

**SUMMARY OF THE
MASONVILLE CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING (MCAC)
March 3, 2026, 5:30 PM - Virtual Meeting**

Attendees:

Baltimore Office of Sustainability: Natalie Cohen
Curtis Bay Community: Rodette Jones
Friends of Masonville Cove: Sharon Dorsey
Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF): Grace DeLuca
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Bertrand Djiki, Danielle Fisher, Holly Miller, Joseph Ross, Kelvin Moulden, Darren Swift
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Matias Orrego
MCAC Chair: Anita Kestel
MCAC Facilitator: Dr. Mamie Parker
Medstar Harbor Hospital: Brian Gray
National Aquarium (NA): Curtis Bennett

Action Items:

- The postponed DMCF tour will be rescheduled for the May 5, 2026, MCAC meeting, weather permitting.
- The committee will review the 2026 DMMP recommendations in more detail at a future committee meeting.
- MPA will compile the combined bird species totals and unique totals for all DMMP sites to share with the committee.

1.0 Welcome & Review of Previous Action Items

**Dr. Mamie Parker, Facilitator
Anita Kestel, MCAC Chair**

All meeting materials can be found here: [MCAC Share Drive](#). The March 3, 2026 meeting of the Masonville Cove Citizens' Advisory Committee (MCAC) was held virtually due to inclement weather. The planned DMCF tour was postponed and is expected to be rescheduled for the upcoming May 5th meeting. MCAC Chair, Ms. Kestel, convened the meeting, followed by introductions led by Dr. Parker. Ms. Kestel later requested feedback and a motion to approve the August 5, 2025, MCAC meeting summary. The Committee accepted the summary as final. Action items from the August 2025 meeting were all ongoing or otherwise completed.

2.0 Office of Navigation, Innovation and Stewardship Updates

**Darren Swift, MPA
Kelvin Moulden, MPA**

Mr. Swift provided a recap of the 2025 Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) Annual Meeting and Annual Report, noting that the annual meeting, held on December 5, 2025, was one of the most highly attended to date, with 167 total attendees, including 97 in-person and 70 virtual participants, representing 54 organizations. Mr. Swift thanked those who attended and expressed that MPA hopes for continued strong participation at future annual meetings. Mr. Swift also highlighted the "Science and Stakeholder Voices" panel discussion as an excellent addition to the Annual Meeting. The panel featured Mr. Paul Brylske, Chair of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee and Friends of Hart-Miller Island, Ms. Lisa Wainger of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, and Ms. Kadija Ndiaye, Program Mentor of the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM Internship program. The panel focused on how the Port collaborates with scientific experts, community members, and workforce

development leaders to support the environment, the economy, and Maryland communities. Mr. Swift also commended Ms. Fisher for facilitating the panel, highlighting the thoughtful discussion, which was received very well by the audience.

Mr. Swift then referred to the [2025 DMMP Annual Report](#), which is now finalized. Mr. Swift explained that the report includes a new, simplified set of 2026 recommendations, which were intentionally rewritten to be more concise and accessible. Major funding and policy highlights included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' FY2025 budget and work plan, which secured over \$187 million in funding connected to Port of Baltimore activities, including major support for the Mid-Bay project and annual maintenance dredging. Mr. Swift also noted that the Masonville Cove Partnership raised over \$450,000 in 2025 to support programming and stewardship work at the site.

Mr. Swift shared that MPA has submitted applications for both additional Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funding and a Department of Transportation BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development) grant to help secure future construction funding for the Masonville Cove Connector project. Outcomes from those applications are expected later in the year, and the MCAC will be updated as new information becomes available. Ms. Cohen asked for an update on the Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) project that affects timing for the Masonville Cove Connector. Mr. Moulden explained that the most current information indicated the DPW project may be advertised in late April and awarded around September, though no confirmed construction start date was available yet. Mr. Moulden noted that the project is closely coordinated with the I-895 at Frankfur Avenue Interchange Improvements Project to ensure the schedules align as efficiently as possible.

Mr. Swift next summarized several Innovative Reuse (IR) and Beneficial Use (BU) milestones from 2025. Approximately 2 million cubic yards of dredged material were placed at Poplar Island, Masonville, and Cox Creek. Cox Creek has also been implementing more IR strategies to aid with capacity limitations, with some examples including material managed with geotubes for dewatering and drying rather than direct placement in a DMCF. A beneficial use project within the Stoney Beach community was highlighted, where 1,600 cubic yards of dredged material were supplied with technical coordination support from MPA. Mr. Swift reported that the IR Research and Development program is nearing completion. HarborRock recently presented on lightweight aggregate and supplementary cementitious material at an Innovative Reuse Committee (IRC) meeting, and the University of Maryland is scheduled to present on vegetated earthen berms at the next [IRC meeting](#) on May 12, 2026.

Mr. Swift discussed birding activity across DMMP sites, noting that Poplar Island recorded 224 bird species and ranked #11 among Maryland eBird hotspots in 2025, Hart-Miller Island recorded 229 species and ranked #1, Masonville Cove recorded 202 species and ranked #12, and Cox Creek recorded 205 species and ranked #6. Mr. Swift emphasized that Masonville Cove remains one of the state's most significant birding sites and that even small increases in species counts could move it higher in the rankings. Ms. Kestel asked whether MPA tracks the total combined number of species across all sites and could also report unique species to each site, and Mr. Swift agreed that MPA would compile and share that information.

In closing, Mr. Swift reviewed community engagement and workforce development highlights from the annual report. In 2025, the program recorded nearly 19,000 community engagements, hosted 611 events, and facilitated 25 DMMP committee meetings. Additionally, MPA supported educational programming, reached over 11,000 students, engaged 469 classrooms, and continued to prioritize engaging Title I Schools and Green Schools. The Baltimore Port Alliance Hiring and Career Expo was also highlighted as

the largest event yet, with more than 300 job seekers and 43 employers in attendance.

3.0 Friends of Masonville Cove Updates

Danielle Fisher, MPA

Ms. Fisher provided an update on the Friends of Masonville Cove, noting that the organization has made considerable progress since the committee last discussed its year-of-learning framework. The original intention of the Friends group was to create and provide a dedicated volunteer support, fill a community partnership gap, strengthen programming, and eventually serve as a fiscal sponsor. Ms. Fisher explained that while the Masonville Cove Partnership is strong and each formal partner already plays a distinct role, the Friends group was envisioned as the community-centered element that would deepen local involvement and help connect the surrounding neighborhoods to Masonville Cove in a sustainable and intentional way. Ms. Fisher next reviewed the group's year of learning, which focused on understanding how other Friends groups operate, defining leadership responsibilities, and developing a strategy to support a dedicated Friends coordinator. Ms. Ralinda Wimbush was credited with helping initiate and build the group over the past two years. The growth of the organization from interested community members to a more structured and mission-driven group was emphasized.

Ms. Fisher announced one of the most significant developments for the Friends to date, with the inaugural Board of Directors for the Friends now established in February 2026. Ms. Fisher also recognized the work of the nominating committee, emphasizing that all work involving the Friends, including board service, nominating committee participation, and interview support, has been on a volunteer-based and conducted in addition to members' other responsibilities. Ms. Fisher introduced Ms. Ralinda Wimbush as Chair, a local community member previously directing the Friends development and deeply engaged in both nature-based community connection and South Baltimore civic life. Ms. Sharon Dorsey was then introduced as Vice Chair, noting prior work at Masonville Cove including leadership on the pollinator container garden project and a previous affiliation with the USFWS. Ms. Dorsey also recently published a children's novel, which the group hopes to feature at Masonville Cove in a program. Finally, Ms. Natalie Cohen was introduced as Treasurer and Secretary, with experience in sustainability planning, community programming, and prior exposure to Friends group structures through work associated with John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge highlighted. Ms. Fisher praised this development of the inaugural board as a major milestone that supports the Friends group moving to a formal organization.

The Friends group has also successfully secured \$200,000 in grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in partnership with Friends of Hart-Miller Island, for two Friends coordinator positions. One will support Masonville Cove, and one will support Hart-Miller Island. The applicant pool was highly competitive, with nearly 70 applicants and interviews now complete. The partnership expects to have coordinators in place by the end of March. Ms. Fisher also shared that formal paperwork has been submitted to the State of Maryland to establish Friends of Masonville Cove as a 501(c)(3). The application is currently under review at the state level and, once approved, will move on to the next step in the federal process.

4.0 Partnership Updates

MPA Outreach & Engagement Updates

Danielle Fisher, MPA

Ms. Fisher updated committee members on broader MPA engagement efforts, highlighting the recent 2026 Masonville Cove Stakeholder Retreat, which took place over two days and focused on team building, communication, and action planning tied to the Masonville Cove Partnership's 2026 to 2030 strategic plan. The retreat helped the partnership move from abstract planning into shared implementation steps with defined responsibilities and realistic timelines. MPA has expanded its communications and

stakeholder engagement tools which now also include county-based iMPAct reports, a new five-part Spotlight video series on dredging, and ongoing “Get the Scoop on Dredging” events. The next “Get the Scoop on Dredging” event is scheduled for March 24th at Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School in Baltimore County and intends to provide stakeholders with an informal opportunity to ask technical questions about dredging and related operations.

Finally, Ms. Fisher introduced Dr. Tallulah Terrapin, the new mascot and ambassador for the Terrapin Education and Research Partnership (TERP). Dr. Tallulah’s role helps the program connect Maryland students, teachers, and families to the Chesapeake Bay and to the restoration work happening at Poplar Island. This new mascot will help outreach efforts reinforce public understanding of how dredged material is being used not only to support commerce but also to restore habitat and protect wildlife.

National Aquarium (NA)

Curtis Bennett, NA

Mr. Bennett provided a brief update on recent NA programming connected to Masonville Cove and began by reflecting on the Shakespeare at the Cove event. The pilot program was held in October 2025 in collaboration with Chesapeake Shakespeare Company and was a successful first effort, which merged arts and science education while engaging 48 participants. The event was well-received, and community members have expressed interest in seeing it return. Mr. Bennett shared that NA and Chesapeake Shakespeare Company are using 2026 as a planning year for the next iteration of the program and will determine what future programming and securing funds for the program will be like in 2027.

Mr. Bennett also shared a major internal organizational update, NA’s former CEO Mr. John Racanelli stepped down at the end of the previous year. NA’s board has since appointed Ms. Jennifer Driban as interim CEO while conducting a national search for a permanent replacement. Mr. Bennett acknowledged that this leadership transition, combined with broader budget constraints, has prompted reassessment of some program areas. Dr. Parker inquired about budget impacts at NA, and Mr. Bennett acknowledged that there have been difficult organizational decisions, including the suspension of some programs across the organization. Additionally, Mr. Bennett’s department had to terminate a coordinator position, and the team is still navigating what that means for long-term program sustainability specifically in the Jonestown Community (East Baltimore)..

Looking ahead, Mr. Bennett outlined three major NA related programs for the second quarter of 2026. On March 18th, the Maryland Climate Crew Network will conduct a campus cleanup at Masonville Cove. The network includes several workforce development groups, including Grow Home (located in South Baltimore), the 6th Branch, Defensores de la Cuenca, Civic Works, Stillmeadow Community, and Howard EcoWorks. The event will combine debris cleanup with networking opportunities so that young professionals can build relationships and learn more about careers in conservation. On April 2nd, the partnership will host a City Nature Challenge themed event at the Brooklyn Library Branch as part of the First Friday series, although the date falls on a Thursday to better align with the library’s availability. The focus will be on introducing participants to iNaturalist and helping them prepare for the April 24th through 27th challenge window. Finally, on April 4th, Templo de Alabanza Y Restauración and the NA will host a South Baltimore cleanup paired with a workshop, continuing a local community partnership that has now lasted for more than a decade.

Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF)

Grace DeLuca, LCF

Ms. DeLuca reported that LCF has had an exceptionally busy and productive school year, with programming underway since fall and continuing intensively through spring. School Leadership in Urban Runoff Reduction Program, or SLURRP, has been one of LCF’s continuing major grant-funded initiatives.

Through SLURRP, LCF staff visit classrooms twice to teach students about storm drains, runoff, and watersheds, followed by a field trip to Masonville Cove. The program is currently being implemented with fourth and fifth graders from six Baltimore City Public Schools, including the local Baybrook, Maree G. Farring, Curtis Bay, and Lakeland Elementary Middle Schools. Ms. DeLuca also noted that the nature play space has proven valuable and has become a productive and enjoyable part of nature walks, giving students an opportunity to move, play, and connect to the site actively.

In addition to these grant-funded programs, LCF continues to run paid fee-for-service field trips and outreach visits. Ms. DeLuca also proudly highlighted that from the date of the MCAC meeting through the end of the school year, there is a field trip or outreach session scheduled every day school is in session. LCF is also continuing its monthly recreation center outreach work and has used the winter months to prepare lesson plans and logistics for the summer Baltimore Environmental Education Superheroes (BEES) program with Maree G. Farring students. Mr. Orrego asked if there was an update on BEES program funding and Ms. Cohen asked for clarification on acronyms. Ms. DeLuca clarified the acronym and explained that while usual grant funding did not come through, LCF decided the program is important to continue and dedicated some funding towards that end. Staff is now exploring alternative grant opportunities and sponsorships so that the program can continue to proceed, hopefully without future interruption.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

Dr. Parker for Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter, USFWS

Dr. Parker provided an update on USFWS on behalf of Dr. Carpenter, who was unable to attend the meeting. Updates on monarch butterfly monitoring were shared. The site included 26 milkweed patches with more than 800 plants; caterpillar use had been observed in 18 patches; about 21 patches were affected by surrounding invasive species. Approximately 30 monarchs were tagged, evenly split between wild-caught and captive-reared individuals, and one recapture was documented from another location. Dr. Parker then highlighted Masonville Cove's participation in Urban Wildlife Conservation Day and the designation ceremony for Masonville Cove as a Chesapeake Gateway site, noting that USFWS staff from headquarters had participated in the celebration. Dr. Parker acknowledged MES and NA for stepping in to lead the site's October bat walks when Dr. Carpenter was unavailable, due to the Federal shutdown, which Dr. Carpenter deeply appreciated.

In December, thermal cameras and red spotlights were used over three nights to survey wildlife populations. The average deer population observed was four, with between one and eight seen per night. Additional wildlife noted during the survey included turkeys roosting in trees, cottontail rabbits, red fox, and a short-eared owl. Dr. Parker also shared eagle nesting updates, which began after the January snowstorm. Dr. Carpenter estimates hatching will begin late February to early March, with fledging expected from late May to early June. Based on those estimates, the eagle nest restriction zone may not be lifted until early June. Dr. Parker also highlighted Dr. Carpenter's enthusiasm about the reopening event for the Brooklyn Branch Library, which featured a Masonville Cove Partnership meet and greet program with Walnut the Eastern Box Turtle, after a turtle themed story time with Maree G. Farring students.

Trail camera mammal surveys were also conducted over three nights in January. Eight mammal species were identified including gray squirrel, deer mouse, cottontail rabbit, white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoon, Virginia opossum, and coyote. Most activity was concentrated near the culvert and stream corridor. Looking ahead, bird banding at Masonville Cove is scheduled for Thursdays through Saturdays from

March through May, that the Mammals of Masonville Cove program would be rescheduled for March 28th and April 4th, and that new additional program dates for the bat walks are being considered.

6.0 Adjournment

The meeting concluded with no final questions or comments raised, and Dr. Parker reminded members that the next MCAC meetings are scheduled for May 5, 2026, and August 4, 2026. Ms. Kestel then formally adjourned the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.