

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Hoskins – MES

DATE: May 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Next meeting – July 15, 2025

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI C O C) will be held ON SITE on Tuesday, July 15, 2025. The boat will pick up attendees at 5:00 pm at the Maryland Environmental Service's (MES) land base at 2024A Riverview Rd in Essex, MD. Please arrive a few minutes early, as the boat will leave promptly at 5:00 pm. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) will provide dinner. A link for registration to this meeting will be released as the date approaches. This meeting will be first come, first served due to boat and tour bus capacity restrictions. There is no call-in option available for this meeting.

Attached for your review is a copy of the final summary from the March 11, 2025, meeting.

FINAL
SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

March 11, 2025 – 6:30 PM
Hart-Miller Island

Attendees:

Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)*

Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Richard Ortt, Chris Gleason-Smuck, Kenneth Miller, Mark Spurrier, Will Sade

Maryland Port Administration: Holly Miller, David Bibo, Amanda Peñafiel, Darren Swift, Nathan Thompson

Maryland Environmental Service: Megan O'Hara, Taylor Hoskins, Lincoln Tracy, Tim Carney

North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council: Fran Taylor*

Sports Fishermen: Sam Weaver*

Baltimore County Sixth District: Katherine Bryant*

Baltimore Bird Club: Kathy Lambrow

Friends of HMI State Park: Robin Reed

**Appointed member of the HMI C O C*

Action items:

1. Maryland Environmental Service (MES) will continue to provide annual environmental monitoring updates to the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI C O C).
2. All future HMI C O C meetings held at the Broening Highway location will convene at 6:00pm, rather than 6:30pm.
3. Richard Ortt will send the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) data to the HMI C O C. – *MES sent the HMI C O C a link to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science SAV Monitoring & Restoration SAV Reports and Data via email on March 12, 2025.*
4. MES will inform the HMI C O C of upcoming Station 265 personnel pier construction dates and if tours will be impacted by this work.
5. Maryland Port Administration (MPA) will consult with Gahagan & Bryant Associates, Inc. (GBA) to determine when the sediment in the North Cell will get to a steady workable state. – *Action item completed: The April 2024 Sampling and Consolidation memo concluded that the consolidation of dredged material in the North Cell has reached a relative steady state. Some minor consolidation may occur in the future, but the relative rate of consolidation has slowed drastically since the site's last inflow event. North Cell Development could theoretically begin at any time now, and there would not be much to gain by waiting longer for more consolidation to occur.*
6. MPA will inform the HMI C O C of the amount of dredged material needed for the Alternative 2 concept plan. – *Action item completed: A rough estimate of 2 million cubic yards of dredged material would be needed for Alternative 2, but further analysis would be required.*

7. MES will distribute the HMI 2024 Annual Presentation and North Cell Development slides to the HMI C O C. – *Action item completed: Presentation slides were sent out via email on March 12, 2025.*
8. MPA will review the legislation and clarify with Richard Ortt and the HMI C O C if a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is required for placement of Baltimore County material at HMI.
9. DNR will meet internally and with MPA to discuss next steps for North Cell Habitat Development.
10. MPA and MES will provide updates to the HMI C O C on North Cell Habitat Development and HMI Infrastructure Working Group progress as it becomes available.

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

Mr. Brylske suggested that the group begin with an ice breaker. Mr. Brylske asked each attendee to give their name and an explanation of their role with Hart-Miller Island. Mr. Brylske ended introductions by acknowledging there were many years of HMI involvement present at the table.

Mr. Brylske said that he was happy to see so many representatives from DNR in attendance and asked them to clarify their line of authority or reporting structure. Mr. Mark Spurrier explained that he supervises the managers of the park, including Mr. Luke Terrell, who oversees Mr. Will Sade and Mr. Chris Gleason-Smuck. Mr. Spurrier said that Mr. Kenneth Miller is equivalent in the chain as he oversees the administration and finance part of the agency. Mr. Brylske asked Mr. Richard Ortt how he fits into the DNR structure. Mr. Ortt explained that while these gentlemen are part of the Maryland Park Service focusing on land, wildlife, and forestry, he works with the aquatic side of DNR that oversees fisheries, boating, critical areas, etc.

Mr. Brylske thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. The July 16, 2024, meeting summary was approved.

Mr. Brylske recognized Ms. Robin Reed's departure from DNR. He read into the record a section of the North Point and HMI newsletter by DNR highlighting Ms. Reed's work at DNR and HMI State Park (see attached newsletter).

2.0 2024 HMI Monitoring Presentation

Taylor Hoskins, MES

Ms. Taylor Hoskins presented on the 2024 HMI Environmental Monitoring Report (see attached report).

Mr. Brylske asked when the SAV monitoring program began and if any longitudinal observations could be made. Ms. Hoskins informed Mr. Brylske that MES is investigating potential uses of the HMI SAV dataset that began in 2001 to show trends in SAV density.

Mr. Brylske asked when construction of the Station 265 personnel pier will occur. Mr. Lincoln Tracy replied that the Station 265 pier pilings were driven, but due to a delay Dissen & Juhn have paused

work and will be returning in late summer or early fall. Mr. Brylske asked if tours would be impacted by construction dates and Mr. Tracy said he would get back to him with that information.

3.0 DNR Update

Robin Reed, DNR

In 2024 Sunday Funday continued throughout July and August with activities like driftwood painting, a ranger guided bike tour and two bioblitz activities hosted and made possible by a collaborative grant partnering with MPA and the Baltimore [National] Aquarium in May and September. Numerous birding tours occurred in the summer and fall months. First-aid and safety supplies and equipment were checked, and six new life jackets were purchased. In fall/winter 2024 and early 2025 new roofing was installed on all park buildings, including the ranger station, tower, bike shed, public restrooms, and information booth. Additionally, the fascia boards and T1-11 siding on the tower were repaired and new vents were installed, all decking and railings throughout the entire complex were replaced, new doors to the ranger station were installed with keypad code locks, and the façade and doors of the public restroom buildings were replaced. Grant funding was used to purchase 12 new bikes in February for the 2025 season. Friends of HMI were also awarded a \$25,000 grant from Baltimore County to purchase 24 interpretive signs to be placed on the blue and white trail and the observation trail. DNR will have these installed in spring or summer 2025. Work had been approved to relocate the Hawk Cove and Drum Point campsites to an area of the original Hart Island near campsites 1-6 for safety and erosion reasons. Mr. Gleason-Smuck added the area also has sanitary challenges, as guests do not have access to restrooms. This campsite work will begin in spring 2025 with help from the Maryland Conservation Corps. Mr. Brylske acknowledged the hard work of Ms. Reed and Mr. Bob Iman and noted that Mr. Gleason-Smuck has large shoes to fill after their departure from DNR but is confident that he is up for the challenge.

4.0 North Cell Development

Amanda Peñafiel, MPA

Since the HMI North Cell stopped receiving dredged material in 2009, there have been multiple habitat development design plans. In 2012, the design consisted of mostly a pond, mimicking the South Cell, however, this design option was determined to be too costly, as it would require DNR to maintain the habitat using pumps. In 2015, the design was modified to be primarily upland, with a deeper pool. MES began implementing this design until DNR requested a series of uplands and open water with a mosaic of habitat types in 2017 and 2018. At that time the partners revisited the shared goals for HMI that include the following:

- Provide seasonal habitat diversity
- Provide passive recreation opportunities & amenities in both the North & South Cells
- Maximize pond depth and surface area to the extent practical to reduce invasive species and to control acidic soils
- Maximize use of onsite resources (soils, organic matter, etc.)
- Manage site surface water based on climatology & hydrology, including storm events
- Minimize size of the upland areas to reduce costs
- Be sensitive to capital costs
- Strive to minimize long-term O&M costs

After revisiting the shared goals, DNR reminded that the three priorities they have for North Cell development are habitat for migratory birds, no pumping, and visitor experience. Using these goals and objectives, in 2019 and 2020, MPA, MES, and DNR stakeholders agreed upon the Option D design plan. The goals and objectives were memorialized in the 2021 IGA and expires December 31, 2025. Option D includes a 202-acre pond and a minimum design depth of 2.8 feet to help deter the growth of *Phragmites australis*. The bottom elevation of the pond is 34 feet, and the surface water is 36.8 feet. The transition area is 68 acres, and the upland is 500 acres. Mr. Carney asked if the transition area is a mudflat or marsh area and Ms. Peñafiel confirmed that it is intended to be planted with vegetation that can tolerate wetting and drying. To obtain the 2.8-foot depth of the pond, the interior pond would need approximately 930,000 cubic yards of dredging. No pumping would be involved, and elevations would be maintained by precipitation alone. There would be three spillways, one from the North Cell to the Chesapeake Bay, a second from the North Cell to the South Cell, and a third from the South Cell to the Chesapeake Bay. The North Cell would feed the South Cell elevation. In 2020, the preliminary cost estimate at concept level was \$47 million, including \$15 million to dredge the interior pond, and a \$10 million (25%) contingency cost. Mr. Dave Bibb asked if stormwater management is the goal. Ms. Peñafiel said yes, but this would only occur when the North Cell is removed from the NPDES Discharge Permit and discharge monitoring is no longer required.

In 2023, GBA engineering was subcontracted to conduct a value engineering study for the 2020 design and the results identified several areas of granular material that could be used for construction. The sampling results within the pond showed the sediment to be mostly gray to black clay with traces of sand and close to the liquid limit. It was determined that the sediment would not support heavy equipment, and the pond excavation would most likely need to be done using a hydraulic dredge, and a berm would need to be constructed around the perimeter of the pond prior to dredging.

May 2023 data was compared to data collected in previous years to determine degree of consolidation and potential future consolidation. The final design will need to account for future settlement and continued consolidation, especially in the pond area. Mr. Ortt asked if there is an estimate from GBA on how many years it will take for the sediment to get to a non-liquid, steady, workable state. Ms. Peñafiel said she would contact GBA to obtain this information.

GBA suggested three alternative designs. **Alternative 1** is a shift of the pond to be along the cross dike and fulfills all the pros of Option D, including refinements to the pond location by increasing overall pond acreage from 202 acres to 275 acres, and identifies areas where MES could excavate material. Cons to Alternative 1 is a high cost for development, construction of the pond depth and the transition area require a large amount of cut/fill, and a high degree of mechanical grading required in the upland. Mr. Ortt asked if a berm stability analysis was completed. Ms. Holly Miller said no that this was very concept level and if this design were to be chosen it would be studied further.

Alternative 2 is to bring in dredged material or off-site fill to raise the upland elevation which would intern make the pond deeper. Alternative 2 also fulfills all the pros of Option D, is the most economical option without sacrificing habitat goals, requires no hydraulic pond excavation, and the increased water depth in the North Cell would add resilience to *Phragmites australis* growth and drought conditions as compared to Option D. Cons of Alternative 2 include the placement of offsite dredged

material, final upland grading may be challenging, and will take more time to develop compared to other options due to crust management. Mr. Brylske and Mr. Ortt asked how much off-site dredged material would be needed for this Alternative 2 design. Ms. Peñafiel said she would get back to him with that answer. Mr. Brylske would also like to know the environmental impact of raising the uplands and how it would impact the birds.

Alternative 3 is a compromise to the goals to reduce the pond depth and the most cost-effective option. Alternative 3 minimizes the amount of required cut/fill. The 2.8-foot minimum pond depth requirement would be reduced to approximately 1.5 feet. HMI aerial images and survey data were analyzed since the North Cell closure and determined vegetation growth does not occur in water depths greater than 1.5 feet. Vegetation is present in pond depth of 0 feet to 1.5 feet. Mr. Brylske asked if this option requires additional dredged material. Ms. Peñafiel responded no, and that this option would require a revision to the agreed upon goals and objectives. Mr. Brylske asked what kind of impact there would be on the uplands. Ms. Peñafiel said the impact would be minimal.

Analysis of these alternatives indicates that the Century Engineering Option D and GBA Alternative 1 are not viable options due to the cost limiting factors. Alternative 2 requires the placement of dredged material or the cost of off-site fill. To develop the North Cell, there may need to be a compromise on some of the original goals established. Reducing the amount of upland habitat acreage can save costs on placement, grading of material, and planting and reducing the 2.8-foot pond depth goal can save costs on the total amount of excavation required.

In an effort to advance Option D with onsite resources, in 2023 MES completed a draft construction plan in which MES proposes to mechanically fill approximately 25 acres of the North Cell between station 103 and 133 to begin upland/forest habitat development. This project was paused due to the potential TPA inflow. Under MES' construction plan, fill volume is estimated to be 125,000 cubic yards and would be sourced from the stockpile located at station 135. Additional fill material may be sourced from the North-South Cross dike (40 feet). It is assumed that the North Cell Pond elevation would be maintained at 37.5 feet. The Leafgro stockpile on the North Cell Cross Dike (Station 25) may be considered as a topsoil amendment, if necessary. Agricultural lime, of which HMI has an ample supply on site, would be used as a topsoil amendment, if necessary. Once grading is complete, approximately 43 acres would be ready for upland/forest habitat development. The transition zone between 0.5 feet and 2.5 feet above the pond surface would have a temporary vegetative ground cover in the event of flooding in the North Cell. With a surface elevation of 40.0 feet in the upland, future development could occur in the remaining North Cell (including dredging) without impacting the established habitat. This plan is conceptual; further engineering will be required before construction.

As part of the HMI IGA, an HMI Infrastructure Working Group was formed to study, evaluate and develop an asset management plan. Mr. Ortt explained that DNR would like to reestablish the Infrastructure Working Group, and that redesigns for North Cell development are okay as long as the goals are met, however, DNR is concerned about infrastructure and significant capital budget needs. DNR is also challenged with staff turnovers and needs to have an internal meeting with its engineering, parks, financing, etc. departments. Mr. Ortt commented that ponds don't get deeper, they get shallower, and if the pond is 1.5 feet deep, then in approximately ten to fifteen years it may only be 0.5 feet deep. Mr. Ortt added concerns about erosion and potential organic material being generated in

a shallow pond. Ms. Bryant asked about movement in the pond for algae disbursement. Mr. Ortt said Cunningham Falls utilizes sonifiers to decrease harmful algae blooms and prevent potentially toxic cyanobacteria. He clarified that this is done in 50-foot deep waters and that HMI ponds are made to become wetlands.

Ms. Lambrow asked if GBA's design plans assess the potential impact to birds, wildlife, and species mix and expressed that it should be considered in the design evaluation. She also asked if it makes sense to wait on this project until there is the budget for it so that it can be done right. Ms. Miller shared that in the current budget climate, MPA is concerned about the money that is needed annually to maintain and operate the site without making progress to the North Cell habitat development. Ms. Lambrow said if the soil is not workable and in too much of a liquid state, then there is nothing that MPA could have done toward North Cell habitat development. However, that depends on the habitat they are trying to create and the design of the site.

Mr. Brylske expressed concern that there is not an end plan for the North Cell or HMI State Park and would like for the HMI C O C and Friends Group to be included in the future HMI IGA meetings. He also expressed concern regarding a lack of awareness from the local community and the state, and suggested that part of the plan needs to include public input from birders, locals, etc. Mr. Brylske went on record to say, he is prepared to push legislation to make this plan happen.

Mr. Brylske asked if dredged material placement at HMI is on the table as it should not be a barrier and can be done in an environmentally friendly way. Ms. Miller responded it could be on the table and is a potential option.

Discussion ensued regarding the development of small groups to see what tasks from the HMI Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis can be completed. However, tasks cannot be decided until MPA and DNR have developed a plan.

During the discussion, Mr. Ortt stated that since HMI State Park does not generate any revenue DNR wants to keep it more of a wildlife area rather than an event for social events and DNR needs to meet with leadership to discuss realistic plans. DNR is not going to have a budget for operation and maintenance costs. Mr. Ortt and Mr. Brylske agreed that prior to July 1, 2025, DNR will have an internal meeting. Mr. Ortt further expressed DNR does not want to take ownership of HMI if the North Cell is "pudding" and that he does not want unstable soils or liquefaction. Mr. Brylske asked how much the State of Maryland is paying for annual operations and maintenance costs. Ms. Miller replied that MPA pays approximately \$2.5 million a year to operate and maintain HMI.

Mr. Brylske said there are things we can do to promote access for learning and leadership training and pointed to Masonville as an example. However, it was pointed out by Ms. Reed that the public can access Masonville, unlike HMI, which is accessible only by boat.

In regard to the December 2025 expiration of the HMI IGA, Ms. Miller stated that it does not relinquish MPA's commitment to ensure North Cell habitat development happens, as it is a defined role, and MPA is committed to seeing the project through. DNR does not want to commit to something that they cannot deliver.

Mr. Brylske questioned whether a nature center at HMI would be possible and whether it could be similar to the nature center at Masonville. When groups visit HMI, they do not have a place to get out of the rain or shelter from poor weather conditions. Mr. Ortt said that he believes a nature center on the mainland would have more success and it was pointed out that if you add a structure to accommodate groups then it would add one more thing to DNR's plate to maintain.

5.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibo, MPA

Mr. Bibo reviewed action items. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.