Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Louis – MES

DATE: August 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Next meeting – October 13, 2026

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI COC) will be on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting venue is currently being determined, and additional information will be provided once finalized. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) will provide dinner. Registration for this meeting is open at maryland-dmmp.com/events/.

Attached for your review is a copy of the July 14, 2026, final draft meeting summary.

FINAL DRAFT

SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

July 14, 2026 – 5:00 PM
Hart-Miller Island

Attendees:

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)*
KLT Group: Brandi McCoy (HMI Facilitator)
Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Luke Terrell, Mark Spurrier, Richard Ortt, Tom Doran
Maryland Environmental Service (MES): Hillary Lewis, James Cooper, Joseph McGrain, Lincoln Tracy, Megan O'Hara, Taylor Louis, Tim Carney
Maryland Port Administration (MPA): Amanda Peñafiel, Danielle Fisher, Darren Swift, Holly Miller, Katrina Jones
Maryland Waterways Foundation: Mark Murphy (Intern)
North Point Peninsula Coordinating Community Council: Francis Taylor*
Sixth County Council District: Karen Wynn*
Sport Fishing and Crabbing: Sam Weaver*

**Appointed member of the HMI COC*

Action items:

1. ***MPA will share the feedback collected from the HMI North Cell Development transition actions engagement sessions and distribute the HMI North Cell Development transition actions survey to the HMI COC to provide additional opinions and perspectives.***
2. ***MPA will follow up with the Essex Middle River Civic Council regarding Ms. Kathy Lambrow's appointment recommendation to the HMI COC, per request by the Governors Appointment Office (complete).***

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks — Paul Brylske, Chair

After introductions, the group reviewed action items from the April 14, 2026, meeting. Mr. Paul Brylske thanked MES and Mr. James Cooper for providing transportation to Hart-Miller Island (HMI) for the meeting and completing installation of the interpretive signs displayed throughout the South Cell that were awarded to the Friends of HMI State Park (Friends Group) by the Baltimore County Community Development Grant Program. Funds leftover from the grant will be put toward additional signage.

The April 14, 2026, meeting summary was approved.

2.0 Friends Group Update — Paul Brylske, Chair

The Friends Group was awarded funding for outreach coordinator positions at HMI and Masonville Cove through the Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (C-WILD) grant by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to assist the Friends Group with strategic programming and organizational capacity. Current grant funding will support the outreach coordinators for an 18-month tenure; however, the Friends Group have applied for an additional grant through NFWF to extend the duration of the positions in hopes of keeping the roles sustainable over time. Mr. Matt Bay was onboarded as the HMI coordinator to begin leadership duties such as community liaising, fundraising, operational planning and management, outreach and marketing, communications, collaboration, and peer learning. As an added element within the C-WILD grant, a sustainability plan was developed in partnership with the consulting and technology firm, coLAB, Inc., to move toward the development of a strategic plan with input from stakeholders.

The Friends Group hosted an outreach and clean-up event at HMI on June 13, 2026, under a restoration grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Outreach Grant program. Participants included 14 volunteers from the National Aquarium, 10 volunteers from the Friends Group, students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Sparrows Point High School Educational Center in Environmental Studies (SPECIES) program, and various homeschool groups. During the event the group engaged in roughly 45 conversations with the public and noted approximately 504 wildlife observations including 62 bird species. The next Friends Group outreach event scheduled on July 18, 2026, was canceled due to poor air quality and rescheduled for July 25, 2026. The Friends Group is collaborating with DNR and the Baltimore County Sailing Center to plan events for summer 2027.

3.0 DNR Updates — Mark Spurrier, DNR

Mr. Mark Spurrier addressed staffing concerns and informed the group that interviews are currently taking place for fall hiring within the Gunpowder Falls State Park Complex which included HMI and North Point State Park. Mr. Tom Doran was hired as the new Assistant Manager of the Gunpowder Falls State Park Complex. As an action item from the April 14, 2026, HMI COC meeting, Mr. Spurrier was asked to follow up with the number of emergency incidents that have occurred at HMI State Park. Due to low staffing, Mr. Spurrier could not provide a specific number of emergencies that have taken place at HMI but confirmed that DNR has not been called to any major incidents this year. Mr. Spurrier reminded the group that any boat accidents or water related emergencies are directed to the DNR Natural Resources Police or U.S. Coast Guard.

Mr. Spurrier noted that visitation to HMI State Park has been steady. Mr. Luke Terrell added that staff from DNR have been out as often as feasible to help with clean-up and maintenance work. DNR has also been assigning staff from nearby parks to assist in providing the highest quality of experience at HMI State Park as possible. Mr. Spurrier noted that Mr. Richard Ortt and a Boy Scout troop camped at HMI State Park in May 2026 with transportation provided by MES. Mr. Spurrier thanked the MES team, the Friends Group, and the National Aquarium for helping maintain HMI State Park. Mr.

Brylske asked Mr. Cooper for his perspective on HMI State Park visitation and tours through MES this year. Mr. Cooper replied that boater activity has been high, no issues have occurred, and MES tours have successfully welcomed approximately 450 to 500 guests so far this year.

Mr. Spurrier informed the group that conversations between MPA, MES, and DNR are currently in progress to consider alterations to burn proposals for enhanced *Phragmites australis* management. Plans for the next HMI Infrastructure Working Group are ongoing to discuss the maintenance of HMI's restored areas.

4.0 MES Updates — Lincoln Tracy, MES

Mr. Lincoln Tracy detailed a breaking and entering incident at the HMI Operations building over the Fourth of July holiday weekend. A boat capsized offshore and it is believed that the group broke the door handle to the HMI Operations building to gain access to a phone to call emergency services. No other damage to the building was found.

Due to evaporation, the North Cell pond elevation is currently at 36.80 feet (ft.). Water surface elevation in the North Cell is typically maintained around 37.50 ft. to preserve water quality, although even with the low elevation, water quality has remained consistent.

The HMI Operations crew are clearing nuisance trees along the 44 ft. and 48 ft. dike roads that interfere with equipment navigation. The trees were placed in a stockpile in the North Cell to be burned during the next *Phragmites australis* burn event.

Water from the Chesapeake Bay enters the South Cell Holding Pond (SCHP) through an inlet pipe (located near the personnel pier) with a duckbill valve, allowing water to flow into but not out of the pond. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) confirmed that there are no requirements, permit conditions, or plans that call for the need to maintain a duckbill valve at the SCHP. MES and MPA are discussing plans to remove the duckbill valve to open the SCHP to tidal flow and will inform the HMI COC members when the project is initiated. Mr. Joe Corcoran asked if removal of the duckbill valve would impact birds. Mr. Tracy explained that opening the SCHP to a fluctuating tide will improve sustainability of the pond and overall habitat.

5.0 HMI North Cell Habitat Development — Amanda Peñafiel, MPA

To advance discussions related to the HMI North Cell Development transition options, meeting attendees were divided into three engagement session groups. Each group reviewed one of the three HMI North Cell Development transition actions. Stakeholders were asked to share their viewpoints on the given action to determine what opportunities and challenges the action presents and if there are any additional actions that MPA should consider. Responses from the stakeholders were collected for MPA evaluation. MPA will share the feedback collected from the engagement sessions with the HMI COC and distribute the HMI North Cell Development transition actions survey for the group to provide additional opinions and perspectives.

6.0 Birding Updates — Joe Corcoran, Baltimore Bird Club

Mr. Brylske announced that Ms. Kathy Lambrow is being vetted as a new member of the HMI COC representing the Essex Middle River Civic Council. Ms. Katrina Jones and MPA will assist Ms. Lambrow in completing the required documentation to finalize the vetting process with the Governor's Appointment Office.

Mr. Corcoran shared that HMI is currently the second highest ranking location in the state of Maryland for birding and first in Baltimore County. Blackwater National Wildlife is currently first right but is a much bigger area - with over 28,000 acres compared to 1,100 for HMI. He also noted that HMI is ranked number 38 for total number eBird checklists, while Blackwater is number 2. Both of these comparisons to Blackwater demonstrate the fantastic bird species density at HMI. For example, a Tufted Duck from Eurasia, an American Birding Association (ABA) rarity, was recently sighted at HMI by MES Senior Environmental Specialist, Mr. Tim Carney.

Mr. Corcoran expressed his appreciation to MPA, MES, and DNR for the opportunities granted to birders at HMI, his satisfaction with the self-guided bird walks, and the success of the recent HMI Friends Group outreach event held on June 13, 2026.

Mr. Corcoran explained that birding provides many health benefits and is gaining in popularity across the country and within the Baltimore Bird Club, with membership increasing from 250 to 700 participants within five years. A new board member was recently appointed to the Baltimore Bird Club as every 100 new members awards a new board member to be admitted. The Baltimore Bird Club has over 200 events each year with 60 percent of them taking place within Baltimore City.

Plans for raptor boxes and Purple Martin housing at HMI are in progress. Ms. Lambrow confirmed that the project information forms have been completed and sent to DNR. If approved, the project will commence in Spring 2027. Encouraging these bird species at HMI may help to reduce midge and other nuisance insect populations. Ms. Lambrow added that additional grant funding opportunities for bird housing may be available through the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy.

7.0 Administration and Open Discussion — Paul Brylske, Chair

The HMI Run event will be held on October 3, 2026. Mr. Brylske thanked Ms. Brandi McCoy for her hard work to coordinate and facilitate the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.

The next meeting of the HMI COC will be held on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224.