

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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WATER
BALTIMORE

CLEAN WATER,
STRONG COMMUNITIES

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A LOOK BACK 2016

This year has brought a lot of change, a few challenges, and several successes for Blue Water Baltimore. What remains as strong as ever is the commitment of our supporters, like you, and the energy you bring to our work.

Among the changes, we welcomed new staff and moved our offices; these changes have both positively impacted our work! Changes in federal environmental policies and the ebbs and flows of funding for nonprofits have been a bit more challenging. But all we have faced this year reminds us that our commitment to building resilient communities, advocating for policies to protect our region's water quality, and engaging people like you is more impactful and important than ever!



This year, Blue Water Baltimore championed trash-reduction legislation and helped inform the transition policies of the new Mayoral administration. We worked with countless residents of Baltimore City and County to plant thousands of trees and build rain gardens and similar features to absorb rainwater as it runs off our roads and rooftops. We worked with churches and schools to educate residents about threats to our region's waterways and how individual action can make a difference. We do all this to improve the water quality in Baltimore's rivers, streams and harbor.

Water connects us to one another. Towns are linked together by the rivers that flow between them. Rainwater from our roofs, stoops, roads, and sidewalks mingle together in the underground network of pipes and drains before emptying into our shared streams and harbor. The trees in your local park and the rain garden at a local church reduce pollution not just for your neighborhood but for everyone downstream.

Now, more than ever, we need to recognize that what we share is often much more important than what we do not. We must work together to protect our precious natural resources and empower our neighbors to do the same. Whether that is planting trees, reducing your use of plastics and foam, or engaging your elected officials on environmental issues important to you, we each have a role to play to protect our waterways and improve the health of our communities. Thank you, for all that you do, and most importantly, for supporting the work of Blue Water Baltimore in many of these efforts!

Sincerely,

Jenn Aiosa
Executive Director

2016 IN REVIEW



4,000,000

gallons of stormwater runoff
treated annually through our
new stormwater projects

28,849

square feet of impervious
surfaces removed



102,105

pounds of trash removed from communities

2,800

trees planted in Baltimore
City and County

25,000

native plants sold



A YEAR IN NUMBERS

4,200

volunteers

13,352

hours of service

101

volunteer events



472

students from 42 schools participated
in Ecoliteracy programming

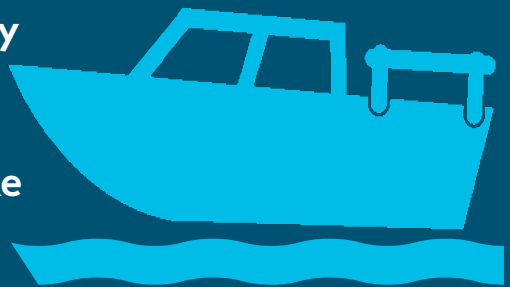


49

sites monitored
for water quality
monthly

588

samples tested
for pollution like
nutrients and
bacteria



5,095

data points collected and displayed
on the Harbor Alert website

19,910

data points collected for analysis in
the Healthy Harbor Report Card



NEW LIFE IN THE JONES FALLS

This summer, Blue Water Baltimore staff joined biologists armed with electroshocking backpacks for an expedition in the Jones Falls that would lead to an exciting discovery. Electroshocking allows scientists to temporarily stun fish for identification and measurement. Among a variety of minnows, daces, and other fish the team was surprised to find trout. It was an exciting find for all those who care about the health of our rivers. Trout are very sensitive to pollution and warm water, which makes them a nice barometer of the health of an ecosystem. Finding trout in the Jones Falls during the hottest time of year is a great indication that the Jones Falls is making a recovery.

On May 13, 2016, Blue Water Baltimore and partners kicked off construction of the Jones Fall Restoration project. It was an ambitious project, the largest single-site restoration project in our organization's history. The project focused on stream channel realignment, replacing a 560 linear foot concrete channel with natural features designed to restore a degraded section of the Jones Falls to its original conditions. Before this project, the Jones Falls ran through a concrete channel which was too small for trout. The concrete also heated up the water far above what the fish prefer. That meant that even though the Jones Falls has one of the largest populations of fish in the state, few transversed this perilous section to journey further downstream.

The Jones Falls Restoration project is returning this section of the stream to a more natural state. Trees surrounding the river will serve as a buffer and natural habitat. The restoration efforts will create natural stream beds which will improve in-stream habitat for fish and the small organisms they eat. Sediment and erosion controls will prevent sediment and other runoff from entering the stream. The project will also add winding bends and deep pools to this section of the Jones Falls to help lower water temperatures of the stream. The end result will be a cooler, cleaner waterway with space for trout to lay eggs, feed, and rest.

Trout aren't the only ones who will get to enjoy the fruits of this project. A cleaner stream means more opportunities for people throughout the region to enjoy this great resource. The Jones Falls' proximity to Baltimore makes it a convenient and beautiful place to enjoy nature, paddle, explore, and fish. That is one of the reasons it has been a beloved spot for fishing. A few minutes away from the hustle and bustle of the city, you'll find fly fishers on the river hoping for a lucky catch. The river's robust trout population provides a thrilling challenge for local anglers and offers a time to relax in nature. Blue Water Baltimore hopes the Jones Falls restoration effort will not only grow the trout population, but also grow the human population enjoying our area's natural resources for recreation and play.

We are just beginning to see the potential of the Jones Falls Restoration project. In years to come, it will contribute to significant water quality improvements along the Jones Falls. It is projected that the restoration efforts will reduce over 100 pounds of nitrogen pollution annually. It will also prevent 30,000 pounds of sediment from going into our streams which can cause the water to be murky and disrupt the river's food chain. It won't be a shock to find trout thriving in the Jones Falls after the project is completed. It will be another Maryland waterway in which wildlife thrives.





THE SECRET LIFE OF TREES

As the seasons change, we tend to have a heightened awareness of the natural world around us. Trees become a community spectacle. We love seeing the autumn leaves and the new buds in spring, reminding us of the hidden life in our city. Trees are the dynamic champions of our city providing beauty, shade, and clean air. They've been shown to increase property values, reduce air and water pollution, and decrease electricity bills in the summer. Who said money doesn't grow on trees?

A recent survey of Baltimore's tree canopy has shown that it has grown by 1% since 2007. This is partly a result of the amazing volunteers who have helped Blue Water Baltimore and our partners plant trees throughout the Baltimore region. Since 2010, our forestry program alone has worked with residents to plant 10,000 trees in the Baltimore area, but this is just one small step in our overall goal to have 40% tree canopy cover in our city by 2037.

Not everyone is welcoming of trees in their community. Through our community engagement work, we have learned that some people believe that tree roots will break through pipes. In reality, tree roots can only grow through pipes once they are already broken. Trees absorb rain water which otherwise might cause pipes to overflow.

Some residents also think that trees detract from the liveability of a neighborhood. Concerns have been raised that planting trees reduces available space for children to play. And some worry that trees might make their community less safe by providing a hiding spot for potential criminals. However studies have shown that crime rates go down in neighborhoods that have trees. Instead of detracting from liveability, trees make communities more pleasant, by providing shade on hot days and actually cooling air temperatures. As Barbara Anderson-Dandy, a resident of Mondawmin put it, "When we go over to the park, it's much cooler because of all of the trees. It's been a calming effect for me, just waking up, meditating, and looking at trees out of my front window."

Trees make neighborhoods better by cleaning the air, pulling harmful pollutants out, and transforming carbon dioxide into oxygen for us to breathe. Studies have shown that having more trees in your neighborhood can lower asthma rates, lower blood pressure, and provide other health benefits. Trees also help reduce runoff. Trees soak up water so it doesn't sweep trash, chemicals, or sediment into our storm drains, which run directly into our streams and harbor. Each tree is a small powerhouse for the environmental and human health of a neighborhood.

Planting trees is an easy way for communities to get involved in protecting their waterways. Anyone can get involved in this effort by organizing or participating in a tree planting. Blue Water Baltimore offers free trees throughout the year for residents to plant on their property. We also work to provide communities free trees to line their streets and augment green spaces. We rely on volunteers to help continue to grow Baltimore's tree canopy and take care of each new tree in the city. Together, we can support the trees that help keep our waterways clean.

WHAT GROWS ON TREES



MONEY

That's right. Money does grow on trees! Numerous studies show that more trees lead to higher property values and major savings on your energy bills.



COOL AIR

Trees cool the air reducing the need for energy-hungry air-conditioning. They also help fight against climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and cooling things down even more!



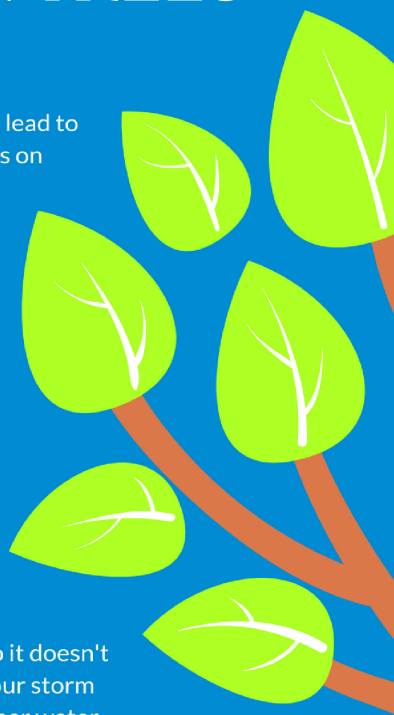
CLEAN AIR

By pulling pollutants out of the air and releasing oxygen, trees help us all breathe easier! More trees can mean fewer respiratory problems and Code Red air quality days.



CLEAN BAY

Trees help soak up water from storms so it doesn't sweep trash, chemicals, or sewage into our storm drains, rivers, streams, and harbor. Cleaner water makes for a healthier ecosystem, which is better for all of us.





DIVING DEEP INTO COMMUNITIES

Through our Deep Blue partnership, we are engaging residents in five neighborhoods – Cherry Hill, Mondawmin, Oliver, Belair-Edison, and Highlandtown - to address stormwater, greening, and public health issues in these areas. This approach has allowed Blue Water Baltimore to move away from a traditional model of isolated projects to a comprehensive community-based approach that focuses on long-term solutions. It starts by working with community members to identify their needs. We then help residents determine the feasibility of different solutions, and work with partners to design and implement projects within their neighborhood.

In each neighborhood, residents' needs and desired outcomes are different. In Mondawmin, we worked with residents to plant trees to increase shade and create new green spaces. In Cherry Hill, we're addressing the issue of flooding and stormwater runoff with residents. From trash removal, to tree planting, to creating new gardens, the residents of Belair-Edison are making their neighborhood beautiful. While in Oliver, they are participating in our Photovoice project, using photography to tell the stories of their community, documenting challenges and successes.

One of our favorite elements of Deep Blue is getting to know the individuals in each neighborhood who are so committed to their community. "For a long time, I stood on the sidelines. A lot of people do," said Celena Owens, an Oliver resident, "When you look around, people may assume, 'Oh people don't care,' but it's not that. Because, when you talk to people, you really realize how much they really do care, which is inspiring." Celena worked with Blue Water Baltimore to get a grant to provide recycling bins to her community. The enthusiasm she has seen is infectious. "People will recycle. We just needed the resources, and the ability to educate them," she said.

In addition to engaging neighborhoods, Blue Water Baltimore is also working with faith communities to initiate projects locally. We are excited to continue working with Inter-faith Partners for the Chesapeake to challenge congregations in the Jones Fall Watershed to take actions to green their surroundings, raise awareness of human impacts on the Earth, and to implement pollution reduction projects in their places of worship.

Recently, fifteen of these faith congregations gathered to commit to taking six actions to improve their environment. Together with these communities, Blue Water Baltimore will treat or remove 15,000 square feet of impervious surface, plant 150 trees, and install up to 5,000 square feet of rain gardens to reduce stormwater pollution.

The work has already started at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. We built a vibrant community garden that provides a beautiful community space, a home for pollinators and wildlife, and reduces runoff. In the same neighborhood, McElderry Park, we worked with the Prince of Peace Baptist Church to install stormwater planters to clean runoff before it goes into the stormwater sewer system. Working with these faith communities provides us another way to engage directly with communities.

These images were taken as part of Photovoice, a grassroots research method that enables a community to identify, represent, and enhance their surroundings through an artistic process. It uses the immediacy of photography and storytelling to furnish evidence and promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise to influence public policy.





PROTECTING OUR WATER

This year the Blue Water Baltimore advocacy team has seen some big wins for our organization and the waterways we protect. Maryland became the first state with natural gas deposits to ban hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” as it is commonly known. Legislation passed creating vital protections for pollinators, and the General Assembly overturned the Governor’s veto to the Clean Jobs Act, a bill that will expand our state’s commitment to purchasing renewable energy.

Blue Water Baltimore also helped with other wins closer to home. Last year, hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage flowed directly into Baltimore’s streams and harbor from leaking and overwhelmed pipes below our city’s streets. We documented human waste, personal care products, and other refuse flowing directly into our waterways. These overflows are the result of backups in our sewer system that cause the pipes to become overwhelmed during heavy rainstorms and discharge millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Jones Falls. Blue Water Baltimore has been working with the city to address this serious threat to water quality.

In 2002, Baltimore City entered into a consent decree with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the State of Maryland, and the U.S. Department of Justice to stop these overflows by 2016. However, as that date rolled around, the work was far from complete. The state and federal agencies agreed to extend the deadline. Blue Water Baltimore formally intervened and became a party to the decree modification process. We wanted to make sure that the city was pressed to make measurable progress on infrastructure projects, put plans in place to help citizens who experienced sewage back-ups in their homes, and continued to measure water quality to scientifically assess whether projects were working as designed.

On October 12, 2017, a federal judge approved the revised consent decree. We are proud that our efforts resulted in significant improvements to the Baltimore City sewage consent decree, including a building backup reimbursement program, and the public accountability and transparency it now contains. The consent decree is much improved and provides increased opportunities for public engagement in developing plans and monitoring. We look forward to working with the city and all stakeholders to ensure the clean water future we all deserve.

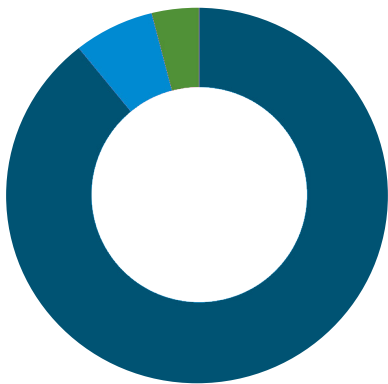
Blue Water Baltimore is also taking the fight against polluting stormwater discharges to court. In 2015, we partnered to petition the EPA to exercise “residual designation authority” for privately-owned commercial, industrial, and institutional sites that contribute to stormwater pollution in the Back River watershed. The EPA can mandate actions that companies must take to limit polluted runoff if they determine there are water quality violations. We provided the agency with unequivocal evidence that these sites were violating Clean Water Act standards, but the agency decided not to act. So, along with co-plaintiffs Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and American Rivers, we sued the EPA for failing to hold industrial and commercial polluters accountable.

We took up this fight because it is critical that polluters be held accountable for their actions. If they aren’t held responsible for cleaning up their pollution, our taxpayer dollars must be diverted to the clean-up. Private commercial, industrial, and institutional sites can discharge a lot of pollution when rain runs over their parking lots, roofs, and other impervious areas and dumps contaminants into our local rivers and streams.

These are just two examples of Blue Water Baltimore’s advocacy efforts. As we gear up for another year, we’re ready to work with you to push for legislation to clean our waterways and ensure our laws are being enforced. This helps ensure both our waterways and our citizens are protected from the devastating and long term effects of pollution. It is an important step in ensuring our water is clean for all.

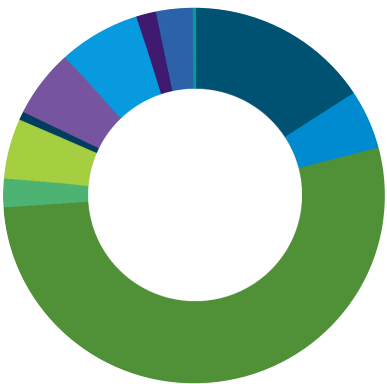


FINANCIALS



EXPENSES

Programs	\$4,296,070
General Operating	\$330,219
Fundraising	\$197,056
<hr/>	
Total	\$4,823,345



REVENUE

Private Foundations	\$768,222
Federal Foundations	\$249,444
Government	\$2,576,117
Corporate	\$117,949
Individuals	\$250,123
Board	\$32,376
Program Income	\$285,253
Nursery	\$337,837
Special Events	\$75,149
Gifts in Kind	\$159,386
Other	\$10,138
<hr/>	
Total	\$4,861,994

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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Maryland Department of Natural Resources
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B'More SUP and FloYo
Combined Federal Campaign
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