

PEARCE CREEK IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
May 16, 2025, 10:00 AM
90B North Center Street
Cecilton, MD 21919

Attendees:

Arcadis: Bert Buell

Bay View Estates (BVE) Residents: Dave Heacock, Jim Myers

Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Saeka Foreman, Christine Offerman

Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Holly Miller

US Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District (CENAP): Michael Hart, Wayne Marston

Action Items:

- CENAP will fix the spacing between the barriers located near the entrance of the Pearce Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF).
- CENAP will investigate the standing water identified in the drainage ditch along Pond Neck Road.

1.0 Welcome & Introductions

Ms. Offerman, Facilitator

- Ms. Offerman welcomed the attendees to the meeting, and the attendees introduced themselves.

2.0 Philadelphia District Corps (CENAP) Update

Michael Hart, CENAP

Pearce Creek DMCF Operations

- Mr. Hart stated the federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 dredging was completed, starting at the end of February and ending mid-April.
 - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was granted an extension to the dredging window by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in order to complete dredging, which was delayed due to weather.
 - Approximately 300,000 cubic yards (cy) of dredged material were removed from the upper Chesapeake Bay channels and placed at the Pearce Creek DMCF..
 - It is anticipated that bottom dragging will take place in the upcoming weeks to flatten out the channel bottom profile in order to maintain the 35 feet (ft) depth.
- Mr. Hart stated that the next contract is anticipated to remove 500,000 cy of dredged material.
 - The majority of the material will go to Pearce Creek DMCF.
 - Material dredged from the eastern side of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal (C&D Canal) will be placed in the Delaware City Dredged Material Disposal Area.
- Mr. Myers asked about the depth of the channel.
 - Mr. Hart replied that CENAP dredges to 36 ft, +1ft, to ensure that the channel is dredged to the required depth of 35ft.
- Mr. Myers asked who pays for the dredging of the channel.
 - Mr. Hart replied that CENAP pays for the dredging.
- Mr. Myers asked about the location of the dredging.
 - Mr. Hart replied that the CENAP dredges from Reedy Point in Delaware to Pooles Island in Maryland and the USACE Baltimore District dredges from Pooles Island to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Mr. Myers inquired about the general expense of typical dredging projects.

- Mr. Hart replied that the project costs typically range \$12-50 million a year.
- Mr. Hart noted that changes to the federal government are preventing CENAP from hiring summer staff, therefore, mowing operations at the Pearce Creek DMCF will be limited and/or delayed.

3.0 MPA Updates

Holly Miller,

MPA

Fall 2024 Exterior Monitoring Update

Christine Offerman,

MES

- Ms. Miller stated that the exterior monitoring will now take place twice a year, during Spring and Fall, in order to fulfill the requirements of the MDE issued Water Quality Certification.
 - The Spring 2025 exterior monitoring is anticipated to begin the week of 5/19/2025.
 - Mr. Myers asked what would happen if something harmful were to be found from the monitoring event.
 - Ms. Miller replied that a discussion with MDE would be held to deliberate on changing the operations of the Pearce Creek DMCF in order to address the issue.
 - Mr. Myers asked if the dredged material would be placed at a different site.
 - Mr. Hart replied that currently, there is no alternate dredged material placement site in the area.
- Ms. Offerman stated that post-placement monitoring has occurred annually since Spring 2018.
 - The baseline samples were collected in Fall 2015, Spring and Fall 2016, and Spring 2017.
 - The samples for Fall 2024 were collected on 9/23 and 9/24 to test surface water chemistry, sediment chemistry, sediment bioassays, and benthic community.
- Ms. Offerman identified the testing site locations on a map, which includes six (6) monitoring locations and one (1) reference site in Pearce Creek Lake and one (1) monitoring location and one (1) reference site in the Elk River.
 - Ms. Offerman noted that the reference sites represent areas that are not influenced by the discharge from the DMCF so that they can be used as a baseline.
- Ms. Offerman stated that the data for the surface water results were comparable between the reference and monitoring locations.
 - The data were within the range of baseline concentrations.
 - The chemical testing presented overall low concentrations and was consistent with results from previous sampling events.
- Ms. Offerman stated that the data for the sediment results were comparable between the reference and monitoring locations.
 - The Pearce Creek Lake monitoring locations consisted of silts and clays, and Pearce Creek Lake 7 (PCL-07) consisted of sand and silts due to its location, which discharges water from the Pearce Creek Lake into the Elk River.
 - The Elk River monitoring locations consisted of gravel and sand, and the reference location consisted of gravel with some silt.
 - The nutrients in the sediments were naturally variable at all locations, although Pearce Creek Lake 6 (PCL-06) had higher concentrations of total Kjeldahl nitrogen (TKN) and total phosphorus (P).
 - Ms. Offerman noted that the higher concentration is likely due to upstream activities such as farming and is not attributed to the Pearce Creek DMCF.
- Ms. Offerman stated that the metals that were tested were generally consistent with the baseline data.

- Five (5) metals at the Pearce Creek Lake monitoring locations and two (2) metals at the reference site were between the threshold effect concentration (TEC) and probable effect concentration (PEC), but Nickel (Ni) concentrations exceeded the PEC which is anticipated as Ni is naturally high in the region.
 - No metals exceeded the TEC for both the Elk River monitoring location and reference site.
- Ms. Offerman stated that the 10-day whole sediment toxicity testing was conducted using *Hyaella azteca*.
 - The results for each location were compared to the reference site and baseline data that were collected from previous sampling events.
 - The results were consistent with the baseline data, in which the survival rate was high for the Pearce Creek Lake and Elk River sediments, indicating that the sediments support benthic organisms.
- Ms. Offerman stated that most of the benthic community metrics were within the range of the baseline data, and abundance was consistent with the baseline data.
 - Localized variability has been identified, but the overall benthic community condition has not substantially changed.
 - The Chesapeake Bay Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity (B-IBI) was used to measure benthic community conditions, and all Pearce Creek Lake monitoring locations except PCL-07 met the restoration goal.
 - Ms. Offerman noted that the conditions fluctuate over time, and similar results have been seen in the past for PCL-07.
 - The Elk River monitoring location met the restoration goal, but the reference site was marginal.
- Ms. Offerman stated that the monitoring program will continue in Spring and Fall 2025.
- Mr. Myers asked if CENAP will be dredging after Memorial Day (5/26).
 - Mr. Hart replied that CENAP finished dredging for this year; the dredging window closes on 3/31.
 - The dredging window will start again on 10/1.
- Mr. Myers asked about the effects of dredging on crabs.
 - The deadline for dredging considers the fish spawning season.
 - Ms. Offerman noted that only the channels are being dredged and not the entire body of water.
- Mr. Myers asked if CENAP was involved with the buoy removal operation.
 - Mr. Hart replied that CENAP was not involved with the operation and noted that the U.S. Coast Guard is responsible for navigational markers.

4.0 Citizen Comments

Community Representatives

Feedback from the Community Members

- Mr. Myers asked for clarification regarding the variations seen in the testing results.
 - Ms. Offerman replied that variations in the results have been seen over time, even in the baseline, and a single variation can be attributed to external factors such as farming in the upstream.
- Mr. Myers asked if testing of the dredged material is conducted at Pearce Creek DMCF.
 - Mr. Hart stated that the dredged material is tested before it is placed into the DMCF.
 - Mr. Myers commented on the Pearce Creek DMCF area previously being a landfill for Cecil County.

- Ms. Offerman noted that the installation of the liner helps prevent leaching from occurring.
 - The liner prevents water from reaching the previously placed material so no new leaching can occur to the groundwater.
 - The liner also prevents any potential leachate from newly placed material from reaching the groundwater.
- Mr. Myers inquired about the liner problem with the methane gas.
- Mr. Hart stated that methane gas had accumulated in the center underneath the liner before the dredged material was heavy enough to displace it. Vents were installed along the edges to release gas from the sides of the liner.
- Mr. Myers asked for clarification regarding the limitation of the mowing operations.
 - Mr. Hart clarified that changes to the federal government are preventing CENAP from hiring seasonal employees that typically conduct mowing operations.
- Mr. Heacock stated that golf carts have been seen entering the DMCF property through a space between the barriers located near the entrance of the Pearce Creek DMCF.
 - CENAP will fix the spacing between the barriers located near the entrance of the Pearce Creek DMCF.
 - Mr. Heacock asked who the point of contact is if similar issues arise.
 - Mr. Hart is the point of contact.
- Mr. Myers asked if it is possible to enter the Pearce Creek DMCF while work is being conducted.
 - Mr. Hart replied that there is strict access during inflow.
- Mr. Myers asked about the procedure if the Pearce Creek DMCF becomes full of dredged material.
 - Mr. Hart replied that dredging is stopped when the water level reaches the 2 ft freeboard to allow the water level to decrease.
 - Mr. Hart noted that the Pearce Creek DMCF can hold up to 25 cycles of dredging events at its current height, but typically annual dredging runs lower than the maximum cycles.
 - It is anticipated that the dikes will be raised in the upcoming years to allow for increased material capacity.
- Mr. Heacock asked if mosquito control is still being conducted in the drainage ditch along Pond Neck Road.
 - Mr. Marston replied CENAP is attempting to keep the drainage ditch dry.
 - Mr. Heacock commented that an area of standing water was identified along the ditch.
 - CENAP will investigate the standing water.
- The next PCIC meeting will be held **Friday, November 21, 2025, at 10am.**