Mid-Bay
ISLAND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

The Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration Project (Mid-Bay Project) is a federal and state partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District and the Maryland Port Administration (MPA). The Mid-Bay Project will restore remote island habitats near James and Barren Islands in Dorchester County, using dredged material from the Chesapeake Bay's Maryland navigation channels. The restoration will provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species, enhance shoreline protection and recreation activities, and assist with maintaining navigational safety.

US Army Corps of Engineers

DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Project Newsletter

Fall 2026

Safety Contact Information

All work vessels will monitor VHF-FM Channel 13, 16, and 18.

Scan the QR code or visit Maryland-DMMP.com/mid-bay-safety for up-to-date safety information about Mid-Bay Project Construction.

Under Water is Under Construction

Please avoid accessing the water surrounding James and Barren Islands. Water users entering the construction areas around James and Barren Islands do so at their own risk. Underwater construction activities may cause damage to vessels as well as boating and fishing equipment. Please use extreme caution, reduce speeds, and avoid entering the construction safety zones. The active construction areas will be marked with buoys. Expect to see increased barge and vessel activity, as well as marked material pipelines. Material pipelines and other built infrastructure may be submerged underwater and not visible. The Project Team has posted safety signage at marinas and water access points, and has created a safety website to share construction updates and safety figures. To see the latest information and important safety updates, please visit the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) safety website at **Maryland-DMMP.com/mid-bay-safety** or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) website at **nab.usace.army.mil/midbayworkzone/**.

Mid-Bay Project Restoration: Construction Update

Great strides are being made in the restoration of James and Barren Islands, and the transformation is becoming more impressive every day! Since work began in spring 2026, James Island is coming back to life. Throughout the summer, construction contractors began building the protective structures, called dikes, that will surround and confine a 1.7 million cubic yard sand stockpile (Figure 1). This is enough sand to fill about 170,000 dump trucks! Sand will be used to create future perimeter dikes, which will surround the restored island, and interior

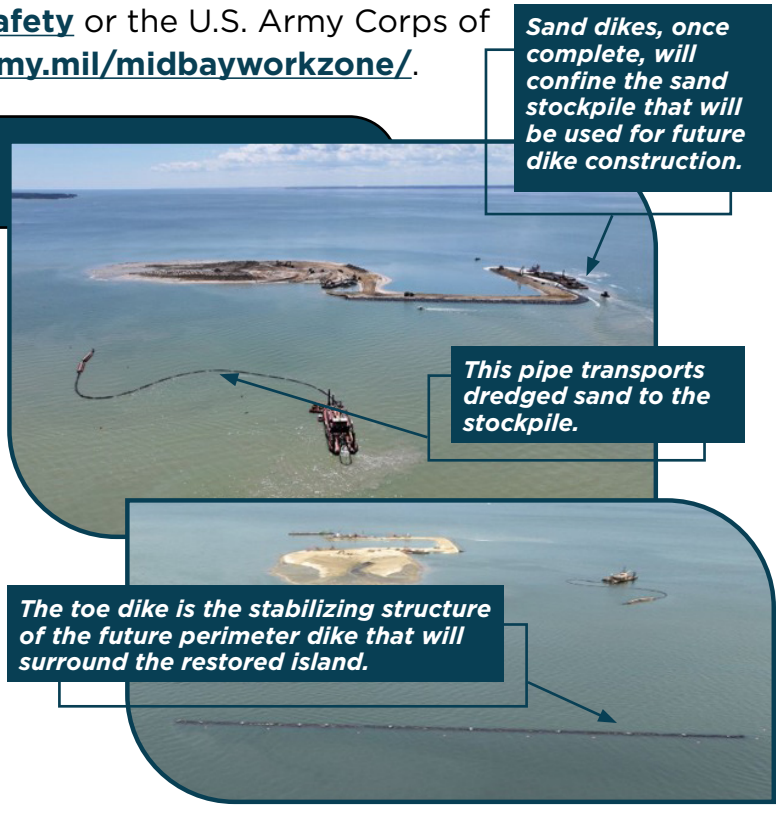


Figure 1: The James Island sand stockpile with a pipe transporting material.

dikes, which will be utilized for roadways and to separate the island into smaller cells. Cells allow targeted dredged material inflow and restoration. The next phase of construction will focus on the development of the northern wetland, with a contract expected to be awarded in fall/winter 2026.

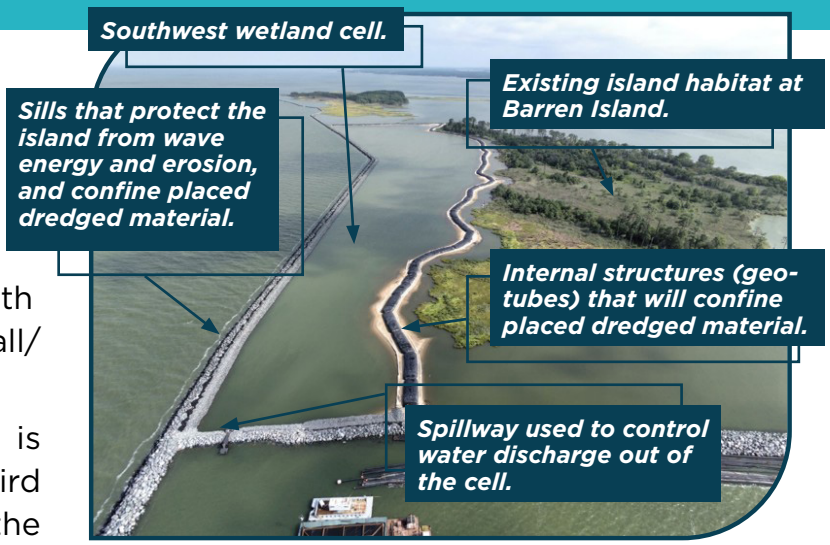


Figure 2: A birds-eye view of construction progress at Barren Island with notable construction features labeled.

At Barren Island, Phase 2 Construction is almost complete. At the constructed bird islands, the shell cap is being placed and the stone reef structures and reef balls have been installed directly offshore. These features will provide habitat for colonial nesting birds, oysters, and fish. Construction of the northeast stone sill, which protects the adjacent wetland habitat from erosion, is complete. With the summer installation of the spillway, full confinement of the southwest wetland cell was achieved (Figure 2), allowing for placement of dredged material from the Honga River Channel and Tyler Cove to begin in fall 2026.

A Win for Watermen and the Mid-Bay Project

One of the greatest measures of successful outreach is when community input leads to meaningful project improvements. That is exactly what continues to happen through the Mid-Bay Project's ongoing engagement with Dorchester County's watermen, including their representation in the Mid-Bay Project Community Stakeholder Group.

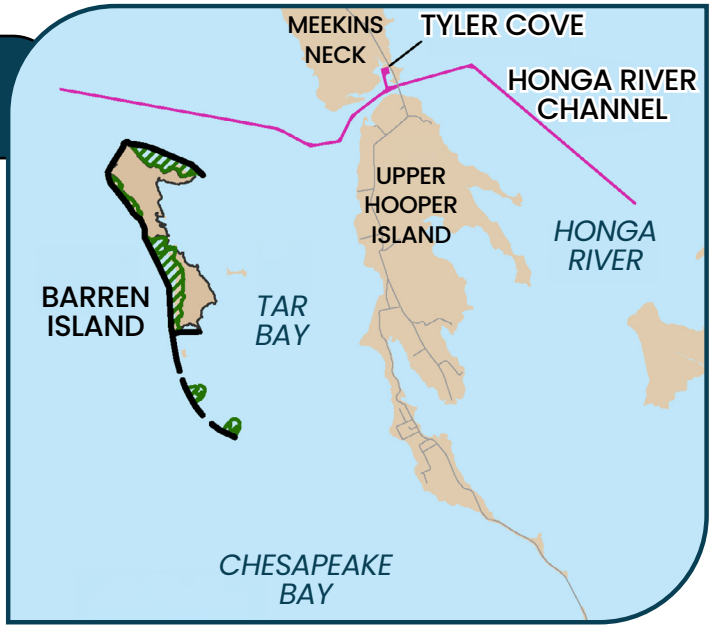


Figure 3: Material from the Honga River Channel and Tyler Cove will be dredged beginning in fall 2026 and placed in the Barren Island southwest wetland cell.

From the beginning, the Mid-Bay Project Team has prioritized regular communication with local water users through meetings, real-time construction updates, and open communication. That collaborative approach has already produced evident results. One notable example is the dredging of the Honga River, a shallow-draft navigation channel that is vital to local water users. Based on input from watermen, dredging of the Honga River Channel was prioritized to improve navigation for local water users. Sediment from the Honga River Channel will be used to restore the Barren Island southwest wetland cell starting in fall 2026 (Figure 3).

More recently, watermen identified a great common-sense addition at Tyler Cove. Tyler Cove, adjacent to a heavily used boat ramp providing access to the Honga River (Figure 3), had become increasingly difficult to navigate due to shoaling of the channel. Rather than allowing administrative processes to become a roadblock, the Mid-Bay Project Team worked through the necessary coordination to allocate funding and make this a priority!

The Mid-Bay Project Team values the relationships that are forged by listening and building trust, and remains dedicated to working with those who are impacted by the project. Working alongside the people who know these waterways best leads to practical, mutually-beneficial solutions that serve the community, the Project, and the Chesapeake Bay.

More Voices of Mid-Bay: Memories Resurface

Throughout our long-time planning process for James and Barren Islands and in our recent article, "Voices of Mid-Bay" we shared stories illustrating the deep connections between the Mid-Bay islands and the people who have lived, worked, and spent their lives on the surrounding waters. We invited people to share their own memories and family histories—and were delighted to receive responses that offered fascinating glimpses into a landscape that has changed dramatically within just a few generations.

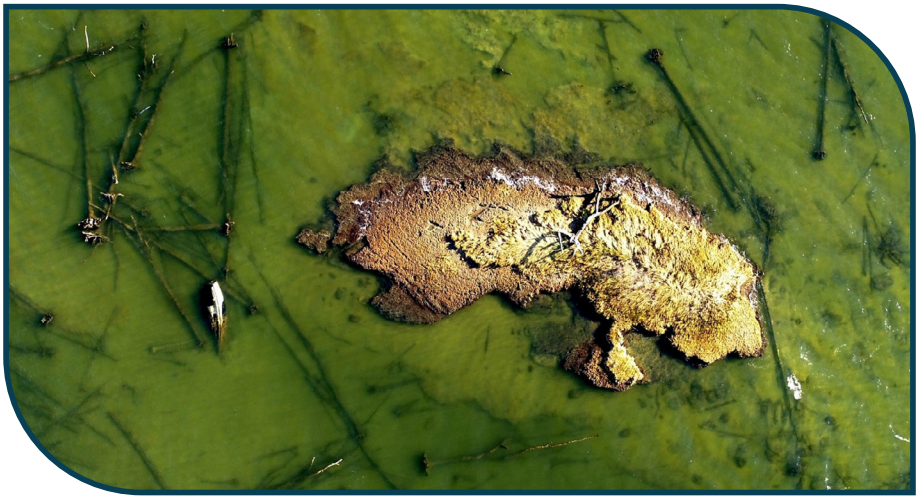


Figure 4: In 2019 (pictured above), the James Island remnants were barely visible. Now, the once large island is completely submerged.

Barren Island was once home to a thriving community, and memories of that community have endured even as much of the island disappeared beneath the Chesapeake Bay (Figure 4). One reader shared the story of a family member born on Barren Island in 1900, when families still made their homes there. Later generations remembered camping on the remaining island in the 1950s and, during particularly cold winters, walking across the frozen water from Hoopers Island to Barren Island. Even small artifacts carried the island's history forward: marbles from the former Barren Island community reportedly washed ashore on Hoopers Island years later.



James Island holds equally remarkable stories. One reader shared that a family member was born there in 1911, when several families still lived on the island. According to the family story, a doctor crossed the shallows from Taylors Island at low tide to assist with the birth. The family later relocated to Taylors Island.

James Island also has a surprising connection to American surveying history. Its former shoreline served as the western endpoint of the Transpeninsular Line used to establish an important boundary point between Maryland and Delaware. The line was the first surveyed by Mason and Dixon before their more famous work establishing the Mason-Dixon Line. As James Island eroded, that historic endpoint eventually disappeared beneath the water.

Today, the Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration Project is creating a new chapter for Barren and James Islands. As restoration changes their physical landscapes once again, stories like these help preserve something equally important: the human history of places that have shaped generations of life on the Chesapeake Bay.

Have a Mid-Bay memory or story to share? We would love to hear it. Every story adds another piece to our understanding of what these islands have meant—and what their restoration can mean for generations to come.



Share Your Story

Do you have a personal connection to James or Barren Islands? We would love to hear it! Please reach out to Rachael Gilde (**Rgilde@marylandports.com**).

Let Us Come to You

Is your community or special interest group interested in learning more about the Mid-Bay Project? Please reach out to Rob Etgen (**retgen@councilfire.org**) of the Mid-Bay Outreach Team and let us know how we can connect with you! We look forward to helping your community learn about the benefits of the Mid-Bay Project.

Learn More

US Army Corps of Engineers

To learn more about the USACE and the Mid-Bay Project, please visit: **www.nab.usace.army.mil/**

To learn more about the MPA and the Mid-Bay Project, including a short informational video, please visit: **maryland-dmmp.com**

Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions, please contact Rachael Gilde at rgilde@marylandports.com

Stay "In The Know"!

Sign up for project updates at the Maryland Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) website: ***maryland-dmmp.com/placement-sites/mid-bay-island/***

More Information

Scan the QR code or use the link below to find more resources:

https://linktr.ee/MidBay

Upcoming Event

Community Poster Session

November 17th, 2026
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Madison Volunteer Fire Department
1154 Taylors Island Road
Madison, MD 21648