

The High 5 Initiative

FY23 Report

The High 5 Initiative, Inc. is a locally based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to practicing, promoting, and enabling the conservation of nature through sustainable practices. We believe in our collective ability as a species to not only identify but solve the biggest problems facing our planet today.

Public Education and Outreach

The High 5 Initiative reaches the community through various methods to promote good stewardship of our local watersheds. We encourage best practices to reduce use, rethink waste, encourage participation and inspire. The brochures we handed out at our cleanups, Cecil County Wade-In, and St. Mary's Garden Market includes a good amount of that information, as well as, directs them to our website to help them find out more. Our website includes an extensive list of actions anyone can take to reduce pollution going to our rivers on our "At Home Tips" page. The High 5 Initiative has a very active presence on Facebook and Instagram where we further our message to those we may not get a chance to see in person. In addition, we have done interviews with Cecil TV and Chesapeake Bay Magazine to discuss The High 5 Cleanup Initiative. Cecil Whig also came out to our Northern Map Turtle Cleanup and did a story. Social and traditional media have greatly extended our public education and outreach.

Awareness Campaign	Total Reach
High 5 Website	3,582
High 5 Facebook	32,118
High 5 Instagram	22,863
Cecil TV	3,500
Cecil Whig	16,000
Chesapeake Bay Magazine	30,000
St. Mary's Garden Market	6,000
Cecil County Wade-In	200
High 5 Cleanups	182
Total	114,445

<https://chesapeakebaymagazine.com/video-cleanup-volunteers-get-rare-glimpse-of-endangered-turtles-hatching/>

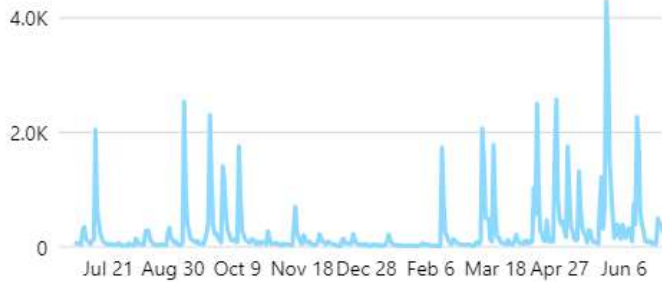
https://www.cecildaily.com/news/rainy-beach-clean-up-sweetened-by-turtle-hatching/article_12a342c1-2c3e-534c-9244-1db2d881b1f7.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASsn3heEjYY>

Reach

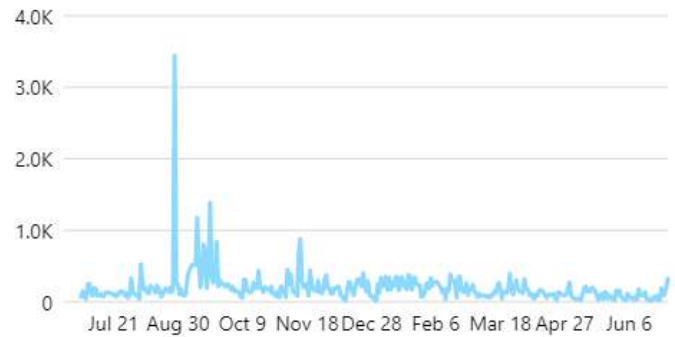
Facebook reach ⓘ

32,118 ↑ 0.9%



Instagram reach ⓘ

22,863 ↑ 137.7%



Public Involvement and Participation

The High 5 Initiative specifically schedules community cleanups within the Northeast River, Octoraro Creek, Lower Susquehanna River and Lower Elk River Watersheds in Cecil County. We can find different types of litter at each of these locations. During every cleanup, we discuss with participants how the “trash” may have ended up there and what could be done to prevent it. We find some are illegally dumped, some thrown from car windows, some left from those recreating on the rivers and some debris that washes ashore.



TH51 completed 6 scheduled cleanups and 1 additional one from July 2022 to June 2023 resulting in 7,015 pounds of trash removed from 15 miles of Cecil County Rivers and tributaries. This included 54 illegally dumped tires. There were a total of 182 volunteers who assisted, 54 of whom were under 18, and most from the area.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event Name</u>	<u>Body of Water</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u># of</u> <u>Volunteers</u>	<u># Under</u> <u>18</u>	<u>lbs of</u> <u>Trash</u>	<u>Tire</u> <u>Count</u>
7/4/2022	Independence Day Cleanup	North East River	2	15	4	300	1
9/17/2022	National Cleanup Day	North East River	2	7	2	300	1
10/8/2022	Cecil Cares Cleanup	Susquehanna River	3	19	4	1175	15
3/17/2023	St. Patrick's Day Cleanup	Susquehanna River	1	6	3	100	0
4/22/2023	Earth Day Kayak Cleanup	North East & Stoney Run	2	65	10	1920	24
5/13/2023	Northern Map Turtle Cleanup	Susquehanna River	3	48	22	3120	13
6/3/2023	National Trail Day Cleanup	Elk River	2	22	9	100	0
Totals			15	182	54	7015	54

This year we had about the same number of total volunteers but we had to rescheduled a large cleanup in the fall due to the impending hurricane, resulting in a lower attendance than initially expected. However, we have seen the youth participation more than double through our efforts of coordinating with local scout groups. Furthermore, we did see a reduction in overall trash collected this year, which is great news! We found especially along rte. 222 we have seen a dramatic decrease in illegal dumping. We believe this to be a result of keeping the area clear by doing cleanups there twice a year since 2020, as trash tends to be a magnet and most people feel less guilty about leaving furniture on the side of the road if they see something else already there. Additionally, we have been educating the community on what to do if they see something. Lastly, we did not have a large wash out and or flooding event in the past year like we had the previous year.



Another amazing thing we had the chance to witness was a crayfish in the North East River and the emergence of baby Northern Map Turtles on the Susquehanna River at our first two cleanups in 2023. Both indicators that the work we are doing is helping make an important contribution.



After every cleanup we are amazed at all the smiles after a day in the ditches. The community generally wants to help, and we are very honored to be able to provide this path.

In addition to these efforts, The High 5 Initiative is involved in many other things to help protect our local watersheds and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. TH5I does monthly water testing where Rock Run meets the Susquehanna River and submits the results to the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative. While educating the community at the St. Mary's Garden Market, we were able to get 500 native perennials into the hands of the attendees to help local pollinators and reduce stormwater runoff. The High 5 Initiative attended town meetings on the North East Nature Preserve and gave input to protect the wildlife and river. We also worked the past three years with state legislators on the Producer Responsibility Packaging Law that passed this spring. That law additionally included a statewide recycling needs assessment. The High 5 Initiative has also worked directly with the Maryland Department of the Environment about the recycling issues in the state.

We are thankful for the relationships we have built and the support we have received. Thank you.

