

**SUMMARY OF THE
MASONVILLE CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MCAC)
March 5, 2024, 5:30 PM - Hybrid Meeting**

Attendees:

Action Baybrook: Jan Eveland
Angie Ashley Consulting: Angie Ashley
Baltimore Bird Club: Nancy O'Hara
Benjamin Franklin High School: Ashley Winter
Canton Kayak Club: Ray Scurr
Curtis Bay Resident: Rodette Jones
Chesapeake Climate and Conservation Corps: Julia Moya
Dartmouth College, Environmental Anthropology PhD Candidate: Alexandria Casteel
Friends of Masonville Cove: Belinda Wimbush, Jason Brannock
K&A Associates: Andrew Bing
Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF): Lorraine Warnick
Maryland Geological Survey: Anna Gilmor
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Danielle Fisher, Katrina Jones, Holly Miller, Joseph Ross, Darren Swift
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Claire Spears, Dallas Henson
MCAC Chair: Anita Kestel
National Aquarium (NA): Swathi Ayyagari
Terrapin Institute: Marguerite Whilden
US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter

Action Items:

- Ms. Warnick requested MCAC members connect any interested groups or classes with her for potential LCF field trips at Masonville Cove.
- Ms. Whilden inquired about a list of turtle species at Masonville Cove. Dr. Carpenter will confirm the list and share the information with her.
- Ms. Fisher will share a flyer for the free Youth Birding Week and WildSTEM internship programs. She requested that committee members share the information with anyone locally who may be interested in participating in either program.
- MCAC members will share recommendations with Ms. Fisher on any barriers or items potentially preventing community members from participating in meetings and will continue inviting fellow community members to join the meetings.
- Ms. Ashley requested MCAC members share any additional announcements via email to share with the group. Upcoming meetings this year will also include updates on the Swan Creek Nature Trail project, adjacent transportation projects, and other partner coordination.

1.0 Introductions, Approval of Summary

**Angie Ashley, Facilitator
Anita Kestel, MCAC Chair**

All meeting materials can be found here: [MCAC – Google Drive](#). Ms. Ashley convened the meeting. The Committee unanimously approved the September 12, 2023 MCAC meeting summary. It was noted that all September 2023 meeting action items were completed or will be completed during this meeting.

2.0 Harbor Development Updates

Darren Swift, MPA

Mr. Swift presented current and upcoming operations for the Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF) at Masonville, the Cox Creek DMCF, the Mid-Bay Project, and Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use (IRBU) project updates.

Dike raising at the Masonville Cove DMCF to an elevation of +30' is underway and slated for completion by Spring 2026. The contract was awarded to Allan Myers Construction in October 2023, with notice to proceed on November 27th, 2023. The dike raising will first require drainage and improvements on one of the neighboring Mercedes Benz lots, followed by raising the dike to +30' beginning this fall 2024. Simultaneously, the design for raising the dike to +42' is in progress. Ms. Eveland asked how the Base Dike Widening would impact the capacity of the DMCF, and Mr. Swift explained the widening will support the structure and increase capacity as the dike is raised. The DMCF is on track to achieve +42' by 2029.

In 2023, MPA achieved a significant construction milestone at Cox Creek DMCF by completing the raising of the upland dike +60'. The next expansion phase involves raising it further to +80', with a feasibility study initiated at the end of 2023. Progress has also been made on the Swan Creek Nature Trail (SCNT) design, developed in close collaboration with the Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee. This trail will create a two-mile loop through the forest conservation easement area. The SCNT will provide valuable green space, outdoor education opportunities, and enhanced access for surrounding communities. The design is expected to be completed in late spring or early summer 2024, with permitting in progress. SCNT construction is anticipated to begin fall 2024 with the goal of opening the trail to the public by 2025.

The Mid-Bay Project will continue beneficial use within the Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) as Poplar Island approaches placement capacity. Run jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and MPA, the Mid-Bay Project will restore over 2,000 acres of remote island habitat, primarily focusing on James Island and Barren Island. The endeavor is expected to provide a total capacity of 90 to 95 million cubic yards over the next 40 years and will protect valuable island habitat in the lower Chesapeake Bay. James Island is expected to begin seeing inflow around 2030.

Innovative Reuse initiatives have produced seven ongoing research and development contracts for repurposing Cox Creek DMCF dredged material following the issuance of a Request for Proposals in 2019. Noteworthy, completed projects include collaborations with Belden-Eco Products, FasTrak Express, Harford Industrial Materials Inc., Northgate Environmental Management, and Suscon Products. These projects cover various innovative reuses including manufactured bricks, soil reengineering for sod growth, incorporating dredged material in concrete mixtures for construction, and utilizing it as a lightweight aggregate. All products are tested and categorized under the Maryland Department of Environment Guidance Document as safe for residential and commercial use, and more information is available on the DMMP website.

Ms. Eveland asked if dredged material could be used to protect or restore areas sinking or severely eroding such as Smith Island. Mr. Swift highlighted the potential for dredged material to support such a project, but it would not be feasible or cost effective to use material from Cox Creek DMCF or the Harbor area. Ms. Miller elaborated on the logistical challenges of dredged material, noting that placement sites are typically chosen near the dredging location to minimize transportation costs. Ms. Katrina Jones provided additional historical context, noting that MPA previously considered Smith Island for dredged material

placement many years ago, but there was still skepticism about the safe use of dredged sediment at the time.

Mr. Swift provided an update on the two active research and development projects, CSI Environmental and University of Maryland. CSI Environmental developed vegetated geotubes for shoreline stabilization and flood management in a project at BGE's Spring Gardens. These geotubes were filled with dredged material from the Cox Creek DMCF and were treated with polymers to efficiently separate sediments from water before being placed at Spring Gardens and planted. The University of Maryland is also researching vegetative earth berms utilizing dredged material blended with recycled materials for stormwater management. At the last Innovative Reuse Committee meeting in February COMUS Sustainable Pozzolan Products provided a presentation on their research into harbor dredged material as a natural pozzolan or a supplemental cementitious material. This innovation aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with traditional cement production methods. MCAC members were curious about pozzolans, and Mr. Swift explained in depth the origins of natural pozzolans, which can be found in sedimentary or volcanic deposits and were historically used by ancient civilizations like the Romans in cement production. These initiatives and environmental resiliency products are exciting developments for MPA and IRBU partners.

In December 2022, MPA purchased a property north of the Cox Creek DMCF for future innovative reuse purposes and will be known as the Cox Creek Sediment Technology and Reuse (STAR) facility. The site was formerly used for heavy industrial activities such as manufacturing titanium dioxide and requires remediation due to contamination. The remediation process involves submitting action plans for different operational units, with approvals already obtained for three units. Short-term plans include setting up a geotube field for drying dredged material near the DMCF and facilitating a closed-loop water collection and reuse system. Discussions are underway with Baltimore City to supply dredged material as daily cover for the Quarantine Road landfill.

Other upcoming IRBU project updates include the Stoney Beach restoration project and Race Street wetland remediation. Stoney Beach's restoration will include a beach restoration and living shoreline initiative. MPA will contribute 1,200 cubic yards of dried dredged material for this endeavor and construction is scheduled to begin in March. In Baltimore City the Race Street wetland area, a former Honeywell contaminated site, is undergoing a remediation project utilizing 550 cubic yards of material. All material supplied by MPA for these projects and any IR or BU project has been thoroughly tested according to the MDE guidance for IRBU, meeting all necessary criteria. Race Street wetland remediation effort is expected to begin later this spring or summer.

Ms. Eveland asked why Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) is necessary given other successful IR projects. Mr. Swift and Ms. Miller answered that CAD is being studied as a potential DMMP tool and that the DMMP program requires a variety of options to tackle dredged material management challenges effectively. Continued examination of CAD and other management strategies is necessary to determine project feasibility, safety, and efficiency.

3.0 Masonville Cove Connector

Joseph Ross, MPA

Mr. Ross, MPA project manager for the Masonville Cove Connector (MCC), provided an update on the shared use path being designed to increase equitable access to Masonville Cove. The MCC project officially began in September 2022 and is working towards 30% design.

The MCC project aims to provide safe, convenient, and equitable access, connecting local communities to Masonville Cove and other trail networks. Recent outreach efforts have focused on gathering community feedback to incorporate into the review and selection of design concepts. Various design considerations are being evaluated, including buffer space, minimizing conflicts, speed compliance, and environmental impacts. Strong engagement with the local community has shown support for the project, with approximately 120 participants attending two open house events and outreach conducted with numerous community groups, industry stakeholders, biking and pedestrian groups, and local city government and agencies. Conversations with neighboring industrial stakeholders regarding the MCC have been positive, with Vulcan Materials expressing support for the project's benefits to the community. Vulcan prefers the Connector to be built on the southside of Frankfurst Avenue which is directly adjacent to CSX property and have confirmed the approved proposal of a signalized intersection at Frankfurst and Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center. Survey responses overwhelmingly support the project and design features for the Connector.

Coordination efforts are underway to minimize disruptions from overlapping construction projects, including the Southwest diversion pressure sewer replacement and the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel all electric tolling conversion. While construction dates for these projects do not align perfectly, coordination aims to reduce repeat work and minimize potential traffic buildup and disruptions to local businesses. The MCC project team is currently working on the 30% design phase, with the completion of 100% design by the end of Spring 2025.

4.0 Partnership Updates

National Aquarium (NA)

Swathi Ayyagari, NA

Ms. Ayyagari shared NA updates, including 2023 accomplishments and recent and upcoming community programs. These efforts align with the Partnership's mission of engaging local communities, promoting conservation awareness, and enhancing environmental stewardship.

In February 2023, NA collaborated with Masonville Cove partners and Ms. Chloe Woodin, a student from Johns Hopkins University's medical illustration program, to design a bilingual eagles illustration poster showcasing the life cycle of eagles at Masonville Cove. In February 2024, NA supported Masonville Cove partners and Johns Hopkins University student Hannah Forward in creating a bilingual bat illustration poster. This initiative helps educate the public about the importance of conservation and overall local biodiversity.

The City Nature Challenge took place in Baltimore from April 28th to May 1st in 2023 and involved 7,785 total observations, with 1,305 total species identified, thanks to the participation of 550 observers. The challenge encouraged citizens to explore and document urban biodiversity, contributing valuable data to scientific research and conservation efforts.

During June and July NA supported the successful WildSTEM Internship program, benefiting five students from local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These students had the opportunity to visit the NA's Animal Care and Rescue Center and engage with professionals from various fields according to their interests, fostering career development and experiential learning. The collaborative Latino Conservation Day event was held on July 30th and served as the official Baltimore City celebration. With over 118 participants, the event featured various activities, including boat rides,

animal encounters, fishing, and archery which connected local Latino community members with nature and conservation efforts. NA also organized shoreline cleanups throughout the year, with events on August 12th and October 28th involving community members and removed large amounts of trash.

NA announced several updates and planned cleanups for 2024 including an April 14th community cleanup with congregations from TAYR and Pathway Church of God in Brooklyn. A shoreline cleanup is also scheduled at Masonville Cove on May 4th. Interpretive signage is also being scheduled for installation at Masonville Cove soon. These signs will provide valuable information about the area's ecology, history, and conservation efforts, enhancing visitors' understanding and appreciation of the local environment.

Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF)

Lorraine Warnick, LCF

Ms. Warnick presented updates on LCF's recent fall programs, which continue to engage students in environmental education programs and STEM initiatives at Masonville Cove. High school students and ninth-grade biology classes from schools such as Benjamin Franklin High School, Digital Harbor, Mervo, and other Baltimore City schools participated in various environmental science and conservation activities. Wildlife on campus and animal ambassadors at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center are significant attractions for students, offering them the chance to interact with different animal species and learn about conservation efforts.

LCF continues collaborating with environmental science groups and classes from local community colleges in Baltimore County, facilitating end-of-semester shoreline cleanups and stewardship projects. These activities aim to promote awareness of environmental issues and foster a sense of responsibility among participants, encouraging them to actively contribute to waste reduction efforts. LCF also proactively organizes shoreline cleanups twice a month, providing opportunities for the public, high school students, scout troops, and residents to participate in community service and environmental education.

Ms. Warnick stated that LCF has secured funding from the Summer Funding Collaborative for the Baltimore Environmental Education Superheroes (BEES) program, which will serve thirty students from Maree G. Farring Elementary School this summer. LCF will also host the Summer Science and Nature program in August, offering week-long sessions for first through fifth graders to engage in outdoor learning experiences.

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter, USFWS

Dr. Carpenter provided USFWS updates on recent wildlife observations at Masonville Cove and events. The nesting eagles were observed starting on February 5th and the eggs are expected to hatch within the next week or so. Unfortunately, around February 25th the eagle camera went offline due to a mechanical or technical failure. Repairs or camera replacement will be conducted after the eagles have fledged and restrictions on their nesting zone are lifted. In the meantime, observers can still catch glimpses of the eagles from a distance on campus using binoculars. Ms. Eveland was curious about the dietary habits of eagles, worried that they may be eating local pigeons. Dr. Carpenter confirmed that while they primarily feed on fish at Masonville Cove, they occasionally catch gulls and waterfowl. Fortunately, the eagles do not typically feed on pigeons or other domestic animals. The abundance of fish in the Cove, supported by 2,000 reef balls acting as nurseries, serves as a vital food source for the eagles.

The campus also experienced an increase in daytime coyote sightings in November. Dr. Carpenter monitored its behavior and confirmed it was displaying appropriate behavior and not approaching people.

The coyote, likely living in a larger range beyond the Cove, was observed utilizing open areas, such as recently mowed meadows, for hunting and sunbathing.

USFWS has been actively involved in various programs and events at Masonville Cove this past year, including the celebration of National Bat Week in October, with a successful evening bat walk in collaboration with Baltimore Green Space. Participants had the opportunity to observe bats and learn about their habitats using audio spectrometers. Additionally, the 2023 bird banding season saw over 1,000 individual birds banded and over 70 species identified, contributing to ongoing research efforts. Dr. Carpenter highlighted the 10th anniversary celebration of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership designation, which took place in December. The event was attended by USFWS representatives, local and Senate representatives, and Baltimore Green Space. The Mammals of Masonville Cove program occurred in January, unfortunately offset by snow, but still enjoyed success as a program and participation from community members. Ms. O'Hara with the Baltimore Bird Club recently led a walk in February, in collaboration with the Friends of Masonville Cove, which attracted about 20 participants of all experience levels.

USFWS has planned a series of programs for 2024 with Masonville Cove, including the continuation of bird banding studies, an upcoming visit by USFWS for urban business planning in May, and implementing the bilingual bat poster project with Johns Hopkins University.

Maryland Port Administration (MPA)

Danielle Fisher, MPA

Ms. Fisher highlighted recent and upcoming programs with Masonville Cove that MPA supported and overall successes from 2023. Ms. Fisher shared highlights from the Friends of Masonville Cove. Ms. Ralinda Wimbush helped lead the organizing of Friends in 2023. After group building activities, meetings, and mixers, the Friends visited John Heinz Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia for a field trip to learn from them and their Friends Group. John Heinz staff and Friends discussed their formation process, how membership impacts them, and collaborated with Masonville Cove Friends on program ideas, training opportunities, fundraising, and future field trip ideas. Mr. Brannock of the Friends agreed the trip was insightful and helped the Friends envision their roles and learn how they can go beyond what is possible for government agencies in making Masonville Cove a community space.

Recent and upcoming Friends of Masonville Cove events include the Introduction to Birding walk with Baltimore Bird Club in January, by Ms. Mindy Hill, and the upcoming Beautify Masonville Cove gardening project, by Ms. Belinda Wimbush. The upcoming garden beautification project's first phase is scheduled for March 23rd and will make the front garden more welcoming and beautiful year-round while continuing to maintain its benefits as a native plant garden.

Upcoming summer programs include Youth Birding Week and the WildSTEM Internship program. Last summer's programs were successful and this year's Youth Birding Week will be expanded to two weeks. The first week will run June 24th through June 28th for 8- to 11-year-old students. The second week will run July 8th through July 12th for 12- to 16-year-old students. Participants will have the opportunity to enjoy trips and learn from expert birders at various DMMP sites like Hart Miller Island and Poplar Island while being based out of Masonville Cove each day. Ms. Fisher will share a flyer for the free Youth Birding Week and WildSTEM internship programs. Ms. Fisher requested committee members share the information with anyone locally who may be interested in participating in either program.

The paid WildSTEM internship application is live on the Masonville Cove website until March 31st and

is open to college students. The internship explores the many careers behind conservation and runs from June 24th to August 3rd. It is open to students from any major and targets students from HBCUs.

Ms. Fisher shared the overall data summary from 2023 DMMP outreach and education, a major commitment of MPA, which includes programming and outreach at Masonville Cove. MPA along with partners engaged 70,901 Marylanders in 2023. This included 49,227 engagements at DMMP sites, including Masonville Cove. Hart Miller Island was one of the top visited sites for the year and was added to the top five birding locations in Maryland by eBird. 21,674 engagements occurred at 396 MPA hosted events, which includes 7,685 more Marylanders engaged than in 2022. Continued community meetings, outreach, and communications intersecting with public interest in events have helped make the events more successful and enjoyable overall. 392 classrooms participated in environmental education programs, with 61.48% being Title I schools and 36.48% being Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) Green Schools, resulting in 13,966 engagements.

Ms. Fisher shared 2024 outreach and education recommendations and suggestions from the DMMP Annual Meeting and engaged MCAC members in providing their recommendations. One of the recommendations critical to the DMMP program is ensuring that the community committees reflect and continue to recruit local members for transparency and equity in the Port's decision-making processes. Some barriers identified included needing a Spanish interpreter, meeting times, age and mobility, access, transportation, advertisement and awareness, work schedules, and childcare. Committee members suggested sharing more information about the DMMP and Masonville Cove with local libraries and institutions in pop up meetings or pamphlets.

5.0 Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:45 pm. The next MCAC meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2024.