Howard County
Watershed Stewards Academy
Annual Report

2025



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

WSA HOWARD COUNTY

Summary

The Howard County Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA) is a training program to empower residents to improve the water quality of local streams. Stewards become community leaders in reducing harmful effects of polluted storm water running off into our streams.

Vision

To achieve community and professional recognition of the WSA as a unique, universally recognized educational organization dedicated to assessment, peer education, and community collaboration in the pursuit of healthy waterways.

Mission

Our mission is to increase the number and diversity of trained volunteers who become Master Watershed Stewards. These Stewards have the knowledge and skill required to enhance the health of our local streams, rivers, and lakes. Master Watershed Stewards also work with their community to provide the best storm water management practices.

Approach

The **Howard County Watershed Stewards Academy** increases the number and diversity of trained volunteers who become Master Watershed Stewards. These Stewards have the knowledge and skill required to enhance the health of our local streams, rivers, and lakes. Master Watershed Stewards also work with their community to provide the best storm water management practices.

Watershed Stewards

The **Howard County Watershed Stewards Academy** is a training program to empower residents to improve the water quality `of local streams. Stewards become community leaders in reducing harmful effects of polluted storm water running off into our streams.

When certified, Stewards become a part of a network of local professionals and volunteers who work to reduce storm water pollution. Course participants are required to complete the certification process which has a lecture component (September – December). This is generally a weekly Tuesday evening set of sessions with occasional Saturday outings. There is also a capstone project component that involves a practical demonstration of acquired skills through community-based activities (January – July)

Master Watershed Stewards improve water quality in many ways such as:

- Planting native trees and plants, and removing invasive plants
- Stenciling storm drains with anti-pollution themes
- Engaging homeowners
- Conducting assessments of residential sites and neighborhoods
- Recommending, designing, and installing storm water remediation
- Providing workshops and presentations to the Stewards and the public

Advisory Committee

The principal purpose of Advisory Committee is to assist WSA's programs in empowering the Howard County community to improve the quality of local waterways. The Advisory Committee is comprised of members with diverse professional and personal backgrounds.

2025 AT A GLANCE

	4	**Master Watershed Steward graduates**
	4	**Stewards' projects completed**
	2000	**Plants Installed**
	24	**Trees / Shrubs planted**
	122	**Rain Barrels distributed**
	3,500	**Individuals educated**
	1,510	**Volunteer hours**

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Provide Stewards and Stewards-in-training with training and continuing education

Steward Certifications

- Promoting recruitment of potential students at outreach events and online
- Establishing a process for reviewing and improving WSA course topics and programmatic content
- Since 2013 certified **70+** Watershed Stewards



Continuing Education (CE)

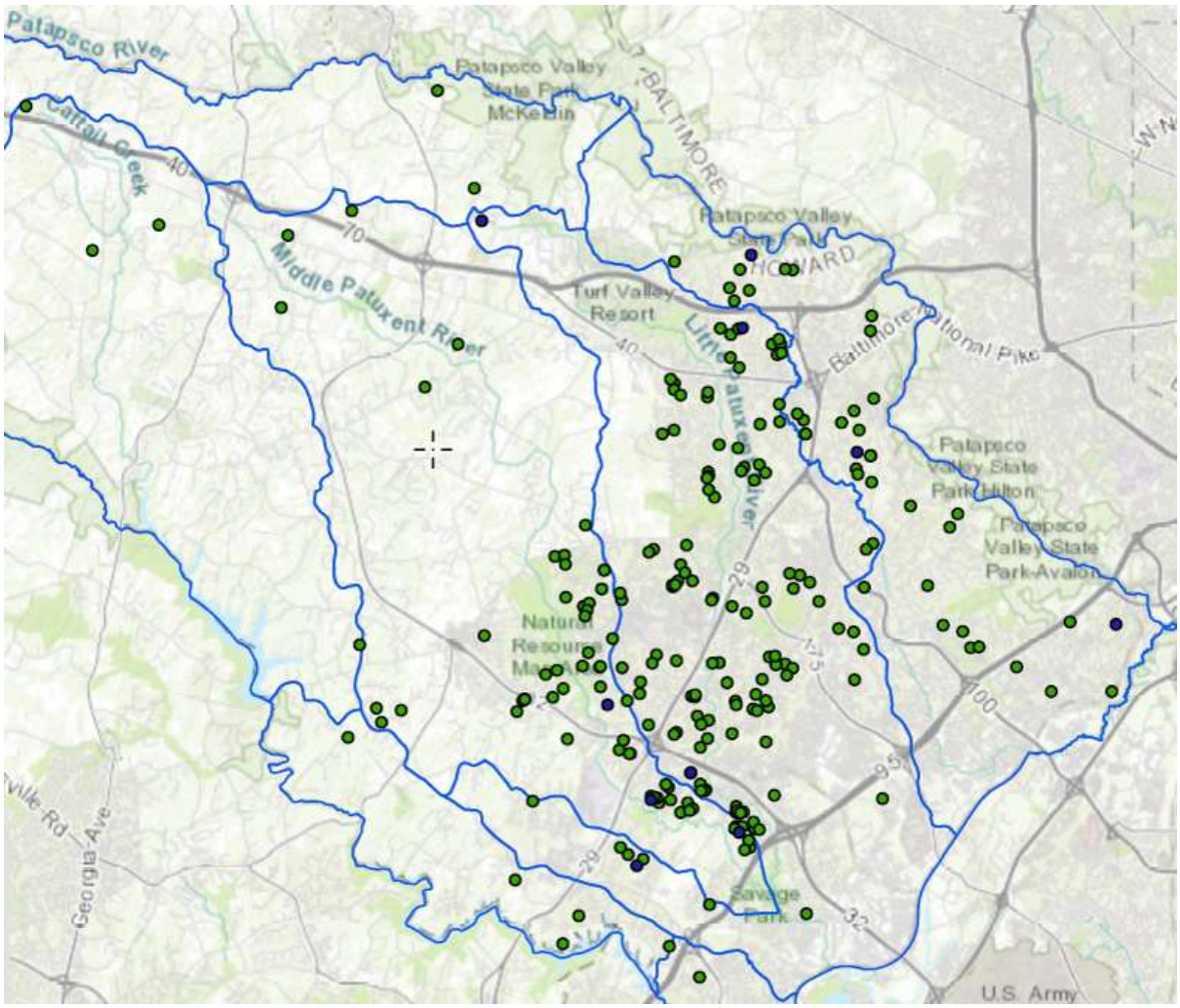
- Performed **5** outreach events
- Initiated developing a long-term CE plan
- Initiated developing a coaching course to help Stewards enhance their public speaking and presentation skills
- Initiated developing mentorship opportunities for newly certified Stewards
- Provided training materials and online resources for Stewards
- Organized field-based training sessions for Stewards
- Establishing partnerships with environmental groups for training and collaborative projects

Make the public aware of the services Stewards can provide

- Homeowner Interview and Site Assessments (HISA) is a method by which Stewards assess stormwater issues on a residential property and provide recommendations to the Homeowner
- Performed **12** HISAs.
- Neighborhood Source Assessment (NSA) is a method by which Stewards can assess stormwater issues on neighborhood-scale
- Performed **7** NSAs



Possible location of rain garden – foreground *Downspouts draining garage roof*



Locations of Howard County homeowner's assisted by WSA

- Used public outreach events to showcase the role of Stewards and available services for communities
- Continually updated outreach materials on Steward services
- Promoted WSA services at annual Howard County Greenfest
- Stewards that are trained Stream Waders performed annual stream sampling that is used to inform the local communities about the relationship between land use and stream quality
- WSA collaborated with Master Gardeners to conduct Howard County Native Landscaping Tours, which were well attended





Create a sustainable organization to support the program

- Updated Bylaws to improve Advisory Committee
- Expanded Advisory Committee Sub-Committees
- Developing fundraising plan for the next five years
- Developing procedure to administer budgeted funds
- Initiated developing a procedure to recruit potential Stewards

Provide Programmatic Guidelines for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect (DEIR) in WSA and AC Operations

- Prepared a DEIR policy statement:

  Understanding that environmental injustices and the resulting land, water, and air pollution disproportionately affect under-served communities, the Howard County Watershed Stewards Academy is committed to seeking solutions through the promotion of Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Respect throughout our organization and program.

- Performed DEIR survey of Advisory Committee (AC) members and Stewards
- Performed DEIR awareness training for AC members and Stewards

FOLLOW US

WSA uses many forms of communications to reach WSA members and communities. WSA has a subscribers list 1,000+ to broadcast emails, plus an informative website and Facebook account.

https://hcwsa.org/

https://www.facebook.com/HoCoWSA/

OUR PARTNERS

