



**CLEAN WATER  
STRONG  
COMMUNITIES**

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



**BLUE  
WATER  
BALTIMORE**

# 5

## years of working to restore water quality in Baltimore



**10,650** trees planted throughout Baltimore and 9,330 trees maintained



**>5,155** pounds of invasive vines and shrubs removed



**18,370** volunteers logged over 43,115 hours



**>100,000** native plants sold at Herring Run Nursery



**>447,500** pounds of trash removed from our waterways



**1,352** storm drains stenciled



**>5,840** students engaged in environmental education programs

# 2015: HOW FAR WE HAVE COME

## SCALE, IMPACT, AND WHY

We are fortunate to have many special places around Baltimore, from beautiful views at Fort McHenry to sunrises over the Middle Branch. We have the Gwynns Falls, one of the largest urban wilderness parks in the United States, where you can bike or walk near a stream just a few miles from downtown Baltimore. In the distant past, large amounts of forest and green space surrounded our streams and rivers. Over the decades, we've transformed this natural landscape into buildings and pavement. Infrastructure has been neglected, causing high levels of sewage, toxic pollutants, and trash in our streams. Clean air and water are two of our most important needs. We live in a world where we must push to protect these natural resources.

Blue Water Baltimore's work is critical not only for water and air quality, but also to help shape a healthier, more resilient Baltimore. 2015 was a year that reminded us that our neighborhoods need investments and partnerships for revitalization. Our innovative stormwater management practices reduce pollution, as well as enhance neighborhood aesthetics with trees and green spaces.

Over the years we've learned lessons and leveraged our resources for a greater impact. We began working on projects at a residential scale, but quickly realized we were not reducing enough direct pollution, so we scaled up our efforts. Through our forestry work, we combined the need for trees with the opportunity to build a workforce development program, creating permanent jobs. We also learned to involve community members early in the process, and began to focus on specific neighborhoods, developing a broader community vision that goes beyond individual projects.

It has been a busy five years of growth and adjustment as we continue to strive for cleaner water and stronger communities in Baltimore. We look forward to a day, not far in the future, when we can safely boat and swim in our waterways and fish from the Patapsco. I've enjoyed looking back and seeing how the past propels our future. Our accomplishments are only possible with the incredible support of our donors, partners, talented board members, and staff. Thank you!

Sincerely,



**Halle Van der Gaag**  
Executive Director



# OUR PROGRAMS IN 2015

**Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper** monitors water quality, reports pollution, organizes cleanups, advocates for government responsibility, and takes legal action when necessary.

**Blue Water Congregations** offers congregations the technical and organizational support to embark on construction projects that address polluted runoff and reduce stormwater utility fees.

**Deep Blue** engages targeted neighborhoods representing a diverse mix of under-served communities to comprehensively address stormwater, greening, and public health goals in each area.

**Herring Run Nursery** grows and sells native plants for restoration efforts and retail customers. The nursery offers hundreds of plants native to the Chesapeake Bay region to help reduce polluted stormwater runoff and to support biodiversity.

**Public Policy and Legislative Advocacy** works to support the passage and implementation of local, state, and federal laws and regulations that will help support clean water objectives. We organize and galvanize citizens to ensure that their voices are heard and are a part of decision-making processes.

**School Restoration** focuses on transforming underutilized school parking lots and hardscapes into living, vibrant, engaging outdoor gardens that dramatically reduce stormwater runoff while providing urban youth positive experiences in natural settings.

**Stormwater Management** uses innovative and traditional methods to beautify communities. Our practices reduce pollution through the removal and replacement of conventional concrete with pervious materials, and the installation of green bioretention practices that filter and absorb runoff. We implement projects on public and private lands by engaging neighborhood residents, local schools, communities of faith, and city agencies.

**Urban Forestry** improves the city's forest canopy, air quality, and quality of life one neighborhood at a time by planting trees in our parks and along our streets and streams. Through the Urban Forestry program we employ YouthWorks, to teach youth valuable life skills while also developing their job skills.

*For more information about our other programs and projects, visit us at*

**[www.bluewaterbaltimore.org](http://www.bluewaterbaltimore.org)**

# OUR STAFF AND BOARD

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# TIMELINE

Blue Water Baltimore began in 2010, when five local, grassroots environmental organizations, each dedicated to caring for their neighborhood streams, joined forces to collectively address water quality issues in Baltimore. Over the course of five years we have grown, matured, and increased our staff and budget to restore water quality and build strong communities.

## 2011

**The Clean Water Community Initiative** was launched, in partnership with Healthy Harbor and Baltimore Community Foundation, to encourage community leaders to identify actions they can take to improve the quality of life and water quality in their neighborhood. ▼



**Project Clean Stream** volunteers removed 41,700 pounds of trash from local streets, streams, and the Baltimore Harbor.

## 2012

The first **Healthy Harbor Report Card** was released to provide a comprehensive look at water quality throughout our Baltimore waterways.

Blue Water Baltimore, along with Clean Water Healthy Families Coalition, focused on passing the **Stormwater Bill** to create funding dedicated to controlling and managing polluted stormwater runoff. ▼



▲ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation presented Blue Water Baltimore with a \$400,000 grant to help residents of Baltimore in our **Water Audit program** reduce stormwater pollution.

**Storm Drain Stenciling** was launched to engage communities, brighten neighborhood drains, and raise awareness about the connection between our streets and our streams. ▼



## OUR WATERSHED

Blue Water Baltimore works in watersheds located in Baltimore City and County which together encompass 194 square miles of land, 454 miles of stream, and more than 1 million residents.



### 2013



▲ The **Waterkeeper program** expanded the geographic scope of water quality monitoring to 22 sampling stations in the Tidal Patapsco and 27 stations in the Jones Falls and Gwynns Falls. Our **Forestry program** planted more than 2,125 trees spread across Herring Run, Jones Falls, Gwynns Falls, and Baltimore Harbor watersheds. ▼

### 2014

**Blue Water Congregations** was developed, in collaboration with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, to identify and implement stormwater reduction strategies at faith-based institutions.

The **Stormwater Advisory Committee** was created, through our advocacy efforts, to advise on stormwater projects, programs, and issues, and to help educate groups on related matters.

The **Harbor Alert website** was released to display water quality data in an interactive mapping format.

### 2015



**Herring Run Nursery** ▲ sold more than 31,550 native plants for a grand total of 96,320 native plants sold over five years. These plants help improve the health of the ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Blue Water Baltimore broke ground at the **Library Square project** in East Baltimore, signifying a new level and higher scale of stormwater management projects undertaken.

**Volunteer engagement** reached 18,370 people who have worked with us in efforts to improve our local waterways.





# STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

## Creating Healthy, Prosperous, Resilient Communities

As recognition of the importance of stormwater issues continues to grow, our stormwater management program has expanded, along with the innovative and traditional methods we use not only to treat stormwater but also to beautify communities through implementation of green infrastructure.

Green stormwater management techniques reduce and treat stormwater at its source while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits. Investing in green infrastructure practices positively impacts the community by adding attractive green space in comparison to traditional gray stormwater measures that often involve concrete pipes and sewers.

We began our stormwater management program by installing rain gardens for homeowners who wanted to do their part to reduce stormwater runoff. Through the years the program has evolved to using engineered bioretention systems and managing large-scale projects on public and private lands, including congregations, parks, and schools.

The thousands of native plants that have replaced impervious surfaces in our projects since 2010 now filter more than 17 million gallons of stormwater each year before it reaches our streams, rivers, and Baltimore Harbor.

An excellent example of our successful greening efforts is the I Wonder Garden at a Baltimore City school in the neighborhood of Canton. The

17 MILLION GALLONS  
OF STORMWATER =



26 OLYMPIC-SIZE  
SWIMMING POOLS



BEFORE



main catalysts for this project were the students, teachers, and community members who partnered with Blue Water Baltimore to replace 7,000 square feet of impervious surface with hundreds of native plants that promote urban ecology and create new habitat for pollinators. With the support of neighborhood volunteers, this little piece of green works hard to make the surrounding environment healthier.

In 2015 Blue Water Baltimore began work on our largest stormwater management project to date. With the help of Biohabitats we embarked on a major community greening and stormwater restoration project at Library Square in East Baltimore. The completed project now contains three bioretention basins filled with native plants and a permeable paver plaza to help manage runoff from the surrounding streets and reduce flooding.

Over the past five years our cumulative stormwater efforts have resulted in 11.5 acres of impervious surface stormwater being treated every year. These green infrastructure techniques go a long way in reversing the urban heat island effect and removing pollution from our air and waterways.

## Why?

Stormwater runoff is a leading contributor to pollution in our streams and rivers. It also can harm wastewater infrastructure when there is too much water for our outdated systems to handle. To reduce the impacts of runoff in our waters it is important to install stormwater management practices that reduce the rate and volume of flow, and remove pollutants from runoff generated in developed areas of our community.



AFTER



# WATER QUALITY MONITORING

## Using Science and Data to Drive Change

The Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper acts as a scientist, investigator, and enforcer for preserving the ecosystem of our waterways and addressing water pollution issues important to the community. With a focus on utilizing the law to achieve cleaner water for Baltimore, the Waterkeeper and our water quality team regularly patrol our waterways by boat and on foot. Through our Outfall Screening Blitz program, volunteers are trained to investigate, identify, and report illicit discharges that are contaminating Baltimore's waterways.

In 2015 our water quality team trained 43 volunteers how to identify and report pollution, and collected 569 samples from 49 sites, which resulted in 14,973 individual data points. Each year, we monitor the Tidal Patapsco and its major tributaries, the Jones Falls and the Gwynns Falls watersheds, for water quality and pollution on a weekly basis and utilize the resulting data to produce the Healthy Harbor Report Card and the Baltimore Harbor Water Alert website ([www.harboralert.org](http://www.harboralert.org)). We also use the data to detect major incidents of water pollution, to inform our legal advocacy priorities, and to identify restoration opportunities within our watersheds. This monitoring work is important to establish baselines and to measure improvements to water quality. The data collected is scientifically rigorous and legally defensible.



Nitrogen pollution, fecal bacteria contamination, and poor water clarity continue to plague our waterways. Many of these problems are the result of sewage overflows, leaking pipes, and untreated runoff from streets and sidewalks that carry trash and polluted stormwater directly into our streams, rivers, and harbor. By holding government regulators accountable for ensuring that water quality standards are met and by advocating for broken pipes to be repaired, we have stopped untold amounts of sewage from entering our waterways.

Through our Waterkeeper program and with the help of our dedicated volunteers, we work to protect and restore the Baltimore Harbor and the greater Patapsco and Back Rivers and their tributaries through enforcement, fieldwork, and citizen action.

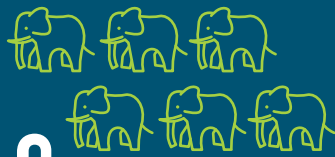
## Why?

The Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper is dedicated to protecting and restoring our local waterways in order to make them suitable for recreation, and to improve the health of the river ecosystem. The Waterkeeper helps protect public health by working to ensure that water is clean and safe for human contact and that seafood caught in our waterways is safe for eating. The Waterkeeper program is part of an international group of water advocates across the globe.



Each year we organize thousands of volunteers in the Baltimore region who participate in Project Clean Stream. In 2015 alone we coordinated cleanup events at 93 sites throughout Baltimore City and County, where over 1,800 volunteers removed 92,308 pounds of trash from their local streets, streams, and harbor.

**92,308 LB. OF TRASH =**



**6 FULL-GROWN  
AFRICAN ELEPHANTS**



# NATIVE PLANTS

## Native Plants Make a Big Difference for Clean Water

When you purchase native plants from Herring Run Nursery, you are not only improving the look of your landscape, you are helping to improve water quality and enhance the ecology of our region. Herring Run Nursery, operated by Blue Water Baltimore since 2010, grows and sells native plants for restoration efforts and retail customers.

Native plants not only offer beautiful flowers and brilliant seasonal changes, they also are adapted to our soils, our climate, and our ecosystems. They do not require fertilizer that can run off and pollute our waterways. Through their root systems they can absorb and filter stormwater before it enters our streams. They also provide habitat and food for birds, butterflies, and insects.

At Herring Run Nursery, we strive to offer affordable native plants that are beautiful, durable, high in wildlife value, and appropriate for Baltimore area landscapes. Thanks to our loyal customers and dedicated volunteers, our sales have grown from \$47,000 in 2010 to \$300,000 in 2015. This revenue is used to keep Blue Water Baltimore's programs strong and sustainable.

Customer favorites at the nursery include perennials such as butterfly weed, asters, golden rods, and monarda; which benefit butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Smaller trees like eastern redbud, black gum, and serviceberry, and shrubs such as winterberry, inkberry, and chokeberry are also popular. In addition, customers enjoy our selection of native edible plants like mountain mint, blueberry, blackberry, and paw paw.

### Why?

Native plants are acclimated to our local environmental conditions, most require less water and maintenance than non-native plants. Another benefit is that their root systems can help prevent erosion and provide filtration of stormwater runoff. They are beautiful in our landscapes and many species of wildlife and pollinators count on them for survival.





# URBAN FORESTRY

## Improving Our Communities With Trees

Trees are not only a beautiful part of the natural environment, they also reduce pollution and make our neighborhoods healthier. Just one tree can capture more than 2,000 gallons of rainfall annually, reducing and removing pollutants from storm-water runoff.

Since 2010, Blue Water Baltimore, with the help of hundreds of volunteers, has planted more than 10,650 trees! Once mature, these trees will absorb and filter more than 21 million gallons of stormwater. They also improve air quality, and provide habitat for wildlife. We planted more than 2,400 trees in 2015 alone and have weeded, mulched, and watered 9,330 trees throughout the Baltimore region. The trees are maintained through our summer YouthWorks program, which offers job placement to students and teaches them many valuable environmental and professional skills.

In 2015, Blue Water Baltimore broke ground on the CREATES project with Baltimore City Forestry. This project entailed removing more than 7,000 square feet of concrete to create 165 tree pits and plant 165 new trees in the Greenmount West neighborhood. The goals of this project were to increase tree canopy, reduce impervious surfaces, and improve the conditions of the local environment, one neighborhood at a time.

Thanks to our partnerships, the work of many volunteers, and our generous donors, we will continue to plant thousands of trees along streets and streams and in open spaces at parks, golf courses, schools, and faith-based institutions.

## Why?

Trees improve water quality in our streams and rivers, primarily by decreasing the amount of stormwater runoff through capturing and storing rainfall in the canopy and then releasing water into the atmosphere. In addition, tree roots promote the filtration of rainwater and mature trees shade homes while reducing heating and cooling costs.

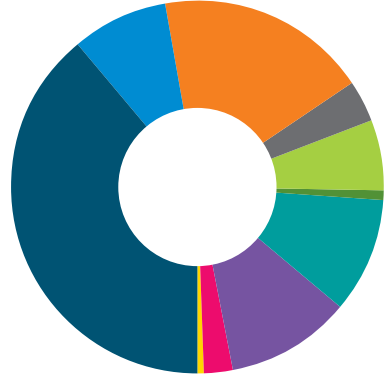


# FINANCIALS



## EXPENSES

■ Programs	\$2,240,467
■ General Operating	\$437,160
■ Fundraising	\$155,184
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,832,811</b>



## REVENUE

■ Private Foundations	\$1,012,484
■ Federal Foundations	\$238,841
■ Government	\$513,685
■ Corporate	\$104,370
■ Individuals	\$171,623
■ Board	\$28,630
■ Program Income	\$279,773
■ Nursery	\$306,833
■ Special Events	\$72,530
■ Gifts in Kind	\$9,280
■ Other*	\$-463
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,737,586</b>

\* Net of miscellaneous revenue and a loss on the disposal of property and equipment.

According to the Financial Accounting Standards Board, restricted grants must be recognized in the period in which they are received. In prior fiscal years funds for multiyear programs were received and recognized. Expenses for these programs are included in the 2015 financials, which creates a deficit for this year because the funds were received and recognized in prior years.

A complete audited financial report is available by writing to:  
 Director of Finance, Blue Water Baltimore, 3545 Belair Road, Baltimore, MD 21213

# DONOR LIST

## Sponsors

*The following businesses sponsored various Blue Water Baltimore events in 2015.*

AGM Financial Services  
AOL  
Association of Maryland Pilots  
Baltimore Industrial Group  
Baltimore Port Alliance  
Baltimore T'ai Chi LLC  
Best Management Products  
Biohabitats, Inc.  
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Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
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an Exelon Company  
Domino Sugar Brands  
EA Engineering, Science,  
and Technology, Inc.  
ESD Associates  
McAllister Towing of Baltimore  
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Stormwater Solution Source  
Straughan Environmental  
The Hatcher Group  
UPS  
Urban Green Environmental, LLC  
Weyrich, Cronin & Sorra

## Corporations, Foundations, and Matching Gifts

*The following corporations and foundations supported Blue Water Baltimore in 2015.*

### \$100,000+

The Abell Foundation  
Baltimore City, Maryland  
Chesapeake Bay Trust  
France-Merrick Foundation  
Keith Campbell Foundation  
for the Environment  
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### \$10,000–\$99,999

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### \$1,000–\$9,999

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## \$100–\$249

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*The following individuals  
supported Blue Water  
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## \$10,000+

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Ruth and George Aranow  
James and Jeanne Armacost  
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	Katherine Goodrich	

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## Silent Auction

*The following individuals and companies generously provided items and experiences for the silent auction at the 2015 Blue Water Bash.*

Jennifer Aiosa  
American Visionary Art Museum  
Association of Maryland Pilots  
Baltimore Museum of Industry  
Baltimore Rowing Club  
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra  
Baltimore T'ai Chi  
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