

SUMMARY OF THE COX CREEK
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
October 9, 2024 - 5:30 PM
Cox Creek Operations and Maintenance Complex
1000 Kembo Road, Curtis Bay, MD 21226
Hybrid Meeting

Attendees:

Baltimore Industrial Group: Scott Dauphinais*
Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee (C O C) Facilitator: Angie Ashley
Maryland Geological Survey: Anna Gillmor
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Bertrand Djiki, Danielle Fisher, Holly Miller, Kelvin Moulden, Joseph Ross, Darren Swift
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Mackenzie Miller, Robert Natarian
Pasadena Sportfishing Group (PSG): Robert Christy, Robert Schmidt
Residents: Chuck Thompson, Carl Treff
Resident of Legislative District 31 & Chair of the Cox Creek C O C: Gary Gakenheimer*
Restore Rock Creek: JP Jendrek
Riviera Beach Community: Amy Beall, Karen Wanner
Rock Creek Community: Ruth Sliviak
Scenic Rivers Land Trust (SRLT): Erin Kilbane
Stoney Beach Community: John Garofolo
The Terrapin Institute: Marguerite Whilden

* Denotes Cox Creek C O C members.

Action Items:

- MPA will coordinate to schedule a tour for the Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee (C O C) and other Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) committees to see the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF) inflow occur.
- MPA will coordinate with the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) to confirm if first responder organizations will have access to the security cameras monitoring the Swan Creek Nature Trail.

1.0 Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

**Angie Ashley, Facilitator
Gary Gakenheimer, Chair**

Meeting materials can be found at the following link: [10/09 Cox Creek C O C Meeting](#). Ms. Ashley welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order.

Ms. Ashley stated that the Cox Creek C O C is established in statute under Maryland's Title 5 Water Resources Act; the bill outlines the statutory duties of the committee. Recognizing the need to modernize its membership and statutory duties, House Bill 343 and Senate Bill 20 were enacted to update the committee's membership and responsibilities. These responsibilities include monitoring dredge material operations, providing feedback to MPA, advising of any complaints, and recommending measures to mitigate community and environmental impacts. The Committee is comprised of 12 members representing diverse stakeholders, including local industries, community groups, environmental organizations, and legislative districts. This includes a voluntary chair who acts as a committee leader and liaison to other DMMP Committees. Appointments are managed through a formal state process, with set terms that previously lasted two years. The updated Cox

Creek C O C membership list includes the Pasadena Sportfishing Group (PSG), Marine Trades Association, Restore Rock Creek, the Scenic Rivers Land Trust, the Greater Pasadena Council, the Baltimore Industrial Group, the Pasadena Business Association, the Anne Arundel County Bird Club, and waterfront communities in northern Anne Arundel County. The MPA continues to coordinate with members to ensure effective communication and procedural adherence.

Mr. Gakenheimer requested a motion to approve the April 10, 2024, Cox Creek C O C meeting summary, which the Committee approved.

2.0 Announcements

Holly Miller, MPA

Ms. Miller shared announcements from MPA with the committee, including a warm welcome to Mr. Kelvin Moulden as the new Chief of Innovative Reuse, Strategy, and Partnerships, following the promotion of Mr. Darren Swift to Deputy Director of Harbor Development. Mr. Moulden brings a background in materials testing from the State Highway Administration (SHA) and will oversee innovative reuse (IR) activities, including research and development (R&D) contracts. As part of this initiative, MPA awarded two new contracts under the R&D program. Northgate Environmental Management will study the use of Cox Creek dredge material in producing cement clinker and other supplemental cementitious materials, while HarborRock will explore its use in creating lightweight aggregate and additional supplemental materials. These projects, now totaling nine, aim to enhance sustainable practices for dredged material reuse.

On September 14, 2024, MPA celebrated Urban Wildlife Conservation Day at Masonville Cove, hosting its largest turnout with 223 participants. The event featured family-friendly activities such as fishing, birding, nature walks, and boat rides, with 59% of attendees being first-time visitors and 40% hailing from local communities like Brooklyn and other Baltimore City neighborhoods.

Additionally, the Bay Enhancement Working Group's Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) Subcommittee held its first meeting on September 12, 2024, with the second meeting scheduled for October 10, 2024. The new CAD Subcommittee has been established to explore technical aspects of a second CAD pilot project, including environmental impacts and benefits, location selection, associated regulation, and socioeconomic benefits and effects. Lastly, MPA announced that the DMMP Annual Meeting will be held on December 6, 2024, with more details to be shared soon. The Annual Meeting offers stakeholders the opportunity to review progress and future plans for MPA's dredging and material reuse activities.

3.0 Cox Creek DMCF Overview

Bertrand Djiki, MPA

Mr. Djiki, MPA Project Manager for Cox Creek construction, provided a comprehensive update on the ongoing expansion of the Cox Creek DMCF, which aims to increase the site's capacity to accommodate dredged material and support Maryland's DMMP program. The expansion project has been underway for nine years and focuses on expanding the site's capacity by raising the elevation from +36 to +60. The project has substantially progressed, with the base dike widening completed in 2020. Dike raising to +60 feet was achieved in 2023. The project also involves constructing a cross-dike to separate the original DMCF from the newly expanded upland area. This separation allows for independent inflow management during construction. The cross-dike construction is approximately 90% complete and is expected to reach the +60 elevation next week, enabling effective operational management of the site.

The next phase of the project involves a dike raising to +80. Studies conducted in 2023 determined the materials, methods, and concept design for this phase. A design kickoff meeting is being planned to advance the process. Once 30% design is reached, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will be engaged to provide feedback. Completion of this phase of the project will increase the site's total capacity from 14.7 mcy at +60 to 17.3 mcy at +80'.

Mr. Djiki also provided updates on the Genesee Valley site mitigation project, which is part of the environmental mitigation efforts associated with the Cox Creek expansion. Wetland improvements, drainage enhancements, and planting are planned for early 2025, with all necessary permits from MDE, including Erosion and Sediment Control, the Stormwater Management Plan, and Small Pond approvals received as of September 2024.

Mr. Gakenheimer inquired about the timing of the next inflow at Cox Creek. Mr. Djiki and Ms. Miller advised that the next inflow has been advertised and should occur in January or February 2025 and offered to investigate the opportunity for a tour during the inflow event. Mr. Gakenheimer also inquired about information in prior meeting minutes and the potential for IR operations at the Cox Creek Sediment Technology and Reuse (STAR) facility to negate the need for the +80 project. In response, Mr. Swift shared that MPA's current hope is for IR operations at STAR to prevent the need to elevate the dikes to +80. However, MPA has a deadline based on capacity needs to make this determination. The STAR facility's goal is to bring large-scale IR production facilities online which would manage 500,000 cy of material annually.

Mr. Thompson inquired about the North Point/Rock Point line, how this relates to managing dredged material from within the Baltimore Harbor, and how legislation can be amended based on past testing to allow alternative placement of Baltimore Harbor material. Ms. Holly Miller recognized that not all Baltimore Harbor material would meet the criteria for alternative placement but that the Bay Enhancement Working Group (BEWG) and the DMMP Committees may be able to review the issue together and weigh opinions from local and legislative stakeholders. Ms. Holly Miller recognized that Senator Simonaire has raised similar questions and that buy-in from local stakeholders through the DMMP Committee structure and the public would demonstrate support for a proposal. Mr. John Garofolo shared that he will represent Senator Simonaire at the October BEWG CAD Subcommittee meeting as Senator Simonaire is unable to attend, but Mr. Garofolo will include this topic in the notes he records.

4.0 Swan Creek Nature Trail

Joseph Ross, MPA

Mr. Ross, Project Manager for the Swan Creek Nature Trail (SCNT), provided a comprehensive update on the trail's design, operations, and upcoming groundbreaking ceremony. The final trail design, which includes boardwalks and pedestrian bridges to ensure safety, has been submitted to MDE and SHA for review. Several permits, including Stormwater and Erosion and Sediment Control, have been approved.

The trail's operating hours will be from 7:30 AM to 3:00 PM, Monday through Friday, with operating hours on one Saturday per month for a trial period to gauge use. These hours align with current site staffing levels, and additional resources will be required to extend hours in the future. To address potential maintenance and safety concerns, the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) and MDTA Police will manage trail operations and ensure public safety, with the possibility of

involving volunteer groups such as Pasadena Sportfishing Group (PSG) for community support. MPA retains the discretion to close the trail for various reasons, including weather conditions or wildlife nesting, and trespassing will be enforced by MPA security and MDTA Police. Signage will be posted along Kembo Road to indicate trail boundaries and enforce regulations, including property limits. Safety measures are also being developed in collaboration with local police, MDTA, and emergency medical services to ensure public access and response readiness, including concerns such as trash management and public safety vehicle access raised at previous meetings.

Mr. Ross highlighted additional trail policies and the importance of preserving the trail area as a natural resource through allowable uses and restrictions that will be posted both on signage and the website. Mr. Schmidt agreed that responsible engagement with the environment within the Cox Creek Forested Conservation Area and Swan Creek wetlands necessitates catch-and-release fishing, in line with conservation goals, and discussed the need for clear language in the regulations, particularly concerning wildlife interaction, litter management, and fishing practices. Cox Creek C O C members actively engaged with thoughtful comments and questions, including concerns about access. Concerns about the clarity of restrictions and potential loopholes were shared, particularly regarding activities allowed on the nature trail versus other parts of the property. Cox Creek C O C members highlighted the importance of more precise language, especially when addressing allowable uses like fishing, and suggested that the current language was too broad. Accessibility issues, particularly for individuals with disabilities, and the limitations posed by the area's topography were also discussed, and committee members acknowledged that while ADA accessibility for areas of the trail are considered, it was affirmed that a paved trail is not an option.

Cox Creek C O C members contributed additional suggestions for the SCNT, including Mr. Garofolo's suggestion to label the area as the "Swan Creek Conservation Area and Nature Trail" to reinforce its purpose and discourage misuse of the area. Concerns about trash disposal were also addressed, with suggestions for including receptacles at trailheads. Mr. Ross invited all Cox Creek C O C members to the groundbreaking ceremony for the SCNT at the upcoming Cox Creek Open House at 11:00 AM on Saturday, October 19th.

Ms. Beall inquired about the future installation of security cameras along the trail. Mr. Ross and Ms. Miller confirmed that cameras were already in place and that there may be additional installations in the future to improve coverage. These cameras are being assessed in coordination with the MPA security team and MDTA police, who specialize in overseeing safety across the MPA's terminals. Mr. Schmidt further inquired whether the camera footage would be made available to first responders, referencing access protocols similar to those used for monitoring major infrastructure like the Bay Bridge. Ms. Miller shared that she would follow up with MDTA to confirm, and also shared that there was potential for future public-facing cameras, such as wildlife cameras, for the SCNT.

5.0 Cox Creek Open House Planning and Promotion

Danielle Fisher, MPA

Ms. Fisher provided an overview of the upcoming Cox Creek Open House, scheduled for Saturday, October 19th, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Some Cox Creek C O C members noted receiving postcards. This event is an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to learn more about the site and ongoing projects.

The Open House will include family-friendly activities such as a "Touch a Truck" experience, guided birding tours in the morning, and self-led birding throughout the day. There will also be facility tours, educational games, crafts, and several community partners hosting tables, including PSG, the Orchard Beach Volunteer Fire Department, and the Scenic Rivers Land Trust, among others. The day will also feature tabling on various MPA projects, including updates on IR initiatives, Masonville Cove, and environmental education. The event will culminate in a groundbreaking ceremony for the SCNT at 11:00 AM. For those interested in attending the early morning guided bird walk, registration is required. With the exception of the birding tour beginning at 8:00 AM, the event does not otherwise require any registration, and all activities, giveaways, and food are free.

6.0 Roundtable Remarks and Open Discussion

All Members

Mr. Robert Schmidt and Mr. Robert Christy presented an overview of the PSG and their mission, highlighting the organization's dedication to educating anglers of all ages on the art and science of fishing while promoting conservation. PSG, which has been active for over 30 years, is a nonprofit organization recognized by the state and partners within the Cox Creek C O C. Its core mission is to foster a lifelong love for angling and the environment, particularly the Chesapeake Bay, and to instill values of sustainable fishing practices and ecological conservation. Through their activities, they aim to nurture responsible anglers and ensure the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem for future generations. They stressed that access to fishing areas is key to creating lifelong connections with the environment, and they advocated for catch-and-release fishing access to be incorporated into the Swan Creek area.

PSG's educational programs not only target children but also engage parents and adults. The group holds free events, such as fishing derbies and educational expos, often partnering with local police stations and other community organizations. The fishing derbies are designed to teach kids about fishing and conservation while creating lasting memories. The speakers also shared details about their monthly meetings at Crabtowne USA, where they invite experts to speak on various topics related to fishing, conservation, and the local ecosystem.

7.0 Upcoming Meeting and Adjournment

Angie Ashley, Facilitator

Ms. Ashley concluded the meeting; the next Cox Creek C O C meeting will be scheduled in 2025.