

PRESS RELEASE

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NFWF funds St. Mary's River restoration efforts

NOVEMBER 4, 2010—St. Mary's River is one of more than thirty waterways in the Chesapeake region that will benefit in the current round of EPA grants. Administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the \$134,000 Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant will provide funding for watershed planning and for several small restoration projects within the St. Mary's River drainage area.

"This funding could not have come at a better time," said Bob Lewis, executive director of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association. "We have worked on a planning process for the past three years and due to a lack of funding we have been unable to complete a watershed plan for the St. Mary's. This grant will allow us to complete the planning process and plan, identify restoration projects, calculate the potential reduction in pollution loads, and install several demonstration storm water bioretention projects."

The one-year grant project will be led by four partners, and buttressed by several more. The St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) will organize the local planning effort and bring stakeholders together to develop the EPA-required WIP, or Watershed Implementation Plan, for the St. Mary's River. The Center for Watershed Protection will provide the technical and engineering support for the WIP and demonstration projects. St. Mary's College of Maryland is providing the science component including baseline monitoring data; and Maryland Sea Grant Extension will provide oversight for the demonstration projects.

Other key partners in the project, that are not named in the grant proposal, will be St. Mary's County government departments and agencies, St. Mary's County public schools, Master Gardeners, and local developers.

"We are excited to be a recipient of this award," said SMRWA president Joe Anderson. "St. Mary's River is one of the most important rivers in Maryland's history and for centuries this river has provided a living for our watermen. Unfortunately, the river no longer supports thriving fisheries. Our watermen have to travel farther or seek alternatives to fishing in order to make ends meet."

St. Mary's River is contained entirely within St. Mary's County. Local experts say that it is an embarrassment that we have idly stood by and allowed the river to become so degraded.

"Shame on us for not taking care of this beautiful river," said Lewis. "Most of our pollution comes from run off from roads, parking lots, buildings, agriculture, and lawns. Every one of us contributes to the rivers decline. We all have to step up. What happens on the land ends up in our river."

"From planting more trees in urban areas to improving wildlife habitat and minimizing stormwater runoff, these grants result in partnerships that help restore and protect the Bay," said Maryland Senator Ben Cardin, a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Since 2000, more than \$27 million in Small Watershed Grants has supported 626 projects around the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These projects have leveraged close to \$90 million in local matching funds for a total on-the-ground restoration investment of more than \$115 million.

The current award represents the second time the St. Mary's River has benefited from a Chesapeake Small Watershed Grant. In 2002, St. Mary's College of Maryland and the Sustainability Development Institute were awarded a grant to develop a watershed plan for the Hilton Run, a subwatershed of the St. Mary's River. That effort led to the founding of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association in 2004. The Hilton Run Plan is available for download from the Association's Web site, www.SMRWA.org.

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