



2016 Year in Review & Action Plan 2017



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 2016 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to maintain our programming, credibility, and effectiveness in 2016. 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!

Outreach and Education

- ⇒ Our outreach to youth from the Chesapeake Public Charter School, Capital City Public Charter School, GMHS STEM Academy, Tech Center's Natural Resource Class, and Lexington Park Elementary School provided hands-on opportunities to diverse communities.
- ⇒ Outreach festivals and events like Earth Day, Juneteenth, Crab Festival, Oyster Festival, Governor's Cup, RiverFest, and STEM Expo attracted new volunteers, informed the public of our work, and engaged in discussions on sustainability.
- ⇒ Ridge Elementary School Robotics Team—Ridge Rockets—partnered with us to design a project based on oysters and the Bay ecosystem.
- ⇒ RES Rockets went to the World Championship for their design and content.



Three Dimensional Oyster Reef

- ⇒ The five-acre Oyster Reef Project is a partnership project of the Leonardtown Rotary Club, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and St. Mary's River Watershed Association.
- ⇒ Three more reef mounds were installed—one installed by Boeing volunteers on their community service day. To date, we have 38 reef mounds and our project is complete.



- ⇒ Funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, we were able to design and install an interpretive sign about the Oyster Reef Project at SMCM Waterfront, overlooking our current restoration site.
- ⇒ Our oyster nursery produced five million spat which we planted on our reef site.





Future Bay Leaders - STEM Interns

- ⇒ We recruited four high school and three college students: two STEM, one Tech Center, one GIS, two SMCM, and one student from the College of William & Mary.
- ⇒ Each intern learned skills applicable to life situations as well as gained experience in a field directed toward their future professions. Each gained knowledge on how to be a successful advocate for the Bay.



Monitoring Oysters and Water Quality

- ⇒ Underwater observation and photography provided data to evaluate natural recruitment vs. plantings, survival, and growth on our reef restoration site. 2016 was another above-average year for wild spat recruitment.
- ⇒ Sampling using tongs on our oyster restoration sites compared population sustainability and mortality rates to previous years. Our project sites look great.



River Friendly Neighborhoods

- ⇒ Our two-year National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant-funded River Friendly Neighborhoods program was completed with 14 rain gardens installed at homesteads throughout our watershed.



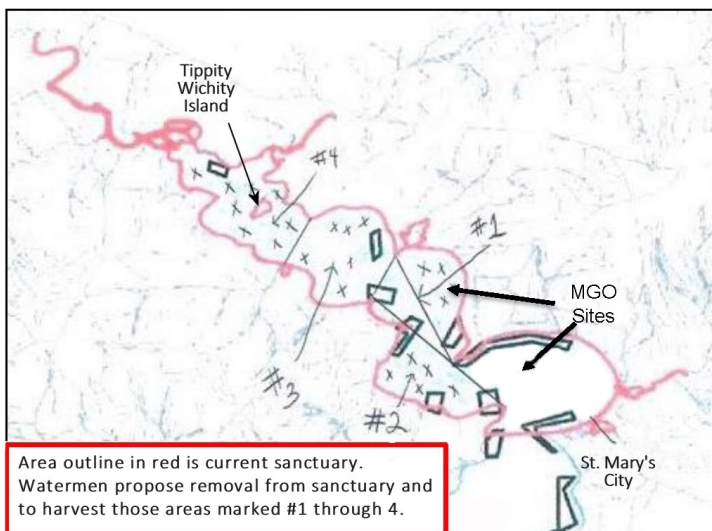
- ⇒ Dedicated volunteers, professionals, and our interns worked together to install rain gardens. Native plants and organic soil components provide filtration of storm water runoff before it reaches our streams.
- ⇒ Pledges of sustainable behaviors were requested from rain garden homeowners. Participants are recognized with a “River Friendly” sign to be displayed on their property.



Top Challenges for 2017

Protecting the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary

- ⇒ 2017 will be a pivotal year as we develop public support for and then advocate for permanent protection of our oyster sanctuary, which is threatened by a proposal to return most of it to the public fishery.



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 youths provide opportunities to develop interest in and concern for our natural resources. And they are fun!

Future Bay Leaders

- ⇒ Our paid student summer internship program continues to prepare and encourage youths to pursue collegiate studies in environmental sustainability and resource management.

WIP Implementation

- ⇒ 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.

Oyster Restoration & MGO

- ⇒ We will continue to support college and high school experiments and long-term monitoring of our oyster restoration projects.

River Friendly Homes & Schools

- ⇒ We will be recruiting schools to learn about, install, and maintain rain gardens.
- ⇒ We will continue to engage homeowners installing rain gardens and greening their lifestyles.

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

COVER PHOTO: Great Mills High School STEM and Chesapeake Charter School students work together to plant 320,000 spat.

