, in 2012 add a second part-time staff position, to assist with clerical duties and event planning.
 - Institute a policy to reimburse valued staff for 80% of cost for individual health insurance, or a percentage commensurate with their level of commitment. (i.e. half time worker might receive 50% of cost)
4. Seek complimentary or reduced-fee office space within the watershed and set up a SMRWA's permanent headquarters.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Adopt a revised strategic plan with requirements for periodic reviews and rewrites.
Beginning: 04/2012 Completion: 06/2012
2. Annually review and modify as necessary the strategic plan.
Beginning: 2013 Completion: Annually
3. Undertake a comprehensive review and rewrite of the five-year strategic plan.
Beginning: 02/2016 Completion: 10/2016
4. Review, revise, and implement a hierarchical structure, standing committee structure, and assignment of responsibilities. Design a flow chart to depict hierarchy and areas of responsibility.
Beginning: 02/2014 Completion: 06/2014
5. Revise and implement a detailed fundraising plan.
Beginning: 10/2012 Completion: 04/2013
6. Recruit at least one new Board member annually.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Annually
7. Provide for training and certification in a relevant area of at least one Board member annually.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Annually
8. Send at least four staff and/or Board members to at least one watershed association convention.
Beginning: 09/2012 Completion: Annually
9. Institute an Program Director position.
Beginning: 05/2012 Completion: Ongoing
10. Increase Executive Director's hourly commitment from 20 hours per week to at least 32 hours per week.
Beginning: 01/2013 Completion: Ongoing
11. Add a second staff member with ability to handle clerical duties and special event planning.
Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: Ongoing
12. Institute health insurance policy.
Beginning 06/2012 Completion: Ongoing

§ Expand and Retain Membership

During the next five years, SMRWA's membership dues will continue to offer the most stable source for the Association's unrestricted finances, so prudent use and expansion of potential members will be essential. Similarly, retaining current members is very important because it is more cost effective than recruiting new members; and these members will continue to provide the best sources for recruiting volunteers.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Increase total membership by at least twenty-five regular and four corporate members annually with the goal of 565 regular memberships and 70 corporate members—in good standing—by the end of 2016.
 - Continue to solicit memberships person to person at events and meetings reaching outside the watershed when deemed appropriate.
 - Seek new opportunities to set up organizational displays with brochures and membership information.
 - Every two years conduct a targeted social media campaign in order to reach at least 1000 new potential members.
 - Present at forums and community group gatherings; invite participants to join SMRWA.
 - Expand opportunities for volunteer implementation projects and recruitment.
2. Retain members through effective organizational operations, meaningful commitment to the mission, informative communications with members and the public, and genuine recognition of the importance of our members.
 - Upon non-renewal at second attempt, send a renewal form with a checklist for the expired member to check off why they are not renewing. Include a convincing letter offering an incentive to renew.
3. Refine and implement a plan to solicit donations from members several times each year.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Increase total membership from 440 regular and 50 corporate to 465 regular and 54 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: 12/2012
2. Increase total membership to 490 regular and 58 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2013 Completion: 12/2013
3. Increase total membership to 515 regular and 62 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2014 Completion: 12/2014
4. Increase total membership to 540 regular and 66 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2015 Completion: 12/2015
5. Increase total membership to 565 regular and 70 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2016 Completion: 12/2016
6. Table and solicit memberships at events and meetings.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Ongoing
7. Utilize the tabletop display at least two times per year at varying venues such as museums, libraries, and retail outlets.
Beginning: 11/2012 Completion: Annual
8. Solicit memberships through a targeted direct mail campaign to reach out to no less than 1000 new addresses every two years.
Beginning: 02/2013 Completion: Ongoing
9. Continually seek opportunities to present at forums and community group gatherings; motivate Board members to attend; and schedule at least two each year.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Annually
10. Coordinate and execute an effective process for successful membership retention, meeting a goal of 90% renewal each year.
Beginning: 09/2013 Completion: Annually
11. Solicit additional donations from members according to fundraising plan.
Beginning: 01/2012 Completion: Ongoing

§ Enhance fundraising programs

Current programming for fundraisers provides substantial revenues for general operations, but still does not meet the needs of future organizational expansion. RiverFest is a wonderful success in programming and outreach but does not achieve anywhere near its potential. Further refinement of sponsorship solicitation and more involvement by the Board is essential. The spring River Affair was a huge success in its first two years, 2011 & 2012, and shall become an annual fundraiser event. Still its potential has not yet been achieved. A third annual fundraiser could fulfill addition revenue needs and should be a part of a revised Fundraising Plan.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Increase the revenue from RiverFest sponsors to \$23,500 each year.
2. Increase the net revenues from the River Affair to \$33,500 each year.
3. Add a third annual fundraiser.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Increase revenues from RiverFest sponsors by \$2,500 each year. (from \$11,000 in 2011)
Beginning: 2012 Goal: \$13,500
Beginning: 2013 Goal: \$16,000
Beginning: 2014 Goal: \$18,500
Beginning: 2015 Goal: \$21,000
Beginning: 2016 Goal: \$23,500
2. Increase net revenues from River Affair by \$3,500 each year. (from \$16,000 in 2011)
Beginning: 2012 Goal: \$19,500
Beginning: 2013 Goal: \$23,000
Beginning: 2014 Goal: \$26,500
Beginning: 2015 Goal: \$30,000
Beginning: 2016 Goal: \$33,500

