

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Louis – MES

DATE: March 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Next meeting – April 14, 2026

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI COC) will be on Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) will provide dinner. A link for registration to this meeting will be released as the date approaches.

Attached for your review is a copy of the final summary of the January 13, 2026, meeting.

FINAL
SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

January 13, 2026 – 6:00 PM
2200 Broening Highway

Attendees:

Arcadis Engineering: Bert Buell

Baltimore Bird Club and Friends of HMI State Park: Joe Corcoran, Kathy Lambrow

Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability: David Riter

Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)*

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Luke Terrell, Mark Spurrier, Richard Ortt

Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Lincoln Tracy, Megan O'Hara, Taylor Louis

Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Amanda Peñafiel, Danielle Fisher, Darren Swift, David Bibo, Holly Miller

**Appointed member of the HMI COC*

Action items:

1. ***MPA will provide an annual cost estimate for invasive control treatment at HMI.*** Complete—Distributed to group with January 13, 2026, meeting summary.
2. ***MPA will provide Joe Corcoran with North Cell habitat development documents to share with a wetland engineer.*** Ongoing—MPA followed up with Mr. Corcoran on January 28, 2026.
3. ***MPA and the HMI COC will evaluate the need for additional meeting dates to discuss North Cell habitat development options.*** Complete—The next meeting of the HMI COC is April 14, 2026.
4. ***HMI COC members will review the HMI Transition Timeline Options document and provide feedback by ranking the options and providing a narrative that will shape future decisions.***
5. ***MES will distribute the January 13, 2026, HMI COC meeting presentation and HMI Run video.*** Complete—Distributed to group with January 13, 2026, meeting summary. ***MES will distribute the July 15, 2025, meeting summary to the HMI COC members for their approval.*** Complete— Meeting summary distributed on January 21, 2026, and finalized.
6. ***MPA will determine if dredged sand is able to be placed along the shorelines at HMI under the current legislation and will continue discussions with David Riter and DNR on the possibility of a future shoreline restoration or beach nourishment project.***

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

Attendees stated their name and affiliation at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Paul Brylske highlighted the “Get the Scoop on Dredging” open house events at the Sollers Point Multi-Purpose Center in Baltimore’s Turner Station community and the North Point Edgemere Volunteer Fire

Department. He also thanked Mark Spurrier for an introduction to the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park.

The group reviewed action items from the July 15, 2025, meeting.

- Action item 5: ***Senator Johnny Ray Salling will introduce legislation to appoint a waterman to the HMI COC.*** Ongoing—Mr. Brylske will follow up with Mr. Salling to clarify whether he will appoint a waterman or a member of the Baltimore Birding Club.
- Action item 6: ***MPA and MES will meet to consider an increase in bird tours, access to the North Cell for birders, and a docking facility for private boats.*** Ongoing—MPA has scheduled a meeting with the MES Environmental and Operations staff to discuss birder access, visit frequency, and other logistics. DNR will also review a Right of Entry Agreement that will allow the Friends of HMI to dock their vessel at HMI to perform maintenance and educational programs.

The July 15, 2025, meeting summary was approved by Mr. Brylske and will be distributed to the absent HMI COC members for approval.

2.0 Friends Group Update

Paul Brylske, Chair

The Friends of HMI were awarded a Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (C-WILD) grant with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Friends of HMI will partner with the Friends of Masonville Cove to create a strategic plan to strengthen long-term stewardship and public engagement. Grant funding will support two coordinators for an 18-month tenure to assist the Friends groups with outreach, strategic programming, and organizational capacity. Essential duties of the Friends of HMI Coordinator will include leadership, community liaising, fundraising, operational planning and management, outreach and marketing, communications, collaboration, and peer learning. The Friends of HMI Coordinator position is posted on the Indeed website and will close on January 23, 2026. The Friends of HMI also received a restoration grant through the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Outreach Grant program and Mr. Brylske thanked the agencies who contributed letters of support.

The Friends of HMI are partnering with the Baltimore County Sailing Center, Maryland Waterways Foundation, and other community organizations to promote outreach, camping activities, educational programs, and trash cleanup events. The fundraiser event held on September 27, 2025, at Charly's Sue Creek Restaurant was successful, and the Friends group plan to have another fundraiser in 2026.

3.0 Birding Updates

Joe Corcoran, Baltimore Bird Club

Mr. Joe Corcoran shared that out of 2,696 eBird hotspots in Maryland, four of the MPA's Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) birding sites ranked in the top 10 for total species observed in 2025. HMI ranked #1 with 233 total species, Poplar Island ranked #3 with 228 total species, Masonville Cove ranked #6 with 211 total species, and Cox Creek ranked #8 with 208 total species.

Mr. Corcoran pointed out that while Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge ranked #2 with 232 total species, it encompasses 29,000 acres, which is far greater in size than any of the DMMP locations. He noted that the inclusion of four MPA DMMP sites on the eBird hotspot ranking highlights the beneficial habitat and refuge the sites provide for many birds. Mr. Corcoran hoped that one day HMI could be turned into a State or Federal refuge.

Mr. Corcoran expressed gratitude on behalf of himself and the Baltimore Bird Club to MPA, MES, and DNR for access to HMI and the North Cell as well as other MPA DMMP locations. Mr. Corcoran and the Baltimore Bird Club are willing to help fund a bird observation platform at Masonville Cove that will allow the public to see into the Masonville Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF). He explained that birder interest is expanding as the Baltimore Bird Club membership grows and requested more birder access to HMI and MPA DMMP sites.

4.0 HMI North Cell Habitat Development

Amanda Peñafiel, MPA

The HMI run event took place on October 4, 2025, with 104 finishers and 25 spectators. The top male finisher was John Ford from Phoenix, Maryland in 32 minutes, 27 seconds. The top female finisher was Karen Cathell from Berlin, Maryland in 41 minutes, 42 seconds. Based on the Charm City Run data, most participants were from the Baltimore or Lutherville/Timonium area.

The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Continuing Operations and Habitat Development at HMI between MPA, MES, and DNR expired on December 31, 2025. An amendment was made to extend the existing agreement term for an additional two years. The amended agreement will expire on December 31, 2027. The IGA language will be revised when plans for habitat development in the North Cell have been solidified.

On October 16, 2025, the HMI Infrastructure Working Group (IWG), comprised of decision-makers from MPA, DNR, and MES, met at HMI to view current assets and infrastructure and discuss a path forward for the eventual transition of the island from MPA to DNR. The HMI IWG met again on January 7, 2026, at North Point State Park to continue discussions on the transition. The next meeting of the HMI IWG will be held on March 19, 2026, at North Point State Park.

In collaboration with DNR, MPA composed an HMI Transition Timeline Options document listing the pros and cons and estimated timelines for completion of three potential options for North Cell habitat development. MPA, MES, and DNR are seeking input and collaboration from the HMI COC and Friends Group to decide on one of the proposed transition timeline options or propose alternative options.

Transition Timeline Option 1 is the original 2019 Option D concept design plan that has been memorialized in the HMI IGA. Option 1/Option D is a minimal maintenance option and would require the least maintenance for DNR in the future. This option has not been advanced due to lack of funding. Option 1/Option D includes dredging of the North Cell pond to a minimum 2.8-foot depth to meet the agreed upon habitat goals and objectives and mitigate *Phragmites* growth. Dredged material would be relocated into the upland causing a potential impact on the existing habitat and bird population. For this option to proceed, alternative funding sources need to be identified, and as a

result, the timeline for completion is unknown. If funding is secured and all transition criteria have been met, MPA and DNR estimate approximately 12 years for completion.

Transition Timeline Option 2 is the original 2019 Option D concept design plan with dredged material amendments. This option would deepen the North Cell pond to a minimum 2.8-foot depth by strategically placing inflowed dredged material into the uplands. Option 2 meets the agreed upon habitat goals and deters *Phragmites* and other invasive species growth but would impact existing habitat. As of December 31, 2009, HMI no longer accepts dredged material; this option would require a change in legislation and support from the HMI COC, community, and all stakeholders. Opening HMI to dredged material placement would provide the Baltimore Harbor DMCFs with additional capacity. An engineering evaluation would be needed to determine the feasibility of Option 2 and facility improvements would need to be completed before accepting dredged material. If legislation were to be changed and transition criteria are met, MPA and DNR estimate approximately 20 years to complete Option 2.

Transition Timeline Option 3 accepts the current North Cell habitat as it stands. This option preserves the existing habitat and is the least expensive transition option. A study by Century Engineering determined that rainfall alone would sustain the ponds; however, the North Cell pond would remain shallow and ongoing maintenance and funding sources would need to be identified for DNR to control potentially harmful algal blooms, *Phragmites*, and other invasive species. MPA will provide the group with a range of current cost estimates for *Phragmites* treatment and other invasive control completed at HMI. If transition criteria are met, MPA and DNR estimate approximately 7 years to complete Option 3. Mr. Brylske believes that accepting the current North Cell habitat is the most attainable and preferable option.

Prior to transitioning the operation of HMI from MPA to DNR, DNR noted that some necessary conditions would need to be met for any of the North Cell habitat development options to occur: all permits and monitoring required by the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) need to be removed (the South Cell no longer has permit limitations or monitoring requirements after consistently meeting standards and the North Cell would need to be the same); any active or passive treatment systems need to be removed; flow controls need to be set to maintain pond levels; and an inspection of the berms would be required. Future discussion on the transition will include MPA response plans and post-transition DNR funding options. Once a transition timeline option has been chosen, MPA and DNR can determine a more accurate timeline for asset and infrastructure transition.

MPA, MES, and DNR reiterated that support from stakeholders, the HMI COC, and the public would be necessary to proceed with any of these options, and they are receptive to additional ideas for transition options outside of those provided. Mr. Corcoran requested information on the North Cell habitat development options to share with an engineer who designed the Eccleston Mitigation Site in Baltimore County. The group discussed options for various potential state designations for the North Cell or the entire island, including wildlife management and natural resources areas. DNR mentioned that they are also gauging interest from local universities to use the Operations building as a research facility or location for a Mesonet weather station. Mr. Brylske thanked MPA, MES, and DNR for their flexibility and would like to set additional meeting dates to continue discussion of development options. MPA and DNR requested that the HMI COC members review and rank the HMI Transition

Timeline Options document and provide justifications for their ranking prior to scheduling additional meetings.

5.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibb, MPA

Mr. Dave Bibb introduced Mr. David Riter, Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability, who explained that Baltimore County would like to dredge approximately 34,000 cubic yards of sand from the roughly one-mile channel and area around HMI, Pleasure Island, Cuckold Point, and Craighill Lighthouse, known as “the Cut.” The County would like to reuse the sand for a beneficial purpose and suggested placing it along the shoreline of HMI for beach nourishment. In 2011, approximately 54,000 cubic yards of sand were dredged from the Cut and placed along the shoreline of Pleasure Island. Dredging of the Cut is required approximately every ten years. The group discussed the potential for beach nourishment around the Station-265 shoreline or the area surrounding Drum Point. MPA will reach out to the Office of Attorney General to review HMI legislation and determine if dredged sand can be placed at HMI as a beach nourishment or shoreline restoration project. Mr. Riter and Baltimore County are interested in working with MPA, MES, and DNR, and explained that this would be a three to four-year state-funded project under the Waterway Improvement Fund Grant. MPA and DNR are interested in more information on the project and will continue discussions on the potential use of the dredged sand.

Mr. Brylske expressed disappointment with limited DNR staffing at HMI in 2025. Mr. Spurrier confirmed that HMI State Park will have limited staffing again in 2026. Mr. Brylske said limited staffing is unacceptable and for liability reasons, he will not send volunteers or other individuals to HMI unless a DNR Park Ranger is present. Mr. Brylske is concerned that limited staffing at DNR and HMI State Park will impact the C-WILD grant and the work of the Friends of HMI Coordinator. MPA affirmed that public access to the North Cell is strictly prohibited unless visitors are on an MPA-approved tour. Mr. Bibb reviewed action items and the status of current HMI COC members. The group agreed that plans for HMI North Cell habitat development are progressing in a positive direction. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the HMI COC will be on Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224.