

## **SUMMARY OF** **TANGIER WATERMEN'S STEWARDSHIP FOR THE CHESAPEAKE (TaSC)**

Understanding the need to plan for an environmentally sustainable fishery, island and culture, the two churches on Tangier Island worked together with the community to form the initiative called "Tangier Watermen's Stewardship for the Chesapeake" (TaSC). Its purpose is to organize the community to implement the "Stewardship 2020 Vision" which is a plan for the future sustainability of Tangier Island's way of life developed by members of the community in March, 1998. The Initiative also actively encourages other watermen and farming communities in Virginia and Maryland to develop a similar stewardship vision for their communities. The Initiative is guided by a Steering Committee of 20 people and a Board of Directors composed of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Initiative is unique in that it is based on Tangier's community value system which is distinctly biblical.

Representatives from all sectors of Tangier society are participating in three committees under the Stewardship 2020 and they are entitled: 1) Caring for Creation; 2) Sustainable Economic Development and Preserving Tangier's Watermen Culture; and 3) Fishery Stewardship. All three committees are implementing the goals, objectives and strategies of the Tangier Island Watermen Community Stewardship 2020 Vision. This Vision was developed by taking into account community ideas via surveys and guided by a set of 10 biblical environmental stewardship principles.

The key goals for the caring for Creation committee, as set forth in the 2020 vision are: 1) Tangier Island's neighborhoods and natural environment (includes creeks, beach, shanty areas and island waters) are enhanced and maintained; 2) Private and business consumption that minimizes and reuses waste products overall and non-recyclable waste products (e.g., plastics) and reduces use of energy (fossil fuels, natural gas, electricity); 3) island and its waters free from toxic substances; 4) Awareness raising and education about caring for creation; 5) Conservation of wetlands; and 6) Stewardship of church facilities.

The key goals of the Sustainable Economic Development and Preserving Tangier Watermen Culture committee are: 1) Diversification of employment opportunities and income generation for individuals; 2) Community captures more income from tourism; 3) Affordable housing for young and old; and 4) Promote local artisans.

The goals of the Fishery Stewardship Committee are: 1) Tangier watermen community is organized and actively engaged in political, social, economic and environmental affairs affecting Tangier fisheries and heritage. (An advocacy group called FAIITH—Families Actively Involved in Improving Tangier's Heritage—has been formed whose goal is to work with government officials, scientists and advocacy groups such as environmentalists to work for good governance that will protect the environment and watermen heritage); 2) Maintain healthy shellfish and finfish populations and protect their habitat; 3) Flexible licensing to maintain watermen's livelihood and way of life; 4) Affordable health insurance for watermen and families; and 5) Diversification and expansion of income-generating opportunities for the fisheries.

The Tangiermen have already begun to implement parts of their Vision plan which reveals the commitment already garnered through this educational process. Under the Caring for Creation committee, the neighborhoods have been implementing trash clean-up efforts on a regular basis, including partaking in the Center for Marine Conservation's International Coastal Clean-up Campaign, placed 13 new trash cans across the island, are working with the EPA on the manner in which to use the reused boat oil as fuel for the Tangier incinerator, and are thinking of how to cut down on waste from bait boxes.

The Fishery Stewardship committee, led by Tangier Combined School's science teacher is developing a 40-hour environmental education program for all grades through the school's science classes. The program will be particularly targeted for young men who are becoming mates and captains. Others on the committee have met with federal government agencies (NOAA, EPA, DOI, Corps of Engineers, etc.) to develop a Coastal America Project which will look at building up the Tangier Island shoreline and use dredge spoil from the dredging to the bay channel for creation of wetlands. CBF, VIMS and VMRC are funding two watermen to conduct experimental oyster aquaculture and four other watermen are conducting experimental oyster aquaculture using an Irish technique.

The Economic Development committee organized three arts and crafts classes from January to June, 1999 for residents—decorative painting, woodcrafting, and watercolor painting. The committee is now discussing the idea of creating a craft-making co-90 to sell crafts generated by the women of the island.

The FAIITH group's membership included approximately 80 families. They have been attending Virginia Marine Resource Commission meetings, writing letters and making phone calls about key state fishery legislation, and meeting with the Chesapeake Bay foundation on a potential oyster restoration project. FAIITH representatives have testified before the Virginia General Assembly committee hearing on two bills, one dealing with placing food in peeler crab pots and the other addressing a license exemption for Tangier. FAIITH also produces a quarterly newsletter on regulations and other issues facing Tangier watermen.