

Maryland Port Administration halts dredge dumping at Hart-Miller Island

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Scott Dance](#) Staff

The Maryland Port Administration has ceased dumping sediment dredged from Baltimore's harbor at Hart-Miller Island.

State law required the port to stop using the island as a dredge site by the end of the year. The MPA closed the dredge site, in the Chesapeake Bay just southeast of Essex, on Dec. 22.

The closure means more dredge material will go to two other dredge sites at Cox Creek and Masonville Cove.

Hart-Miller Island had been controversial when it became a dredge site in 1984, but port officials said they were pleased with the resulting wildlife and waterfront restoration from the project. They hope to do the same at Masonville.

"This facility that has been critical to the prosperity of the Port of Baltimore is now an asset to the community," said MPA Executive Director James J. White in a statement. "Today, we look at Hart-Miller and see it as a symbol of partnership where working closely with local citizens produced a project that would benefit the environment, the port and the public.

The southern section of the island closed to dredge material in 1990 and is managed as a wildlife habitat. The northern section will be developed for the same purpose in 2010.

Hart-Miller Island is also home to a public recreational facility for boating, fishing, camping and swimming.

Last dredge fill goes to Hart-Miller Island

Baltimore Sun

The port of Baltimore has sent its last haul of dredge material from the [Baltimore Harbor](#) and [Chesapeake Bay](#) channels to Hart-Miller Island, and the spit of land near the Back and Middle rivers in Baltimore County will enter the final phase of its conversion into a wildlife refuge and recreational area. Some 100 million cubic yards of material has been

formed into 1,100 acres during the past 25 years. The island is now home to more than 200 species of birds, other animals and plants. Thousands of people also use it for boating, fishing, camping and other activities. The port will begin putting dredge material that is cleared from shipping lanes in Masonville. There already is a park there, so the new acreage will become land to store automobiles imported and exported through the port.

Hart-Miller Island site is filled

Maryland Daily Record

A dredge lifts silt from the harbor bottom into a barge for shipment to Hart-Miller.

Hart-Miller Island took delivery last week of its final load of dredge material from the Baltimore harbor, ending the 25-year practice that occasionally drew the ire of environmentalists and community groups.

The manmade island off Baltimore County, while still a work in progress, is a state park. Plans call for it to be converted entirely into a wetland wildlife habitat.

“While controversial at the outset, this facility that has been critical to the prosperity of the Port of Baltimore is now an asset to the community,” said James White, executive director of the Maryland Port Administration, in a written statement.

Hart-Miller began as Hart and Miller, two islands eroded down to a few acres each. About 100 million cubic yards of material dredged from the harbor and Chesapeake Bay shipping channels later, the island sprawls over 1,100 acres and rises 45 feet tall at its highest point.

Community activists protested the development of the dump site when state officials identified the Hart-Miller location north of the entrance to the harbor. The state began construction of the dike — a barrier surrounding the island, designed to keep the contaminants in the material dredged from under shipping channels — in 1981.

Environmentalists worried that the barrier would not be enough to stop the toxic metals and other substances from leaching into the bay.

Today, opposition on both fronts appears to have cooled.

Beth McGee, senior water quality scientist at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said she was concerned by the height of the island and the surrounding dike, but said projects such as Hart-Miller and Poplar Island, a more recent dredge spoil site 34 miles south of Baltimore, can have a positive effect on the bay and the wildlife that calls it home.

“We’re losing a lot of our bay islands, so we see the beneficial use of dredge materials as a good thing,” she said.

Tom Kroen, then a Dundalk resident, was adamantly opposed to the project when it was proposed. But, as plans moved forward and eventually included a citizen oversight committee, Kroen came around.

“I opposed it at first,” he said. “Then when it became fait accompli, I just said ‘If it’s going to be it’s going to be something that’s worthwhile.’ ”

Kroen is now the president of the 10-member committee.

The southern portion of the island was filled in 1990 and was groomed as a wildlife habitat. The remaining 800 acres remained an active dredge dumpsite until Dec. 22, nine days shy of the deadline set by the General Assembly.

The port administration said it will begin developing the northern section of the island in 2010. Spokesman J.B. Hanson said dredge material will now be deposited on two newer sites — the Masonville terminal and another at Cox Creek.

“That’s the major issue with all the ports in the world — there’s just not enough space,” Hanson said. “We have to dredge, and we have to put it someplace.”