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# WATERSHED WATCH

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

January 23, 2024

## Chesapeake Bay Oyster Reproduction

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Save the **New** Date!

### *A River Affair*



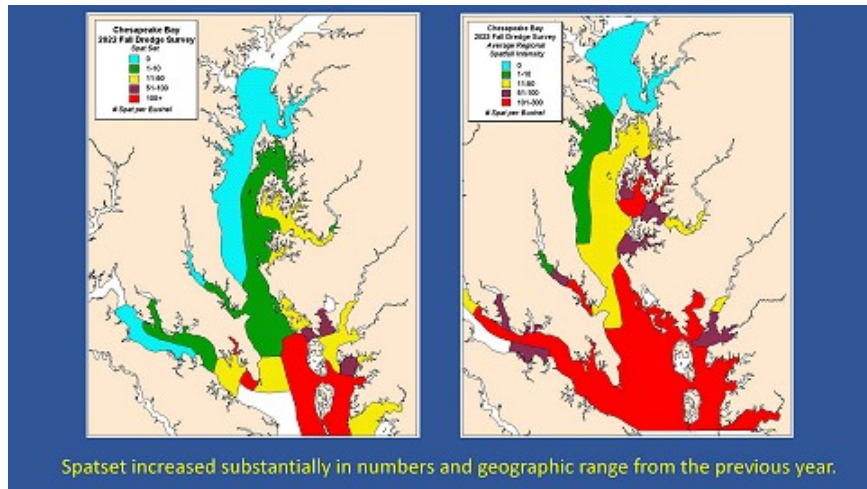
This year *A River Affair* will be held on **Sunday, April 7**. Mark your calendars to enjoy frosty libations, great food, and unique live auction items.

[More Info/Buy Tickets](#)



The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducts an annual Fall Oyster Survey to assess the health of the oyster population in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. They measure disease and the number of juvenile oysters on "key bars." On January 9, DNR announced the [2023 survey results](#) in a public meeting.

2023 was a "remarkable year" for oyster reproduction in the Chesapeake Bay, according to the report. Of the 39 years DNR has been studying the number of baby oysters (spatfall), 2023 had the fifth highest spatfall. Even more promising was the unprecedented distribution of the spatfall across the tidal tributaries in Maryland.



*Slide presented by Chris Judy (DNR) at the Oyster Advisory Commission meeting on January 9. Red shading indicates good spatfall of 100 or more per bushel; blue shading is zero.*

In October, St. Mary's River Watershed Association announced evidence of oyster reproduction in the upper Breton Bay for the first time in two decades. The DNR survey confirmed these results with notable reproduction in lower Breton Bay and the Wicomico River.

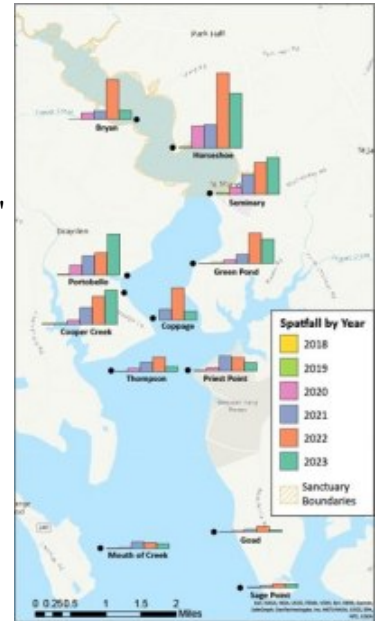
## Spatfall in the St. Mary's River

St. Mary's River Watershed Association has conducted our own oyster reproduction success (recruitment) survey throughout the tidal St. Mary's River for the past six years. After summarizing the annual data, we found that 2022 was the St. Mary's River's best year for oyster reproduction since 2018. While

2023 spatfall ranked among the highest of our study years, there was a 14 % decrease in spat (juvenile oysters) from 2022 to 2023.

"While the Maryland Bay spatfall was exceptional in its wide distribution, the St. Mary's River spatfall was more akin to average," stated our survey founder Bob Lewis. "We're encouraged to see the spatfall numbers increase in 2022 and 2023 after poor results during the previous four years."

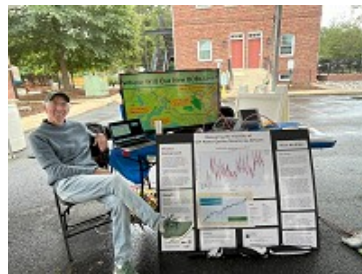
The results of our study help inform fishery management and watermen, who need to make tough choices of where to invest monies to maximize harvests. Thanks to our volunteers, student interns, Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and St. Mary's College of Maryland for supporting this project.



Read the full St. Mary's River Oyster Recruitment Study report [here](#).

## Chesapeake Bay Trust Announces 2024 Oyster Innovation Grants

For the second consecutive year, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) has received Chesapeake Oyster Innovation Award funding to develop its inexpensive, automated solution to address the need for remote water quality monitoring at oyster restoration sites.



The new \$10,000 grant by the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance, in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Trust, will allow SMRWA and lead volunteers Norm & Shelly O'Foran to build three new Bay Observation Boxes (BOBs) and improve our data dashboard, analyze collected data, and upgrade sensors for improved accuracy. SMRWA will also continue its

partnership with students and teacher Dorothy Birch at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center in Leonardtown, MD to build, troubleshoot, and deploy buoys.

"Last year, we learned how to design and deploy the technology. This year, we will focus on improving our sensors and ensuring our data is accurate. These are exciting challenges." SMRWA Executive Director Emma Green said.



Chesapeake  
**OYSTER ALLIANCE**  
10 Billion for the Bay



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](http://www.smrwa.org)



[Join or Renew Today!](#)

Save The Date:

- *A River Affair*

April 7, 2024

[More Info/Buy Tickets](#)

Inquire by text 301-395-5757



- 11am- 4pm September 21, 2024  
Inquire by text 301-395-5757

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