

We began 2016 on a solid foundation as an organization. Our staff, grants and project workload has grown as has the reach and visibility of our programs. Relationships with our partners remain strong. The hard work of Board and Staff have created stronger more efficient administrative and financial systems, built brand identity, defined and clarified our programs, expanded communications, and begun to renew our focus on fundraising. The following represents some key highlights of the first quarter of 2017.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Highlights: Delivering our Mission through Signature Programs

- Implementation *of local government assistance* programs have increased with the acquisition of several private grants that augment and build on the flagship work with the Local Government Advisory Committee in the watershed. We are working directly with the States to expand outreach and engagement of local governments with Chesapeake Bay Program initiatives related to WIP III and TMDL midpoint, working with partners to development training and education resources for elected officials, and assessing how to measure the effects of local leadership.
- Citizen stewardship action through *Project Clean Stream* launched on April 1 with a new online registration system for volunteers. Ted Wolfe has newly assumed leadership of PCS for 2017.
- Developing a strategy for marketing and expansion of *Businesses for the Bay* in 2017, a key year for building program content and gaining greater visibility in order to expand membership.
- Launching a partnership effort with the land trust community to expand knowledge and participation of land trusts in **environmental markets through a USDA funded project**
- Completing the framework and guidelines needed to implement the *Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative* and will launch with a signing by the EC and major outreach to volunteer monitoring groups across the watershed.
- Completing our *RiverWise Congregations* effort culminating in the \$1.2 million St. Lukes Project later this summer. *We are also partnering with the AA Co Watershed Stewards Academy to provide assistance to a group of “mega” churches as well.* Continuing to partner with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake in tree planting on church properties.
- Moved riparian forest buffer tree planting efforts to central and western MD under our *Healthy Streams Farm Stewardship Program and RCPP.*
- Working on a transfer of leadership of the Howard County **READY** program while developing new programs in Anne Arundel County, MD and the City of Lancaster, PA.

- Work was launched in PA for the multi-year **Octoraro Restoration Project** aimed at delivering conservation practices on Plain Sect farms in cooperation with local partners and developing sustainable strategies for future funding.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Highlights: Organizational Health

- **Alliance staffing** has remained steady at approximately 32 employees in 2017, however, we have experienced another first quarter of turnover. In the first 3 months of 2017, we lost 6 employees who were able to use their experience to move on to higher level positions including our PA State Director. During the same time, we hired 6 new employees and have restructured some duties. As such, hiring, training, mentorship, guidance, and team building have been more significant time commitments.
- We are entering 2017 with our **highest level of grant commitment** (\$10.6 million) on the books ever at the beginning of the year. This is due to two straight years of an unprecedented level of **grant writing** and the implementation of **programs across the Alliance** organization. Concerns remain about the future of federal spending.
- Employees are taking advantage of both **health and pre-tax retirement savings** options adopted by the Board in the fall. We expect to be under budget at mid-year and we may be able to increase our offering to employees at that time.
- I have spent considerable time this period supporting the **ED Transition process** which continues moving on schedule. With over 100 applicants, the Search Committee has refined the list to over a dozen strong candidates to consider.
- We enter 2017 **with 22 of 24 Board Members** filled and no terms expiring during the coming year. Our succession planning from the previous year has a list of 6 potential members with interest. This year will also be our year to further **cultivate our Honorary Directors** and potentially add new Honorary Directors.
- Planning our **May Staff Retreat** (May 4-5) which will include program planning small group work, diversity training, and discussions of the ED Transition, Finance and Budgeting, and expanding volunteerism. Field training in water quality monitoring and a native wetland plan trip are planned.
- We adopted a Resolution on **Diversity and Inclusion** in January. Staff will begin with Cultural Competency training during our May retreat and we will schedule for the Board later in the year.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Highlights: Development and Communications

- We have been working on a plan to provide **web support** for the Alliance with the loss of Dan Brellis either through hiring of staff or contract support. In addition to our newly-designed flagship Alliance site, we have assessed our significant online resource needs are trying to determine the best ways to maintain the Chesapeake Network, PCS site, *Reduce your Stormwater' DIY site, Native Plant Center, Forest for the Bay, and others*. This is a robust set of online resources that are in demand and useful for local governments and homeowners but

which we do not have a stable source of funding support. These are outreach tools, eventually driving additional traffic to the Alliance online.

- Our communication group began work on a **social media plan** that will develop some targeted *social media campaigns* to build on past success such as “Runoff Busters” and “Go Native” and explore new campaigns such as “We all live upstream” to bring some branding to our social media.
- We have assigned a portion of the time of our part time support staff-Harriett Newquist, Lisa Wadsworth, and a new administrative assistant, Jeremy Browning, -to assist Mary Angela in **staff support for carrying out the 2017 Development and Fundraising plan** and begin preparation for Taste 2017.
- We are working with a designer to complete **a new brochure and “play book”** that will serve as a simple but engaging takeaway for people and ensure they understand our mission and programs. It will be a strong outreach tool for Board Members to use in communication as well.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Highlights: Financial Management and Fund-raising**

- We entered 2017 with a **positive net asset balance** and are continuing on a path to build operating reserve.
- We reorganized financial staff and **enhanced grants management** support. Program managers are for the first time, receiving monthly grant accounting and direct assistance with grant budget preparation. We have also just begun building a system for tracking match for grants.
- We have received nearly **\$700,000 in new grant awards** so far this year and staff are working on **preparing proposals** for approximately \$2.7 million more. Most of the larger requests will be a part of this year’s NFWF Stewardship Fund RFP. We are making a push on federally funded grants at this time while the likelihood of funding is positive. Our staff will continue to seek other state and private grant opportunities in 2017.
- Although the first quarter is our slowest for donations, we have begun preparing for the implementation of our comprehensive fundraising plan for 2017 beginning with the Mid-year appeal in June.

*Submitted on 4/21/2017 by*



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