



2025 Year in Review & Action Plan 2026



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, political, and recreational stakeholders in the community.

Our 2025 Successes

This year, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) celebrated 20 years of serving our river and community. Over the past two decades, we've planted millions of oysters, empowered hundreds of budding watershed stewards, monitored our river's changing conditions, and collaborated with many stakeholders. With your help, we'll continue to build on this progress for a healthier, more resilient river for generations to come.

>3,000

VOLUNTEER HOURS
(THAT'S ALMOST
1.5 FULL TIME
EMPLOYEES!)



SHARED OUR MISSION
WITH

1,114

PEOPLE AT NINE
FAIRS AND FESTIVALS



830,000

BABY OYSTERS RAISED
IN OUR SHORESIDE
NURSERY TANK



58

REEF BALLS DEPLOYED

52

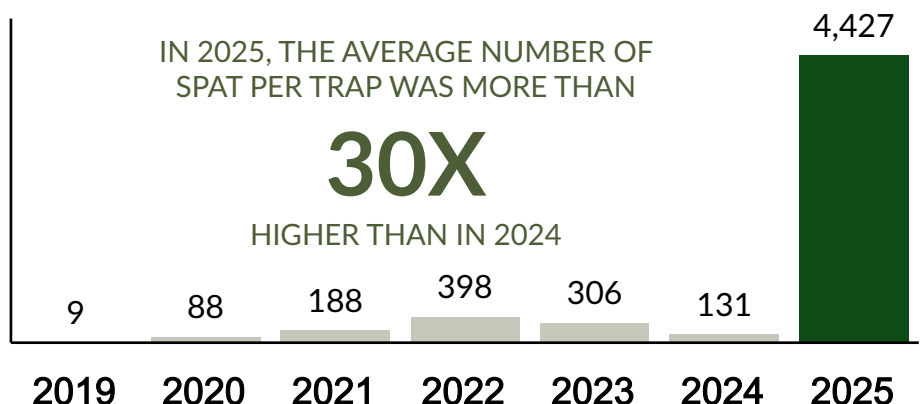
REEF BALLS BUILT

Record oyster reproduction in the St. Mary's River!

Each year, we measure oyster reproduction by counting the number of baby oysters ("spat"), both living and dead, that attach to traps that we deploy throughout the St. Mary's River. We thought that 2022 was a record year for oyster reproduction, but 2025 shattered that record! We believe the spike in oyster reproduction was due to optimal water quality and restoration efforts.



Photo by Capt. Rick Loheed



Outreach & Education



- In 2025, we built reef balls with students from the Chesapeake Public Charter School, Ryken High School, Forrest Career and Technology Center's Natural Resources Management Program, and campers from three Greenwell Fishing Camps.
- We seined for fish and introduced oyster larvae to our nursery tank with the 15 Brendan Sailing campers in July.
- We planted oysters with groups from Boy Scout Troop 420 and first-year students from SMCM.
- These hands-on opportunities instill a sense of stewardship and foster a deeper connection to the Chesapeake Bay.



Breton Bay Reef Surveys



Photo by Dr. Matt Gray of the S3AM team

- Since 2017, SMRWA has collaborated with Friends of St. Clements Bay (FSCB) to plant over 4.5 million oysters off of Lovers Point in Breton Bay.
- We teamed up with FSCB, the S3AM project, and Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology Rapid Assessment Protocol team's Dr. Allison Tracy, to survey the restoration site.
- Early results suggest that the reef is doing well!
- We're hopeful to see more good results in the final analysis.

Future Bay Leaders

- This year, seven students and one recent graduate gained real-world experience while engaging the community, growing oysters, and collecting and analyzing data.
- We hired four interns from St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM): Sarah Luersen, Max Stumpf, Meredith Nishiura, and Kaley Christman, and one recent graduate from the Forrest Career and Technology Center: Megan Shepherd.
- We hosted three Great Mills High School Science Technology Engineering, and Math (STEM) program student interns over the summer: Evan Ulloa, Tyler Neall, and Reyna Anderson.

"Whether I pursue biology, marine science, or even a tech-related field, the skills I've gained will help me stand out as a student and as a future professional."
-Reyna Anderson



"At the end of this internship, I feel more well-rounded and confident in my abilities."
-Max Stumpf

- The paid college and college-bound internships were funded thanks to supporters like you, the Lindsey Paul Rudolph Memorial Endowment Fund, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR), SMCM, FSCB, and the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust.

Honoring River Champions

- At our annual fundraiser, *A River Affair*, we honored our 2025 River Champions: Russell Miller, Diana Mendes, and Mark Bassett, as well as our Volunteer of the Year: Brian Kulczycki.
- Many thanks to the honorees for their exceptional contributions to our work!



Challenges and Action Plan for 2026

Environmental Education for our Public School Students

- Since the closure of Elms Environmental Education Center in Spring 2024, only three St. Mary's County Public School grades receive a single, formal, outdoor environmental education day each year.
- We are reaching out to other nonprofits in an effort to fill the gaps left by the Elms closure.
- We are exploring new avenues for outdoor education.



Expanding our Restoration Footprint

- After the success of our five-acre oyster restoration project adjacent to St. Mary's College of Maryland in both restoring the oyster population and engaging the public, we began looking for a new sites to transform.
- In 2025, with funding from the Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, we identified two new sites for restoration in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR).
- In 2026, we will design, plan, and permit the restoration work for these two sites.
- By 2027, the first reef balls will be going into the water!

COVER PHOTO: Brendan sailing campers learn about the life cycle of the oyster before introducing oyster larvae to our nursery tank.

New Program: SAV Watchers

- We're starting our own SAV (submerged aquatic vegetation or underwater grasses) Watchers program!
- Underwater grasses are indicators of good water quality and are keystone species in the Bay.
- A board member, our Executive Director, and a volunteer were certified to train volunteers on SAV monitoring this summer by MD DNR.
- This Spring, we'll begin monitoring the prevalence of SAV throughout the St. Mary's River.



New Bay Agreement

- On December 2, the Chesapeake Bay Program's Executive Council approved the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.
- This agreement will steer the region's efforts to reduce nutrient pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the next fifteen years.
- We will continue to advocate with all area stakeholders to ensure that the St. Mary's River watershed meets and exceeds the targets set in this agreement.

Your support is essential to protecting and restoring the St. Mary's River. Please consider becoming a member at the Friend (\$103), Steward (\$303), or Guardian (\$1,303) level. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the health of our river.

