

**SUMMARY OF THE
MASONVILLE CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MCAC)
September 3, 2024, 5:30 PM - Hybrid Meeting**

Attendees:

Action Baybrook: Alicia Lucksted
Angie Ashley Consulting: Angie Ashley
Baltimore Office of Sustainability: Natalie Cohen
BayBrook Elementary Middle School: Herelys Parks
Benjamin Franklin High School: Ashley Winter
Curtis Bay Resident: Rodette Jones
Chesapeake Bay Association: Frank Neighoff
Chesapeake Climate and Conservation Corps: Julia Moya
EcoLogix Consulting Group: Dr. Mamie Parker
Friends of Masonville Cove: Jason Brannock, Tieya Parker, Belinda Wimbush, Ralinda Wimbush
Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF): Lorraine Warnick
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Bertrand Djiki, Darren Fisher, Katrina Jones
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Matias Orrego
MCAC Chair: Anita Kestel
National Aquarium (NA): Greg Atkin
Patapsco River Tributary: Chuck Thompson
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: Thea Becton

Action Items:

- MCAC members will work to recommend potential new members for the Friends of Masonville Cove, including community organizations, to partner with on events, as well as suggest any grants or applicable funding sources that may help sustain the group in the future.

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

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

All meeting materials can be found here: [MCAC Share Drive](#). Ms. Ashley and Ms. Kestel convened the meeting. The committee accepted the May 14, 2024 MCAC meeting summary. It was noted that all May 2024 meeting action items were completed or will be completed during this meeting.

2.0 Harbor Development Updates

Darren Swift, MPA

Mr. Swift provided an in-depth update on Harbor Development initiatives and recent education and outreach activities at Masonville Cove. He announced the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM internship program successfully engaged Historically Black Colleges and Universities students with funding supported by the Campbell Foundation and Brown Advisory. This program provided interns with hands-on experience in environmental management but also exposed them to various career paths related to these opportunities tailored to their interests, such as information systems and architecture. Interns enjoyed enriching experiences, participating in educational activities that included visits to local ecological and Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) restoration sites and Masonville Cove Partnership organizations.

Mr. Swift also highlighted the success of the expanded Youth Birding Week, which, after a successful inaugural year, now offers a two-week program. This year, participants enjoyed guidance and trips led by expert birders and were also introduced to maritime careers, enhancing their understanding of environmental conservation and biodiversity. In addition, he highlighted a special visitor to the Masonville

Cove Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF), the first site record of an American White Pelican. The pelican is rare in the area and typically resides in the Gulf of Mexico and migrates to the American Midwest and Canada.

The Baltimore Port Alliance's sixth annual Hiring and Career Expo was successful and attracted 34 employers and 307 job seekers. This expo was the largest to date, with employers conducting on-the-spot interviews and making follow-up connections. The event aimed to support those impacted by recent economic challenges, particularly individuals impacted by the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse. Survey responses indicated high satisfaction, with 100% of exhibitors expressing interest in participating in future events, and 75% of job seekers reporting that they found opportunities. Ms. Katrina Jones reported that several candidates received offers of employment after the event and exhibitors mentioned following up with candidates for further interviews as well.

Restoration efforts at Poplar Island's 1,715 site acres are ongoing and are expected to remain operational until approximately 2034-2035. This project involves the beneficial use of dredged material to create a vital habitat within the Chesapeake Bay and is a successful habitat for many beloved area wildlife including terrapins and migratory birds. Field trips to Poplar Island are available to groups on request and are included in dedicated programs provided by the Maryland Port Administration (MPA).

Mr. Swift also reported on the progress of the restoration of both Barren and James Islands, which aim to restore 2,144 acres of critical Chesapeake Bay habitat as part of the DMMP and are referred to as the Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration Project. The first phase of the Barren Island project includes installation of protective breakwaters and stone walls which are expected to be complete by fall 2024. For the second phase, contract solicitation began in May 2024 and is projected to be awarded in the near term. The James Island project initial design is ongoing, and a second Engineering with Nature workshop was held in February 2024. Ms. Ralinda Wimbush asked for more information concerning the workshop and Mr. Swift clarified that the aim was to gather input from project stakeholders including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MPA, regulatory and state agency representatives, and local stakeholders. The workshop aimed to investigate options for soft shorelines while adhering to state regulations, this balance has presented challenges but also opportunities for innovative solutions. Inflows to James Island are anticipated to begin by 2028.

Updates regarding the Cox Creek DMCF and Swan Creek Wetland included the DMCF's upland dike successfully raising to a height of +60', which will provide an additional 8.5 million cubic yards (mcy) of storage capacity. This expansion is critical for accommodating material dredged from the Baltimore Harbor and surrounding waterways. A feasibility study for the next phase of expansion, which would elevate the dike to +80' feet, has been completed, and design options are currently under review.

In order to provide background about the DMMP to those new to the committee, Mr. Swift explained that under the Dredged Material Management Act of 2002, any dredged material from within the Baltimore Harbor must remain within the harbor's boundaries and be properly contained. While some materials are repurposed through innovative reuse initiatives, the bulk of the material is deposited in containment facilities like the Masonville and Cox Creek DMCFs. At Swan Creek, near the Cox Creek facility, the design for the Swan Creek Nature Trail is nearing 100% completion. This trail will provide a valuable outdoor recreational and educational resource for the community, promoting engagement with nature and environmental learning. MPA plans to also submit a request to the Board of Public Works to secure an easement and begin construction for the Genesee Valley Outdoor Learning Center mitigation project. Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use of dredged material updates included the Cox Creek Sediment Technology and Reuse (STAR) facility, discussions with Baltimore City to use dredged material as daily

cover for the Quarantine Road landfill, opportunities to reclaim capacity at Cox Creek DMCF, and the implementation of two beneficial use projects. The STAR facility next to Cox Creek, previously used for titanium dioxide manufacturing, is now undergoing remediation. MPA recently acquired the property and as part of acquisition in a cost-sharing program to remediate the property with the previous owner; it is also under an administrative consent order signed with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). MPA is working to finalize remediation action plans for different sections of the property. The STAR facility will advance innovative reuse through large scale development and capacity recovery from the Cox Creek DMCF.

Private companies and institutions participating in research and development (R&D) projects have demonstrated a range of possible applications in innovatively reusing dredged sediment including investigating the feasibility of vegetated earth berms by the University of Maryland, the creation of bricks and permeable pavers by Belden Eco Products, the creation of shoreline protection structures by Northgate Environmental Management, and the production of a growing medium for sod by FasTrak Express from dredged material. Additionally, outside of the R&D process companies like Comus Sustainable Pozzolan Products are proposing innovative methods to transform dredged material into green cement, which could significantly reduce carbon emissions in cement manufacturing, a major contributor to global CO₂ emissions. Mx. Atkin inquired about the transportation logistics for growing sod with FasTrak Express and Mr. Swift explained that given the location of FasTrak's operation, the cost of transportation for dredged material by truck would be cost prohibitive, however the project is feasible but could benefit from a centralized facility or location.

MPA is also engaging in large-scale beneficial use projects, such as the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative Projects, and working with regulatory agencies and stakeholders to improve transparency in the permitting process for all projects, including proposed Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD). A CAD subcommittee has been formed under the DMMP Bay Enhancement Working Group to provide recommendations. Ms. Hill asked for a current status on the CAD project and Ms. Ashley shared that the project is paused pending the coordination of the subcommittee.

3.0 Masonville Construction Updates

Bertrand Djiki, MPA

Mr. Djiki shared updates regarding progress at the Masonville DMCF in both construction and environmental mitigation efforts. The first phase of raising the base dike to +30' feet is 95% complete, and the project aims to raise it further to +42' feet by 2029. This increase will provide capacity for an additional 10.4 mcy of dredged material, sustaining operations for the next 15 to 20 years. The 2023 completed inflow projects include inflows from the Seagirt Berth 3 Pocket Phase 1 consisting of 21,900 cy, Dundalk Marine Terminal Berth 3 reconstruction consisting of 23,500 cy, and Seagirt Berth 3 Pocket Phase 2 PAC consisting of 18,78 cy. The 2024 inflows to date include completed inflows from Consol Energy consisting of 5,173 cy and an inflow from Tradepoint Atlantic of 67,545 cy. An Inflow from the CSX Coal Pier of 30 cy is expected to be completed Fall 2024.

Ms. Rodette Jones asked for more information regarding the completed Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) wall update shared during the meeting. Mr. Djiki explained the wall is part of an innovative design that reduces the amount of fill material needed while increasing DMCF dike stability, saving both costs and resources. Ms. Belinda Wimbush and MCAC members inquired about material used in the MSE wall and Mr. Djiki clarified that the wall utilizes sandy locally sourced soil material along with intentional plantings to improve water retention and contain erosion. The new innovative design approach also enhances the slope stability, replacing traditional methods with a more efficient 5:1 slope structure. Additionally, drainage improvements, including a drainage blanket, have been implemented to manage water flow and ensure long-term stability of the dike.

The Masonville DMCF project also includes a comprehensive environmental mitigation and restoration component for Masonville Cove. Mr. Djiki shared updates on the Access Zone 2 Nontidal Wetland Improvement project, which was not functioning as expected before, and underwent a redesign with construction completed in 2023. After final seeding in August 2024, the wetland is showing promising results, with plans for final inspections by MDE expected in the near future.

4.0 Masonville Cove Connector (MCC)

Darren Swift, MPA

Mr. Swift provided updates on the Masonville Cove Connector (MCC) and Swan Creek Nature Trail (SCNT). The MCC is currently in a holding pattern, with the project narrowed down from eight design concepts to four. MPA is set to make a final decision after further input from community outreach, with hopes to present the selected concept to the executive director by fall or early winter 2024. Afterward, the project will move forward with final design and scheduling. Ms. Ralinda Wimbush asked about the connections of the MCC with the broader Baltimore City Green Trails Network, which Mr. Swift confirmed will be connected to other city regional trails through the Baybrook Connector, although the projects are independent of each other.

The SCNT is a community enhancement project connected to the Cox Creek DMCF. The design is currently 90% complete, and the project was initiated based on community feedback seeking greater access to green spaces and nature trails. The trailhead will start along Kembo Road adjacent to the Cox Creek Operations and Maintenance Facility, with features such as boardwalks over sensitive wetland areas to minimize environmental disturbance. The trail will include educational elements like themed outdoor classrooms focused on wetlands, wildlife, and plants. Historical elements of the site including former homes and vacation areas called "shore shacks" will be highlighted along the trail. Construction is expected to begin in 2024-2025, with the work taking approximately a year to complete. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for the upcoming Cox Creek Open House on October 19th. Part of the trail will utilize dredged material to improve surface conditions, showcasing innovative reuse methods. While the trail will generally have a natural surface, portions of it will aim to be ADA accessible.

5.0 Friends of Masonville Cove Updates

Ralinda Wimbush

Ms. Ralinda Wimbush shared updates on recent Friends of Masonville Cove (Friends Group) activities and goals, emphasizing the need for continued community involvement and support. Ms. Wimbush discussed the importance of continuing to cultivate relationships with local stakeholders and community members and the need to build a more formal foundation for the group such as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. This formalization would allow the group to access financial support and expand their capacity to engage with the community, while also establishing the group as the first Friends Group of an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in the nation.

The Friends Group is committed to fostering connections, particularly through community outreach, stewardship, and partnerships with other organizations. Ms. Wimbush and Ms. Fisher highlighted previous activities like gardening, kayak trips, and visits to the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge to learn from their established Friends Group. The goal of the Friends Group is to further community engagement efforts and establish a space for community members to engage and further contribute to design and involvement opportunities they would like to see at Masonville Cove.

6.0 Partnership Updates

National Aquarium (NA)

Greg Atkin, NA

Mx. Atkin shared updates on NA's community engagement efforts and programs around Masonville Cove from this past summer. NA collaborated with the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM internship program supporting exposure to the various ways NA operates as both an educational institution and a conservation organization. Interns were given exclusive access to behind-the-scenes areas, including backstage tours of the aquarium and the Animal Care and Rescue Center, which is typically not open to the public. NA also worked with the Boys and Girls Clubs in Brooklyn, offering programs designed to connect local youth with nature and foster a stronger relationship with the environment. The feedback from these events was positive, with requests for continued and expanded engagement in the future.

On August 11th, NA participated in a Latino/a/e Conservation Day event at Patapsco Valley State Park's Pickall area. The event was organized in collaboration with Templo de Alabanza y Restauracion (TAYR), a local church in Brooklyn with which NA has partnered for several years, who requested Patapsco Valley State Park as the site for the event this year. The event saw 205 participants and included activities such as raffles, prizes, and food.

Looking ahead, Mx. Atkin highlighted several upcoming events:

- Urban Wildlife Conservation Day on September 14th: This event at Masonville Cove will feature various free conservation activities, including boat rides, exhibits, and a BioBlitz led by the NA field conservation team. Experts on amphibians, birds, and horseshoe crabs will be present, and food will be available. Due to limited parking, attendees are encouraged to carpool or use the free shuttle service.
- International Coastal Cleanup on October 10th: In partnership with the Ocean Conservancy, NA will participate in a shoreline cleanup at Masonville Cove.
- Brooklyn Community Cleanup with TAYR on October 27th: NA will collaborate with TAYR for a cleanup event in the Brooklyn community.

Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF)

Lorraine Warnick, LCF

Ms. Warnick shared updates on a productive and busy summer at Masonville Cove, with a focus on the Baltimore Environmental Education Superheroes (BEES) program. This program, designed for 30 students from Marie G. Farring Elementary/Middle School, received funding from the Weinberg Foundation, Bloomberg Foundation, and other organizations, enabling comprehensive support for the students and their families. The program included daily transportation, meals, social-emotional learning, literacy, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focused activities all taking place on-site at Masonville Cove.

Throughout the five-week summer program, students engaged in various science-based activities, including nature walks, fishing, and conducting experiments in Masonville Cove's laboratories. The BEES program emphasized STEM education through wildlife biology, ornithology, chemistry, meteorology, and botany, with a unique career focus each week. This approach is designed to prevent summer learning loss and promote literacy, with the added benefit of introducing students to potential careers in environmental science. 100% of the students improved their reading levels over the summer, and 17% advanced by two or more reading levels.

In addition to the BEES program, LCF extended its outreach to recreation centers across the community, including the Curtis Bay Recreation Center and the Brooklyn O'Malley Boys and Girls Club, where they ran two environmental education programs. Ms. Winter asked if high school students are also engaged at Masonville Cove, and Ms. Warnick confirmed that close collaborations with all grades at Benjamin Franklin High School and Baltimore City 9th grade students are ongoing with the MWEE stream study

program and field trips. Ms. Warnick noted volunteer efforts also played a significant role in summer programming and more opportunities will be available during the school year.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Angie Ashley, AAC

Ms. Ashley shared updates on behalf of Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter of the USFWS, who could not attend the meeting.

Black Birders Week successfully engaged participants with the opportunity to join Dr. Carpenter and the bird banding station to learn about birding and related opportunities, participate in a bird walk, and even hold and release a very rare Mourning Warbler as part of the day's activities.

Internship related updates included the completion of the container gardening capstone project at Masonville Cove led by Ms. Julia Moya, the Chesapeake Climate and Conservation Corps 2024 member, and Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM intern updates. Ms. Moya has now secured a job with the Maryland Environmental Service at Poplar Island. The WildSTEM interns had the opportunity to visit the Department of Interior headquarters in Washington, D.C., where they met with Ms. Martha Williams, the USFWS Director, to discuss the potential listing of the monarch butterfly as an endangered species. Dr. Carpenter also shared a video featuring wildlife camera footage captured by WildSTEM interns, showcasing a unique and amicable interaction between a red fox and an opossum. These experiences provided interns with insights into wildlife policy in addition to their hands-on fieldwork.

Upcoming updates included the now completed installation of new interpretive bilingual signage, with design informed by community member engagement, and fall programs. While the initial signs have been installed, there are plans for more in the future as funding becomes available. Ms. Ashley announced upcoming programs, including fall bird banding activities and the fall Mammals of Masonville Cove survey programs.

7.0 Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:30 pm. The next MCAC meeting is scheduled for 2025.

Ms. Ashley thanked the MCAC members and received applause for her efforts to help facilitate meetings over the past 15 years. Ms. Ashley introduced Dr. Mamie Parker as the new facilitator, but will assist Dr. Parker in the transition. Dr. Parker is new to the MCAC but a familiar face at Masonville Cove, helping with many programs and initiatives. Dr. Parker shared her background, emphasizing her 30 years of experience with the USFWS and her passion for internship programs. She highlighted how her own internship experience helped shape her career, and she looks forward to working with the group to expand opportunities for youth and foster connections within the community.