



2022 Year in Review & Action Plan 2023



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 2022 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to fulfill our mission to protect, improve, and promote the sustainability of the St. Mary's River Watershed in 2022. In 2023, our staff will be in a period of transition (see back). Now more than ever, we need your support to sustain our activities.

Oysters!

- ◆ We planted six million "spat" (baby oysters) on four acres in the sanctuary that Maryland DNR deemed suitable for oyster restoration but too small for their large scale operations.
- ◆ We made and deployed 374 Reef Balls with local high schoolers, elementary schoolers, and community groups.
- ◆ At each of these "builds," community members learned about historic oyster population declines, our efforts to restore oysters, and how they can help the Bay.



One Million Oysters in Breton Bay



- ◆ The Breton Bay shellfish sanctuary was originally slated for large-scale restoration by the State of Maryland, but was removed due to existing low oyster density.
- ◆ Since 2017, Friends of St. Clements Bay has been planting MGO oysters and they have seen good success.
- ◆ On September 10th, Friends of St. Clements Bay, Shore Thing Shellfish LLC, and the St.

Mary's Recreational Fishing Organization planted **one million oysters** at Lovers Point in Breton Bay.

- ◆ Thanks to the Chesapeake Bay Trust for partial funding for this project.



Students from Leonardtown high school work together to remove a mold from a reef ball



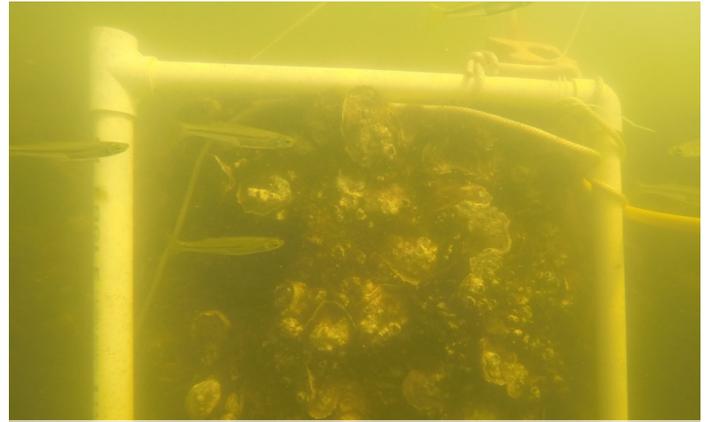


Future Bay Leaders + Summer Interns

- ◆ This summer, we hosted five *Future Bay Leaders* who learned valuable professional skills through the hard work we do every day.
- ◆ Jack O'Brien and Colleen Smith returned this summer as Associate Director and Program Director, respectively.
- ◆ Josh Kim and Morgan Watkins joined as STEM interns from Great Mills High School. Josh studied age structure on our five-acre reef site, and Morgan planted oyster shell.
- ◆ From the Forrest Tech Center, Future Bay Leader Tyler Johnson (pictured above) helped with outreach education, reef ball builds, nursery operations, and planting spat.



Morgan Watkins uses our newly acquired surface air compressor to survey the oyster reef



Monitoring our Five Acre-Reef Site

- ◆ Since we began our five-acre artificial reef project in 2013, we've enhanced the area with 2,326 Reef Balls, over 250 tons of concrete rubble, and over 8,000 bushels of spat-on-shell.
- ◆ This summer we began a comprehensive assessment of the project site thanks to funding from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, and members like you. We will complete the field work in spring 2023.
- ◆ We are thrilled to report that our initial assessment of our five-acre oyster reef shows that it is exceeding the goals for oyster restoration under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement—150 oyster per square meter.

Completion of Large-Scale Restoration

- ◆ The upper St. Mary's River was selected as one of five tributaries in Maryland for large-scale oyster restoration.
- ◆ On October 21st, Maryland celebrated the completion of the first phase of large scale oyster restoration in the St. Mary's River.
- ◆ The state's oyster restoration effort installed 9.7 acres of stone reefs and seeded 25.5 acres with oyster seed.
- ◆ In 2023, CCA Maryland and CBF will deploy 600 reef balls at Horseshoe Point.

Top Challenges for 2023

Collaboration with St. Mary's College

- ◆ St. Mary's College of Maryland, our close supporters and collaborators, began offering a Marine Science Major in 2021.
- ◆ This new Major will bring more opportunities for studying the impacts of our restoration efforts.
- ◆ In 2023, we will directly engage college faculty in developing a plan to assess the success of the St. Mary's Shellfish Sanctuary.

Low Oxygen Events

- ◆ In the deeper areas of our River, we've seen persistent low oxygen in the late summer due to excess nutrient-laden runoff.
- ◆ All the animals in the Bay need oxygen to survive, including oysters.
- ◆ We will continue working to stop these excess nutrients in the St. Mary's River to prevent low oxygen events.

Oyster Restoration & MGO

- ◆ Our MGO program will continue to support more than 125 volunteers hosting 500 oyster cages at 90 piers in the St. Mary's River.
- ◆ We will continue to support the Breton Bay and St. Clements Bay MGO programs through our formal partnership with Friends of St. Clements Bay.



Staff Changes

- ◆ This year, our executive director Bob Lewis will be reducing his workload, and our general manager Emma Green will be taking on more responsibilities.
- ◆ With this transition, your generous support is needed now more than ever.

Sharing Our St. Mary's River

- ◆ Access to the river is free at the Great Mills Kayak Launch, St. Mary's College of Maryland (kayaks & paddleboards), and at the Piney Point county boat ramp. Access is also available for a fee at Dennis Point Marina. Let's all get out and have fun!

Thank you for your support and dedication as a member of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association. Please renew your membership and consider donating at the Friend \$100, Steward \$303, or Guardian \$1,303 level.



COVER PHOTO: Volunteers move one million oysters via 'bucket brigade' onto a barge for planting at Lovers Point in Breton Bay.