

## April Newsletter 2022

### Upcoming Volunteer Events (click on each for more details)

- [Volunteer Calendar](#) (one click shopping for events all year)
- [Bay Day Volunteers Needed](#)
- [Marine Debris Plunder](#)
- [Horseshoe Crab Recovery Team](#)

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## Director's Notes

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### *A Note from the Director*

#### **So, What Are You Working on These Days?**

That's a question often asked when you run into an old friend or acquaintance. The question is usually followed by the response, "Oh, same old stuff". You don't want to bore your friend into oblivion with a list of all the stuff you really are working on. So maybe you try to pick out a few items that may be interest.

I've had a lot of time to think about this recently as we had our annual Policy Committee meeting on April 13th. This is a good chance to inform our Policy Committee members about pressing items on our front burner – and some on the backburner too.

This year we highlighted issues and initiatives that will be taking up a good bit of our time for the next few years. And it gives the Policy Committee members a chance to give their thoughts as to how to best address these issues. (In case you didn't know – and I'm sure most of you do not – the Policy Committee is made up of representatives from our partner organizations. Policy Committee members represent Worcester County, the Town of Ocean City, the state departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Planning and the Environment as well as a host of other towns and organizations.)

This year, we discussed a number of items such as environmental education, marine debris, dredging and others. But I wanted to bring up one particular item which generates a lot of conversation. And that is the loss of tidal marsh in the Coastal Bays over the last 15 – 20 years. If you own waterfront property along the bays, you've probably noticed the changes. This has been happening somewhat gradually. But the rate of loss has certainly increased markedly in recent years, and this does not bode well for resiliency or habitat. Certainly not for the critters that live in these coastal marshes.

Take the saltmarsh sparrow for instance - a species that lives nowhere else on earth but the coastal marshes along the Atlantic seaboard. It appears to be headed for extinction for one overwhelming reason - the loss of tidal marsh habitat. The saltmarsh sparrow is only one of a hundred species that rely on these lush green carpets of grass for their existence. Then, of course, there is the impact on resiliency. These same marshlands provide a substantial line of defense from storms and tidal surges. These marshes protect us, our

land, and our infrastructure.

Why are we losing these marshes? Well, there's a number of reasons, but the most prominent are sea level rise and the historic ditching that was done in the early and mid-20th century to drain the marshes and reduce mosquitoes. It probably did very little to reduce mosquito populations, but it sure did a lot to destabilize the marshes which resulted in the degradation we see today.

How do we help? What can we do? These are not easy questions to answer. What we are doing is working with partners like the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others to identify where this is happening and to develop and implement practices to restore tidal marsh areas that are degraded. We are also working with private landowners who are witnessing the loss of their own marshlands. We have a few projects planned and will be working on ways to hone our techniques to restore these marshes. We've got a long way to go and not a lot of time. Delay and do nothing is not really an option.

That's one of the things we're working on these days. If you have tidal marshland that is being affected by this, we'd love to hear from you.

## Kevin

Executive Director

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## Farewell to Katherine 'Kat' Phillips

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The past few weeks have been a whirlwind of emotion at MCBP as we had to prepare for, and send off one of wonderful co-workers, Katherine "Kat" Phillips. After an amazing 9 years at Coastal Bays, Kat hung up her waders, and accepted a job with the MD Department of Natural Resources as a Natural Resource Technician in western Maryland.

Throughout her almost decade of dedication, Kat worked relentlessly, and passionately, to conserve our beautiful bays and watershed. Having held multiple positions within the MCBP family, she contributed her energy and knowledge towards all four of Coastal Bays' focuses- restoration, monitoring, outreach, and education. Many of you know Kat through her work on the yearly MCBP Report Card, as key lead on the Annual Terrapin Survey, as a mentor for our environmental internship program, or through her welcoming demeanor at volunteer and partner events.

It was also under her guidance that Coastal Bays began its tidal wetland assessment program in 2019. These invaluable wetland assessments were overseen by Kat and will help provide a fuller understanding of our local wetland stressors and how they affect wetland health.



Kat's scientific contributions at MCBP are numerous and impactful, but we are most thankful to her for her incredible knowledge, devotion to the Coastal Bays, and drive to mentor the next generation of environmental scientists. Kat, thank you! We miss you already and we can't wait for our first reunion.

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## 2021 Horseshoe Crab Spawning Results

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The 2021 horseshoe crab spawning survey was the 20th annual survey to track Atlantic horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) spawning population abundance and critical habitat availability in the Maryland Coastal Bays.

Horseshoe crabs are an integral component of Mid-Atlantic





estuaries. Their eggs are a vital source of protein to migratory shorebirds returning from over wintering areas. Eggs and larvae are also a source of food for numerous Coastal Bays' species like eels, catfish, juvenile striped bass, white perch, killifish, weakfish, Atlantic silversides, bluefish, sand shrimp, blue crabs, spider crabs, and hermit crabs (ASMFC, 2019). The adults are a food source for sea turtles, conch and even sharks.

Horseshoe crabs are commercially harvested for bait in whelk and eel pots. In addition, their blood is used in the biomedical industry to test for the presence of bacterial toxins.

Survey results are used by the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to monitor abundance trends in the local population. The data collected from the surveys is also used to delineate areas of critical spawning habitat for horseshoe crabs as well as preferred spawning temperatures. Results are submitted to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and are used to inform management of horseshoe crabs. The status of horseshoe crab populations along the Atlantic coast is investigated through surveys,

research, and harvest records. The 2019 ASMFC stock assessment indicated the population in the Delaware Bay area that also includes the Maryland Coastal Bays is stable (ASMFC, 2019). Results from this survey supports the stock assessment in that the local population abundance appears to be stable. [More](#)

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## Adult Learning Series

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Please join us for an afternoon of learning about the history of oysters in our Coastal Bays, the importance of them to our watershed, and current citizen-led efforts to help understand and work to restore these amazing creatures.

This program will take place at Archer Oyster Company in George Island Landing on Tuesday, April 19 from 1:30 to 3:00. Participants will take a tour of Archer Oyster Company, led by owner Jess Baunhofer, and learn about the Coastal Bays Oyster Gardening Program.

To register, please visit [here](#):  
Please email MCBP Education Coordinator, Liz Wist, at [lwist@mdcoastalbays.org](mailto:lwist@mdcoastalbays.org) for any questions.



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## Survey for O.C. Green Team Action Plan

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April 4, 2022: Ocean City's Coastal Resources Legislative committee, also known as the Green Team, is releasing a survey for both residents and visitors to gauge the community's environmental interests, behaviors, and needs.

This information will help the Green Team develop and target its 3-year Action Plan to ensure the wants of the community are addressed in the goals that are set. This survey also helps Ocean City to become recertified by Sustainable Maryland, which helps the town and its members save money, protect the environment, and be recognized for their environmentally friendly actions.

The survey can be accessed here: [here](#)

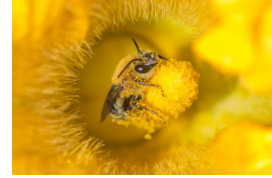
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# Pollinator Gardens

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If you live in Ocean City, you have one more day to apply for a pollinator garden!

Click [here](#) for details.



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# Salt Marsh Restoration Project

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On Wednesday March 16th, the Maryland Coastal Bays SMART Field Implementation Team toured a salt marsh restoration project in Ocean View, Delaware at the James Farm Ecological Preserve.

Completed in 2008, the Sloughs Gut project filled linear mosquito ditches dug by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, and replaced the ditches with an interconnected network of sinuous tidal creeks and pools. The purpose of this project was to return the salt marsh to a more natural state, thus providing additional ecosystem services and increased habitat capacity.

During the site visit, for comparison purposes, the group was able to view unrestored salt marsh across the main channel from the restoration site that has continued to decline. Attendees included a majority of the SMARTeam members as well as others interested in learning about salt marsh restoration.

Pictured from left to right: Amanda Poskaitis (National Wildlife Federation), Lorie Staver, Elly Gartnerlast (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science) Katie Kavanagh, Cailyn Joseph (Maryland Coastal Bays Program), Jared Parks, Beth Sheppard (Lower Shore Land Trust), Katherine Phillips, Carly Toulan, (Maryland Coastal Bays Program), Leslie Pitt, Leah Franzluebbbers, Katherine Stahl, Rich Mason (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Roman Jesian (Maryland Coastal Bays Program), Sarah Hilderbrand (Maryland Department of Natural Resources), . Thanks to Andrew McGowan of the Center for Inland Bays for leading our group!

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# Employment Opportunities

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Assateague Outfitters is currently has several seasonal opportunities, [click here](#) for specifics. Hours and shifts can be flexible.

