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Contact: Bob Lewis 301-904-2387

SMRWA Submits Proposal for St. Mary's Restoration and Oyster Fishery Management

St. Mary's City, Nov 9—The St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) submitted their plan today for the protection and restoration of the St. Mary's River oyster sanctuary and an oyster fishery management plan for the public harvest areas.

In summary, the plan calls for the protection of the entire sanctuary area as well as designation as one of five tributary sanctuaries to be restored under the Bay's clean-up plan using federal monies. Such a designation would bring a massive restoration project into the St. Mary's in an effort to add an additional 150 or more acres of productive oyster bars within the sanctuary. Once completed, the restored areas would remain off limits indefinitely—the sanctuary would no longer be threatened by public harvest.



Investments in the health of the St. Mary's River spans two decades and includes \$3 million in federal dollars to develop ten years of water quality data under the St. Mary's River Project (a St. Mary's College of Maryland project). Since 2009, local efforts have restored oysters in seven locations within the sanctuary including the five-acre reef project (photo above) costing local, state, and corporate funders about \$254,000. These projects have been very successful. Opening the sanctuary to harvest, as the watermen hope will happen, would throw away all these prior investments and return the St. Mary's to meager harvest and poorer water quality.

To read the plan, visit:

http://smrwa.org/pdfdocs/MANAGEMENT_PLAN_FOR_ST_MARYS_RIVER.pdf

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Photo caption: Underwater image of the oyster reef restoration project in the St. Mary's River oyster sanctuary—a partnership project with St. Mary's College of Maryland, Leonardtown Rotary, and the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.