

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Hoskins – MES

DATE: December 19, 2023

SUBJECT: Next meeting – March 19, 2024

In lieu of an October 2023 Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI COC) meeting, updates will be sent via email. The next meeting of the HMI COC will be held **IN PERSON** on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 6:30pm. This meeting will be held in the conference room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224.

Attached for your review is a copy of the summary from the July 18, 2023 meeting.

SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

July 18, 2023 – 5:30PM

Hart-Miller Island

Attendees:

Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)

Baltimore County Sixth District: Karen Wynn

Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Robin Reed, Chris Gleason-Smuck

Maryland Port Administration: David Bibo, Amanda Peñafiel, Holly Miller

Maryland Environmental Service: Lincoln Tracy, James Cooper, Hillary Lewis, Joseph McGrain, Taylor Hoskins

North Point Peninsula Community Council: Fran Taylor

Sports Fishermen: Sam Weaver

Friends of Hart-Miller Island: Joe Corcoran

Action items:

- MES will provide a draft 2022 annual environmental monitoring report to the HMI COC for review prior to the next meeting. The 2022 environmental monitoring information will be presented at the next meeting.
- MPA and MES will keep the HMI COC updated as the HMI Infrastructure Working Group progresses.
- MES will incorporate a section for birding in future meeting schedules and agendas.

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

The HMI COC approved the January 17, 2023 meeting summary. Mr. Brylske thanked DNR staff and Mr. Gleason-Smuck for hosting the HMI COC meeting and the work being done at the HMI State Park. Mr. Brylske thanked MES staff and MPA. Mr. Brylske was very pleased to see the continued collaboration between MES, MPA, DNR, and Baltimore County.

2.0 HMI Friends Group

Paul Brylske, Chair

Mr. Brylske thanked Mr. Cooper and MES staff for access to HMI as well as their flexibility in scheduling HMI tours for the Friends Group. Mr. Brylske also thanked Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Carney for their efforts with coordination for birding tours at HMI. Through the Friends Group tours, the Mount Carmel School group and North Point Coordinating Council visited HMI. Members of the Aquarium and campers from Marshy Point will be visiting HMI in the upcoming weeks.

Mr. Brylske thanked Ms. Fittig, website director for the HMI Friends Group, for her work on the webpage and the HMI Friends Group social media websites including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The HMI Friends Group collaborated with North Point Volunteers to host a fishing derby at North Point State Park on Saturday, July 15, 2023, with community groups in attendance.

Mr. Brylske recognized Ms. Wynn as Volunteer of The Year. Mr. Brylske also noted the unfortunate cancellation of the Maryland Waterways 2023 Summer Slam fishing tournament.

The HMI Friends Group collaborated with the National Aquarium to submit an application for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Chesapeake Wild Grant. The 2-year grant will cover debris cleanups and camps at Hart-Miller Island, Poplar Island, and Swan Creek. Ms. Dahlenburg stated that the results of the grant will be known in December.

The next HMI Friends Group meeting will be held on August 17, 2023. Ms. Peñafiel asked where the HMI Friends Group meetings are held. Mr. Brylske explained that the group typically gathers at Weaver's Marina.

3.0 HMI Operations

Lincoln Tracy, MES

Mr. Tracy informed the group that the HMI Operations team has continued working on daily maintenance, grass mowing, and upkeep of the HMI facility. In the beginning of the 2023 season, the HMI Operations team cleared the wind drifted beach sand around the DNR boardwalk area.

The South Cell pond elevation is currently 18.2 feet. This South Cell elevation is slightly lower than normal operating elevations. The HMI Operations team have continuously been using the lake fill pumps to combat evaporation. The elevation in the North Cell is currently 37.8 feet. This North Cell elevation is at the desired level for water quality and therefore discharge has not been needed.

The HMI Operations team repaired and refurbished the floating pier before launching in the water for the 2023 season. MES and MPA are working to obtain permits and procurements to rebuild the land base pier and restore the Station 265 personnel pier. The permits are pending, and the procurement packets will be sent out soon. Apart from moving the floating pier out into deeper water to avoid shallow water habitat the design of the piers will be an exact replacement. Mr. Corcoran asked if other boats would be allowed to come to the new land base pier, or if this were strictly for MES boats. Mr. Tracy explained that the land base pier is only for MES boats due to contracts MES has with the owner of the property, however the personnel pier at Station 265 is for both MES and DNR boats.

Depending on contractor availability, it is anticipated that the repairs to the land base pier will be completed by the end of the calendar year. MES will coordinate with the landowner during restoration of the land base pier. HMI Operations team is researching a temporary land base location that can accommodate access for the crew boat and parking for the HMI staff.

4.0 Birding

Joe Corcoran, Friends of Hart Miller Island

Mr. Brylske requested a birding section be included on the agenda for future meetings.

Mr. Corcoran noted the success and popularity of the recent birding tours to HMI as well as the continued demand. Mr. Corcoran expressed interest in winter birding trips to HMI, including the Audubon winter bird count held at the end of December. Mr. Carney explained that feedback from tours has been overwhelmingly positive, and MES is prioritizing new visitors to HMI. An MES outreach staff member and two bird club leaders will be assigned as guides for each HMI birding tour.

A Painted Bunting was recently spotted on HMI and added to the HMI eBird list, bringing the species total to 300. This makes HMI the first hot spot in Baltimore to reach 300 species. Mr. Carney believes the Painted Bunting was expanding its range in an effort to escape the recent drought. A Barn Owl was seen in January, which prompted the installation of a Barn Owl box in the North Cell in February by Maryland Conservation Corps interns. A second Barn Owl box is scheduled to be installed on July 21, 2023.

Mr. Corcoran estimates that 150 new visitors have come to HMI this summer through the birding trips. Mr. Brylske noted that Ms. Fittig's advertisement for a visit to HMI on the Friends Group webpage and a survey to deduce interest in future visits both reiterated the high demand for visits to HMI.

5.0 HMI North Cell Habitat Development

Amanda Peñafiel, MPA

GBA, an engineering firm, was subcontracted to conduct valued engineering on the chosen Option D Design Plan for North Cell Habitat Development. Specifically, GBA is investigating ways to reduce the cost of the proposed project while meeting the goals outlined through discussions between MPA and DNR.

Objectives for the study include:

- Review of the 2020 cost estimate and methodology for implementation of DNR/MPA Option D with the intent to lower costs.
- Provide recommendations for purchase of dredge equipment.
- Develop alternative design recommendations to lower project costs.
- Perform Geotech sampling in the North Cell to define mechanical and hydraulic dredging locations and to perform consolidation analysis.

GBA and their subcontractor, SaLUT, have completed Geotech sampling. Sampling occurred from March 27, 2023 to May 17, 2023. Twenty (20) samples were collected within the North Cell pond and nine (9) samples along the cross dike, the upland test plot area, and around Station 135. Information from the Geotech sampling will be utilized to assist in identifying areas where MES Operations staff can begin habitat development activities from the North Cell design plan, including mechanical and/or hydraulic dredging, while other funding mechanisms are investigated.

GBA has begun investigating alternative designs and are awaiting Geotech results to finalize designs. Any alternative designs will meet goals and objectives established for North Cell Habitat Development

set forth by the HMI Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).

6.0 HMI Infrastructure Working Group

Amanda Peñafiel, MPA

Through the 2021 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 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 was provided to the group. The group visited and discussed each of the items on the inventory list.

On June 1, 2023, MPA and MES met onsite with new management at DNR to update new staff about the IGA and Infrastructure Working Group. DNR, MES and MPA will meet in the future to continue discussions and coordination for the Infrastructure Working Group as positions in DNR management become filled and will continue to provide updates on progress to the HMI COC.

Mr. Brylske asked if there are options for community input such as a survey. Ms. Peñafiel explained that a survey could be conducted but ultimately it will be DNR maintaining the facilities. Ms. Miller ensured that updates will be provided to the group so that feedback and input can be considered and implemented. Ms. Reed voiced that the agencies are transparent and continually share information with each other.

Mr. Bibo asked about permitting for the site once the site is developed and managed by DNR. Ms. Peñafiel noted that the site is making progress towards having no permits, as the Maryland Department of the Environment took the South Cell off the most recent discharge permit after demonstrating continued compliance and non-detect values of the permit parameters over many years.

7.0 DNR Update

Robin Reed, DNR

Ms. Reed thanked everyone for their attendance, the HMI Friends Group, and Ms. Fittig for setting up the website and advertising HMI Sunday Fundays. Ms. Reed thanked Mr. Brylske, Mr. Weaver, Ms. Wynn, and Ms. Dahlenburg for helping with meetings and spring cleanup to prepare for the 2023 season. Ms. Reed thanked MES for their support and efforts toward clearing the sand around the boardwalk area.

The spring cleanup was successful. The DNR staff updated the kitchen/office room of the DNR facility replacing the flooring, installing a new refrigerator, sink, faucet, etc. Ms. Reed thanked seasonal worker Ms. Snyder for her hard work toward this kitchen/office room renovation project and upkeep of the DNR Ranger Station. Ms. Reed thanked the Friends Group for purchasing cabinetry for the kitchen/office room, and maintenance supervisor Mr. John Hendrzak for installing the cabinetry. DNR staff continues to mow grass, clean bathrooms, and are currently working on painting the exterior of the DNR Ranger station. With more funding available the nature hallway is also slated to be updated. The Baltimore Bird Club donated taxidermied birds that will be displayed.

On July 31, 2023, the pre-bid meeting for the DNR complex deck work will take place. All decking, railings, bathroom facade, roofing, and doors will be replaced. Ms. Reed hopes to have this project begin in November or December. Mr. Brylske asked how old the decking is. Ms. Reed believes the decking dates to about the early 1990s.

Ms. Reed expressed the popularity of the Sunday Funday activities, the camp store, and camp sites at HMI State Park, especially on weekends. Ms. Reed thanked Mr. Weaver and Ms. Wynn from Maryland Waterways Foundation for collecting bikes during cleanup days and donating them to HMI State Park. This helped solve the shortage of children and tween bikes at HMI. The DNR staff work to repair and refurbish the bikes as needed.

Mr. Bibo asked Ms. Reed if graffiti or vandalism are an issue, and Ms. Reed said no. Baby changing stations and mirrors were recently installed and have not been vandalized. Ranger Reed said that besides trash and a few beach fires that took place during the July 4, 2023 holiday weekend, there are typically no issues. Ms. Snyder said that the only vandalism she could recall was during the previous season when a few railings were ripped from the decking to be used for firewood.

Mr. Brylske asked about the presence of jellyfish, and Ms. Reed said that she and Ms. Snyder have experienced about 25 to 30 people coming to the Ranger Station with jellyfish stings recently. Ms. Reed said she supplied these individuals with necessary first aid.

Ms. Peñafiel asked if there have been any complaints about mosquitos. Ranger Reed said no, but there have been complaints about the flies and have seen a heavier presence of Spotted Lantern Flies.

The HMI 5-Miler Race will be held on October 21, 2023.

8.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibo, MDOT MPA

Mr. Bibo acknowledged Ms. Miller who used to be an environmental specialist at Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF) and is now the Director of Harbor Development. Ms. Miller noted how active the Friends Group is and remarked upon the engagement between agencies. Mr. Bibo also recognized Mr. Brylske's transition from the HMI COC to the Friends Group, as well as Mr. Weaver's help in the program.

Mr. Bibo noted that in addition to the 5-miler race at HMI on October 21, 2023, the Cox Creek Open House will also occur on that date.

Mr. Bibo expressed to the HMI COC the continued commitment MPA and MES have to environmental monitoring at HMI. The 2022 Annual Environmental monitoring report was provided to the group. The next meeting is scheduled for October 24, 2023; however, the Friends Group will be meeting on August 17, 2023, and will discuss whether or not a COC meeting is needed, or if in lieu of a meeting, updates can be sent via email. The group will also discuss potentially pushing the annual meeting back to February or March.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.