



## Engage in Advocacy

Blue Water Baltimore works to advance policies and regulatory actions that protect and improve the health of local waterways and surrounding communities while amplifying local voices, centering equity, and building a powerful movement for clean water.

If you support a clean environment and strong, healthy communities, join our advocacy efforts today! [Sign up for advocacy alerts to stay informed and take action.](#)

It's hard to capture everything that happened in 2020. Here are few of our favorite memories and updates from the field.







# Virtually Brilliant



# Partners in Action



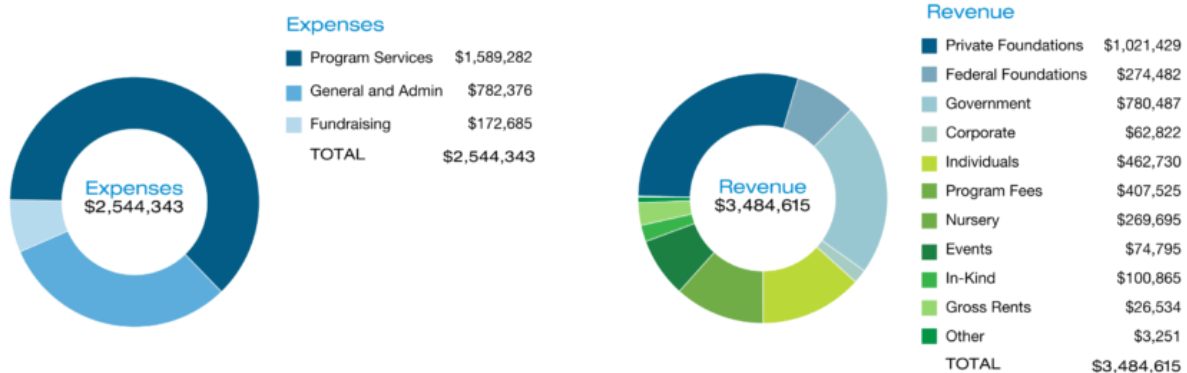
# Garden Boom





## Pollution Sleuthing

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It takes a village to protect our environment. From \$1 to \$100,000, every donation adds to our cleaner, healthier future. Additionally, every donor becomes a member of Blue Water Baltimore for the next 365 days, building our standing in legal actions and elevating our messages with local leadership.

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Baltimore City Office of Sustainability

Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

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# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## Virtually Brilliant: Bringing Ecoliteracy Online



Prior to 2020, Blue Water Baltimore did not offer any virtual

programming, which is wild to think about considering our new “normal”. All our educational programs used to be delivered in classrooms or out in the community, and as much as we miss delivering programs in-person, we’ve learned that we can reach a much wider audience by offering our programs online.

The pandemic brought us indoors, so we sought to learn about the outdoors from within. We were challenged to design creative and accessible programs to educate others. To make our programs more interesting for online viewers, we developed novel ways to engage with audiences. Storyboarding, shooting, and editing short videos has aided our Ecoliteracy Programs in going virtual. With what we have

learned, we intend to continue translating and offering our Ecoliteracy Programs virtually, as well as in-person when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

“There’s a sweet spot where the virtual world and natural world can both serve as appropriate spaces for learning,” says John Marra, our Ecoliteracy Specialist. Our transition to virtual programming has allowed us to explore ways to represent our vision for the world through digital means. Moreover, our virtual workshops afforded us a few recorded versions of what we do, creating valuable content to share throughout our watershed in the future.

We are especially proud of our new virtual [F.O.G. Monster Mash Workshop](#), also led by John Marra. In the workshop students turned ordinary used soup cans into monsters that “feed” on fats, oils, and grease (F.O.G.) that may otherwise go down the drain. Many Baltimore residents unintentionally damage the pipes in their home and throughout the city each time they dispose of F.O.G. down their drains. By getting rid of F.O.G. Monsters in the trash rather than the sink, Baltimore residents help protect our pipes, homes, and waterways.

Reflecting on this workshop, John feels that technology has unlocked a whole new world of possibilities for learning. Are more workshops like this possible? “Totally!” says John, “If we have the right gear and the right people shooting it. We could really make a difference”

Looking into the future, we are envisioning ecoliteracy programs of various modalities. Ranging from virtual workshops to in-person steam walks, we’ve got a lineup of programs to meet you where you are most comfortable. There’s even some talk of incorporating augmented reality into our programs. The possibilities are truly endless! One thing is for certain: Blue Water Baltimore is keeping up with the times.

Learn more about our programs and workshops at [BlueWaterBaltimore.org/ecoliteracy-programming](https://BlueWaterBaltimore.org/ecoliteracy-programming)

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# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## Partners in Action: doing good is good for business



On a

windy Friday afternoon, our restoration team was joined by a cheery group of volunteers at a vacant lot on North Washington street. As we set up our check-in table, we were approached by Max Hart, Head of Creative Services at Flywheel Digital. Flywheel Digital is an advertising and marketing company that helps drive growth in digital commerce. They are a subsidiary of Ascential, a London-based media company serving clients in over 120 countries. There's something beautiful about a company with such a

large global reach working to make an impact locally. With an office in such close proximity to the harbor, Max feels that Flywheel has a responsibility to be a positive force in the area they are based in.

Over the past year Flywheel has stood by —and benefitted— from its acts of social corporate responsibility. What started off as a Google search for ‘volunteer opportunities’ grew into an impressive record of continuous engagement with Blue Water Baltimore. From a private learning session about the urban water cycle, to community tree plantings and trash cleanups Flywheel has done it all! By embracing our programs Flywheel has introduced new perspectives to employee while bolstering employee retention. “When I volunteer with Blue Water Baltimore I feel like I’ve achieved something... like I’m a part of something bigger” says Max. Moreover, he feels that our programs are a great way to do something in the ‘physical world’ when he spends so much time working in the ‘virtual world’.

**“When I volunteer with Blue Water Baltimore I feel like I’ve achieved something... like I’m a part of something bigger.”**

*Max Hart, Head of Creative Services at Flywheel Digital*

Partnering with BWB offers a lot more beyond much needed relief from remote work. It also broadens the lens by which Flywheel employees approach communications with their clients. “[BWB Programs] get the cogs turning,” says Max, noting the real-world applications of our ecoliteracy work.

Max strongly believes that the private sector as a whole needs to work harder to give back. When it comes to building a culture of inclusivity and holding ourselves accountable to the communities, we inhabit Max says, “It takes more than just words.” In 2020, companies like Flywheel Digital helped bring our mission to life. Learn more about how your company can partner with us to leave a legacy, and strengthen communities in Baltimore.

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# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## Pollution Sleuthing: the Waterkeeper team hits the streets



In Armistead Gardens, a massive mountain of soil, sediment, and debris towers over the neighboring trails. Nicknamed “Mount Dirt” by locals, this pile holds thousands of pounds of sediment—one of the four major types of pollution afflicting the city’s waterways. Thought to be self-contained, Mount Dirt was largely left alone by local authorities until, one day, a local passerby noticed part of the mass had collapsed. This eroding face had entirely filled a tributary connecting Armistead Run and Buttonbush Swamp. After receiving a tip on Blue Water Baltimore’s Pollution Reporting Hotline [link], the Waterkeeper Team sprang into action. Using drone technology, our team, in partnership with the Maryland Department

of the Environment (MDE) captured images and video of the pollution issue, which helped MDE enforce an existing consent order to put an end to this pollution.

Further downstream, the Waterkeeper team received another report—water was flooding the streets of Canton. With the help of the media and committed ordinary citizens, our teams tracked this apparent watermain break back to its source. Storm drains, maintained by Baltimore’s Department of Public Works, were releasing huge amounts of sediment into the water, clogging key pipes, and causing breaks and overflows.

In both cases, committed citizens played an integral role in addressing sources of pollution in their communities through Blue Water Baltimore’s community-engagement programs. COVID-19 related closures limited our team’s ability to get out on the water, so we adapted and spent most of 2020 expanding the reach of our pollution reporting programs. By doing so, we involved more Baltimoreans in the fight against pollution in our waterways. By shifting our signature “Evening with Your Waterkeeper” event digitally, our teams were able to spend less time orchestrating an in-person event, allowing for lengthy trends analyses on water quality data instead. Time is precious and the pandemic gave our Waterkeeper team the time it needed to do a deep dive into our scientific work.

*For the first time since the beginning of our water quality monitoring program, we can confidently say that bacteria levels in Baltimore’s waterways are remaining at consistent levels and, in some locations, notably decreasing. What does this mean? “Well, it could mean that projects on land are working,” said our Water Quality Scientist, Barbara Johnson. For more information on water quality, check out [Baltimore Water Watch](#) updated weekly!*

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