# Serving Historic Sites and the Environment: Adopt a Wetland

Created by Chris Davies

St. Mary's County Public Schools
Subject Area: Civics
Grade Level: 9

The service-learning program at Great Mill High School combines student knowledge of citizenship with active involvement in the community. Students work to gain an understanding of community on many levels, from school to the global community. Using a process of identifying the needs of their community, students work with community leaders and organizations to create a community based service project.

For the past 2 years (1994-1995), students have created on ongoing community partnership with Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC). HSMC is a living museum in southern Maryland that works to preserve Maryland's first colonial settlement. HSMC combines historical preservation and reenactment with environmental education. The museum has over 200 acres along the shore of the St. Mary's River. HSMC provides both the local community and all visitors with a historical look back at the first Marylanders and the Native American settlements that preceded colonial settlement.

Students have worked with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to "Adopt a Wetland" at HSMC. The area known as Key Swamp is a vital tributary to the St. Mary's River in Southern Maryland. Students work with the educational director and the historical horticulturist at HSMC to improve and maintain the environmental balance of the Key Swamp. The project also strives to promote plants and animals in the area that existed at the time of the first settlers. Removal and documentation of introduced invasive plants (such as Japanese honeysuckle and kudzu vine), strive to create a living exhibit of the plants used by the original native populations and settlers.

Through grants by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation this project and community partnership between great Mills High School and Historic St. Mary's City, will continue into the 1995-96 school year and beyond.