



2014 Year in Review & Action Plan 2015



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.

Our 2014 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to maintain our programming, credibility, and effectiveness in 2014. We stood firm in our belief that healthy waterways and a clean environment are essential to a high quality of life today and a fundamental right of future generations. Our successes are your successes because it is you who provide the moral and financial support that make this all possible. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!



River Friendly Neighborhoods

- Volunteers and professionals worked together to install two rain gardens using native plants and organic soil amendments thereby reducing polluted run off into the river.
- We were awarded a two-year Chesapeake Small Watershed grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation to continue work on the River Friendly Neighborhoods program. This winter, we are recruiting new participants into this cost-sharing program.



Watershed Implementation Plans

- We completed the first draft of a St. Mary's River Watershed Plan Action Strategy and began the process of public review.
- We continue to work with county officials and staff to implement the county's initial watershed implementation plan (WIP), and to evaluate the direct benefits to our waterways.



Outreach and Education

- Our field trip programming was rewarding for students at the Chesapeake Charter School, Forrest Tech Center, DC Charter School, LSM LEAD Teen Leadership, 4-H, and others.
- Outreach at festivals and events, like RiverFest, Earth Day on the Square, Oyster Festival, Crab Festival, Governor's Cup, and Juneteenth, provided ample opportunity to engage the public in dialog about sustainability.
- Speaking at civic group meetings and participating on panel discussions develop greater stewardship in participants, recruit working partners, and refine our message.



Three-Dimensional Oyster Reef

- Staff and volunteers added an additional eight three-dimensional mounds and applied treatments, either oyster shell or spat-on-shell veneers, to four mounds—bringing the total number of reef mounds installed to date to 32.
- In our remote oyster nursery, we raised six million spat and planted them into the St. Mary's River.
- The Oyster Reef Project is a partnership project of local Rotary Clubs & Rotary District 7620, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.

Monitoring Oysters and Water Quality

- We continued working with senior college students to develop a baseline water quality assessment for the oyster reef project.
- Our staff and STEM interns collected data on morphology (size, shape) and oyster density throughout our five-acre oyster reef project.
- We launched a sedimentation rate study to evaluate the effects of three-dimensional structures.
- We continued to survey our restored and natural oyster bars in the upper St. Mary's.
- We partnered with St. Mary's College and Shore Thing Shellfish LLC on testing an experimental *in situ* method for oyster restoration, which can greatly reduce the labor involved in seeding oysters.

Future Bay Leaders—STEM Interns

- Carrying on from last year, we recruited four new high school student interns and retained one from last year (who is now a college student) and challenged them to become future Bay leaders.
- Each intern took on a summer project and learned how to recruit volunteer help, organize the work day, provide oversight with worker safety in mind, and evaluate the occasion—all valuable life skills in leadership.



- Intern projects included reef morphology and oyster density—Ken Gill; variability in oyster strike on aged/not-aged concrete rubble—Micheal Maragh; fauna diversity on reefs—Meghan Webster; current flow rate around three-dimensional structures—Virginia Detrick; and oyster nursery production—Emma Evans..
- All workers received certification for boater safety and operated the 15-foot *Nancy McAllister*, named after our founding president.



Top Challenges for 2015

County Adoption of the St. Mary's River Watershed Plan

- 2015 will be a pivotal year as we develop public support for and then advocate for county adoption of our St. Mary's River's restoration plan.
- We will maintain a strong relationship with county officials who will be key in getting funding to support restoration and retrofit projects throughout the county.

River Friendly Neighborhoods

- We will be recruiting new homeowners to implement cost-sharing enhancements in residential neighborhoods.
- We will continue to work with, certify, and recognize the neighborhoods already in our program.

Future Bay Leaders

- Our paid student summer internship program will continue to become more structured and require individual responsibilities and commitments.

WIP Implementation

- We will maintain a strong relationship with county officials who will be key to implementing the clean-up of our county waterways.

Oyster Reef Project & Partnership

- We will request an extension to our reef site development permit in order to continue our work throughout the five-acre site.
- We will continue to support college experiments and long-term monitoring of our oyster restoration projects.
- We will develop an evaluation program to look at the economic and ecological value versus the cost for this project, and whether it is a model for restoration around the Bay.
- Placement of signage at the college waterfront will be key to recognizing the partners and contributors to this project. (Delayed in 2014 due to work along Rte. 5)

Sharing Our St. Mary's River

- Our education and outreach programs are integral to our mission and provide a greater understanding of our dependence on clean and healthy waterways.
- Field trips for children provide opportunities to develop interest in and concern for our natural resources. And they are fun!

Thank you for your support and dedication as a member of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.

