



2019 Year in Review & Action Plan 2020



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 2019 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to maintain our programming, credibility, and effectiveness in 2019. Your generosity is greatly appreciated! We expanded our oyster reef habitat programming and our outreach to community, business, and youth groups by creating working partnerships with Coastal Conservation Association Maryland, Southern Maryland Recreational Fishing Organization, and Chesapeake Oyster Alliance.

Living Reef Action Campaign

- ⇒ Cooperatively funded and operated a traveling oyster reef habitat program incorporating classroom teaching with hands-on outdoor activities building reef balls.
- ⇒ Engaged 710 students and youths and 247 teachers and adults building 530 reef balls and learning about the importance of oyster restoration.



Three Dimensional Oyster Reef

- ⇒ We installed 347 reef balls onto 28 reef mounds. We have 584 reef balls aging on our field site for installation next year.
- ⇒ Our oyster nursery produced two million spat. Most of the spat were used in the MGO program in 815 cages in the St. Mary's, Smith Creek, Breton Bay, and St. Clements Bay.
- ⇒ We installed 3,800 pounds of concrete rubble on a reef mound and planted 535,000 spat-on-shell.





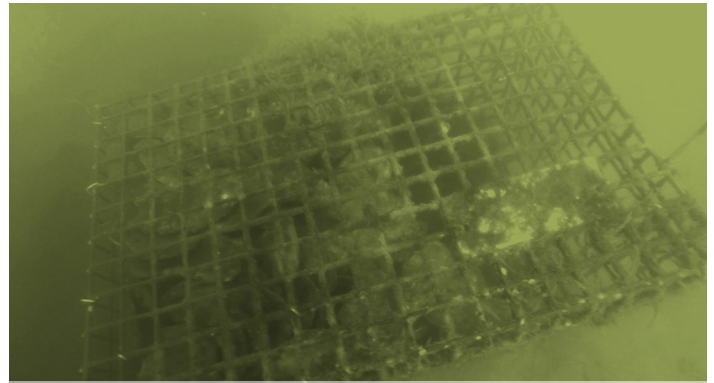
Future Bay Leaders + Summer Interns

- ⇒ We recruited two high school students—one GMHS STEM intern and one Tech Center student—and two college students.
- ⇒ Interns learned skills applicable to life situations and led youth and volunteer teams at our workday events, gaining knowledge on how to be a successful advocate for the Chesapeake Bay.



Outreach and Education

- ⇒ STEM-5 students from Lexington Park Elementary came to the college waterfront and learned how their STEM education can be applied to real-life scientific studies and policy-making—they heard from scientists; counted, measured, and recorded data of spat recruited in our study; and learned how to collect water quality data.
- ⇒ We recycled shells at the US Oyster Festival.



Spat Recruitment Study

- ⇒ We implemented a second-year wild spat recruitment study of the entire tidal St. Mary's River funded by the Department of Natural Resources. St. Mary's College was a key partner, and student James "Toby" Beauregard and Bob Lewis authored the report, which is available on our website.
- ⇒ Spatfall success was directly correlated to existing oyster density in the local area. Heavily harvested areas near the river's mouth had little spatfall. Spatfall in the sanctuary near our restoration sites was best suggesting that sanctuaries are worthwhile.



Advocacy for Oyster Restoration

- ⇒ Last fall, large scale restoration began with DNR's application for a permit to add natural and artificial substrates on ten acres in the sanctuary. The state hopes to begin the restoration work in late winter 2020.
- ⇒ Maryland has indicated that they will restore just under 70 acres. About half of this area already meets or exceeds restoration goals.

Top Challenges for 2020

Restoring the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary

- ⇒ 2020 will usher in the state's large scale restoration efforts in the St. Mary's River Shellfish Sanctuary.
- ⇒ We will seek volunteer groups to augment the state's restoration efforts by planting 8 million oyster seed onto small spread out areas.

Working with Our Local Watermen

- ⇒ We will repeat the study of spat recruitment in the St. Mary's River, making it the third year collecting data. Trends may occur and inform the science of larval drift and propensity to strike in reoccurring locations.

Oyster Restoration & MGO

- ⇒ Our MGO program was the only one that was able to provide spat to our volunteers last fall. We also supplied Breton Bay, St. Clement's Bay and the Patuxent River. We will continue to support the St. Mary's County area.
- ⇒ We will continue to support the more than 220 volunteers hosting oyster cages at more than 140 piers in St. Mary's River, Smith Creek, Breton Bay, and St. Clements Bay.
- ⇒ We will continue to partner with Friends of St. Clement's Bay to restore oysters at Lover's Point in Breton Bay.

Living Reef Action Campaign

- ⇒ We will continue to bring classroom discussions and outdoor hands-on learning about the importance of oysters in Chesapeake Bay restoration.
- ⇒ We plan to build more than 500 reef balls for installation in 2021. We already have 540 reef balls aging in our warehouse for installation on our reef project in May through July 2020.
- ⇒ In July and August, we will engage youth groups, businesses, church groups, and other volunteers in building reef balls and learning about oysters.

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!

Want to Volunteer Your Group? Call us!

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



www.SMRWA.org

Post Office Box 94, St. Mary's City, MD 20686 • 301-904-2387

COVER PHOTO: Intern Jack O'Brien leads youths age 7 to 14 in the building of oyster reef balls as a part of the week-long summer fishing camps at Greenwell State Park.