



2018 Year in Review & Action Plan 2019



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 2018 Successes

Thanks to members like you, the St. Mary's River Watershed Association was able to maintain our programming, credibility, and effectiveness in 2018. We stood firm in our belief that healthy waterways and a clean environment are essential to a high quality of life today and a fundamental right of future generations. Our successes are your successes because it is you who provide the moral and financial support that make this all possible. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Monitoring Oysters and Water Quality

- ⇒ Underwater observation and sampling provided data to evaluate natural recruitment vs. plantings, survival, and growth on our reef restoration site. 2018 was a poor year for wild spat recruitment due to low salinity.
- ⇒ Interns surveyed all six of our restoration sites using hand tongs and diving. (Below: Emma Gilligan working the hand tongs.)



Three Dimensional Oyster Reef

- ⇒ We made over 100 reef balls this year and they are being aged for installation in 2019.
- ⇒ Our oyster nursery produced four million spat. Most of the spat were used in the MGO program in 740 cages in the St. Mary's, Breton Bay, and St. Clements Bay.
- ⇒ The five-acre Oyster Reef Project is a partnership project of the Leonardtown Rotary Club, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and St. Mary's River Watershed Association.





Future Bay Leaders + Summer Interns

- ⇒ We recruited one high school student and two college students: one current STEM intern and one a former Tech Center student.
- ⇒ Each intern learned skills applicable to life situations as well as gained experience in a field directed toward their future professions. Each gained knowledge on how to be a successful advocate for the Bay.



Outreach and Education

- ⇒ Our outreach to youth from the Chesapeake Public Charter School, Capital City Public Charter School, GMHS STEM Academy, and Tech Center's Natural Resource Class provided hands-on opportunities to diverse communities.
- ⇒ Outreach festivals and events like Earth Day, Crab Festival, Oyster Festival, RiverFest, and STEM Expo attracted new volunteers, informed the public of our work, and engaged people in discussions on sustainability.



Spat Recruitment Study

- ⇒ We designed and implemented a wild spat recruitment study of the middle section of the St. Mary's River. Our STEM intern, Jack O'Brien, led the study and authored the report, which is on our website. Our findings indicate that spat strike happens everywhere in the St. Mary's.



Advocacy for Oyster Restoration

- ⇒ Members and staff attended quarterly meeting of the Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission to advocate for the St. Mary's River to be permanently protected now that it has been designated as a major restoration project.
- ⇒ We entered into a formal partnership with Coastal Conservation Association Maryland to bring reef ball building and oyster culture education into schools in southern Maryland.
- ⇒ Tech Center teacher, John Spinicchia, (photo above) displays teaching materials that he and his students used at RiverFest 2018.

Top Challenges for 2019

Protecting the St. Mary's River Oyster Sanctuary

- ⇒ 2019 will usher in the state's major restoration efforts. In order to reap the rewards of this effort, we will push for permanent protection and an end to leasing river bottom for aquaculture.

Working with Our Local Watermen

- ⇒ We will expand the study of spat recruitment in the St. Mary's River and provide useful data and recommendations for enhancing the local wild harvest.
- ⇒ We will continue to assist homeowners installing rain gardens and greening their lifestyles.

Living Reef Action Campaign

- ⇒ We have formalized a partnership with CCA Maryland (and others) to bring reef ball building efforts and oyster culture education to schools and youth groups in southern Maryland.
- ⇒ We plan to build more than 500 reef balls for installation in 2019. We have 300 reef balls aging in our warehouse for installation on our reef project in May through July 2018.

Oyster Restoration & MGO

- ⇒ Our MGO program grew this past fall and we will continue to support more than 160 volunteers hosting oyster cages at more than 100 piers along 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.

Sharing Our St. Mary's River

- ⇒ Our education and outreach programs are integral to our mission and provide a greater understanding of our dependence on clean and healthy waterways.
- ⇒ Field trips for youths provide opportunities to develop interest in and concern for our natural resources. And they are fun!

Thank you for your support and dedication as a member of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.

COVER PHOTO: A father and son row a replica 17th-century shallop. Attendees at RiverFest enjoy water-based activities such as oyster tonging, seining, kayaking, and rowing.

