

# The High 5 Initiative

## FY25 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. We believe in our collective ability to identify and solve the biggest problems facing our environment today.



## Public Education and Outreach

The High 5 Initiative employs diverse strategies to engage the community and foster responsible care of our local watersheds. We promote best practices that include minimizing resource consumption, re-imagining waste management, fostering community involvement, and inspiring simple sustainable solutions. Our informational brochures, distributed during cleanup events, the Earth Day event at Cecil College, Cecil County Wade-In, the St. Mary's Garden Market, the Unicorn Quest, the Port Deposit Pirate Takeover and Cheers for Clean Beer, provide a wealth of knowledge. Furthermore, these materials direct individuals to our website for additional insights to follow up on the education happening onsite. Our website features an extensive array of actionable steps, outlined on the "At Home Tips" page, that empower everyone to curtail pollution impacting our rivers. Active across Facebook and Instagram, The High 5 Initiative leverages these platforms to extend our message to individuals who might not have in-person interactions with us. Our commitment to spread awareness has led us to collaborate with various partners who have significantly amplified the reach of our educational and outreach endeavors. In addition to our online presence, the Cecil Whig wrote two articles, and we were interviewed by Cecil TV in the past year, bringing our overall reach to almost 380,000.

<b>Awareness Campaign</b>	<b>Total Reach</b>
High 5 Website	3,000
High 5 Facebook	300,000
High 5 Instagram	5,000
Cecil TV	4,500
Cecil Whig	54,000
Unicorn Quest	2,500
Port Deposit Pirate Takeover	3,500
St. Mary Anne's Garden Mark	4,500
Cecil County Wade-In	300
Cecil College Earth Day	200
Cheers for Clean Beer	300
High 5 Cleanups	267
Bainbridge Elem. Planting	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>378,090</b>

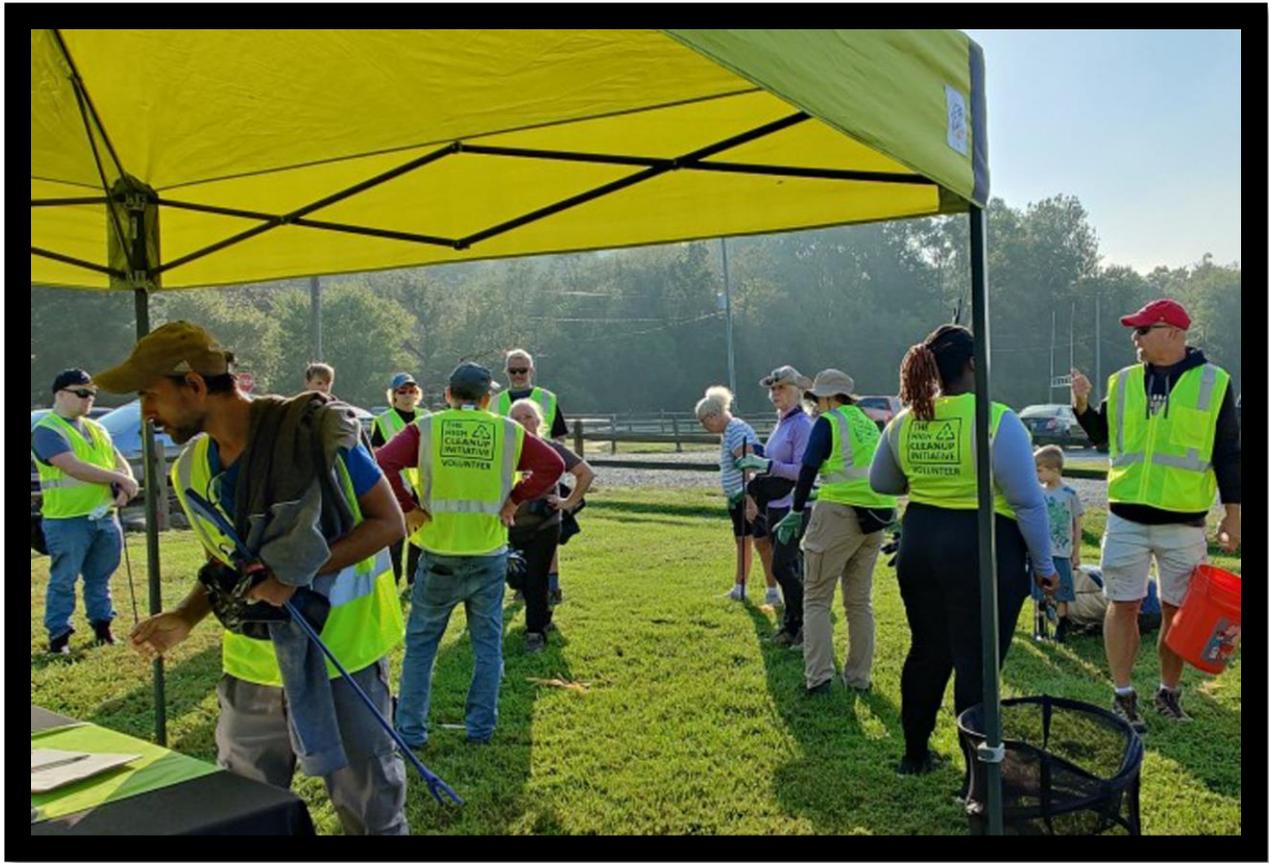
## Public Involvement and Participation

The High 5 Initiative strategically arranges community cleanup events across several critical watersheds in Cecil County: The North East River, Octoraro Creek, Lower Susquehanna River, and Lower Elk River. Each of these locations are afflicted by different types of pollution aka trash. Throughout these cleanups, we engage participants in conversations about the origins of this "trash" and brainstorm preventive measures. Our findings reveal that the "trash" accumulates from various human sources, including illegal dumping, discarding from vehicles, remnants left by recreational river users, and boat litter and storm water debris brought in by the tides.



Between July 2024 and June 2025, TH5I successfully conducted six planned cleanups, one additional cleanup effort and monthly cleanups at our water testing site. An incredible 269 volunteers contributed their efforts to the cause, with 86 of them being under the age of 18. Many of these individuals have been coming back for years and letting others know about our events too. We even had one repeat volunteer to the Northern Map Turtle Cleanup, who happens to be a girl scout, create a Junior Environmentalist Badge Program for Endangered Turtles. Most of these dedicated volunteers are from the local area, embodying the spirit of community involvement and environmental stewardship.

These community cleanup events collectively resulted in the removal of an amazing 8,730 pounds of trash from a span of 18 miles of Cecil County Rivers and their tributaries over the course of the year. Notably, the weights included the removal and proper disposal of 21 illegally dumped tires, which is 19 less than what was collected in FY24.



In FY25, our total volunteer count increased by 66 people compared to FY24. Our outreach efforts with local scout groups continue to yield awesome results, with youth participation of an all-time high of 86. During our Earth Day Kayak Cleanup, we broke our event attendance record with 81 volunteers and then broke it again at the Northern Map Turtle Cleanup with 96 amazing community members. Additionally, we hit a volunteer milestone with our 1000th person sign in at the National Trails Day Cleanup.

Moreover, our measurements tell the story of the positive environmental impacts that result from our work. The most obvious improvement is the dramatic decrease in illegal dumping, particularly along Rte. 222 near the Susquehanna River where we would find dozens of tires and lots of furniture every year. Since starting our biannual cleanups of the area in 2020 we have focused on clearing the area's multiple illegal roadside dumping sites in addition to our normal riparian and shoreline efforts. Consistently keeping the area clear deters further dumping, as pre-existing trash often encourages more littering. That said, the total amount of trash collected from all sites went up by over 1,040 pounds in FY25, indicating room for improvement in preventing littering, especially along the roadways. This may also be a result of additional volunteers covering more area.

Date	Event Name	Body of Water	Miles	# of Volunteers	# Under 18	lbs of Trash	Tire Count
7/4/2024	Independence Day Cleanup	North East River	2	15	6	300	0
9/14/2024	End of Summer Cleanup	North East River	2	30	8	500	1
10/5/2024	Cecil Cares Cleanup	Susquehanna River	3	24	4	1620	7
3/15/2025	Adopt-A-Road	Rock Run	1	2	0	400	5
4/26/2025	Earth Day Kayak Cleanup	North East & Stoney Run	2	81	20	720	3
5/10/2025	Northern Map Turtle Cleanup	Susquehanna River	3	96	41	4540	3
6/7/2025	National Trail Day Cleanup	Elk River	2	19	7	50	2
Monthly	Water Testing Site	Rock Run & Susquehanna River	3	2	0	600	0
	<b>Totals</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>8730</b>	<b>21</b>



After every cleanup, we are amazed at all the smiles after a day in the ditches. The community genuinely 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 again this year. The High 5 Initiative is on the planning committee for a couple large events in the county that thousands of community members attend where we encourage environmentally friendly practices and help with the post event cleanup. The High 5 Initiative, with the help of Bainbridge Elementary School students, planted natives at Marina Park in Port Deposit promoting beautification of outdoor public spaces.

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