

The background of the slide is a landscape photograph. On the right side, there is a dense line of dark green trees. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from a low sun, creating a sunset or sunrise scene. The light reflects on the water in the foreground. In the distance, a small boat is visible on the water. The overall mood is serene and natural.

**ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
WATERSHED STEWARDS ACADEMY**

STRATEGIC ROADMAP 2020-2025

ABOUT THIS PLAN



For 11 successful years, Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA) has trained leaders across Anne Arundel County to drive change for clean creeks and rivers in their communities. In 2020, the Board, Strategic Planning Committee and Staff of WSA developed a new Strategic Plan to focus our efforts, thoughtfully charting opportunities to expand our reach and impact over the next five years. Guided by Due East Partners during a global pandemic, we came together and developed a new vision and mission, four priorities to guide our next five years, and three results of long-term change we will create in partnership with individuals and organizations across Anne Arundel County and the Chesapeake Bay region. Each result is accompanied by a set of actionable strategies along with measurable progress indicators that WSA will use to track and report on our impact. Through our many planning sessions, input gathering, and field testing, we worked to ensure this Strategic Plan is accessible to our broad and diverse constituency and will inspire more people to join us in taking action for sustainable landscapes and clean waters. We did this by engaging the following key constituents:

- 14 Board
- 7 Staff
- 27 Donors
- 80 Watershed Stewards
- 20 Consortium Members
- 39 Partners
- 9 House of Worship Members

Thank you to our Staff, Strategic Planning Committee and Board for their guidance and leadership:

Staff: Suzanne Etgen, Alyssa Brummitt, Noelle Chao, Josh Clark, Haley Denton, Katie Foster, Trish Hennessy-Webb,

Strategic Planning Committee: Khadija Abdur-Rahman, Mike Davis, *Frank Dawson*, Ginger Ellis, Nina Fisher, Kate Fritz, Tatiana Klein, *Steve Raabe*, Matt Rhoderick, *Steven Russo*, *Carmera Thomas-Wilhite*

Board: Jan Atwood, Bill Daniel, Adil Desai, Kevin Green, Leila MacCarthy, Liam O'Meara, Barbara Palmer, Melanie Parker, Kristin Reilly, Don Simpson, Michael Wagener

*Board members on the SPC shown in italics

VISION



WSA envisions every community in Anne Arundel County actively engaged to ensure a healthy environment for all.

MISSION



Train and mobilize community leaders to drive change for sustainable landscapes and clean waters.

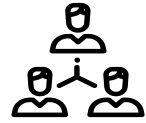
VALUES



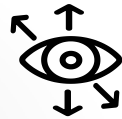
Clean Water, a Metaphor for Life
Partner Inclusively
Share Abundantly
Be Energizing

TARGETING ACTION FOR MEASURABLE IMPACT

5-Year Priorities



Train and mobilize a diverse network of leaders to engage communities in actions that reduce pollution.



Expand WSA's presence and visibility to foster environmental stewardship and behavior change.



Build and strengthen relationships with government, businesses, organizations, and residents for enduring collaborations to achieve land and water restoration.



Multiply resources to increase restoration actions across Anne Arundel County.



10-Year Results

With volunteers, partners, donors and community leaders, we can achieve bold, enduring impact over the next decade:



Volunteers effectively engage all communities



People who live, work, and gather in Anne Arundel County are engaged in habits that help reduce pollution



Sustainable landscapes and clean waters



Volunteers effectively engage all communities

Our ability to unite to overcome our biggest challenges depends on dynamic community-based leadership. Over the last decade, hundreds of grassroots leaders from Brooklyn Park to Herring Bay have transformed our approach to one of the greatest challenges of our time—restoring our local waterways. Together, we have made progress we could barely imagine.

For almost all environmental restoration projects in Anne Arundel County, there is a Master Watershed Steward involved. Often, without this Steward, the project would have never been identified, funded, installed or maintained.

As we enter the next five years, WSA will continue to train and mobilize diverse community leaders from every corner of Anne Arundel County. We will significantly increase our partnerships with faith communities and partner with Anne Arundel County Public Schools to offer unique action opportunities for students. We will also offer meaningful education and volunteer opportunities that fit into the busy schedules of families, businesses, and community members. From backyards to churchyards and many businesses and schools in between, we will equip local leaders to restore Anne Arundel County's landscapes, streams, and rivers.

Strategies

- Train and engage diverse community leaders in targeted areas to increase WSA's reach and impact.
- Devise new methods of engagement to reach priority audiences, including families, faith communities, community associations, businesses, and schools.
- Inspire and empower the faith community to lead environmental stewardship actions in their own congregations.
- Expand our relationship with Anne Arundel County Public Schools to increase environmental action opportunities for students.
- Retain the involvement of certified Stewards and support their ongoing community leadership activities.
- Provide leadership to influence community engagement programs across the Chesapeake Bay region.

THROUGH TRAINING AND INNOVATIVE METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT WE WILL SUPPORT **200** ACTIVE MASTER
WATERSHED STEWARDS AND REACH **100,000** DIVERSE COMMUNITY MEMBERS.



Empowering Believers Church



When it rains, surrounding development dumps runoff onto the grounds of Empowering Believers Church in Glen Burnie. A few years ago, it was not uncommon for standing water deeper than 10 inches to cover the parking area and lawn. In 2015, WSA and members of the church’s congregation partnered with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake to install projects to relieve flooding.

Our relationship did not end when those projects were complete, it was just getting started. Over the last 5 years we have grown and deepened this relationship by creatively tackling the environmental issues that matter to the congregation, lifting up their leadership, like Master Watershed Steward Roz Davall (pictured on the left).

“When the Empowering Believers Church began partnering with WSA, I shared with them we were new kids on the block. The church continues to get help from WSA to sustain our garden and to help empower and educate our congregation on how we can continue to heal our earth by caring for our environment.” - Apostle Larry Lee Thomas, Pastor of Empowering Believers Church and President of United Black Clergy of Anne Arundel County

Today, Empowering Believers is no longer the “new kid on the block”, but rather a seasoned leader helping to bring new and diverse communities into our shared environmental restoration movement.

From “new kid on the block” to seasoned movement builder



People who live, work, and gather in Anne Arundel County are engaged in habits that help reduce pollution

We are all in this together and *It takes all of us*—phrases that represent our community’s incredible response to the recent health pandemic. These sentiments hold power, now more than ever, as we tackle the expansive task of restoring our local waterways.

Private property constitutes the number one source of runoff into streams and waters in Anne Arundel County. Regulation and policy can’t fix this problem—only individual action can. Yet, in the 2017 Citizen Stewardship Indicator survey, less than 40% of Anne Arundel County residents believe their actions make a difference to local waters. In the next five years, we will reach well beyond those who are currently engaged in watershed efforts; we know it will take all of us to make the difference.

With a growing force of volunteer leaders and partners, WSA is poised to lead campaigns to achieve measurable behavior change across the county. We will accelerate cleanup of our local creeks and rivers by carefully selecting priority audiences and equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and passion to drive new habits that reduce pollutants in our waterways.

Strategies

- Raise the public profile of Stewards to increase awareness of WSA and environmental stewardship.
- Develop a marketing and branding campaign to build the visibility of WSA and spark environmental action.
- Develop and lead campaigns, in collaboration with partners, to achieve measurable behavior change in targeted groups.

ALMOST 600,000 PEOPLE LIVE IN ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY AND ONLY 40% REALIZE THEIR ACTIONS CAN HELP REDUCE POLLUTION (CITIZEN STEWARDSHIP INDICATOR).



The Ladies of Linthicum



Master Watershed Stewards Sandy Hartzell and Brenda Schwaab have lived in northern Anne Arundel County for most of their lives. People know them. People trust them. They share the same concerns, experiences and vision for their community.

Sandy and Brenda use their long-term relationships to open doors to restoration and engagement. They mentor STEM change-maker students and install rain gardens at local schools, treat over 1,000 gallons of polluted runoff annually through residential projects, and transform their congregational ground into a sanctuary for birds and butterflies. Beyond Linthicum, they were instrumental in the Delaware Maryland Synod's 500 tree planting commemoration.

Opening doors to restoration
for all of their neighbors



Sustainable landscapes and clean waters

EMPOWERED LEADERS + ENGAGED RESIDENTS = ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

From large projects, built with partner organizations, to climate-resilient tree species planted by thousands of residents as part of Replant Anne Arundel, these projects on private property will result in sustainable landscapes and cleaner waters.

To complement the efforts of our mobilized grassroots network, we will deepen and expand our partnerships with local government, restoration professionals, and partner organizations to provide technical resources that assist communities in moving from ideas to action.

To ensure the long-term impact of stormwater restoration projects, WSA will launch a new multi-sector, countywide maintenance collaborative that pools collective knowledge and resources to create a sustainable and measurable solution for maintenance.

Strategies

- Deepen the relationship with Anne Arundel County government to increase watershed restoration through community engagement.
- Increase the tree canopy across Anne Arundel County through targeted tree plantings and protection of existing tree canopy within communities.
- Create and execute a plan, focusing on Consortium Members, to measurably increase the involvement of restoration professionals in Steward projects.
- Expand WSA's suite of technical resources to increase the number of medium- and small-scale stormwater restoration projects, focusing on those that can adapt to changing precipitation and temperature.
- Launch a countywide coalition to increase effective maintenance of medium- and small-scale stormwater restoration projects.
- Identify and support large-scale stormwater restoration projects, built by local partners, that meet community needs and achieve the greatest possible community engagement and investment.

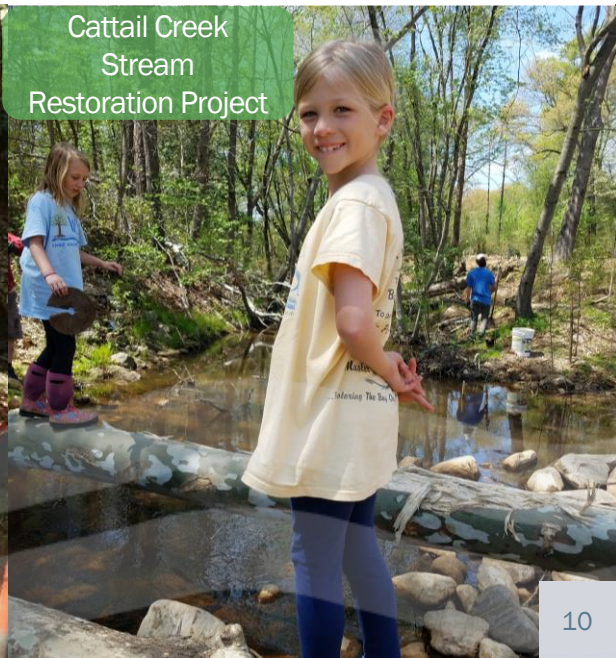


Sustainable landscapes and clean waters

AS WSA ENGAGES A GREATER NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, OUR ROLE WILL BE CRITICAL IN BUILDING A PIPELINE OF PROJECTS THAT CAN SIGNIFICANTLY TREAT LARGE STORMWATER FLOWS.



Steward Khadija Abdur-Rahman plants a forest buffer along the South River.



Cattail Creek Stream Restoration Project



Conservation landscapes at Payne Memorial Church in Jessup



Steward Keli Stambaugh plants natives with a student from the Center of Help at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

Organizational Excellence

In these challenging and uncertain times, WSA's organizational foundation has become even more critical to its ability to deliver on the promise of sustainable landscapes and clean water.

To successfully implement this plan, all people who live, work, and gather in Anne Arundel County must see themselves reflected in our work, our Staff, our volunteer leadership, and our partnerships. To that end, WSA will build our organizational capacity to engage a larger and more diverse constituency over the next five years.

We will also pursue audacious goals that leverage our value. Every dollar donated to WSA is matched 10:1 by communities investing in their own clean watershed initiatives. By increasing our unrestricted revenue, we can provide a powerful multiplier for homegrown efforts to restore our land and waters.



Strategies

- Develop and integrate equity and inclusion goals and diversify our Staff, Board, Stewards, and Consortium.
- Develop clear metrics and data collection protocols to track program success and pollutant reductions.
- Increase WSA's flexible dollars through grants, major donor fundraising, and earned revenue sources to support growth and innovation.
- Increase capacity (Staff, facilities, infrastructure) to support and engage volunteers, donors, and partners.
- Cultivate and retain knowledgeable and fulfilled Staff who build and maintain meaningful relationships with Stewards, partners, donors, and volunteers.

Progress Indicators



Result 1: Volunteers effectively engage all communities

- Over 200 Master Watershed Stewards remain active.
- 20,000 community members engaged annually.
- 60% increase in RiverWise Congregations.
- 20% increase in Stewards who engage with schools annually.
- 85% of Stewards reporting activities.
- Increase trainings and resources to support effective community engagement programs in Anne Arundel County and across the Bay watershed.



Result 2: People who live, work, and gather in Anne Arundel County are engaged in habits that help reduce pollution

- Increase investment and ownership of stormwater restoration projects.
- Measurable change for three to five behaviors within priority audiences in Anne Arundel County.
- Increase the number of people who recognize WSA and understand how their individual actions impact their local waterways.



Result 3: Sustainable landscapes and clean waters

- Increase in public and private funding for stormwater restoration projects.
- Increase in the number of stormwater restoration projects, including those with climate-adaptive design elements.
- Increase in the annual number of new acres treated by stormwater restoration projects, including 20+ new acres treated with urban tree planting.
- Increase in the number of voluntary stormwater restoration projects that are well maintained three years after installation.
- Double the number of restoration professionals actively supporting Steward projects.



Organizational Excellence

- Double the funding for tree planting programs (\$260K to \$520K).
- Increase in the diversity of perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds of the Staff, Board, Stewards, and Consortium.
- 75% of supporters have relationships with more than one WSA Staff.
- 100% of Staff rate WSA as a great place to work.
- 90% of Staff achieving professional development goals.
- Launch a planned giving program with 10 to 15 donors.
- Triple earned revenue (\$17.5K to \$52.5K annually by 2025).
- Double our unrestricted raised revenue (\$180K to \$360K annually by 2025).

Additional insights on a few of our strategies*



Develop and lead campaigns, in collaboration with partners, to achieve measurable behavior change in targeted groups.

Behavior change campaigns are informed by social science, following a specific sequence that moves a target audience from issue awareness towards a behavior change that results in a specific outcome. WSA will use a rigorous process to identify target groups, implement campaigns, and track and measure behavior change over time.



Launch a county-wide coalition to increase effective maintenance of medium- and small-scale stormwater restoration projects.

Lack of adequate maintenance of stormwater restoration projects has been a persistent and widespread issue. Poorly maintained projects don't function as intended to filter pollutants. They also contribute to the perception that projects are "messy" or "unsightly," thus threatening the widespread adoption of these practices. We will initiate a cross-sector collaborative of organizations, businesses, and individuals who affect and are affected by the issue of stormwater restoration project maintenance, working toward solutions in a structured way. This strategy will focus on restoration project maintenance within Anne Arundel County.



Identify and support large-scale stormwater restoration projects, built by local partners, that meet community needs and achieve the greatest possible community engagement and investment.

Communities identify a wide range of potential projects, from very small residential-scale projects, averaging a few hundred dollars, to very large stream restoration projects that can cost well over \$100,000 and take years to implement. WSA will partner with organizations who regularly manage large projects to provide project identification, community engagement, and "buy in" through our Watershed Stewards, while the partner organizations manage project development and implementation.

**In gathering feedback to strength our new Plan from our diverse constituency, we recognized that a few of our Strategies, while no more important than others, could use some additional explanation.*



Provide leadership to influence community engagement programs across the Chesapeake Bay region.

WSA Staff will engage in strategic initiatives to increase the effectiveness of volunteer engagement programs and community outreach within Anne Arundel County and throughout the Bay watershed. Examples of this work are the new Stewardship Actions and Behavior Change website and efforts to consider stormwater credits for behavior change.

5-YEAR PRIORITIES

10-YEAR SHARED RESULTS



Train and mobilize a diverse network of leaders to engage communities in actions that reduce pollution.



Expand WSA's presence and visibility to foster environmental stewardship and behavior change.



Build and strengthen relationships with government, businesses, organizations, and residents for enduring collaborations to achieve land and water restoration.



Multiply resources to increase restoration actions across Anne Arundel County.



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Sustainable landscapes and clean waters

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Organizational Excellence

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Develop clear metrics and data collection protocols

Increase WSA's flexible dollars innovation.

Increase capacity to support and engage volunteers, donors and partners.

Cultivate and retain knowledgeable and fulfilled Staff who achieve excellence.

