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WATERSHED WATCH

ST. MARY'S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
PO Box 94
St. Mary's City, MD 20686

October 13, 2021

Large-Scale Oyster Restoration Moves Ahead

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Last spring, the state began the St. Mary's River large-scale oyster restoration by planting spat-on-shell, known as "seed", in areas of the sanctuary that has insufficient density of wild oysters. The seed was grown from St. Mary's River brood stock at the state's Horn Point Hatchery in Cambridge. The state hired local watermen and the Papa Francis, which was built in Piney Point about a decade ago, to plant more than 75 million spat (baby oysters). This initial seeding in areas designated for seed-only is finishing up this week as the Papa Francis again plies our water in the upper river. The state will repeat this seed-only planting again next year with the goal of having a density of 150 oysters per square meter and at least two year classes. They anticipate having to plant an additional 30 million spat in 2022.

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Last week, the state's contractor for applying rock and/or shells substrate positioned two barges in the sanctuary and were to begin work yesterday. Areas with no oysters but river bottom suitable for restoration will have 6 to 12 inches of substrate spread on the bottom. These areas will receive 40 million seed next year.

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John Felicitas & Christine Wray

John & Karen Garner

Shepard & Pat McKenney



In all the state will restore 15.8 acres with seed-only and another 8.7 acres with substrate and seed. These 24.5 acres are all the state plans to do in the St. Mary's River sanctuary. The estimated cost for this project is \$966,800. The St. Mary's is known as a good oyster tributary and currently has 35 acres of thriving oyster reefs that already meet restoration criteria. Other large-scale tributaries have gotten much more attention: Harris Creek restoration is 351 acres, Little Choptank is 358 acres, and the Tred Avon is 130 acres. The Manokin is slated for 400 acres of restoration over the next two years, although the watermen there are trying to stop the effort. In all the state proposes to restore a total of 1,439 acres in five tributaries at a cost of \$57 million. To read the state's plan for the St. Mary's restoration, visit

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/St._Marys_%28Maryland%29_Oyster_Restoration_Tributary_Plan.pdf



NFWF Announces Grants for Chesapeake Bay

Yesterday, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation announced \$10.3 million in Small Watershed Grants from the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund. These grants will be matched by an additional \$12 million by the recipients. Forty-nine projects were awarded to municipalities, non-profits, and a native American group. The projects range from tree plantings to storm water infiltration to educational programs to oyster restoration. Just over \$3 million was awarded to projects in Maryland.



\$125,000 was awarded to the St. Mary's River Watershed Association to increase the acreage of the St. Mary's River large-scale oyster restoration project by four to five acres. The Association will match the grant award with \$65,000 from its general funds. The project aims to plant six million spat in the St. Mary's River sanctuary.

"Our river appears to have fallen well below the other four restoration tributaries in Maryland in acreage and in monetary investment," said Bob Lewis, executive director of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association. "Historically, our upper river (current sanctuary) had well over 165 acres of thriving oyster reefs and the 69 or so acres the state is proposing to achieve falls short of our goals."



The Association has already restored over six acres and will partner with the state to restore at least an additional four acres in the St. Mary's and a 1/2 acre in Breton Bay.



"Our existing work and this grant project will expand the state's efforts by 18% from 59.7 acres to 70.7 acres," said Joe Anderson president of the Association, "and Breton Bay will get our attention as well."

STEM volunteer, Daniel Ulrich, applies shell substrate.

Volunteers will be vital to the Association's work as they will be engaged at every step through the process. The project estimates that 585 hours of volunteer effort will be required to achieve goals. Please join the volunteer list by emailing Bob Lewis at bobsmrwa@gmail.com. Youth groups are encouraged to become involved.



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.

We're on the web!
www.smrwa.org

Upcoming Events:

- US Oyster Festival
October 16 & 17
St. Mary's County Fairgrounds
Volunteers can help recycle shells
- We expect to have volunteer work days in
October, November, and March.



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