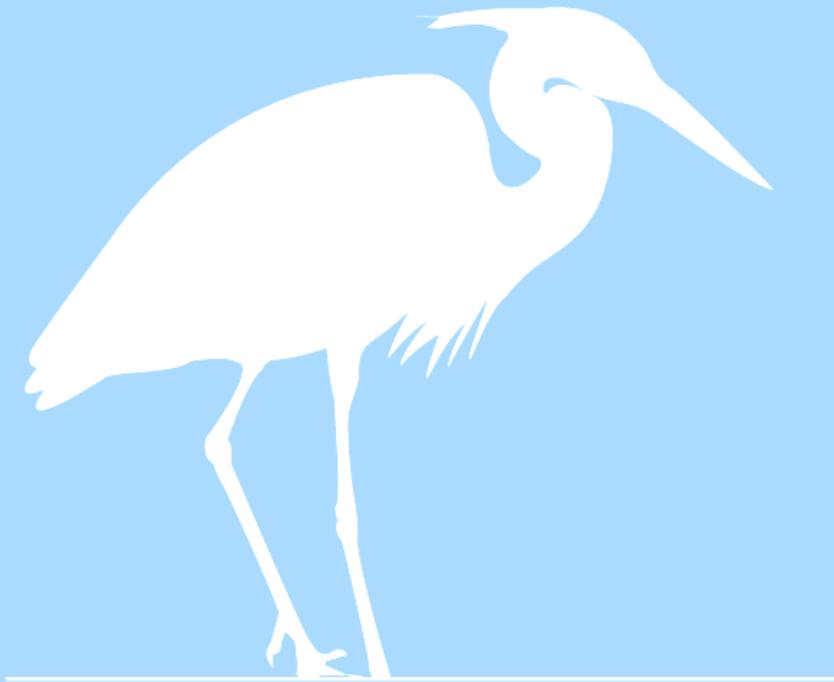


St. Mary's River Watershed Association
STRATEGIC PLAN



*Accepting Responsibility for What is Ours -
A Plan to Protect and Enhance the Living Communities
and Resources of the St. Mary's River Watershed*

Strategic Plan 2006-2010

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

*Accepting Responsibility for What is Ours -
A Plan to Protect and Enhance the Living Communities
and Resources of the St. Mary's River Watershed*

Strategic Planning Committee Members

Gary Hunt, Chairperson

Elaine Szymkowiak

Joseph Anderson

Gary Williams

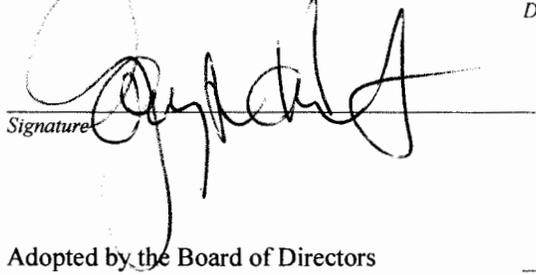
Joan Poor

Adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee

Date

11/28/06

Signature



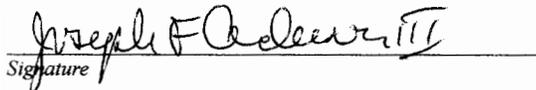
Gary Hunt, Chairperson

Adopted by the Board of Directors

Date

12/2/06

Signature



Joseph F. Anderson III, President

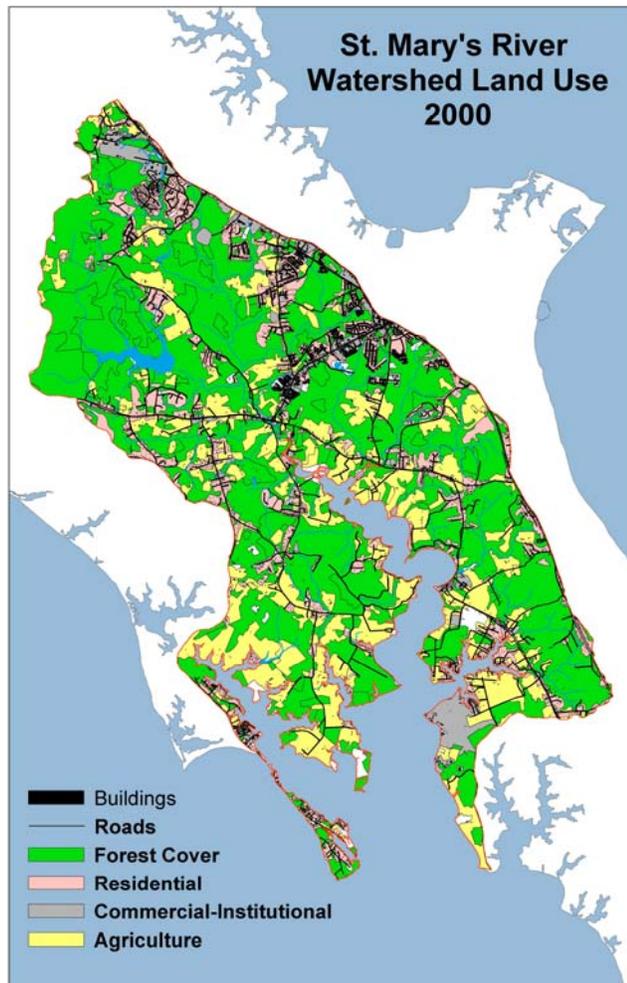
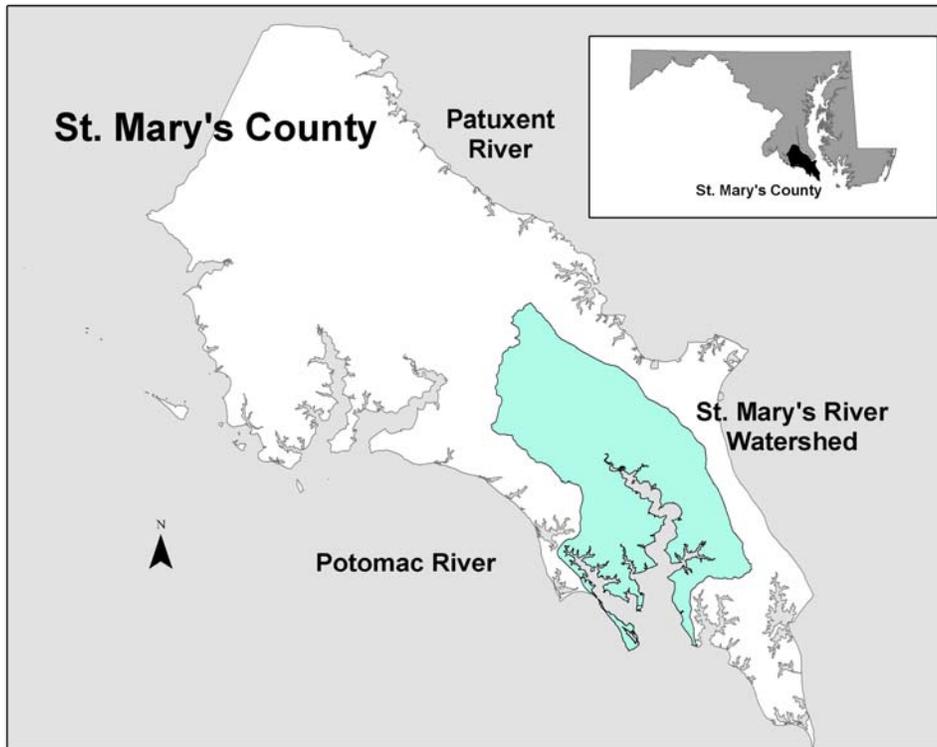
Prepared for the St. Mary's River Watershed Association

Roger Stone - Sustainable Development Institute

Bob Lewis - WLP Consulting

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Maps courtesy of St. Mary's College of Maryland and the St. Mary's River Project.

Strategic Plan 2006-2010

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

In the winter of 2005-2006, the Board of Directors of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) decided to pursue the development of the Association's first strategic Plan. In June of 2006, the Board appointed a Strategic Planning Committee and charged the Committee with the work of designing the strategic plan under the guidance of consultant Roger Stone, Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Institute. The Committee met routinely from June through November, beginning with a guided discussion of mission and strategic priorities. Further refinement utilizing a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) was conducted (see Appendix B), and this process generated a basis for identification of metrics and timeline. As this process evolved, Bob Lewis, Executive Director of WLP Consulting, was contracted in order to expand the knowledge base of the strategic planning process and to complete the plan within SMRWA's calendar deadline of December 1, 2006.

The mission statement has been scrutinized and endorsed by the Committee, strategic priorities have been defined, and tactics to achieve these priorities have been developed. There will continue to be modifications; such is the nature of an evolving community-based organization and the necessity for ongoing review and assessment. As one well-known strategic planner has commented, "While the plan itself is indeed important, what is more important is that we all begin to think strategically." We believe we are making progress towards this goal.

MISSION STATEMENT

To protect, improve, and promote the well being 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.

In the fall of 2006, the Committee continued to refine the tactics described below by creating action plans for each that are reasonable, fundable, assessable, and time-bound. With this work complete, we have the first installment of a rolling five-year strategic plan that can be prudently modified to meet the current and future needs of SMRWA.

As a result of this work, the Committee adopted two strategic priorities, each of which has several critical tactics identified to provide direction to those who live within the watershed.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Embrace Sustainable Practices and Sustainable Development Opportunities within the Watershed and in Harmony with a Vibrant and Healthy River System.

- Influence Public Policy
- Affect Behavior
- Strengthen Connections, Expand Relationships, and Form Alliances
- Develop a Resources Toolbox

Sustain St. Mary's River Watershed Association's Organizational Capacity.

- Establish Best Business Practices
- Expand and Retain Membership
- Develop Relationships with Trust, Foundation, and Corporate Grantors

BACKGROUND

The St. Mary's River Watershed encompasses 47,000 acres of land and waterways, which lie entirely within one jurisdiction, St. Mary's County. Much of the Lexington Park development district, one of the three major planned high-density growth areas in southern Maryland, is in the watershed. Development pressures are a significant concern as waters and land experience increasing negative impacts and resultant degradation of environmental quality.

And yet hope springs forth with this simple creed: *Accepting Responsibility for What is Ours*. Since St. Mary's County is host to this watershed, and none other can claim such, Countians must take responsibility for the watershed's future viability and aesthetics. To allow this system to deteriorate would be no different than to fall victim to the tragedy of the commons.¹ (See appendix A for an expanded background.)

ACTION PLAN WITH OBJECTIVES AND MILESTONES

*** Embrace Sustainable Practices and Sustainable Development Opportunities within the Watershed and in Harmony with a Vibrant and Healthy River System.**

At the core of the SMRWA's identity is its commitment to protect, improve, and promote the well being of the St. Mary's River watershed. As our mission states, we achieve this goal through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders throughout the region. We believe that only through a whole systems approach incorporating economic, academic, environmental, agricultural, historical, social, cultural, and political assets and ideals can we achieve this lofty goal.

Hence, of highest priority for our strategic planning are all issues related to sustainability. Accordingly, strategic planning must identify and prioritize the critical tactics most crucial to SMRWA's core mission. At the same time, SMRWA must be able to communicate effectively its mission to prospective members and the public in general.

§ **Influence Public Policy**

Recognition of the need to influence public policy through effective interaction and collaboration with government is essential. Areas to be addressed where improvement to government's approach to land use and management are needed include new and better use of science to craft regulations, ongoing and effective oversight and compliance enforcement, use of substantial penalties for noncompliance, an effective system of redress and mitigation, and, in general, the will to effect change in the system.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. **Gain greater respect** from county, state, and federal agencies and staff, and from our St. Mary's County Commissioners and our representatives at the state and federal governments.
 - 2006-2010 focus attention on the reliability and credibility of information that SMRWA provides by providing informed visionary alternatives based on sound science.
 - 2006-2007 request a position at the table during policy-making sessions of local officials; 2008 increase from one to two members of the Board serving on government advisory boards; 2009-2010 foster a relationship whereby government staff actively seek input on a routine basis for policy development and decision making.

¹ This phrase, *the tragedy of the commons*, coined in William Forster Lloyd's 1833 book on population and made popular in 1968 by Garrett Hardin's essay of the same title, portrays the phenomena in which a conflict for resources between individual interests and the common good result in the eventual loss of the resource.

2. **Develop 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. 2006-2007 a minimum of two times per year; 2008-2009 a minimum of three times per year; by 2010 have a program in place 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. 2007-2010 an annual full-fledged report containing metrics and milestones on land use, water quality, and vision; 2009-2010 add a mid-year "update" report addressing specific concerns and latest scientific findings.
 - 2006-2010 as opportunities arise for formal address of policies and regulation (such as policy rewrites and zoning amendments), be ready and take advantage through one-on-one meetings with county and state staff, participation in public meetings, and by providing convincing written testimony.

Critical Input Milestones

1. One member of the Board serving on the Maryland Tributary Teams. (Bob Paul)
2. Increase from one to two members of the Board serving on government advisory boards.
Beginning: 01/2008 Completion: 07/2008
3. Increase the number of informal interactions with government from two times per year to a minimum of three times per year.
Beginning: 06/2006 Completion: 06/2008
4. Deliver an annual State of the St. Mary's River Watershed address.
Beginning: 06/2007 Completion: Annual
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

§ Affect Behavior

Educating and motivating the public is vital to 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 individuals to recognize their place within the greater watershed system and how they might improve their behavior as it relates to the protection and enhancement of the watershed's resources and living communities.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. **Enlighten the public** through a variety of hands-on promotional campaigns and events with two objectives in mind: to educate and to motivate the public to take action within themselves and their immediate environment.
 - Hold an annual celebration of the St. Mary's River and its watershed. Attract people through conservation-oriented entertainment and sustainable foods and drinks. Pursue venues that are accommodating of large crowds and friendly to a diverse population; venues should foster direct interaction with the watershed environment.
 - 2008-2010 provide the public with a series of ongoing seminars and workshops that inform and motivate sustainable conservation.
 - Utilize organizational publications and letters to the editor to maximize the extent of reach into the public sector.

2. **Seek opportunities to change the way land use industry professionals do business.**
 - Provide economic analysis of alternative conservation methodologies such as rain gardens, forested buffers, and combining low-impact parkland with the preservation of sensitive areas to be impacted by development.
 - Establish formal interaction with Chaney Enterprises 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: 09/2006 Completion: Annual
2. Pursue a venue that will accommodate a large crowd and be effective connecting people with the watershed environment.
 Beginning: 09/2008 Completion: 09/2008
3. Provide the public with a series of ongoing seminars and workshops. At least two per year should be a hands-on approach such as rain garden installation, rain barrel setup, shoreline restoration, or reforesting watercourse buffers.
 Beginning: 08/2006 Completion: 12/2008 at two events per year
 Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: 12/2010 at three or more events per year
4. Include an informative backyard conservation section in the quarterly newsletter at least two times per year.
 Beginning: 04/2007 Completion: Biannual
5. Require each Board member to write at least one letter to the editor per year.
 Beginning: 01/2008 Completion: Annual
6. Seek funding to provide an economic analysis of alternative conservation methodologies.
 Beginning: 06/2008 Completion: 06/2009
7. Provide land use industry professionals with an economic analysis of alternative conservation methodologies.
 Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: 12/2009
8. Establish formal interaction with Chaney Enterprises for the collaborative planning of sustainable communities.
 Beginning: 06/2006 Completion: Ongoing
9. Create a model of the Stewart's Grant program for others to replicate.
 Beginning: 2010 Completion: well beyond 2010

§ Strengthen Connections, Expand Relationships, and Form Alliances

Building strong bonds between other entities is an effective means of fostering sustainable conservation practices. Parties benefit through information and experience sharing, collaboration on programs, and momentum building. Identification of entities, which will provide essential foundation principles to this objective, is important.

While watershed groups and network conservation groups are obvious team players to be recruited, other entities should be identified early on for their importance in affecting behavior.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Foster effective partnerships with conservation and watershed groups.
 - Maintain existing relationships with River Network, Potomac River Association, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust, St. Mary's College of Maryland, St. Mary's River Project, Historic St. Mary's City, and Chesapeake Bay Field Lab.
 - Beginning in late 2007, identify and develop effective relationships with additional groups such as NEMO (Non-point Education for Municipal Officials), Center for Watershed Protection, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay

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.
 - By the end of 2009, design and publish a multi-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation utilizing the many excellent publications available. Personalize it by including specifics relating to the local watershed and feature additional local resources.
 - In 2009, expand the resource section of our web site with a section specific to residential needs.
2. Pursue ongoing scientific analysis of the native oysters' ability to cleanse the water and promote diverse communities.
 - Fall of 2006 through 2007, accumulate scientific knowledge on oyster restoration and assessments of the oyster's role in the ecosystem.
 - In 2008, author and film necessary elements in order to make a documentary of the oyster recovery assessment project with a focus on promoting subsistence and commercial oyster farming.
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.
 - Update the Hilton Run Subwatershed Management Plan 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.
 - Publish a paper and/or short film about the Stewart's Grant sustainable development collaboration program especially noting where this program can serve as a model for planned urban developments within the watershed and elsewhere.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Publish a multi-page homeowner's guide to backyard conservation.
Beginning: 06/2008 Completion: 12/2009
2. Add to the web site a section specific to backyard conservation tools.
Beginning: 06/2008 Completion: 09/2009
3. Report on the oyster recovery assessment project.
Beginning: 09/2006 Completion: 12/2007
4. Develop and publish the film documentary of the oyster recovery assessment project.
Beginning: 09/2006 Completion: 12/2008
5. Update the Hilton Run Subwatershed Management Plan.
Beginning: 2010 or after Completion: after 2010
6. Publish a paper and/or film of the Stewart's Grant collaboration.
Beginning: unknown timeline—could as early as fall of 2009

*** Sustain St. Mary's River Watershed Association's Organizational Capacity.**

St. Mary's River Watershed Association must satisfy the challenge of meeting long-term human, capital, equipment, technology, and financial resource needs to sustain the Association's mission.

The establishment of proven business practices will enable SMRWA to address a variety of needs both planned and unforeseen. Membership dues will serve as the core share of the financial resources while a successful fundraising campaign targeting foundations and corporations will lend much stability to the overall budgetary needs.

8. Send at least one staff member and/or Board member to at least one watershed association convention.
Beginning: 11/2006 Completion: Annually
9. Institute an Executive Director position.
Beginning: 06/2007 Completion: Ongoing
10. Increase Executive Director's hourly commitment from 10 hours per week to at least 16 hours per week.
Beginning: 12/2007 Completion: Ongoing
11. Add a second staff member with ability to handle clerical duties and special event planning.
Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: Ongoing

§ Expand and Retain Membership

Recognizing that membership dues offer the most stability in the organization's unrestricted finances, prudent assessment of recruitment potential and practices is essential. Likewise, retaining members is more cost effective than recruiting new members. Members provide the best opportunities for recruitment of volunteers.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Increase total membership by at least sixty regular and two corporate members annually with the goal of 440 regular members and 16 corporate members by the end of 2010.
 - 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.
 - Annually conduct a targeted direct mail campaign in order to reach at least 1000 new potential members.
 - Present at forums and community group gatherings; invite participants to join SMRWA.
2. Retain members through effective organizational operations, meaningful commitment to the mission, and informative communications with members and the public.
 - 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. Design and implement a plan to solicit donations from members several times each year.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Increase total membership from 34 regular and 8 corporate to 190 regular and 10 corporate.
Beginning: 04/2006 Completion: 12/2006
2. Increase total membership to 250 regular and 10 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2007 Completion: 12/2007
3. Increase total membership to 310 regular and 12 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2008 Completion: 12/2008
4. Increase total membership to 370 regular and 14 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2009 Completion: 12/2009
5. Increase total membership to 440 regular and 16 corporate.
Beginning: 01/2010 Completion: 12/2010
6. Table and solicit memberships at events and meetings.
Beginning: 06/2006 Completion: Ongoing
7. Utilize the tabletop display at least two times per year at varying venues such as museums, libraries, and retail outlets.
Beginning: 06/2006 Completion: Annual
8. Solicit memberships through a targeted direct mail campaign to reach out to no less than 1000 new addresses each year.
Beginning: 02/2007 Completion: Annually

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: 06/2006 Completion: Annually
10. Coordinate and execute an effective process for successful membership retention, meeting a goal of 70% renewal each year.
Beginning: 11/2006 Completion: Annually
11. Solicit additional donations from members according to fundraising plan.
Beginning: 02/2007 Completion: Ongoing

§ Develop Relationships with Trust, Foundation, and Corporate Grantors

Foundation grants and partnerships are essential to funding programs, special events, and publications. Likewise, corporate grants, sponsorships, and donations are an important funding source for special events and publications.

Attention to the development of SMRWA's relationship with these potential-funding sources is critical in order to be successful. Clearly defined steps in the approach and development of each relationship combined with effective note taking and the development of a file for each potential-funding source will increase success rates.

Recognize that these funding sources are concerned primarily with their image and tailor campaigns to effectively communicate how their grant, sponsorship, or donation to SMRWA will benefit them.

Objectives with Assessment Metrics

1. Continue to develop and nurture relationships with current trust, foundation, and corporate funding sources.
 - Begin an ongoing interaction each year with effective one-on-one (two-on-one) encounters.
 - Utilize targeted campaigns to solicit funding for special events and programs.
 - Develop a database documenting the relationship by reporting to the designated staff person the details of each and every contact.
 - Recruit one or more Board members who are effective and experience in fundraising; until this Board member can be recruited, pursue opportunities to train Board members and staff.
2. Design a detailed fundraising agreement for each program or special event with specifics on benefits to the respective grantor.

Critical Input Milestones

1. Seek one-on-one (two-on-one) encounters with current grantees with the intent of improving communications and developing consensus on program goals and deliverables.
Beginning: 12/2006 Completion: one year after completion of program
2. Identify at least two foundations or corporations and seek one-on-one (two-on-one) encounters with the intent of securing funding in areas of mutual interest. (Always keeping operating expenses in mind.)
Beginning: 06/2007 Completion: Annual
3. Identify potential sources and solicit sponsorship monies and in-kind services for RiverFest.
Beginning: 01/2007 Completion: 08/2007 (and repeat every year)
4. Identify other programs and special events where funding is needed or fundraising can be successful and develop a campaign to maximize fundraising effectiveness.
Beginning: 02/2008 Completion: Ongoing
5. Incorporate a process where interactions with funding sources or potential funding sources are documented and retained in files as a resource.
Beginning: 12/2006 Completion: Ongoing
6. Board and staff development (recruitment and training): see page 7.

APPENDIX A

*** Outline of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis (SWOT)**

Strengths

- Board expertise (especially scientific) and credibility
- Respect among those familiar, good relationships with county staff/agencies
- Motivated and participatory board
- Good relationship with local government
- Initial fund raising successes through foundation and government agency grants and in-kind services for RiverFest
- Established working committees (field teams)
- Growing membership
- Acknowledged need for a strategic plan

Weaknesses

- Young
- Organizational structure not clearly defined, lack of administrative staff
- Insufficient membership base
- Lack of a Board-approved Fundraising Plan
- Lack of a plan to increase our political influence
- Insufficient connection with key groups, e.g. business community, developers, Navy
- Association simply not well enough known, let alone understood
- Lack of diversity on board (need for broader community and ethnic representation)
- Lack of a Strategic Plan

Opportunities

- Expand our relationship with Patuxent River Naval Air Station
- Strengthen interactions with contractors and developers (e.g. prepare green building guide)
- Form alliances with other groups, e.g. Southern Maryland Navy Alliance, Community Development Corporation, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust, Potomac River Association
- Develop a replicable model of the collaborative planning process of the Stewart's Grant project
- Strengthen environmental education efforts
- Become a point of contact and resource for concerns within the watershed
- Influence public policy through effective partnerships and alliances with diverse entities such as the Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Corporation, and Builders Association
- Pursue expansion of the Potomac Riverkeeper into the southern tidal Potomac River

Threats

- Relentless development pressure with inadequate oversight, enforcement and redress mechanisms and policies
- Apparent lack of political resolve for better management
- Fact that developing land easiest way to make a buck
- Failing to sustain an effective capacity building program
- Public is poorly informed about threats to the watershed

APPENDIX B

*** History of the Formation of St. Mary's River Watershed Association**

Culturally, this region of the prized and biologically key coastal zone remained in many ways tied to its 370-year heritage as a remote rural area. There were two noteworthy periods of change. The first period, during World War II, witnessed the development of the 8,000-acre Navy base immediately adjacent to the eastern border of the St. Mary's River Watershed. Catapulting St. Mary's County out of its centuries old standing as one of our nations most impoverished rural areas, the Patuxent River Naval Air Station brought to the area many jobs and resources. The second period, a consequence of nationwide military base closing and realignment actions in the early 1990s, saw thousands of new jobs transferred out of other locations and *added* at the Navy Base in the heart of St. Mary's County. Consequently during each of these two periods there came a great and disorderly wave of "development" as the community generated new housing, shopping, educational, and recreational facilities for this sudden influx of new military people, civilian contractors, and private companies doing business with the Navy and other military tenants on the base.

As a result of this latter expansion period, a new comprehensive land use plan (adopted May 2002) reflected the citizens' vision. Local people had clearly spoken in favor of protection of farmland and open space and traditional livelihoods, clean air and water, and a healthy and uncluttered environment. The challenge was to help breathe life into these aspirations, over the political opposition of a powerful minority—the land development industry professionals—and translate the community's vision into decisive actions. If the citizens of St. Mary's County could achieve such goals, their success might set a significant pattern for others elsewhere in the coastal zone, where human population density is already triple the national average and fast growing, who are waging their own battles against the growing pressures of helter-skelter development.

Early on as the concept of a community-based steward for the fast-growing area around the Navy Base began to take shape, a specific region in need of planning for environmentally sound development was identified: the 47,000 acre watershed of the St. Mary's River—which lies almost entirely within one of the region's principle development districts. This watershed had also long been of great interest to St. Mary's College of Maryland, a small public honors college located at St. Mary's City on the bank of the river. Since 1998, biology professors Robert Paul and Chris Tanner and their students had been compiling detailed data about impacts on the watershed's environmental quality resulting from rapid development and other changes. Drs. Paul and Tanner were anxious for the scientific data being gathered from this St. Mary's River Project to be applied for practical purposes, and welcomed the idea of a whole-systems analysis of the region, in which thought would concurrently be given to historic, cultural, economic, and environmental considerations. Watershed management planning would be based on these considerations and presented to County officials.

With support from government agencies and foundations, most notably St. Mary's College of Maryland and the Sustainable Development Institute, St. Mary's River Project data was used to develop a management-planning framework for the entire watershed. In 2002, a group of ten citizens was convened to prepare a detailed management plan for Hilton Run, one of the 16 subwatersheds in the St. Mary's River system, to serve as a model. In 2004 the group was able to obtain the local government's endorsement of its management plan, whose implementation is now established as part of the county's area land use plan for the development district within which Hilton Run is located.

As the year 2004 ended, initial steps were being taken to establish a private, non-profit St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) with membership open to any group or individual, and to monitor and advocate for the implementation of the plan over the longer term. SMRWA received its corporate status from the State of Maryland in March of 2005 and was granted the federal tax status, 501 (c) (3), in March of 2006. The citizens involved in the earlier planning process formed the nucleus of SMRWA's founding board. In April 2006, the first election of Board of Directors was held.

