

2017

# ANNUAL REPORT



BLUE  
WATER  
BALTIMORE

CLEAN WATER, STRONG COMMUNITIES

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## A LOOK BACK IN 2017

*What a year 2017 was for Blue Water Baltimore and our many partners and supporters! I'm so inspired by what we have accomplished together, and thankful for your incredible support of our work.*

Clean water is essential. Yet, in these busy times, we rarely think about where our drinking water comes from, where our sinks and toilets drain, or what happens to all that rain water rushing down our streets. These are things that Blue Water Baltimore cannot stop thinking about, because in this region, the reality is not always what we'd like. Bursting water pipes due to cold weather, sewage backups into basements, and local flooding of streets and neighborhoods are all reminders that Baltimore's networks of underground pipes for moving water and wastewater are old and leaky, and often pollute our streams and harbor.

In 2017, we turned an important corner in Baltimore. Blue Water Baltimore and other advocates spent many hours working toward a strong and transparent legal agreement between the City and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that our sewer pipes are repaired and maintained over the next 13 years to significantly reduce the amount of pollution entering our waterways. Blue Water Baltimore stopped a scrap-metal recycling facility from releasing toxic chemicals into the Patapsco River and discovered an oil spill in the Jones Falls. We brought a barren median on Route 40 back to life with hundreds of new trees and helped residents from Mondawmin and Oliver neighborhoods express themselves with photography to spur community conversations. We helped bring cherry trees back to Cherry Hill, removed tens of thousands of square feet of impervious surfaces, and engaged thousands of volunteers in Baltimore City and County to plant, clean, and advocate for cleaner water.

In this year's Annual Report, we are proud to share stories about Blue Water Baltimore's work that highlight some of the many facets of our community-focused approach, some of which is often hidden from view. Sharing these stories is important, because it helps us demonstrate the variety of ways that we can all work together to achieve healthier, cleaner communities when we collaborate. As proud as I am of all that we've achieved, I cannot help but think that we have only just begun; I can't wait to see how much more we can accomplish together!



Sincerely,  
*Jenn Aiosa*  
Jenn Aiosa  
Executive Director

# 2017 IN REVIEW



2,279

LETTERS SENT TO  
DECISION MAKERS

60



POLLUTION REPORTS  
INVESTIGATED

109,000

LBS OF TRASH  
REMOVED

4,200

VOLUNTEERS  
ENGAGED



3,060  
TREES PLANTED

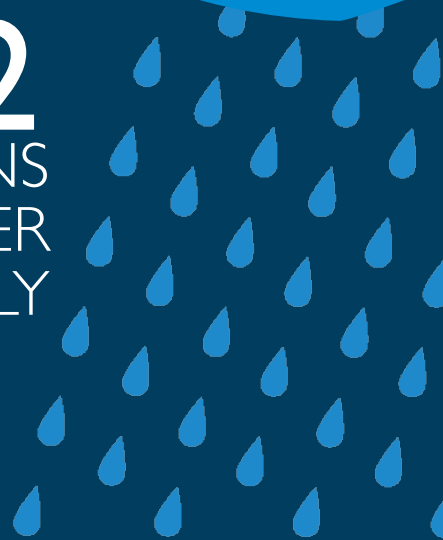
987  
TREES GIVEN  
AWAY

5.2  
MILLION GALLONS  
OF STORMWATER  
TREATED ANNUALLY

26,000  
NATIVE PLANTS  
SOLD



32,467  
SQ FT OF IMPERVIOUS  
SURFACE REMOVED







# THE HIDDEN POWER OF TREES

*Roads connect, but they can also divide. The expansion of Interstate-70 in the 1960's and 70's displaced and divided the thriving African-American neighborhoods of Poppelton, Harlem Park, and Franklin Square in West Baltimore.*

Many efforts have since been made to revitalize the space, but there remains a six-lane highway and large grass median stretching one-mile known as the 'highway to nowhere.' In 2017, the Red Line project was cancelled, and once again this project site was left neglected. As part of the city's goal to increase tree canopy in Baltimore to 40%, Blue Water Baltimore saw potential to transform this median. "MD 40 is a gateway road into West Baltimore and we saw this project as one way to beautify an area that had become cut off from people," says Darin Crew, Senior Manager of Forestry and Restoration.

After securing approval from the city Department of Transportation and funding support from the Maryland Port Administration, the Department of Public Works shared utility maps to mark out where the power and water lines lay. Then in April 2017, Blue Water Baltimore partnered with the group 'Volunteers Untapped' to put in the first phase of the site — 158 trees were planted in one morning! During the following months, we employed YouthWorks crews to water the site weekly and keep the trees thriving. As reported by those who visited regularly, the process of bringing the space to life made for some interesting visuals. At one point during the hot, dry spell, the median looked to some like a "yellow and green polka dot shirt" — the pale yellow lawn dotted with trees inside dark green rings of thick grass where we had watered.

Serviceberry trees were the first to bloom in early April, followed by the redbuds and hawthorns. Not only will the space be a feast for the eyes, the newly planted trees will also be good for the lungs as they grow to their full height, filtering out pollution from passing cars and trapping particulate matter that can contribute to asthma and other respiratory ailments. In a few years, the fruit trees will bear native fruits such as persimmons and pawpaws. Eventually, the slow-growing, long-lived species, such as oaks, will provide much needed shade and counteract the heat-island effect (where some urban areas are much hotter than places around them) as well as become valuable habitat for birds. All told, the project will beautify the mile-long strip of MD 40 and almost seven acres that once lay fallow. This patch of land by a noisy highway is one of the many places in the Baltimore area to which we are bringing new trees, and demonstrates the rejuvenating power of trees.





# A BIG WIN FOR CLEAN WATER

## *Blue Water Baltimore's investigation of a company called Baltimore Scrap started with a tip.*

After receiving a tip on Blue Water Baltimore's pollution hotline, we sent our scientist to sample water near the facility and looked into the business' permit to see if there were potential violations. It appeared the scrap metal recycling facility was not controlling its polluted runoff properly and was releasing stormwater that contained heavy metals and other pollutants into the Patapsco River. Once our investigations uncovered enough evidence, Blue Water Baltimore alerted the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) that the facility was possibly violating its permit under the Clean Water Act.

When the MDE inspected the facility they found multiple violations of the company's stormwater pollution controls. A review of discharge monitoring reports and site inspection documents raised serious concerns.

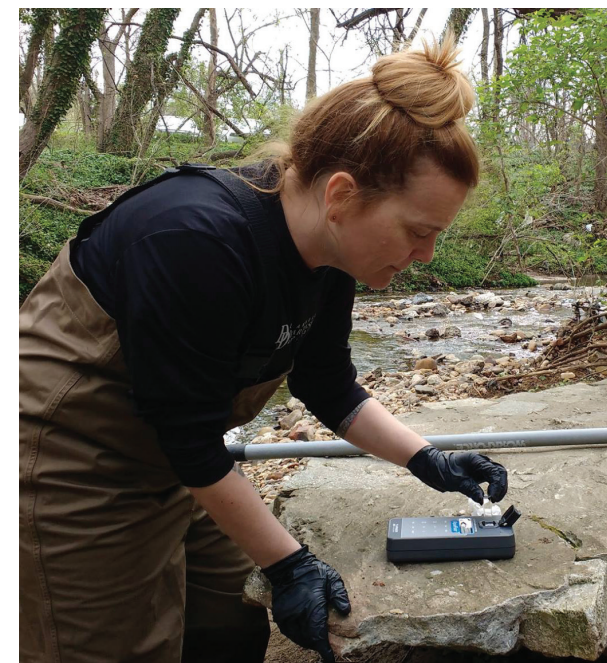
Partnering with the Environmental Integrity Project, who acted as formal counsel to Blue Water Baltimore, we filed a notice of intent to sue Baltimore Scrap for their Clean Water Act Violations. Rather than pursue litigation, Baltimore Scrap agreed to enter into a three-party negotiation settlement with the MDE and Blue Water Baltimore to address concerns with the company's stormwater runoff. Together we reached a settlement which includes an enforceable schedule for the construction and implementation of stormwater pollution controls to minimize the amount of toxic metals and other contaminants in Baltimore Scrap's stormwater discharges. The improvements will bring the scrapyards into compliance with the Clean Water Act and ensure that excessive contamination doesn't enter Baltimore's rivers and Harbor.

In addition to these site upgrades, Baltimore Scrap will undertake additional and more frequent monitoring, including for oil and grease, so that progress can be tracked. They will improve stormwater management practices, submit regular updates to their stormwater pollution prevention plan, and pay a civil penalty of \$50,000 to the Maryland Clean Water Fund. Documentation of the work performed by Baltimore Scrap will be submitted to the MDE and Blue Water Baltimore to ensure compliance. There could be further penalties if the scrapyard does not meet the requirements of the agreement.

This settlement was the first of its kind under the current general permit for industrial facilities in Maryland. Blue Water Baltimore's collaboration with the Maryland state authorities has provided a roadmap for other organizations to address polluting facilities.

The agreement provides a new model for holding industrial sites accountable by requiring monitoring, creating deadlines that can be enforced, and allowing the MDE to take further action if the site does not adequately reduce the pollution it is putting into our waterways.

You can help alert us to issues in your local waterways by attending our Pollution 101 trainings and calling our Pollution Hotline at (443) 908-0696. Blue Water Baltimore staff can assess the threat and alert the proper authorities to help gather evidence for further action. It is hard for any organization to be able to monitor every river and stream. The Baltimore Scrap settlement is a great example of how pollution tips help prevent further harm to our environment. Community members can act as our eyes and ears, keeping watch on our waterways and alerting us to potential threats. Together we can continue to hold polluters accountable and keep our waters clean.







# NEW LIFE IN CHERRY HILL

*Growing up in Cherry Hill, Michael Middleton remembers the neighborhood was true to its name.*

“Back then, we had cherry trees all around, with little tiny cherries,” he remembers. “Then the blight came along in the sixties and wiped them all out.” Cherry Hill has faced many other challenges over the years. Imbued with a powerful sense of history and identity, this community established for African American veterans in segregated post-war Baltimore has also long suffered from a legacy of environmental degradation and injustice. Cut off from the halls of power, it was even made the site of the city dump. “You see that around the country,” says Michael. “Negative aspects of society are placed in communities of color. Cherry Hill has suffered for that, to the detriment of our health and well-being.”

Today, that lack of access and services persists. For example, the Circulator buses that provide such convenience for so many residents of Baltimore are parked and maintained in Cherry Hill, but do not stop there or serve its residents. Michael and his fellow residents have a vision. They want to empower their community and undo that legacy. And they want to bring the cherry trees *back* to Cherry Hill.

Blue Water Baltimore has had the good fortune to work closely with the Cherry Hill community to help them realize that vision, and last year saw us pressing forward on many fronts throughout the neighborhood, from breaking physical ground to forging new bonds. At Cherry Hill Homes we worked with Ms. Betty Baze to plant nearly 150 cherry trees. In Middle Branch Park, we partnered with the community and other volunteers to pick up 7,000 pounds of trash. At Cherry Hill Town Center we are working through the details of the plan neighborhood residents designed with us to create a more beautiful and walkable space with trees and native plants. And at Harbor Hospital we broke ground on the Clean Water Community Healing Project — a major green infrastructure project that will prevent pollution from washing into the Patapsco River and promote greater public health for nearby residents.

Blue Water Baltimore hopes you will follow our progress in 2018 as we continue our partnership with a community empowered to pursue its aspirations. We know full well what it means for people to take control of their environmental destiny. As Michael says, “I believe that the injustices of the past can be righted, and I believe that anything that this community wants is possible. I want a child to walk to their new school seeing visions of beauty around them. If you have to go to school through blighted areas with broken glass, drug dealers, blight, or flooded streets, your education is going to feel ugly and negative. But if you’re looking at decent affordable housing, beautiful nature, people with jobs, you can aspire to learn and live a great life. Imagine that child’s path. Imagine our streets lined with cherry blossoms again.”





# FROM HAZARD TO HABITAT

*At the end of the parking lot for the Chizuk Amuno Congregation synagogue stood Lake Chizzie. The body of water was not a scenic lake ideal for recreation or play. Lake Chizzie was the nickname the congregation gave to the pool of rainwater that would collect en masse and flood the parking lot.*

"Sometimes we would find Canadian geese paddling around," Ann Betten, a member of the community remembered. The parking lot was a hazard, flooding in the summer and freezing in the winter creating a hazardous area for children and adults alike.

Lake Chizzie also presented dangers to our environment. Impervious surfaces like the parking lot at the Chizuk Amuno Congregation collect rainwater, preventing it from soaking into the ground where it can be cleaned. Instead the rain traverses the parking lot picking up pollution from cars, humans, and pets along the way. The rain brings this pollution into our rivers and streams which eventually make it down to our Harbor and Bay.

Luckily, Lake Chizzie is no more. Today if you go to the place it once stood you'll find two bioretention gardens. These gardens utilize the natural benefits of plants, and soil to soak up stormwater when it rains. The new gardens not only prevent pollution from entering the Jones Falls, they provide a space for education and contemplation for the community.

As part of these improvements Chizuk Amuno also planted new trees and nearly 800 new native plants, all serving to prevent a flood of stormwater runoff from entering our rivers and streams. In addition to these gardens, Blue Water Baltimore installed a

waterfall-like rain catchment system coming off the roof of the preschool. The tiered scupper box system is an attraction for children and their families everytime it rains. "Yes, we installed them for the purpose of slowing

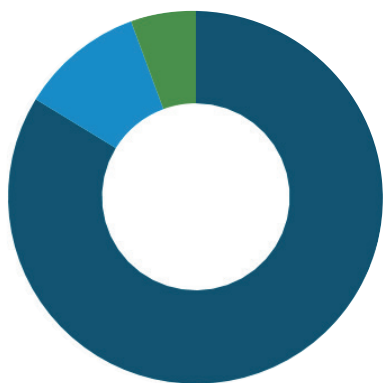
down the flow of water and removing some chemicals," Ann Betten said, "but for the kids, it's pure entertainment." The teachers at all of the synagogue's schools have included these bioretention systems in their curriculum.



All together, the new project treats 3.5 acres of impervious surfaces. That's over three football fields of pollution prevented from entering our streams and rivers each time it rains. That makes it the largest retrofit project Blue Water Baltimore has completed to date.

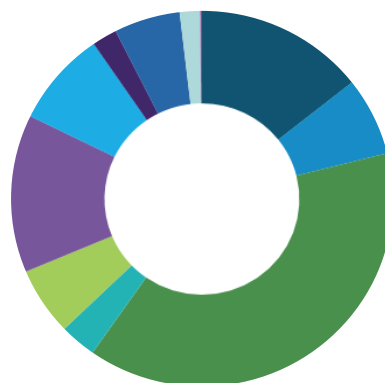
The Chizuk Amuno Congregation is part of the One Water Partnership, a joint initiative with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, that engages faith communities to work together for a cleaner Jones Falls watershed. This work builds on the outreach and education that Blue Water Baltimore's Herring Run Nursery has been doing for years. The Nursery educates residents about ways to reduce their impact on the landscape, including reduced reliance on pesticides, and use of native plants to slow stormwater and provide habitat for pollinators. Extending this work to faith communities spreads pollution reduction even further!

# FINANCIALS



## EXPENSES

Programs	\$3,394,155
General Operating	\$431,495
Fundraising	\$227,515
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,053,165</b>



## REVENUE

Private Foundations	\$631,074
Federal Foundations	\$228,110
Government	\$1,576,474
Corporate	\$126,762
Individuals	\$238,750
Program Fees	\$555,239
Nursery	\$332,906
Special Events	\$86,624
Gifts in Kind	\$227,279
Gross Rents	\$70,259
Other	\$5,574
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,079,053</b>

A complete audited financial report is available by writing to:  
Director of Finance, Blue Water Baltimore, 2631 Sisson St, Baltimore, MD 21211

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**Blue Water Baltimore is extremely appreciative of the Baltimore Municipal Golf Corporation for generously hosting our Herring Run Nursery at the Mount Pleasant Golf Course!**

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