

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Hoskins – MES

DATE: February 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Next meeting – July 18, 2023

In lieu of the April 2023 meeting, updates will be sent via email.

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI COC) will be held ON SITE on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. The boat pick up time will be 5:30 pm at the Maryland Environmental Service's (MES) land base at 2024A Riverview Rd in Essex, MD. Please arrive a few minutes early, as the boat will leave promptly at 5:30 pm. The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA) will provide dinner. All attendees must confirm their attendance as well as number of guests and mode of transportation to Taylor Hoskins at Thoskins@menv.com by July 14, 2023. There is no call-in option available for this meeting.

Attached for your review is a copy of the summary from the January 17, 2023 meeting.

SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

January 17, 2023 – 6:30PM
2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224

Attendees:

Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)

Baltimore County Sixth District: Karen Wynn

Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Robin Reed

Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration: David Bibo,
Amanda Peñafiel, Katrina Jones

Maryland Environmental Service: Lincoln Tracy, Lien Vu, Taylor Hoskins

North Point Peninsula Community Council: Fran Taylor

Sports Fishermen: Sam Weaver

Essex Middle River Civic Council: Larry Lee

Friends of Hart-Miller Island: Joe Corcoran

Others Present: Marguerite Wilden (via phone) (Terrapin Institute)

Action items:

1. MES will continue to provide annual environmental monitoring updates and follow-ups to the HMI COC.
2. MDOT MPA will follow up on birding tours. A list of tours will be sent out to the HMI COC.
3. MDOT MPA and MES will keep the HMI COC updated as the HMI Infrastructure Working Group progresses.

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

The HMI COC approved the July 19, 2022 meeting summary. Mr. Brylske thanked MES, MDOT MPA, and DNR, for hosting trips out to HMI this year. Mr. Brylske was very pleased with the dredge material management annual meeting.

2.0 HMI Friends Group

Paul Brylske, Chair

Mr. Brylske noted the success of the HMI Friends group in 2022 and the amount of money they were able to raise for the HMI State Park. The HMI Friends group held successful fundraisers at Rowboat Willies in 2022. The Millers Island license plates raised over \$4,000 and will continue to be sold this summer.

Mr. Weaver and Ms. Wynn mentioned the Marine Trades Association of Baltimore County are hosting a boat show that will take place at the Timonium fairgrounds from 1/20/23 to 1/22/23, where 97 booths, 60 boat dealers, and 97 exhibitors were expected to be present. They reported that the HMI Friends Group will have a booth at the event.

Mr. Brylske stated that the HMI Friends Group would like to focus on outreach this year. Mr. Brylske thanked Ms. Jones for the brochures provided by MDOT MPA to the HMI Friends Group to use at outreach events. Mr. Brylske asked if there was budget to print materials for the HMI Friends Group, as it is not an expense the HMI Friends Group can afford at the moment. Mr. Brylske finds the brochures to be a great resource provided at events. Ms. Jones said any material that is already in print can be provided to the HMI Friends Group.

3.0 Birding

Joe Corcoran, Friends of Hart Miller Island

The Second Annual Christmas Bird Count took place at HMI on December 18, 2022. Ten bird counters visited HMI and spent about 4.5 hours monitoring. Fifty-three (53) different species were found overall, including three (3) swan species, thirteen (13) duck species, seven (7) raptor species, and seven (7) sparrow species. Duck numbers were especially high with 2,600 Greater Scaup and 650 Western Scaup recorded. Rare and notable sightings included a White Crown Sparrow, Coopers Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Swamp Sparrow. The two adult Trumpeter Swans and two Cygnets were observed in the South Cell. Mr. Corcoran explained the process of counting and estimating large flocks of birds to collect accurate data. Mr. Corcoran thanked MES for transportation to and from HMI for this event and is hoping to have even more counters attend next year.

Mr. Corcoran noted the popularity of the birding tours and the large demand for people eager to visit HMI. Both he and Mr. Brylske expressed the desire to add more birding tours to the list for 2023.

4.0 2022 HMI Monitoring Presentation

Lien Vu, MES

Various monitoring efforts are conducted at HMI including groundwater and discharge monitoring. A presentation summarizing environmental monitoring from January to December 2022 was presented.

Groundwater monitoring occurred in June and December of 2022. Groundwater results from 2022 for trace metals were below the State Water Quality Standards and in most circumstances below EPA drinking water standards. Dissolved Iron and Dissolved Manganese exceeded the EPA Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for drinking water at all wells in June and December. Iron and Manganese are secondary standards. EPA has Secondary Drinking Water Standards, that are not mandatory, however have set Secondary MCLs, to assist public water systems in managing drinking water for aesthetic considerations such as taste, color, and odor. Dissolved Arsenic exceeded the EPA MCL in December at Well 12A and Well 6A for drinking water sourced by groundwater but was still below Maximum Concentration (MC) for groundwater protection.

All water discharge from the facility is required to meet requirements set forth by HMI's Discharge Permit issued by Maryland Department of Environment. In 2022, HMI discharged a total of 52.09 million gallons (MG) from North Cell Spillways 007, 008, and 009. A total of 17.48 MG was discharged from the South Cell Spillway 003. All discharge results were within permit limits for 2022. Quarterly Discharge Monitoring Reports were submitted to MDE as required by the discharge permit.

Algae sampling in 2022 was conducted monthly, June to October at Spillway 003, Spillway 009, and

the South Cell Holding Pond to monitor for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). Results from the June and July samples showed no presence of potentially toxigenic (PTOX) cyanobacteria. Results from the August samples showed PTOX cyanobacteria to be present at Spillway 003 and the South Cell Holding Pond. Further toxin analysis was suggested for the Spillway 003 sample in August, South Cell Holding Pond in September and Spillway 003 and South Cell Holding Pond in October. All algae samples collected in the 2022 season that were found to have potentially toxigenic (PTOX) cyanobacteria and recommended for further testing had toxin concentrations lower than the World Health Organization (WHO) provisional guidance threshold for recreational water, which is 30 ppb for saxitoxins and 24 ppb for microcystin/nodularin. These samples also tested below the current Draft EPA Recommended Value for Recreational Criteria and Swimming Advisory of 8 ppb total microcystins/nodularins.

Additional sampling was conducted from the South Cell on August 17, 2022, due to a red coloring observed throughout the pond. Low levels of potentially toxigenic cyanobacteria were observed, and further analyses were recommended. Saxitoxin was detected however the concentration level was much lower than the WHO provisional guidance threshold for recreational water. Per the monitoring plan, further sampling was conducted on August 31, 2022, two weeks after the first sampling event. Again, potentially toxigenic cyanobacteria were observed, and further analyses were recommended. Saxitoxin was detected but below the WHO threshold.

An aerial herbicide spray occurred at HMI on November 10, 2022. A total of 500 acres were sprayed to target *Phragmites australis* in the South Cell and North Cell. MES is coordinating with DNR Forest Service and Baltimore County for a burn of the North Cell and DNR marshes in 2023. Invasive vegetation monitoring and control was conducted from May to October 2022. Invasive species control was conducted for *Phragmites australis*, Thistle, Mile-a-Minute, Pokeweed, Tree of Heaven and Princess Tree. Over six acres of the North and South Cell were controlled for invasive species through ground-spraying.

Exterior monitoring for SAV (Submerged Aquatic Vegetation) was conducted in June and September 2022 along the western side of HMI from Station 265 pier the southern point of Miller Island. Species found included wild celery (*Vallisneria Americana*), coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), and sago pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinata*).

HMI State Park and South Cell public access opened on May 30, 2022. Bicycling, hiking, and bird watching were offered to the public in the South Cell as well as boating, swimming, and fishing at the State Park. The Nature Center and snowball concessions were open for the season. The 5-Miler race took place on October 22, 2022, with 109 runners recorded. Ranger-led programming and bird watching tours successfully re-commenced throughout 2022 after being cancelled for the 2021 season due to the Covid-19 pandemic. South Cell Public Access visitation decreased by 8.3% in 2022 as compared to 2021. However, hiking, bike rentals, and camping all increased from previous years.

MES, MDOT MPA and DNR established a new HMI IGA in February 2021, which outlines the roles and responsibilities for each agency in the partnership for the entire site through December 2025. As part of the HMI IGA, an HMI Infrastructure Working Group was formed to study, evaluate, and develop an asset management plan. The first meeting was held onsite at HMI on June 13, 2022, with representatives from MDOT MPA, DNR, and MES in attendance. An HMI inventory list and map was

drafted, which includes the South Cell holding pond and various items in the operations building compound, and provided to the group. The group visited and discussed each of the items on the inventory list. MDOT MPA and MES will continue working with DNR on the HMI Infrastructure Working Group to develop the asset management plan. Any updates to the plan will be shared with the HMI COC.

MES resident birder, Tim Carney, conducts bird censuses of HMI twice a month. On January 4, 2023, Mr. Carney spotted a Barn Owl in the cedars just past the HMI State Park ranger station. This is a notable sighting as it's the first record for HMI and Mr. Carney's first sighting in Maryland away from Poplar Island and the Jug Bay area. The owl is likely a migrant and utilizing HMI as a brief stopover site but could also be overwintering or utilizing the habitat for breeding. MES would like to install two barn owl boxes at HMI and is looking for a scout or community group to assist. The HMI COC said they would let MES know of any potential groups to assist.

5.0 HMI Operations

Lincoln Tracy, MES

Mr. Tracy informed the group that the HMI operations team have continued working on pond maintenance, vegetation control, roadway maintenance, and building maintenance. The elevation in the North Cell is currently 38.75 feet due to recent rain.

After performing an inspection, it was determined that the landbase pier will need to be replaced. Design plans and specifications for repairing and replacing the landbase pier are being developed. Each piling of the land base pier will be replaced in the same footprint. MES will coordinate a temporary departure location while the pier is under maintenance.

The Station 265 personnel pier located on HMI does not need to be fully replaced but refurbished. The floating pier will be relocated in deeper water to protect SAV habitat. The Station 265 pier was last re-done in the late 1990s.

Dredging of the Station 265 personnel pier is also planned to allow for easier boat access. Currently, the dredge material from this project will go to Cox Creek DMCF, but grant opportunities are being investigated to possibly utilize the dredge material for shoreline stabilization projects.

The plans and specifications are being drafted for both piers. The personnel pier at landbase is more critical due to structural issues and is projected for fiscal year 2023. It has been difficult to find a marine contractor who may be interested in this pier work, as it is on the smaller scale, and they have long wait times.

6.0 HMI North Cell Habitat Development

Amanda Peñafiel, MDOT MPA

MDOT MPA continues to investigate options to fund North Cell Habitat Development. Ms. Peñafiel explained that MDOT MPA is exploring the use of a Request for Information (RFI), where a private partner could invest in the development of the North Cell for potential mitigation credits. The RFI has been drafted and is under review by MDOT MPA legal. MDOT MPA will inform the HMI COC, if

and when, the RFI is published.

MDOT MPA and MES is contracting with an engineering firm to conduct value engineering on the Chosen Option D Design Plan. This will be completed to help lower the cost of the project while still meeting the goals of MDOT MPA and DNR.

The same engineering firm will conduct geotechnical analysis of the North Cell to determine the stability and suitability of the sediment for development. MES and MDOT MPA will utilize this information to identify areas where onsite MES Operations staff can start habitat development, including mechanically and/or hydraulically dredging, in order to begin implementing the chosen North Cell design plan while other funding mechanisms are investigated. The purchase of a small dredge is also being considered.

7.0 DNR Update

Robin Reed, DNR

Ranger Robin Reed and the HMI Friends Group are continuing to work on events for the upcoming 2023 season. Events and activities include a spring clean-up day with Maryland Waterways, as well as several 2023 fundraisers. Ranger Reed expressed how much she is looking forward to continuing this partnership.

DNR is working with Mr. Weaver to secure a Pontoon boat that DNR can use to haul large building materials and outdoor equipment to and from HMI.

Sunday Fundays will continue in 2023, as they were very popular and successful with children and adults throughout the 2022 season. Sunday Funday programs include environmental, science, and arts and crafts related activities. In 2022, an instructor from CCBC (Community College of Baltimore County) came out to HMI State Park to teach kayaking and paddle boarding to visitors. DNR and the legal department are working on waiver forms to potentially allow visitors to rent kayaks and paddleboards. Ranger Reed would like to add more of these recreational activities to the Sunday Funday program as well as a volleyball tournament and other beach activities.

Mr. Brylske acknowledged Ranger Reed's scout group work completed this season. The youth group camping area has been finished and can accommodate 36 scouts. An eagle scout group and DNR worked to clear the area behind the Ranger station of debris. The group removed a large amount of invasive vegetation, installed camp numbers, grills, and fire rings. Ranger Reed is working to secure picnic table legs to finish the work desired for the 2023 season.

A trail crew came out in the fall to cut back overhanging trees along the road in the South Cell. Another crew is scheduled to come out in the spring to continue the work and clear vegetation on the observation hill so the view can be clear from the tower. Ranger Reed would like to install a picnic grove this season to appeal to day-use visitors as well.

The Great Outdoors Act was approved. Therefore, DNR will be receiving funding to complete capital projects such as roof and decking replacement. Other maintenance to be completed by this

funding includes restroom door replacement and a new fascia board on the tower. Ranger Reed is waiting to hear from engineering and construction for pre-bid meetings to complete this work.

Ranger Reed shared exciting news with the group that she has been promoted to a classified Ranger and will be the point of contact for HMI moving forward.

8.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibo, MDOT MPA

Mr. Bibo expressed to the HMI COC the continued commitment MDOT MPA and MES has to environmental monitoring at HMI. The next meeting is scheduled for April 18, 2023; however the HMI COC will discuss whether or not a meeting is needed or in lieu of a meeting, updates can be sent via email.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.