

# ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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## **2021 Annual Report**

This is the Annual Report of the St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment (COE) covering the period from January to December 2021.

### **COE Membership**

Norman Dean-Chair

Molly Boron-Vice Chair

Kristen Whitesell-Secretary

George (Mike) Thompson

Melissa Rodriguez

Cristina Val Perez

Scott Clark

### **Mission**

The purpose of the COE is to provide the Commissioners of St. Mary's County with education, advice and assistance concerning the protection and preservation of our county's natural resources and fragile environment.

### **Meetings**

The Commission meets at 6:30 pm on the first Tuesday of every month. Public participation is encouraged.

### **Focus on Issues of Concern**

The Commission encouraged progress on several key environmental issues in the County, including:

- Home testing of Radon
- Increased air quality monitoring
- Development of a pilot composting project
- County sourcing of electricity and increasing use of renewable sources
- Trash clean-up

## **Sustainability Awards 2020**

Sustainability awards are the flagship project of the Commission. Program goals are to encourage continuous environment improvement by recognizing outstanding St Mary's County students, restaurants, businesses, non-profits and farms for their environmental stewardship, resource conservation, innovative best practices, and pollution prevention. The winners of the award receive publicity for their achievements and an award plaque.

The award winners for 2020 were:

*St Mary's College of Maryland.* Even during a pandemic St. Mary's College was able to continue with past projects as well as create new campus-wide initiatives to promote sustainability! The college has been recognized by Princeton as s one of the top 50 Green schools in the nation. The College has: implemented compost collection for on-campus residents., assured that its new facilities all adhere to LEED standards, and planned, funded, and began construction of a Permaculture Garden.

*St. Mary's Ryken Maryland Earth Preservation Organization (MEPO).* This organization of young academics conducted a trash collection initiative on their campus and surrounding area and supported the Appalachian Wildlife Refuge in its efforts to care for small wildlife.

*Energy Select, LLC.* Energy Select is an energy contractor specializing in solar panel construction, energy analysis and retrofit, electric vehicle charging stations, and commercial lighting retrofits. Among their initiatives, the company helped 172 businesses reduce their energy usage by 2,069,446 kWh representing \$269,028 in annual savings, recycled an estimated 90% of its significant construction waste, and began installation of a solar system that will account for 200% of the company's energy use.

## **Presentations and Discussions**

The Commission received presentations from, and held discussions with local leaders active in environment protection, including:

- Lance McDaniel, Director-Installation Environmental. NAS Pax River
- Jeff Shaw, SMECO
- John Deatrich and Nick Zurkan, DPW&T
- Melissa Towles, Clean It Up SOMD
- Liz Curtz and Cindy Ross. Friends of St Clements Bay

## **Public Education**

The Commission maintains an active Facebook site that focuses on environmental issues of concern to the residents of St. Mary's County. The goal of that site is to educate citizens on important environmental issues, encourage active individual citizen participation in protecting the environment, and highlight and support the work of organizations, businesses and agencies working to achieve a cleaner county.

Examples of informative content on our public site includes

- Announcements of upcoming meetings and conferences
- Promotion of Radon Gas awareness month

- Information on how to submit a nomination for a Commission Sustainability award
- Announcement of the public forum being held by the County Commissioners
- Information on the 2022 Wellness Challenge
- An article on good news stories about climate change

## **Summary of Monthly Meeting Topics**

### **January 2021**

Sustainability Awards

Initiative to open compost facility in the county

Radon

Air monitoring stations

### **March 2021**

Status of storm drain signage project by Leonardtown high school student

Presenters: Liz Curtz and Cindy Ross Friends of St Clements Bay (FSCB): water quality issues in Leonardtown/Breton Bay area

Composting initiative

Radon and air quality monitoring

Sustainability Awards update—impact of Covid on nominations

### **April 2021**

Presenter: Melissa Towles "Clean It Up SOMD" (Previously Named "Trash Free SOMD")— report and discussion of possible joint projects

Sierra Club initiative on encouraging county to source electricity from renewables

Friendship Road Rezoning proposal

### **May 2021**

Approval of 2020 Sustainability Award winners

Air Quality Monitoring

Sourcing of electricity by the County

### **June 2021**

Composting Facility Plan

Sourcing of electricity by the County

SMECO's use of renewables

Friendship Road Rezoning update

Process for electing officers

### **July 2021**

Election of Commission officers

Request for update of County solid waste plan, including composting pilot project

Commission budget

### **August 2021**

Presenter: Jeff Shaw from SMECO, SMECO's use of renewable energy sources

Presenter: B. John Deatruck and Nick Zurkan from DPW&T, update on Solid Waste Plan and Composting Facility

### **October 2021**

Proposed budget for 2022

Earth Day 2022

Update on Radon

Trash cleanup event in October

Possible master gardener workshop

Possible solicitation of grant money

### **November 2021**

Presenter: Lance McDaniel, Director-Installation Environmental. NAS Pax River

Department of Health response regarding radon exposure in St. Mary's County

Continued discussion of grant funding possibilities

Repeat request to DPW & T to see a draft of Solid Waste Program

### **December 2021**

Possible tour of PAX

Sustainability awards

PFAs and Pax River

Master Gardeners' Workshop in February

Commission budget