

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)

2022 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 2022.

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.

Highlights of the Commission's Work

- Held a successful workshop in February 2022 on native plants attended by over 100 residents of the County.
- Awarded the Commission's annual sustainability awards to four programs in recognition of their leadership in promoting environmentally sustainable practices in the County.
- Recommended that the County adopt a goal of obtaining 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030.
- Began planning an event to celebrate Earth Day with Summerseat Farm in April 2023.

Workshop on Native Plants

- On February 19, 2022, the Commission held a workshop on native plants attended by over 100 residents of the County. The workshop examined the ecological benefits of native plants and practical approaches for obtaining and using them. Presenters at the workshop included:
 - Karyn Molines with the Maryland Native Plant Society
 - Barbara Martin, Marlene Smith and Carrie Krier with Butterfly Alley
 - Elisabeth Curtz and Becky Wolf with Friends of St. Clements Bay
 - Stephanie Frederiksen and Debra Mayfield with St. Mary's Master Gardeners

Sustainability Awards

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 2021 St Mary's County Sustainability Award winners were:

Restaurant: Enso Kitchen

School: Captain Walter Francis Duke Elementary School

Non-Profit: Master Gardeners (UMD Extension)

Business: Bay Fibers Studio

Honorable Mention: Ryken High School, Maryland Earth Preservation Organization (MEPO)

Each of the awardees have incorporated sustainment-focused practices into their organizations. Enso Kitchen serves locally grown and produced food and Bay Fibers Studio promotes our local native environment while also donating proceeds to Chesapeake Bay conservation and other environmental causes. The volunteers that make up the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardeners have worked tirelessly to incorporate native plants in landscape design projects and in leading County residents and businesses in installing interpretive boards for others to learn about wetlands, native trees and buffer zones. Lastly, Duke Elementary School students and teachers have an active garden club, support pollinators by planting native flowers, incorporate signage to limit paper towel waste, and have a very popular walk/bike to school program. Receiving an honorable mention was the Maryland Earth Preservation Organization for increasing their efforts to bring environmental topics to even more students.

Resolution to Promote Renewable Energy in the County

The Commission recognizes the environmental and economic benefits of using energy from wind, solar and other renewable resources. After several meeting and considerable discussion, the Commission adopted a resolution recommending that the County establish "a one hundred percent (100%) renewable energy goal for county government electricity use by the year 2030."

Other Issues of Interest to the Commission

The Commission held discussions on a wide range of other issues, including

- Promotion of composting as an element of the County's comprehensive solid waste management plan.
- Adoption of policies, including a solar zoning ordinance, that encourages increased development of solar energy in St. Mary's County.
- Trash cleanup in the County.

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.

Presentations and Discussions

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

- Benjamin Hance and Brandon Smith, Southern Maryland Sierra Club
- James Raley, President of the Farm Bureau
- Staff of Maryland Environmental Service
- Amanda Yowell, County Zoning Administrator

Summary of Monthly Meeting Topics

January 2022

Commission Sustainability Awards

Master Gardner workshop in February

February 2022

Master Gardner workshop scheduled for February 19

Status of county solid waste management program plan

Presenter: Benjamin Hance, Southern Maryland Sierra Club resolution to promote county purchase of electricity from renewable sources

County Solar zoning ordinance

Presenter: James Raley, President of the Farm Bureau on draft solar zoning ordinance

March 2022

Sustainability Awards: to be announced on March 26 at Cherry Blossom Festival

Review of Award winners

April 2022

Guest: Brandon Smith, Southern Maryland Sierra Club on draft resolution to promote solar

Sustainability Awards recap

Possible future initiatives by the Commission

May 2022

Meeting cancelled for lack of a quorum.

June 2022

Extended discussion and approval of resolution recommending that county's use of electricity be from 100% renewables by 2030

Planning for future presentations to the Commission

Trash cleanup initiatives in the County

Possible grant funding for Commission projects

July 2022

Election of Commission Officers for 2022-2023

Discussion of the comprehensive solid waste management plan for the County and the role of the Commission with respect to that plan

August 2022

Presenters: staff of Maryland Environmental Service on composting

Decision to present comments on solid waste management plan

Commission budget and plans

September 2022

Guest: Amanda Yowell, County Zoning Administrator

Continued discussion of county solid waste management plan

Possible role of Commission in celebrating Earth Day 2023

October 2022

Earth Day 2023: decision to hold a joint event with Summerseat Farm and discussion of issues, budget and tasks related to the event

Transmitting the Commission resolution on county use of renewables to the County Commissioners

Discussion of possible changes to county solar zoning ordinance

November 2022

Preparation for Earth Day 2023 event with Summerseat Farm including insurance, vendors, and budget

Guests: Mark and Scott Fondren, Possible tree planting project by Scott as part of his work to become an Eagle Scout

Presenter: Christina Allen on “Cycling Without Age” program in the County

Update on Sustainability Awards

December 2022

Preparation for Earth Day 2023 event with Summerseat Farm, including discussion of the vendor application, possible giveaways to attendees (such as trees, seeds, plants), speakers, and music.

Cleanup of trash on County property: Airport Road and Three Notch Road.

Update on Sustainability Awards

Commission budget and future events