

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

P.O. Box 653 - Governmental Center
Leonardtown, MD 20650
Telephone (301) 475-4200 x 1547 (DLUGM staff contact)

2017 Annual Report

This Annual Report covers the period of January – December 2017 and is submitted by the current members of the Commission on the Environment (COE) to provide a summary of significant tasks that the COE has undertaken during the timeframe stated above.

I. Current COE Membership & staff support

COE current members and their respective offices are as follows:

Thomas Brewer – President
Mike Thompson – Vice President
Jacqueline Dyson
Mark Burroughs
James Hensley

Past Members (during the reporting period)

Kim Egbert
Gordon Smith

Ex Officio members:

Heather Moritz –Health Department representative (attends only as requested)
Sue Veith –Department of Land Use and Growth Management (staff support)
Ben Cohen -Department of Land Use and Growth Management (staff support)

II. Purpose and Mission Statement

The purpose of the COE is to provide the Commissioners of St. Mary's County with advice and assistance concerning the protection and preservation of the county's natural resources and fragile environment. The COE broadly interprets the word "environment" to include land, air, and water and how the actions of humans influence the habitat in which we live. The mission of the COE is to:

- Gather environmental concerns from local residents and research related topics, utilize available public and private resources, and advance appropriate concerns and suggestions to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County;
- Work with appropriate groups and organizations to support the successful implementation of worthy initiatives;
- Develop and deliver educational resources and outreach activities; and
- Work with civic organizations and the general public to improve, enhance, and preserve the natural resources of St. Mary's County.

III. Summary of Specific Tasks

Significant tasks the COE has undertaken in fulfillment of its purpose and mission statement:

1. Rain barrel and Compost Bin Workshops- The Commission coordinated with the University of Maryland Extension office to plan and execute four workshops, two rain barrel workshops and two compost bin workshops, all taking place on May 20, 2017. The Commission utilized allocated funds to purchase materials, and worked with the Extension office to collect a registration fee at half of the cost of the materials, meaning

that residents obtained the materials at half cost. The workshops were well attended and we received positive feedback. With leftover materials and positive feedback, the Commission plans to hold these workshops again in the future.

2. Sustainable MD Municipalities program- The Commission worked with the Leonardtown Town Council to initiate Leonardtown in the application process to become a Sustainable Maryland municipality. Sustainable Maryland is a certification program for municipalities in Maryland that want to become more sustainable. Once certified, Leonardtown gains access to further sustainability opportunities, including grants for further projects. The Town Council passed the motion to pursue the certification. The COE remains in the process of pursuing certification.
3. Public Outreach- The Commission sought to participate in the Leonardtown Earth Day event on April 23, 2017; however, the event was cancelled due to the weather.

Future Study and Action Topics

1. *Composting*: The Commission plans to continue to educate residents and work to increase opportunities and ease of composting for residents, schools, and businesses. Our research has led us to the opinion that a composting operation sufficient for both residential and commercial organic waste would be beneficial to the county. The Commission offered the recommendation to pursue a covered, aerated pile approach based on research from a St. Mary's College student from 2016, and that recommendation remains.
2. *Recycling*: The Commission will continue to investigate and make recommendations to increase recycling efforts in the county, and develop outreach and education programs. The Commission plans to coordinate a field trip to a local MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) to better understand the sorting processes, and to determine the most common non-recyclable materials that are inappropriately placed into single stream recycling by residents.
3. *Largest negative contributors to the environment*: The Commission plans to identify the largest negative contributors to the local environment, and work to identify suggestions for the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.
4. *Environmental programs and stewardship in Public Schools and community centers*: The Commission will work to make sure that environmentalism remains a focus in public schools despite the elimination of Green Schools program funding. Our recommendation to the Superintendent's office was that some or all public schools participate in the Trex recycling competition. This low maintenance competition involves schools collecting plastic bags and film packaging that do not belong in single stream recycling, weighing the collection monthly, and delivering it to a retail drop-off location. We feel that teaching environmentalism to students is an effective way to also

teach parents. The Commission also recommended to the Public Schools that they initiate a composting project, and will revisit the subject with them next year.

5. *Sustainability workshops for residents:* The Commission plans to replicate the rain barrel workshops and backyard composting workshops co-sponsored with the University of MD Extension office. The Commission also plans to coordinate with the Master Gardener Program to offer a backyard vegetable gardening workshop for residents.
6. *Woods in your backyard workshop:* The Commission plans to repeat the successful workshop (90 + attendees) held in June of 2015.
7. *Environmental Summit:* St. Mary's County held these summits in the past, and the Commission will determine whether hosting future Environmental Summits would be of benefit to the County.
8. *Participation in Community events:* The Commission will provide displays regarding a broad range of information and ideas that County residents can implement at home to "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" in an effort to use less energy and produce less waste in their daily lives at one or more of the following events: St. Mary's Watershed Association's RiverFest, Earth Day in Leonardtown, Juneteenth, Bay-to-Bay Service Day, and the County Fair.
9. *Website development:* The Commission plans to develop the website to provide more resources for residents to access regarding environmental subjects in the county.

IV. Challenges

The COE had two members, Kim Egbert and Gordon Smith, resign their memberships to the Commission. We look forward to the appointment of new members. Brad Newkirk was a member who became unable to attend meetings, but has expressed interest in returning.

V. Acknowledgments

The COE acknowledges that many citizens and professionals have provided assistance and information to the Board. We thank:

- Paul Waxman, former member of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee who attends a majority of our meetings and continues to provide us with a wealth of information regarding recycling and solid waste management issues,
- Nicole Basenback who has been regularly attending our meetings and has provided information on the newly established Watershed Stewardship Academy and water quality initiatives in the County,
- Former Department of Public Works and Transportation Director, George Erichsen, and present Solid Waste Manager, Nickolas Zurkan, for their work and consultation with the COE in our capacity as the County's Solid Waste Advisory Committee,
- And Department of Land Use and Growth Management Deputy Director, Bill Hunt, for his regular participation in our meetings and for bringing items of interest to the attention of the COE,

Finally, we thank the Commissioners of St. Mary's County for providing the staff and financial support for activities of the Commission.

VI. Membership and Meeting Information

As a reader of this annual report, if you are interested in becoming a COE member (<http://www.stmarysmd.com/voluntr/>) and/or would like to attend a meeting as a concerned County resident, please join us on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm in the conference room of the Patuxent Building, located in the Leonardtown governmental center. Please visit our website for more information: <http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/voluntr/environment.asp>

VII. Conclusion

The COE is pleased to submit this report for the period of January– December 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Brewer, COE President