

ST MARY'S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2006

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of the St. Mary's River,

Welcome to the first edition of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association's newsletter. This organization has come a long way in a short period of time and has many great accomplishments to celebrate as we reflect on 2005. We owe a special thanks to all of you who have served as sparks to get this organization up and running!

Since late last spring we have elected our Board of Directors, applied for our 501 c3 non-profit status, found office space, started our website, hosted the inaugural River Fest celebration of the St. Mary's River, secured a grant from the Chesapeake

Bay Trust, and hired a part-time contractor, Abby Meatyard.— Whew! We're not stopping there! We already have lots planned for the year ahead. We'll be hosting two backyard conservation workshops this spring! Look for announcements for our annual member event in early April. And, of course, after the success of this year's River Fest event—we've already started planning for next year's celebration!

The quality and volume of activities, past, present and future, demonstrate we are well on our way to achieving our goals and our mission! We have a fantastic and unique opportunity to preserve the St.

Mary's River before it has degraded beyond repair. I truly believe we are charting the right course to make a significant and positive impact on the watershed and on the community.

Best wishes to you and yours for a wonderful new year! I look forward to working with you in 2006 to keep the St. Mary's River and its watershed as beautiful as it is today!

Nancy E. McAllister

President, St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA)



Nancy McAllister, President

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *We are now located on the web! Check us out at www.smrwa.org!*
- *Next Board Meeting is February 3rd, 2006, 10am, at Lexington Park Library.*
- *Stay tuned for upcoming Backyard Conservation Workshops and all member events in the spring.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Using already granted Chesapeake Bay Trust grant funds, SMRWA has hired part-time coordinator, Abby Meatyard, to maintain records, carry out routine bookkeeping duties, and communicate with prospective members, and board members. All board members are extremely dedicated to the organiza-

tion and are participating in planning and executing program activities. Board members are:

Frank Allen, physicist at Patuxent River Naval Air Station and member, Commission on the Environment, St. Mary's County.

Joseph Anderson,

Former member of St. Mary's County Board of County Commissioners; general manager, Lexington Park office of Computer Science Corporation.

George Baroniak, farmer and member of many state and local agricultural board and committees.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONT.

Raymond de Leon, environmental engineer and GIS specialist at local defense contracting company, Booz-Allen Hamilton, Inc.

Robert Lewis, board member, Potomac River Association; consultant to many non-profit organizations and proven, long-standing liaison to local minority populations

Nancy McAllister, (President), a graduate of the University of Maryland with

an M.S. degree in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development; former science teacher

Robert W. Paul (Vice President), Steven Muller Distinguished Professor of Science at St. Mary's College of Maryland, Biology Department Chair and long-time director of the St. Mary's River Project

P. Joan Poor (Treasurer), Assistant Professor of Envi-

ronmental Economics, St. Mary's College of Maryland; authority on valuation of environmental degradation

Roger D. Stone (Secretary); author and environmental communications manager; Director and President, Sustainable Development Institute

David Waring, real estate developer and broker

"MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL OF RECRUITING 200 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AND TEN INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS BY THE MIDDLE OF NEXT YEAR."

MEMBERSHIP

The Association's efforts to recruit a membership got off to a rousing start last June 26 with a well-attended reception hosted by Susan Messitte at her handsome house on the St. Mary's River just north of the college. Further efforts to enlarge our membership took place later in 2005 via distribution of our membership brochure at various public events, especially the River Fest held in October, and via our new website.

This newsletter, which will appear quarterly, is envisioned both as a way to circulate general information about the Association's activities, especially noting opportunities for members to participate actively as team members in planning and carrying out the Association's programs, and also as a means of attracting new members.

More needs to be done if we are to achieve our

goal of recruiting 200 individual members and ten institutional members by the middle of next year. If each existing member would successfully sign up a new member, it would move us substantially toward our goal. In order to interest new people, either hand out the membership form portion of this newsletter, or request copies of the color brochure by writing or e-mailing us. In this regard, please note that the newsletter can be downloaded from our website as well as circulated on paper.

The list of members includes: Frank Allen, Joe Anderson, George Baroniak, J. Tyler Bell, Fred & Becky Benton, Maureen & Stephen Bernard, John Hanson Briscoe, James & Judy Carr, Curtis Cooper, Raymond de Leon, David Deaderick, Doris Fischer, John & Sherry Guisti, Jim Hardin, Gail

WRITTEN BY ROGER STONE

Harmon, Suzy Henderson, John & Grace Horton, R. Bruce & Suellen Keiner, Bob Lewis, Phillip & Phyllis Margolius, Paul & Nancy McAllister, John & Julie McAllister, Hassanali Mehran, Susan Messitte, Jane Margaret O'Brien, Gail Ostergaard, Nicholson Parker, Joan Poor, Bob & Susan Paul, Jim Smith, Roger Stone, Donald Strickland, Kate Sullivan, Elaine Szymkowiak, Alice Tetelman, David Waring, Martin Winnick, Phil & Kate Willette, Gary & Linda Williams, Ernest & Paula Wiloughby, John Wilson, and W.O. Wormwood.

Institutional Members: Booz-Allen Hamilton, Inc, Chesapeake Bay Field Lab, Eagan McAllister Associates, Potomac River Assn., Tall Timbers Marina, Tri County Abstract, Inc

Please help make this list longer. And do not hesitate to contact us.

BACKYARD CONSERVATION: HELP YOUR BACKYARD WILDLIFE THRIVE THROUGH THE WINTER

WRITTEN BY ABBY MEATYARD

The winter cold tends to chase most of us inside our homes where it is warm. But while you are curled up on your couch near the fire, take a glance out your window and check on your backyard neighbors. Do the birds, squirrels, deer, and other animals in your yard have a warm shelter, food to eat, or water to drink? If not here are ways you can help the wildlife living in your backyard.

During the winter months you want to make sure that you have plenty of berry and nut producing plants and shrubs that will provide the wildlife with plenty of high calorie foods. Some great native species that produce berries in the fall and winter include: spicebush, staghorn sumac, gray dogwood, black huckleberry, and winterberry . Another way

to ensure that the animals are going to be able to find a good food source is by providing birdfeeders throughout your yard. Feeders can be found in many local stores and for a winter project you could also build one yourself. Be sure to place the feeders in an area where the wind is blocked and for your own viewing pleasure place them near the house. Again you want to find a high calorie seed to place in the feeders to help with the metabolism and the health of your wildlife. Be sure to regularly clean out the feeders to prevent any bacteria and diseases that could harm the wildlife.

The next thing you check is whether your backyard provides shelter for the wildlife to hide from the cold winds, rain, and snow. The best way to provide shelter is to plant native evergreens

around your yard. Some great native examples of these trees which also produce a great source of food for the wildlife are the Atlantic White Cedar, the Eastern Red Cedar, the American Holly, and the Virginia Pine. These trees allow for various different animals to create a shelter that is blocked from the wind and one that is near a great food source. The other way to produce a great shelter for wildlife is building nesting boxes. These boxes provide a great home for many birds which remain in the area year round.

The final element you want to check your backyard for is water. The winter creates a difficult time for animals to find water. Most sources become frozen and in some instances dried up. The easiest way to provide water for animals is a bird bath.

store or nursery. Be sure to fill the bath on a regular basis with fresh water and check daily for ice.

If you have time and the space another fun way to create a water source for your backyard wildlife is building a pond. This will allow for larger mammals, such as deer, to find a water source. The pond, along with the native trees and shrubs, will add a great aesthetic value to your backyard.

So next time you run from the cold and curl up near the fire, don't forget about those backyard animals of yours who with your help can have a warm and fulfilling winter.

BACKYARD CONSERVATION FOR KIDS: DECORATING A CHRISTMAS TREE FOR YOUR WILDLIFE

WRITTEN BY ABBY MEATYARD

It is very important that we begin to teach our kids about conservation at a young age. A great winter project for kids (and adults too) is decorating a Christmas tree for the wildlife in your backyard. This project will help your backyard critters be able to find food throughout the cold months of the year when food is sparse.

Materials Needed: A needle, Spool of string,

Nuts, Berries, Fruit chunks (apples, oranges, cranberries, grapes, etc), Seeds, Popcorn, Pine cones, Peanut butter, Birdseed, Christmas Cookie Cutters, Bread, Ribbon, and An Evergreen Tree

1.) Thread your needle onto a large piece of string (Parents: depending on the age of the children you may want to help and/or supervise). Tie a large knot at the end of your string. Using the nuts, berries, fruit chunks, seeds, and

popcorn begin to thread a pattern alternating the different items. Use your own discretion on how many food strings you should create for your tree (look at the size of the tree and how much fun you and your kids are having creating them).

2.) When finished wrap strings about your tree. With some of your ribbon, tie loops onto the pine cones. You want to be able to hang them from the tree like a

Christmas ornament. Then roll your pine cone in peanut butter (some people find it easier to spread the peanut butter on the cone with a knife). After you have your peanut butter on your pine cone, roll the cone in bird seed. Then hang on your tree.

3.) Now, take several pieces of bread and lay them out on a table.

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BACKYARD CONSERVATION FOR KIDS, CONTINUED

Using your cookie cutters, make bread cut outs of your favorite holiday shapes. Then tie a ribbon at the top and hang them from your tree. The bread will dry out and become stale quickly, creating a great treat for birds and squirrels.

4.) Your tree should now be decorated and full of lots of

treats for your backyard wildlife. Very quickly several different animals will start feeding from the tree. Use your own discretion on how often to replenish the tree. Some refill every few days, others every weekend.

“THE EVENT INVITED ITS 300+ VISITORS TO PARTAKE IN NATURE WALKS, BIRD WATCHING AND SEINING BY THE BEACH”

RIVER FEST 2005

WRITTEN BY ABBY MEATYARD

On October 29, 2005 the St. Mary's River Watershed Association held its first St. Mary's River Fest. The event was hosted at the Chesapeake Bay Field Lab on St. George's Island, an organization which uses environmental outreach and education to keep the history and the culture of local watermen and the Bay alive. The goal of the St. Mary's River Fest was to reconnect the community with the St. Mary's River and the outdoors through various activities and exhibitors.

The event invited its 300+ visitors to partake in nature walks, bird watching and seining by the beach. Near the pier, people were able to participate in oyster tonging, receive a history lesson about wooden boats, and take a ride on the skip jack, *The Dee of St. Mary's*. Local Girl Scouts were invited to complete many tasks to fulfill a Water Drop Badge, a badge which encourages

girls on becoming watershed and wetland stewards. Finally in celebration of upcoming Halloween, The St. Mary's River Fest invited its visitors to paint pumpkins on the Bay Lab's screened in porch.

Surrounding the activity areas numerous exhibitors had set up tables demonstrating various environmental activities that are taking place in the area, as well as things the everyday person can do to help the environment. Exhibitors at the event included St. Mary's College of Maryland's St. Mary's River Project and the Student Environmental Coalition, Historic St. Mary's City's Joe Greeley providing historical reenactment, as well as promoting his book *Watery Highways*, the Patuxent NAS River Conservation Department, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Capital Projects Coordinator of Leonardtown, Mark Grant displaying infor-

mation on the Leonardtown Warf Project, Chesapeake Bay Program (EPA), the St. Mary's Health Department, Bay Wise Gardening, Envirothon/Soil Conservation of St. Mary's County, the Lower Potomac Tributary team, Voter Registration, the Chesapeake Bay Field Lab, and the Friends of Myrtle Point.

While the visitors walked around and enjoyed the variety of exhibits and activities, Fred and Beck Benton and Jim and Suzanne Hardin along with the women of Trinity Church served food and baked goods. People were invited to eat their food at the benches that circled the live music by *Indian Summer* (Michael Smith, Bob Smith, and Lois Stephenson), Gary Rue, and Carrie and Michael Kline.

The St. Mary's River Watershed Association would like to thank all who made

RIVER FEST, CONTINUED

this event possible and successful. Eagan McAllister Associates (Gold Level Sponsor), Booz-Allen Hamilton (Bronze Level Sponsor), and Tall Timbers Marina (Bronze Level Sponsor). Thanks to Cooks Grocery for donating drinks, Raleys Grocery for helping with the food, the Bentons and Hardins for cooking, the women of Trinity Church for their baked goods, Girl Scout Leader, Sharon DeVico, for leading the Girl Scout water drop patch, and the Chesapeake

Bay Field Lab for hosting the event. Special thanks to the St. Mary's River Fest: Bob Paul, Elaine Szymkowiak, Abby Meatyard, Raymond de Leon, Angela Funya, Laura Essex, Jim Smith, Linda Val-landingham, and Suzy Henderson. Finally, we would also like to thank all our vendors, performers, volunteers, and especially the community for supporting our cause.



Captain Jackie Russell, of the Chesapeake Bay Field Lab, gives tours of the St. Mary's River Watershed about the *Dee of St. Mary's*.



Live music featuring *Indian Summer* (above), the Kliens, and Gary Rue.



Skip jack, *The Dee of St. Mary's*, took visitors of River Fest on 2 separate 45 minute tours of the watershed surrounding the Chesapeake Bay Field

PUBLIC POLICY FIELD TEAM: THOUGHTS FROM THE TRENCHES

WRITTEN BY JOE ANDERSON

As we are all well aware, St. Mary's County is one of the fastest developing jurisdictions in the State of Maryland, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The mission of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association is "to protect, improve, and promote the well-being of the St. Mary's River Watershed through the collaborative efforts of economic, academic, environmental, agricultural, social cultural and political stakeholders in our community". Because the St. Mary's River runs largely through the county's largest development district, quite frankly folks, we have our hands full.

Formed as one of the original Association Field teams, the Public Policy Field team's job is to leverage the power of the public's knowledge of the impacts of development on the St. Mary's River into public policy that both protects the river and allows for adjacent development as long as it doesn't contribute to the further degradation of this critical economic and environmental resource.

In the long run, it's going to be public policy based on facts that will ultimately determine the fate of the St. Mary's River. We

have a long way to go, but we have already initiated actions with some success. Some of the highlights include:

Early this Fall the Association was asked to offer a letter of support for the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce TDR Task Force's effort to improve the county's system of transferable development rights (TDRs). In our letter to the St. Mary's Board of County Commissioners we offered support for the Chamber's proposal "as one step in the evolutionary process of continuous improvement of a planning and zoning system aimed at creating a high quality of life for St. Mary's residents, while protecting the rural character and the ecosystem of the region."

Subsequently, the owners of a large residential development scheduled for the Hilton Run sub-watershed were directed by the St. Mary's Planning Commission to consult with representatives of the Watershed Association prior to final submission of their development plans. Bob Lewis and Bob Paul met with the developers and their engineer and offered guidance on how they could make their project more watershed friendly. The jury is still out as to whether their recommendations will be taken to heart, but the fact that we had a chance to pro-

vide input as a part of the Palling Commission approval process was unprecedented and a step in the right direction.

A letter was also sent by the Association to the County Commissioners urging them to convene as soon as possible the St. Mary's Rivershed Commission, a county appointed advisory group tasked to investigate, analyze and make recommendations (to the County Commissioners) regarding the effect of current and proposed land use regulation and policy upon St. Mary's County watersheds. The Watershed Commission was legislated into existence by the previous Board of Commissioners in 2001, and members were appointed, but the group was never officially convened by the county. Given the tremendous amount of pressure being exerted on the County's watersheds by on-going development, there is clearly no time like the present to get this group working!

Finally, if you have the time, go on line to the Baltimore Sun's homepage and access Tom Horton's November 15th and November 19th "On the Bay" columns, "Reality Differs A Bit From People's Words Actions On Growth", and "State's Thirst For Growth

"THE PUBLIC POLICY FIELD TEAM'S JOB IS TO LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER INTO PUBLIC POLICY THAT BOTH PROTECTS THE RIVER AND ALLOWS FOR ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT"

PUBLIC POLICY, CONTINUED

Will Take Toll On The Environment.” Horton writes eloquently about the challenges facing Maryland in balancing the seemingly unstoppable drive to develop with sustaining and indeed enhancing the quality of our environment and ecosystem.

The members of the St. Mary’s Watershed Association’s Public Policy Field Team are Tyler Bell, Jim Smith, Joan Poor, Gary Williams and Joe Anderson. If you are interested in joining the team, or if you have items of concern or interest that

you’d like to have addressed, please contact Joe at 301-737-8125, or at jander-soniii@csc.com.



I’D LIKE TO LIKE TO HELP THE ST. MARY’S RIVER!

I support the St. Mary’s River Watershed Association and its mission to help protect the St. Mary’s River Watershed and engage the community in such efforts!

I would like to become a member of the SMRWA

Membership Options	Price
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Limited Income	\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$100.00

Total: _____

Yes, I would like to become an active member/volunteer

Method of Payment

Check

Name

Address

Please make checks payable to:

The Sustainable Development Institute
and mail this form along with your check
to the address below.

Email Address

Phone

ST. MARY’S RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

PO Box 94
St. Mary’s City, MD 20686

E-mail: smwatershed@yahoo.com

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.SMRWA.ORG

OUR MISSION

To protect, improve, and promote the well-being of the St. Mary's River Watershed through the collaborative efforts of economic, agricultural, environmental, social, cultural, and political stakeholders in the community.

FIELD TEAMS OF THE SMRWA

The St. Mary's River Watershed Association offers a wide range of opportunities to their members. By becoming an active member of the group you will have the choice of 5 different field teams to become a part of.

Public Policy: Works with the local government to help them make informed management decisions for the sake of the watershed and the community. Team Leader— Joe Anderson, 301-863-9282 x 8125, jandersoniii@csc.com

Community/School Relations: Liaison between the Association and the local schools and general public; coordinates River Fest and other community functions and workshops. Team Leader— Abby Meat-

yard, 301-994-2560, ammeatyard@smcm.edu.

Membership: Works to build the membership base of the Association; Coordinates membership events. Team Leader— Roger Stone, 202-338-1017, susdev@igc.org.

Backyard Conservation: Provides information to local homeowners and businesses on what they can do to help the watershed on their own property; Coordinates Backyard Conservation Workshops for the general public. Team Leader— Frank Allen, allensarticles@earthlink.net.

Public Relations: Coordinates the publicity needs for the Association...especially for River Fest, Backyard Conservation Workshops and other special events. Team Leader—

WRITTEN BY NANCY MCALLISTER

TBA.

We'd love to have you join us! If you are interested in becoming involved with any of the Field Teams, please contact us at: smwatershed@yahoo.com or contact any of the Team Leaders.