

FINAL
SUMMARY OF THE DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
June 24, 2020, 10:00 AM
Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Angie Ashley Consulting: Angie Ashley
Anchor QEA: Walter Dinicola
Association of Maryland Pilots (AMP): Eric Nielsen
Baltimore Port Alliance: Rupert Denney
Citizens Advisory Committee (Chair): Adam Lindquist
Council Fire: George Chmael II, Katie Smith
EcoLogix Group: Steve Pattison
Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Bruce Michael, Richard Ortt
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Tammy Banta, Jeff Halka, Melissa Slatnick, Jay Sullivan
Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE): Matt Rowe
Maryland Department of Transportation: Eddie Lukemire
Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA): Dave Blazer, Kristen Fidler, Tom Hall, Margie Hamby, Katrina Jones, Kristen Keene, Holly Miller, Amanda Peñafiel, Dominic Scurti
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Chesapeake Field Office: Karen Greene
NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service: Jonathan Watson
US Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (CENAB): Justin Callahan, Graham McAllister, Ray Tracy
US Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District (CENAP): Ken Goldberg
US Fish and Wildlife Service: Chris Guy

Action Items:

1. MDOT MPA will accept and consolidate comments on the Mid-Bay design for submission to Mr. Tracy before the USACE November review.

Statements for the Record:

1. Mr. Bill Doyle will be the new Managing Director of the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA) starting on July 22, 2020. He was previously the Executive Director of Dredging Contractors of America.
2. Maryland Environmental Service (MES) Chief Executive Officer Roy McGrath has been appointed as Chief of Staff for the State of Maryland. The new MES Director is Dr. Charles Glass.

1.0 Introductions, Approval of Meeting Summary

Ms. Kristen Fidler, MDOT MPA

Ms. Fidler welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order. Ms. Fidler requested comments on or changes to the April 24, 2020 Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) Management Committee meeting summary. A motion to accept the meeting summary passed unanimously.

2.0 State of the Port

Mr. Dominic Scurti, MDOT MPA

Mr. Scurti stated that due to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Port Authority (MDOT MPA) saw a significant decrease in the number of twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) exported from the Port of Baltimore (POB) in April and May. April and May 2020 volumes decreased 16% and imports decreased 10% compared to April and May 2019. China commenced quarantine lockdown the third week of February, which impacted imports to the POB starting in late March. MDOT MPA is expecting to continue to see decreases throughout the summer. If there is a second wave of COVID-19 lockdowns, the POB could continue to see considerable decreases in imports and exports. Mr. Scurti stated that only one shipping line route through the POB has had a blank sailing, which is less than neighboring ports.

Mr. Scurti stated that MDOT MPA terminals imported approximately 35,000 automobiles in March, which decreased to approximately 20,000 in April and 12,000 in May. Nearly all of the world's automobile factories were shut down by mid-April. United States (US) automobile factories were closed by the third week of March and started to gradually reopen in mid-May with a reduced workforce and supply shortages. There has also been a decrease in the number of previously owned vehicles (POVs) that have been exported. West African countries purchase a large portion of the POVs that are shipped out of Baltimore. Because many West African countries are heavily dependent upon the petrochemical industry, their economies have been impacted by low oil prices and there is less demand in POVs. As worldwide economies resume operations, the volume of automobiles shipped in and out of the POB is expected to increase.

Mr. Scurti stated that all MDOT MPA terminals have remained open for business with the exception of the cruise terminal. On March 18, 2020, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan issued a No Sail Order for cruise ships in Maryland and the CDC followed suit nationwide within a few days. As of June 24, there are still no cruise ships in operation in the world. Through May, the POB has lost 22 home port cruises and 3 port calls. It is expected that another 26 home port cruises will be lost through August. Once the No Sail Order has been lifted, cruise lines must submit a plan to the CDC detailing how they will protect passengers and crews before they are allowed to sail. The Royal Caribbean cruise line has suspended their cruises worldwide through the middle of September. Additionally, travel restrictions in other countries will pose challenges to developing cruise itineraries. Canada and Bermuda have suspended all cruises through the end of October. Other challenges to reopening cruise lines will be determining social distancing implementation protocol and expected diminished consumer demand.

Mr. Scurti summarized the affect COVID-19 has had on other major commodities imported and exported from the POB. Coal exports from the POB have decreased and will continue to be diminished through at least fall 2020. Coal exports are used primarily for foreign steel manufacturing as well as power generation, which has decreased with the global economic recession. Sugar imports are expected to increase with more people cooking and baking at home.

Mr. Blazer asked Mr. Scurti how the POB is doing compared with other domestic ports. Mr. Scurti stated that the POB has fared better than some Mid-Atlantic ports and the West Coast ports. When commodities are shipped from China, they are most often discharged in Long Beach and Los Angeles ports and shipped by rail across the US. Whereas when ships leave from Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and India, it becomes just as fast and cost effective to travel through the Suez Canal to ports along the East Coast. The shift of manufacturing to Southeast Asian ports has accelerated during the COVID-19 crisis and slightly counteracted the global economic recession impacting Mid-Atlantic regional ports like the POB. The POB has not seen the number of blank sailings/cancelled routes that other ports have on the East Coast. That is partially due to the fact that

other ports on the East Coast offer more services than the POB. The two shipping lines into Baltimore have been reluctant to decrease their lines because they would not have alternative ways to ship goods into Baltimore if they were to take ships out of rotation.

Mr. Denney asked if Mr. Scurti was referring exclusively to the MDOT MPA terminals, not the private terminals. Ms. Fidler confirmed that Mr. Scurti was referring to public MDOT MPA terminals. Mr. Denney stated that private terminals not owned by MDOT MPA make a small contribution to the ship calls but a large contribution in terms of tonnage.

3.0 DMMP Citizens Advisory Committee Update

Mr. Adam Lindquist, Chair

Mr. Lindquist stated that almost 40 people attended the first virtual DMMP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on May 13. At that meeting, Brad Smith (MDOT MPA) announced MDOT MPA successfully secured a \$125 Million (M) grant from the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the Howard Street Tunnel Expansion Project. Approximately 100 letters of support were submitted allowing MDOT MPA to secure the grant for the Howard Street Tunnel Expansion Project. USDOT expressed that the letters of support helped significantly to secure the funding. This expansion will make the POB more accessible by rail to the Midwest supply markets. Once the project is completed, over 7,000 jobs will be created in Maryland as well as 6,550 construction jobs during the duration of the project.

Mr. Lindquist stated that Brad Rogers (South Baltimore Gateway Partnership) and Ethan Cohen (Baltimore City Office of the Mayor) presented at the May 13 CAC meeting on the Middle Branch Master Planning process. The South Baltimore Gateway Partnership is a community economic development authority funded by casino revenues and is doing work across many of the neighborhoods of south Baltimore. A contract has been awarded for the Middle Branch redesign master plan, which covers approximately 11 miles of shoreline from Masonville Cove to Port Covington. Mr. Lindquist stated that the goal is to involve local communities in the project. Early conceptual drawings have potential innovative reuse applications of dredged material that have the potential to mitigate the impacts that climate change has on the communities around the Middle Branch.

4.0 Corps of Engineers, North Atlantic, Baltimore (CENAB) and Philadelphia (CENAP)

Mr. Ken Goldberg, CENAP

Mr. Graham McAllister, CENAB

Mr. Ray Tracy, CENAB

Mr. Justin Callahan, CENAB

Chesapeake and Delaware (C&D) Maintenance Dredging

Mr. Goldberg stated that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), North Atlantic, Philadelphia (CENAP) district advertised the C&D maintenance dredging contract on May 21, 2020 with the bid opening on June 22, 2020. The two bidders were Great Lakes Dredge and Dock (GLDD) and Weeks Marine. The two bids were within \$2,000 on a \$10M bid including the base and two options. GLDD was the apparent low bidder and is the intended awardee. For the contract, Pearce Creek and Reedy Point South will be dredged to -35 Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW).

Baltimore Harbor and Maryland Approach Channels Update

Mr. McAllister stated that the USACE North Atlantic, Baltimore district (CENAB) Baltimore Harbor Channels Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 contract is under way and nearing completion. GLDD commenced work in February 2020 on the \$38.3M FY19/20 Maryland maintenance contract. They completed maintenance dredging of the approach channels, Brewerton Eastern Extension and the Tolchester

Channel. It is expected that approximately 2.2 million cubic yards (MCY) of dredged material will have been removed from those segments and placed at Poplar Island. GLDD is currently dredging the Baltimore Harbor channel segments and finishing work on the Brewerton Channel moving into Brewerton Angle. It is expected that 700,000 cubic yards (CY) of material will be dredged from the Baltimore Harbor and Brewerton channels. CENAB has removed the dredging of the East Channel from the 2020 plans because the pre-dredge surveys of the Baltimore Harbor and Brewerton channels yielded higher than historically average increases in sedimentation, therefore more time is needed in those segments. Dredging on the Brewerton Channel is expected to be complete in early July with dredged material being placed at the Masonville Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF).

Mr. McAllister stated that the \$17.8M base FY20 York Spit maintenance contract was awarded to GLDD, who commenced work on the contract in early May and is expected to complete the work in August. GLDD are dredging approximately 2.6 MCY with a hopper dredge from the York Spit Channel to be placed in the Wolf Trap Alternate Open Water Placement Site Northern Extension. GLDD anticipates augmenting work with a second hopper dredge at the beginning of August to finish dredging by the end of August to prevent harm to sea turtles in the area. There have been two incidental sea turtle takes on this contract during the 500,000 CY of material dredged thus far. CENAB anticipates that it will be taking one sea turtle every 320,000 CY of dredged material from the York Spit area.

Mr. McAllister stated that CENAB will advertise a contract for the dredging of approximately 1.3 MCY of material from the Maryland approach channels, Craighill Angle and Swan Point, later this summer with an award in late September. Material will be placed at Poplar Island with dredging commencing in late fall or early winter of 2020.

Seagirt Loop Deepening Study

Mr. Tracy stated that the federally funded \$1.5M Seagirt Loop Deepening Study is progressing on schedule. CENAB is finalizing the language of the Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement with MDOT MPA before it is sent to the USACE North Atlantic Division (NAD) for execution approval.

Virginia Channels DMMP Preliminary Assessment

Mr. Tracy stated that CENAB had a meeting with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and MDOT MPA on May 21 to discuss disposal of dredged material at the Wolf Trap Alternate Open Water Placement Site for both current dredging and future dredging for the widening project. There was discussion of forming a committee in Virginia similar to the Bay Enhancement Work Group (BEWG) in Maryland, which should help to advance placement in Virginia. Mr. Tracy stated that the meeting minutes for the May 21 meeting are available by request. Once comments are submitted to USACE NAD, the preliminary assessment will be finalized and ready for NAD approval.

Mr. McAllister stated that later in the summer, CENAB intends to solicit a contract for the dredging of 1.5 MCY from the Cape Henry Channel in Virginia waters. This award will not be made until the beginning of FY21 and that material will be placed at the Dam Neck Ocean Open Water Placement Site.

Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration

Mr. Tracy stated that the contracts for James and Barren Island designs are progressing on schedule. Soil surveys and coastal modelling contracted by MES for James Island has advanced and CENAB's contract award for the design of Barren Island should be completed by the end of July 2020. The project design is anticipated to be complete in the fall of FY22 and construction material procurement is estimated to be complete in the winter/spring of FY22.

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has not been able to perform field biological surveys due to COVID-19 restrictions. CENAB has worked with MDOT MPA and MES to set up alternates to perform the surveys. There was a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) update meeting on June 22 with the federal and state resource agencies and Angie Sowers (CENAB) will release a NEPA public notice by mid-July.

Poplar Island

Mr. Callahan stated that CENAB completed placement of 2.8 MCY at Poplar Island with approximately 1.8 MCY in Cell 2 and approximately 1 MCY in Cell 6. With this inflow, the original Poplar Island placement capacity for dredged material has been reached. All future inflows at Poplar Island will involve placement in the expansion cells. The perimeter dikes will be completed in August 2020 and the two remaining drainage structures will be completed in December 2020. The Poplar Island Expansion will be prepared to receive dredged material starting in August 2020.

5.0 DMMP Mid-Year Progress Report: Update on 2020 Recommendations

Dave Blazer, MDOT MPA

Ms. Fidler stated that the Mid-Year Progress Report is an opportunity for MDOT MPA and their partners to evaluate the progress towards meeting the 2020 recommendations set forth in the 2019 Annual Report. MDOT MPA is open to feedback by members of the Management Committee as they prepare recommendations for 2021.

Mr. Blazer presented the progress and unanticipated challenges faced in the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the DMMP Mid-Year Progress Report attached below:

Recommendation 1: Engage directly with the Congressional delegation and other federal partners to support sufficient funding and constructive policies for the USACE dredging program serving POB. This recommendation emphasizes the necessary funding needed for the Middle Chesapeake Bay Islands Project (Mid-Bay) site design and for initiating construction of Barren Island in 2022 and James Island in 2024 with the goal of acceptance of dredged material by 2029. Specific focus should be made on advancing the project as authorized as a 65%-35% federal/state cost-shared aquatic ecosystem restoration project. Continue efforts with the USACE at the District, Division, and Headquarters levels, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and the Office of Minority Business on dredging and dredged material management to coordinate funding needs, approvals, and planning to meet the current growth and long-term demands of the POB as a nationally significant economic engine.

- a) MDOT MPA will work closely with the USACE Baltimore and Philadelphia Districts to implement their Dredged Material Management Plans so that the plans and schedules are approved, fully coordinated, and available funding is optimized.
 - MDOT MPA has engaged in several meetings with the Maryland Congressional Delegation to advocate in support of federal funding for the Mid-Bay project and annual appropriations for federal channels. MDOT MPA meets regularly with CENAB to provide supporting information in development of the Federal FY21 USACE Work Plan, FY22 budget and future budgets for funding to complete the design of Mid-Bay, to initiate construction at Barren Island as the first increment of construction for the Mid-Bay project, and to seek solutions to any foreseeable challenges jointly.
- b) Continue coordination with the Corps, National Marine Fisheries Service and Virginia to address questions related to overwintering female crabs and the Virginia channels dredged material placement sites.

- MDOT MPA proactively scheduled meetings with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the CENAB to work on securing a long-term dredged material placement site for the York Spit Channel, and continues discussions to identify various potential solutions, including beneficial use.
- c) Develop a State strategy to evaluate external risks and assure the DMMP successfully adapts to changing fiscal and other circumstances while accommodating port growth and dredging needs.
 - MDOT MPA provided timely and strategic input to the Congressional Delegation, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and USACE that helped result in CENAB receiving “new start” investigation funds in the USACE’s Federal FY20 work plan for the Seagirt Loop Feasibility Study, which is only one of six new starts funded nationally in the USACE Civil Works Program.
 - With the efforts to control the unanticipated COVID-19 virus, state and federal funding concerns have elevated quickly. MDOT MPA has been able to contain costs and continually communicate key projects and important priorities to state and federal leadership in an effort to maintain funding for the DMMP.

Recommendation 2: Work with USACE, directly and through the American Association of Port Authorities, to ensure favorable legislative language for the Corps navigation program and projects that benefit the Port’s Baltimore Harbor and Approach Channels project as reflected in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, should it be enacted.

- Following the February 2020 submission of the annual appropriations requests, MDOT MPA has worked to engage the delegation and review and advocate for the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) priorities that benefit MDOT MPA.
- MDOT MPA has continued frequent meetings with USACE Baltimore and Philadelphia Districts to discuss progress on navigation program projects.
- MDOT MPA conducted an analysis of the Senate mark-up on the American’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2020 and supports language that would allow full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Further input is being considered to clarify language regarding the “federal interest determination” which could favorably impact the Seagirt Loop Feasibility Study.

Recommendation 3: Focus on capacity and demand planning beyond the 20-year timeframe, including ongoing refinement of data to inform and support long-term sustainable dredged material management options including considerations related to climate resiliency.

- a) Incorporate into DMMP project planning and implementation the potential impacts resulting from climate change, including co-benefits from using dredged material in beneficial use projects.
 - Progress is continuing under the draft 2020 Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use Strategy as it calls for MDOT MPA to “Investigate how beneficial use of dredged material can be expanded to address Maryland’s Coastal Resiliency needs” by addressing policy, regulatory and technical issues, implementing programs and projects, and enhancing education and stakeholder engagement opportunities.
 - The Turner Station Conservation Teams was recently awarded an MDOT Secretary's Grant in the amount of \$500,000 to support the Fleming Park Restoration Project. This project involves the revitalization of a recreational asset in Baltimore County by reusing dredged material in both upland and in-water applications. The Fleming Park project will help to pave the way for beneficially using dredged material in the Baltimore Harbor to address coastal resiliency challenges

- b) To the extent practicable, quantify carbon sequestration benefits. In project planning across MDOT MPA, recognize the carbon sequestration benefits from using dredged material in Port related infrastructure projects.
- MDOT MPA is interested in continuing to share data with the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science that could play a part in the Blue Carbon initiative, specifically carbon sequestration in marshes on Poplar Island.
 - When appropriate, coordinate to participate in a follow-up event to “The Use of Dredged Material to Protect Low-Lying Areas of the Chesapeake Bay” workshop, which recommended the use of pilot projects at appropriate locations to address the impacts of erosion and inundation from rising sea level.
 - Environmental, geotechnical, hydrographic, and aerial surveys are underway as part of the Mid-Bay Pre-Construction Engineering and Design phase. CENAB project design considers varying scenarios of sea level rise as part of its risk analysis of future conditions.
 - Poplar Island expansion dike construction is on target to be complete by the end of summer 2020, providing additional capacity as well as wetland, protected open water, and upland habitats.
 - Raising of the Masonville DMCF dike to +18’ MLLW is complete and preparations have begun to raise the dikes to +30’ MLLW. The final elevation of the Masonville dikes will be +42’ MLLW, equivalent to the adjacent land.

Recommendation 4: Continue to review and evaluate the 2011 Harbor Team recommendations and advance where feasible. Based on additional studies and more recent stakeholder feedback, the recommendations to continue to be pursued in 2020 include:

- a) Implement the Cox Creek Expanded Project (CCE) on MDOT MPA-owned property (Stage 1 Expansion) and pursue acquisition of the Tronox (formerly Cristal USA) property for CCE Stage 2.
- Base dike widening and dike construction to elevation +36’ MLLW is underway for CCE and slated for completion in February 2021. Design of the upland expansion and +60’ MLLW dikes was completed in early 2020. Construction of the +60’ MLLW dikes is scheduled to begin in early 2021 with anticipated completion in summer 2024.
 - Community enhancement projects are proceeding in concert with the expansion project. Navigation aids have been installed in Cox Creek channels and a nature trail around Swan Creek is being designed.
 - Efforts to acquire the Tronox property adjacent to the Cox Creek DMCF remain underway.
- b) Begin evaluating the potential future of Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) as a dredged material management option based on lessons learned from the pilot project.
- MDOT MPA is conducting planning and investigative efforts to identify future CAD sites in the Patapsco River based on lessons learned from the pilot project and is developing a suite of recommendations for review by the end of 2020.

Recommendation 5: With input from the Innovative Reuse and Management Committees, review the June 2014 Innovative and Beneficial Use Strategy and update as necessary with refined goals and new action items, deliverables and deadlines.

- a) Submit revised strategy to DMMP Executive Committee for approval by the end of 2020.

- A 2020 Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use Strategy was developed with input from both the Innovative Reuse and Management Committees. The Strategy will be presented to the Executive Committee for final approval at their next meeting.
- b) Recommendations from the 2019 Workshop on the Use of Dredged Material to Protect Low-Lying Areas of the Chesapeake Bay will be considered in the strategy update.
- MDOT MPA staff and a team of advisors from the workshop explored the recommendation of forming a work group and the additional three recommendations of a web-tool, pilot projects and a regional strategy. The group evaluated the various related activities already underway with respect to sea level rise, vulnerable shorelines and innovative/beneficial use of dredged material. They determined the appropriate approach at this time was to work with those existing commissions, workgroups, agencies and organizations (federal, state, local, non-governmental organizations) in this arena as a vehicle to advance the goal of using dredged material to protect low lying areas of the Chesapeake Bay.

Recommendation 6: Support MDOT MPA's mission by working with all stakeholders to increase MDOT MPA's visibility and enhance the public's knowledge of MDOT MPA, the POB, port operations and dredging program, and their importance to the State of Maryland. Chart a clear course for increased outreach, engaging communications, meaningful educational opportunities and improved measurement of the impact of these activities:

- a. Build and maintain respectful, productive, and mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders, especially with younger and more diverse audiences, as well as colleagues in the scientific and seaport industry to generate a high level of support for the MDOT MPA DMMP.
- In light of the COVID-19 virus, the education and outreach team is developing new ways to support and reach students through online learning portals, virtual classrooms and presentations, social media outreach, and other means of stakeholder engagement.
 - New guidelines for providing public access to sites are being developed to adhere to all state mandated safety protocols including social distancing in preparation for state-approved phased reopening of public spaces.
 - Harbor Development has successfully transitioned many of their meetings to a virtual platform with opportunities for feedback and dialogue; to date there has been robust participation by the DMMP committee members.
 - In response to the need for continued virtual engagement, Harbor Development will continue to find ways to create new partnerships and create meaningful virtual outreach opportunities.
- b. Effectively engage stakeholders as partners in securing future dredged material placement sites and alternative uses that facilitate Port operations, growth and expansion.
- Community engagement and outreach efforts in Dorchester County associated with the Mid-Bay project were initiated with the release of the updated video: [Sediment to Solutions: Channeling Innovations for Beneficial Uses](#).
 - MDOT MPA continues to develop strategic partnerships with additional community organizations to improve access to MDOT MPA sites.

Recommendation 7: Continue to partner with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on revised Hart-Miller Island (HMI) North Cell habitat design concepts and refine the preferred design. Work to establish an agreement with DNR to clearly establish roles and responsibilities regarding habitat design and future management of the site.

- In coordination with DNR and MES a preliminary design for the HMI North Cell habitat development was developed; it includes upland, transitional, and ponded habitat areas to maximize potential wildlife habitat and minimize operations and maintenance in the North Cell. Cost estimates for implementation of the design are being developed.
- MDOT MPA, MES, and DNR met in January, March, and June 2020 to discuss roles and responsibilities regarding habitat design and future management of the site. These discussions will be used in the establishment of the next Inter-Governmental Agency agreement.

6.0 Harbor Development Update

Holly Miller, MDOT MPA

POB Inflow Projects

Ms. Miller stated that approximately 15,000 CY of material will be dredged from the Baltimore Harbor and placed at the Masonville DMCF from June to July 2020 for the Baltimore City Tall Ship Maintenance Dredging Project to support the Fleet Week festival that is scheduled to take place September 9-15. Additionally, approximately 200,000 CY of material will be dredged during Phase 2 of the Tradepoint Atlantic dredging project that will be placed at the Cox Creek DMCF in August 2020. MDOT MPA expects to advertise the Seagirt Berth Marine Navigation Improvement Project, which entails dredging approximately 450,000 CY of material in October 2020 to be completed by March 2021, in time for new cranes to be delivered.

Cox Creek Expanded Project

The CCE Project will add 7.6 MCY of capacity to the Cox Creek DMCF. The +60' MLLW dike raising construction project is currently being advertised for bids with the bid opening at the end of June. The project is expected to be started by February 2021 and completed by summer 2024. MDOT MPA continues to coordinate with regulators to obtain the required permits and approvals and to identify the mitigation requirements. MDOT MPA has coordinated with the Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee to identify and work on planning concepts for several community enhancement projects that they would like to see implemented. For the second year in a row, there is a nesting pair of Bald Eagles at Cox Creek that have successfully fledged two eaglets.

Tronox

MDOT MPA continues to have productive conversations with the Tronox property owners regarding the technical and cost details of the property for acquisition. Once the property is acquired, it will be used to expand the efforts for innovative reuse operations and activities.

Masonville DMCF/Cove Update

The Masonville DMCF dike construction to +18' MLLW was completed in early April. The +30' MLLW dike design is 90% complete. The +30' MLLW dike raising construction is expected to begin in March 2021. For the second year in a row, a pair of Bald Eagles nested at Masonville Cove. One of the eaglets fledged and another is expected to fledge soon.

Gwynns Falls Trash Wheel

As a part of the Masonville DMCF mitigation requirement, MDOT MPA is partnering with Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore (WFP) on the construction of the Gwynns Falls Trash Wheel. Mr. Lindquist stated that WFP is planning to install the Trash Wheel in October/November 2020. The name will be voted on publicly after WFP chooses options from the approximately 4,000 submissions. The name is expected to be revealed just prior to installation, likely in September 2020.

Mr. Denney asked if Fleet Week has been confirmed and if the dredging has started yet. Ms. Miller stated that Baltimore City continues to have discussions concerning COVID-19 precautions, but they are currently preparing as planned. Although dredging has not yet started, MDOT MPA has mobilized at Masonville to prepare for inflow. Mr. Denney asked if the project was expensive for the state. Ms. Miller replied that Baltimore City is funding the dredging and MDOT MPA is providing capacity for the anticipated 15,000 CY of material.

7.0 Round Table Discussions: Activities and Issues of Significance

Ms. Kristen Fidler, MDOT MPA

COVID-19 Organizational Challenges and Adaptations

Ms. Fidler stated that MDOT MPA is interested in hearing from Management Committee members on how their organizations are adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Guy stated that USFWS has been shut down due to COVID-19 and has been developing their reopening plans while navigating complications due to suspended operations. One example of this is showcased on the marsh habitat restoration on the island in Cell 3B of Poplar Island. In 2009 when restoration started, there were nine nesting pairs of egrets, and last year there were more than 400. This year because USFWS could not do fieldwork to implement preventative measures, which would have only taken 3-4 days, 900 pairs of cormorants came to the island and destroyed approximately 90% of the vegetative cover in the past 12 weeks that has grown over the past 11 years. The reopening plans have been approved and Poplar Island is now the only USFWS location where operations have resumed. USFWS is beginning to evaluate the cost of remediating the soil on the island from the toxins in the cormorant guano to be able to replant. The water quality in the restored marsh is also having effects on the stabilization of the low marsh in the surrounding areas.

Mr. Rowe asked if a habitat that needs this much maintenance is sustainable for the long term. Mr. Guy responded that humans have altered the ecology entirely, and self-sustaining on Poplar Island would entail leaving the island to allow wildlife to alter it freely in the way that has been seen during COVID-19. USFWS has been managing the egret habitat because egrets and herons are a high priority species for Maryland and for the American people. Mr. Guy stated that there is a rookery of approximately 400 herons on Poplar Island, but due to the displacement from the cormorants they didn't reproduce this year. The management of Poplar Island habitat costs only hundreds of dollars but restoring the habitat after not being managed costs hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Michael stated that DNR also experienced a shutdown of all monitoring activity but has since resumed monitoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay. It is critical to examine hypoxic dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay. Working with academic partners at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and others, DNR performs an annual hypoxia forecast, which was released mid-June. DNR is predicting a less than average dead zone this year with better dissolved oxygen conditions than the previous two years due to slightly less than average flows for the period of January-May 2020. There was irregularly high precipitation in 2018 and 2019, which caused excess nitrogen, phosphorous, and sedimentation which has set back the Chesapeake Bay total maximum daily load (TMDL) goals. DNR is preparing to release the subaquatic vegetation (SAV) press release for 2019, which will reflect a decreased presence of SAV, due to the high flows of 2018 and 2019. Most losses in SAV were in the southern portions of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia because it is dominated by eel grass and wigeon grass. SAV monocultures are more vulnerable to environmental degradation. There are certain biodiverse segments of the northern bay that saw an increase in SAV in 2019.

Input on Mid-Bay Design Considerations

Ms. Fidler stated that there has been an interest in the past in having an opportunity to give input on considerations to the Mid-Bay design. Mr. Tracy stated that USACE will review the 35% design for Barren Island in November/December 2020. The Management Committee will be able to review and submit comments to MDOT MPA by that time. Ms. Fidler stated that MDOT MPA will accept and consolidate comments on the Mid-Bay design for submission to Mr. Tracy before the USACE November review.

Mr. Rowe stated that for the design of Poplar Island the BEWG created a process to weigh in on the design. Ms. Fidler stated that this will be an iterative process moving forward and emphasized the importance of recognizing the constraints and parameters that the Mid-Bay Project's authorization have on the review process. Mr. Callahan stated that the reviews of the design for Mid-Bay are handled within the context of the working group for that project. He stated that it would be highly irregular for the members of the Management Committee to provide comments on the plans and specifications for the design of the project. Mr. Callahan asked for clarification for why Management Committee members want to have an opportunity to provide input. Ms. Fidler asked Mr. Callahan if he could recommend an alternative that would allow the Management Committee members to see the development of the design and provide feedback. Mr. Callahan stated that providing feedback would be different than providing design review, which he believes would be problematic. He added that each agency had an opportunity to provide feedback on the preliminary 65% design of Mid-Bay during the feasibility study. USACE took the comments into account in the plan that was authorized. Ms. Fidler asked Mr. Rowe to clarify what he is hoping to achieve through the design feedback input process. Mr. Rowe asked whether it is too late to provide input on the design. Mr. Callahan stated that is not too late because USACE is developing construction plans and specifications for containment structures and dike alignments, and the construction for habitat is still at least a decade away. Before plans for habitat development are approved, they will certainly be reviewed by the working group that has been formed for that project. Ms. Fidler asked who from MDE has been involved in the planning meetings for the design of Mid-Bay thus far. Mr. Tracy stated that MDOT MPA, MES, and their consultants have been involved. MDE is present at the NEPA meetings, but not the construction plan development meetings. Ms. Fidler asked Mr. Rowe if he is more interested in giving feedback on plans for habitat development or for containment structures and dike alignments as it relates to habitat creation. Mr. Rowe stated that he is interested in examining the use of James Island as a reuse facility to provide dredged material for resiliency projects such as sediments to be used for wetland restoration or living shorelines in the Dorchester area. Mr. Callahan stated the plan has already been authorized, and reauthorization would take several years if it is changed. He urged Committee members to read the Mid-Bay Feasibility Study and make suggestions that are within the confines of the study. Mr. Tracy stated that James Island is authorized as a beneficial reuse site and for it to be reclassified as a treatment site for beneficial reuse in other settings would require significant justification for reauthorization.

MDOT MPA opened the discussion to concerns regarding the Wolf Trap Open Water Alternate Placement Site and plans, in partnership with CENAB, to form a Virginia Bay Enhancement Work Group. The Committee members had no concerns at this time.

Ms. Fidler stated that 2021 will be the 20th anniversary of the Dredged Material Management Act of 2001 that established the DMMP. MDOT MPA would like to hear feedback on how the DMMP can evaluate past experiences within the program to prepare for future leadership changes, funding challenges, and other variables that will impact the course of the DMMP.

Mr. Denney asked if it is the responsibility of the Management Committee to engage in revamping the Dredged Material Management Plan because of financial cutbacks at the state, city, or federal level or is that an MDOT MPA internal decision that will be announced to the Committee. Ms. Fidler stated that once there is final direction on the funding reality of specific projects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MDOT MPA will coordinate with the Management Committee to evaluate the facts, anticipate the implications, and problem solve a long-term capacity plan and viable solutions to overcoming the impending economic crisis.

8.0 Closing Comments and Adjournment

Ms. Kristen Fidler, MDOT MPA

Ms. Fidler stated that the next DMMP Management Committee meeting will be held on September 23. The postponed Executive Committee Meeting that was originally scheduled for June 4 has not yet been rescheduled. The DMMP Annual Meeting will take place November 6. Ms. Fidler thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting was adjourned.