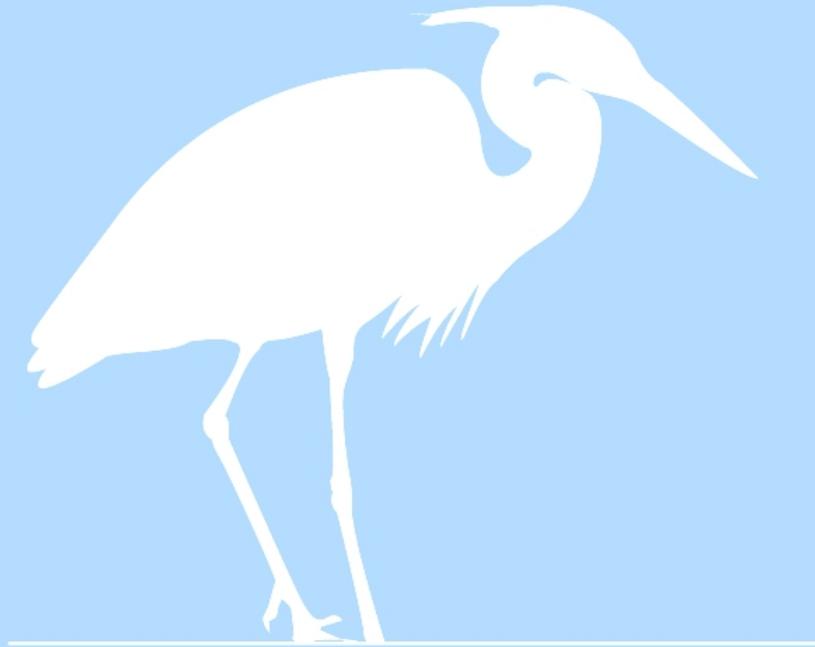


## Strategic Plan

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

For the Five-Year Period from 2016 to 2020



***Protecting, Improving, and Promoting*** 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.

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# Strategic Plan 2016-2020

## 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  
Bob Lewis

John Giusti  
Karen Nutter

Adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee

December 1, 2016  
*Date*

  
*Signature*

Joseph F. Anderson III, Chairperson

Adopted by the Board of Directors

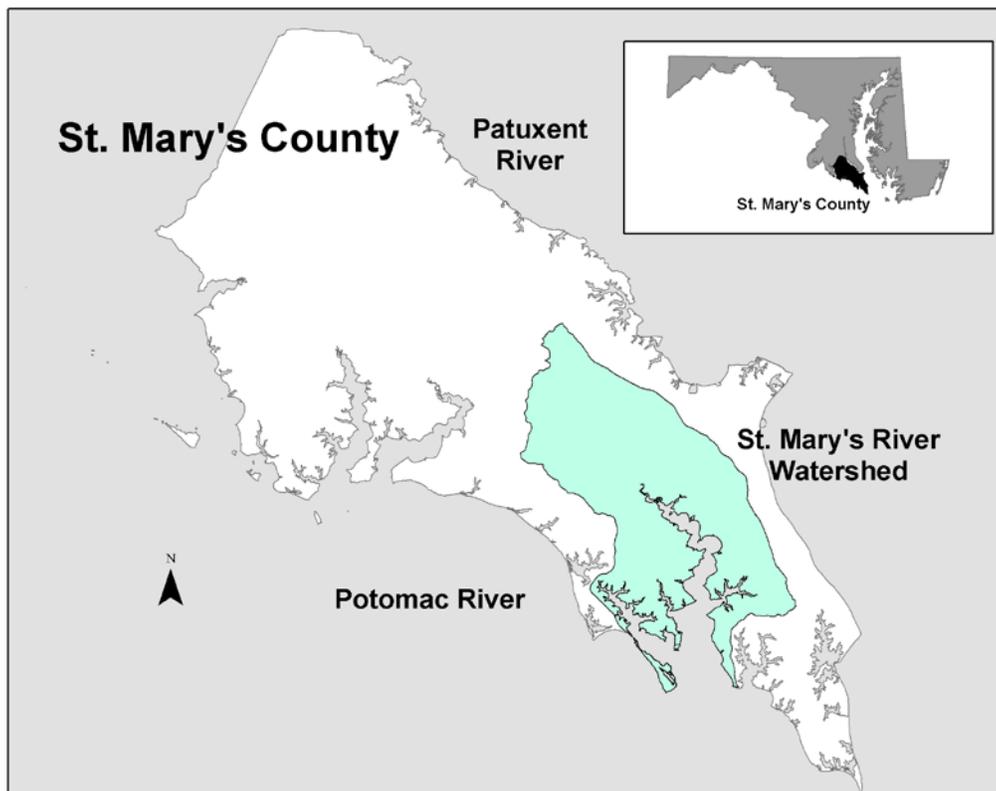
December 1, 2016  
*Date*

  
*Signature*

Joseph F. Anderson III, President

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## STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

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.

Even though the Board used this first strategic plan, and a subsequent second plan, to guide SMRWA's activities and to think more strategically about policy and activities, the Board found itself embroiled in controversy when the state chose to open the oyster sanctuary to commercial operations in the summer of 2012. This led in 2015 to a couple of board members questioning whether SMRWA was following the plan. As a result a committee was appointed to review compliance and make recommendation to the board. The committee was unable to identify any concerns of inappropriate actions by SMRWA that may have been outside of the Plan, although they did suggest to the board that there were areas of concern that were not being implemented. In September 2015 at a called meeting of the board, they requested all board members to review the Plan and provide them with comments, and to prepare the third plan for the next five-year period 2016-2020. This third plan will also coincide with the period covered by St. Mary's County Watershed Implementation Plan III (WIP), 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 and second 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 third 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 and again in 2015, 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 as well as currently recognized pressures and threats from an increasing population. 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 and the Watershed Implementation Plan
- 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
- Prepare for staff changes

## 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 direct 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 13,150 new residents by 2020. Currently (2016) the county's population is about 112,000 with stagnant growth over the past three years. 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, Growth patterns indicate that 80% of actual county residential home-building has been in the St. Mary's River watershed due to the state severely restricting growth on large lots in the rural areas through the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. We can anticipate 3,188 new homes by 2020—an increase of 14% in just four years. [St. Mary's County *Economic Review*, 2013 using population projection data from Maryland Department of Planning; <http://www.stmarysmd.com/docs/document27-economicoverview.pdf>]

## 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, continued in the second plan, and 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 & WIP**

The restoration program for the Chesapeake Bay is has undergone 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. Maryland is well on the way to achieving this milestone.

**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.
  - 2016-2020 SMRWA representation on the county WIP committee actively participates and provides necessary background and science, collaboration of identity and problem solving, and partnership to ensure implementation.
  - Local, state, and federal adoption of the St. Mary's River Watershed Action Strategy and implementation plan

**Critical Input Milestones**

1. 2017 - Public process for Characterization draft and EPA "a through i" plans
2. 2018 - Finalize documents and submit to EPA and state for approval
3. 2017 and 2019 - Implementation rate meets or exceeds two-year milestones

## § **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.
  - 2016-2020 focus attention on the reliability and credibility of information that SMRWA submits by providing informed, visionary alternatives based on sound science.
  - 2016-2020 continue to request a position at the table during policy-making sessions of local officials; 2017 increase from one to two members of the Board serving on government advisory boards; 2016-2020 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. 2016-2020 maintain a program for semi-annual 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 every three years at a minimum. 2016-2020 continue issuing an annual report on conditions in the watershed, including metrics and milestones on land use, water quality, and progress achieving our vision; 2016-2020 issue reports when appropriate on our specific concerns and latest scientific findings about conditions in the watershed.
  - 2016-2020 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: 06/2016      Completion: 06/2018
3. Increase the number of informal interactions with government from two times per year to a minimum of three times per year.  
Beginning: 01/2016      Completion: 12/2016
4. Deliver a State of the St. Mary's River Watershed address every three years.  
Beginning: 05/2017      Completion: Every three years
5. Deliver periodic "update" report on science and concerns.  
Beginning: 11/2017      Completion: 11/2020
6. Provide formal response to policies and regulations at all relevant formal public sessions.  
Beginning: 01/2016      Completion: Ongoing
7. Research, draft application, and advocate for Scenic River status for the St. Mary's River.  
Beginning: 06/2018      Completion: 12/2020
8. Publish an annual report.

## § **Affect Behavior**

Educating and motivating the public is vital to developing support for our mission. Helping developers make informed decisions to minimize the impact of development on the watershed is also essential. Equally important is the need for individual residents, homeowners and area workers to recognize the impacts of their activities on the watershed and how they might improve their behavior to protect the watershed's natural resources and promote the sustainability of its communities.

### **Objectives with Assessment Metrics**

1. **Enlighten the public** through a variety of hands-on implementation projects and via campaigns and events with two objectives in mind: to educate and to motivate the public to take action within themselves (behavior changes) and their immediate environment.
  - Continue holding an annual celebration of the St. Mary's River and its watershed that attracts the general public through conservation-oriented entertainment, water-based activities, and informative exhibits by accommodating large, diverse crowds and by fostering direct interaction with the River and the environment of it watershed.
  - 2016-2020 provide the public with an annual lecture, seminar, or symposium that informs and motivates conservation on sustainability.
  - Utilize our own publications and letters to the editor in other publications to maximize the extent of our outreach and publicity to the public.
2. **Continue seeking opportunities to partner with and change the practices of land development businesses**
  - Provide economic analysis of alternative conservation methodologies such as rain gardens, forested buffers, permeable pavements, and combining low-impact parkland with the preservation of sensitive areas to be impacted by development.
  - Establish formal interaction with Chaney Enterprises (or other) in the planning and development of the 385-acre Stewart's Grant planned urban development. Create a model of this program for others to replicate.

### **Critical Input Milestones**

1. Hold an annual celebration of the river and its watershed (RiverFest).  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Annual
2. Provide the public with a series of ongoing seminars and workshops. At least four per year should be a hands-on approach such as rain garden installation, rain barrel setup, shoreline restoration, habitat restoration, or reforestation watercourse buffers.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Annual
3. Require each Board member to write at least one letter to the editor per year.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Annual
4. Provide land use industry professionals with an economic analysis of alternative conservation methodologies.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: ongoing as needed
5. Establish formal interaction with Chaney Enterprises (or other) for the collaborative planning of sustainable communities.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Ongoing
6. Secure funding and provide State Highways with locations and advocate for installation of signage noting watershed boundaries.  
Beginning: 01/2017                      Completion: 12/2019



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: 01/2016                      Completion: 12/2020 (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: 01/2016                      Completion: Ongoing
7. Develop one alliance with faith based institutions each year.  
Beginning: 01/2018                      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 44-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation.
  - In 2016-2020, 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, and specifically, the five-acre project adjacent to St. Mary's College.
  - Spring of 2016 through 2020, accumulate scientific knowledge on oyster restoration techniques and feasibility of implementation of additional restoration projects.
  - In 2017-20, film additional footage and edit with existing footage in order to make a documentary of the Marylanders Grow Oysters in the St. Mary's River.
  - Continue to acquire knowledge of aquaculture operations and encourage watermen to establish successful operations, thereby lessening the dependence on wild harvest.
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 in storm water control management.

### **Critical Input Milestones**

1. Continue to distribute 44-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Ongoing
2. Enhance the section of our website specific to backyard conservation tools.  
Beginning: 01/2017                      Completion: 12/2017
3. Report on and promote the oyster reef restoration program.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Ongoing
4. Edit and publish the film documentary of the Marylanders Grow Oysters in the St. Mary's River.  
Beginning: 01/2017                      Completion: 12/2020
5. Publish a short film of a sustainable development project and/or neighborhood rewards program.  
Beginning: 01/2017                      Completion: 12/2017

## **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.

In its first ten years, 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 increase in financial support, but a successful fundraising campaign targeting foundations, corporate, and government grants will still be needed to provide increased stability for the Association's overall budgetary needs as well as funding earmarked for implementation of our Watershed Action Strategy and the county WIP.

### **§ 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, constituent 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 late 2016, adopt a strategic plan update with requirements for periodic reviews and rewrites.
  - In early 2017, 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 late 2017, 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 2017, 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, environmental economics skills, connectivity to key groups such as the land development industry, and ethnic diversity.
  - In 2017, 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 conferences, symposiums, and summits in order to maximize networking opportunities and take advantage of unique training seminars, knowledge enhancement programming, and presentation opportunities.
3. Expand the staff positions with titles and job descriptions, and increase staffing commitments.
  - Maintain the Program Director position at half time.
  - In order to allow the Executive Director to spend more time in the field and on fundraising obligations, in 2018 seek funding to support a second half-time staff position as Communications Director, to be the lead on periodic reports and newsletters, to provide membership recruitment and maintenance services, and to assist with clerical duties, development pursuits, and event planning.
  - Maintain the 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 or maintain current low-rent headquarters.



**Critical Input Milestones**

1. Increase total membership from 240 regular to 265 regular.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: 12/2016
2. Increase total membership to 290 regular.  
Beginning: 01/2017                      Completion: 12/2017
3. Increase total membership to 315 regular.  
Beginning: 01/2018                      Completion: 12/2018
4. Increase total membership to 340 regular.  
Beginning: 01/2019                      Completion: 12/2019
5. Increase total membership to 365 regular.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: 12/2020
6. Table and solicit memberships at events and meetings.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Ongoing
7. Utilize the tabletop display at least annually at varying venues such as museums, libraries, and retail outlets.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Annual
8. Solicit memberships through a targeted social media campaign to reach out to no less than 200 new recipients every two years.  
Beginning: 03/2017                      Completion: Ongoing
9. Continually seek opportunities to present at forums and community group gatherings; motivate Board members to attend; and schedule at least one each year.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      Completion: Annually
10. Coordinate and execute an effective process for successful membership retention, meeting a goal of 75% renewal each year.  
Beginning: 12/2016                      Completion: Annually
11. Solicit additional donations from members according to fundraising plan.  
Beginning: 01/2016                      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 A River Affair was a huge success in its six years, 2011 through 2016, 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 \$18,700 each year.
2. Increase the net revenues from the River Affair to \$17,500 each year.
3. Add a third annual fundraiser.

**Critical Input Milestones**

1. Increase revenues from RiverFest sponsors by \$1,500 each year. (from \$11,700 in 2016)
 

Beginning: 2016	Goal: \$11,700
Beginning: 2017	Goal: \$13,200
Beginning: 2018	Goal: \$14,700
Beginning: 2019	Goal: \$17,200
Beginning: 2020	Goal: \$18,700
2. Increase net revenues from River Affair by \$1,000 each year. (from \$12,500 in 2016)
 

Beginning: 2016	Goal: \$13,500
Beginning: 2017	Goal: \$14,500
Beginning: 2018	Goal: \$15,500
Beginning: 2019	Goal: \$16,500
Beginning: 2020	Goal: \$17,500

