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LT. GOVERNOR BROWN CELEBRATES TRANSFORMATION OF CONTAMINATED BALTIMORE WATERFRONT INTO NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVE

11-Acre Parcel of Land is Part of \$153 Million Restoration of Contaminated Baltimore Waterfront

BALTIMORE, MD (October 24, 2012) – Planting wetland grasses alongside fourth-grade school students, Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown, along with community leaders, and federal, state and local officials, officially opened the Masonville Cove nature area in Baltimore. The nature area is the newest improvement to a \$153 million environmental restoration project that is transforming one of Baltimore Harbor's most contaminated sites into an area that will benefit wildlife, local residents and the port industry.

“The Masonville Cove environmental restoration project is one of Maryland’s greatest environmental success stories,” said Lt. Governor Brown. **“Until a few years ago, this was one of Baltimore’s most contaminated areas with tens of thousands of tons of trash and debris dating back decades. Today, with an environmental education center and now a beautiful nature area, it has been transformed into a site to learn about and enjoy the environment. This project is a great example of the Administration’s Smart, Green and Growing Initiative.”**

The Maryland: Smart, Green & Growing initiative is a multi-agency, Statewide initiative to help Maryland achieve a more sustainable future by linking community revitalization, transportation improvements, economic development, smart growth and environmental restoration efforts. The Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center brings together many of the goals of this key initiative into one project.

“Masonville Cove is a terrific, innovative project that advances economic and environmental interests,” said Congressman John Sarbanes, who wrote the *No Child Left Inside Act*, which bolsters outdoor environmental education in America’s schools. **“We are transforming one of the city’s most contaminated sites to an outdoor attraction where families can learn about and interact with their environment – all the while advancing the viability of the Port of Baltimore.”**



“The Port of Baltimore must be dredged if we want it to continue to generate jobs in the global marketplace,” said Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, who has secured federal funding to support safe dredge disposal. **“Dredged material must be disposed of in a way that has the least impact on the environment – but this project goes above and beyond, using it to actually enhance the environment. The public will now be able to use this beautiful nature center to exercise, fish, bird-watch and boat while supporting Maryland jobs.”**

“The cleaning and restoration of Masonville Cove has created a new attraction for the people of Baltimore – especially the residents of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay,” said Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. **“We are grateful for the support of the Governor and Lt. Governor to create a new park for the city. It is another natural treasure that can connect residents with outdoors while still being in a great American city.”**

The nature area is an 11-acre parcel of land that has seen the removal of invasive plants, unhealthy trees, and dangerous and hazardous debris. It is now capped with clean soil and is being replanted with native trees, shrubs, and wetland plants. Allowing for passive recreational use, the nature area includes walking trails, fishing from a designated pier, and bird-watching. A non-motorized boat ramp is also available for kayaks and canoes. This project is the first of a three-phase project that will see about 41 additional acres of land restored and made available to the public over the next few years. It is free and open to the public.

The nature area is the second key element of this overall restoration project. Since 2009, an environmental education center located adjacent to the nature area has welcomed thousands of grade school students for hands-on environmental learning. The Living Classrooms Foundation, National Aquarium Baltimore, and Brooklyn-Curtis Bay Coalition, known as BayBrook, develop and run the education programs for the center. The center itself is a “near-zero, net-energy” building, with green features such as a ground-source air conditioning system that uses half the energy of a conventional building; solar energy; rain barrels that collect roof rain runoff to water greenery and flowers; a reflective roof that decreases the amount of heat transferred into the building; and an energy recovery ventilator where exhaust air is used to heat or cool fresh air using a heat exchanger, making ventilation more efficient.

“The Maryland Port Administration, the Living Classrooms Foundation, the National Aquarium and the residents of the neighborhoods near Masonville Cove should all be commended for the hard work that transformed a former dumping ground into an environmental education and nature center at Masonville Cove,” said Robert M. Summers, Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment. **“MDE is proud to have overseen a cleanup that successfully addressed contamination from decades of industry and dumping to create a safe gateway to the water and the natural world. For our efforts to protect and restore our waters to succeed, it is critical that our citizens -- and particularly our youngsters -- have opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the value of nature and our environment.”**

“The Masonville Cove revitalization project is an excellent example of how our city can turn challenges into opportunities,” said State Senator Bill Ferguson (D-46). **“From a formerly contaminated industrial zone, we will now have a thriving space for families to enjoy the wonders of our ecosystem.”**

“The Masonville Cove project is a model for any port in the nation considering beneficial use of dredged material,” said State Delegate Brian McHale (D-46). **“The Port Administration consistently assured the local communities from the beginning that their requests would be considered and honored if possible. Masonville Cove is a win-win-win for the port, the community, and schoolchildren throughout the region.”**

The restoration project sits on the site of the former home of Kurt Iron and Metal and the Maryland Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. Both companies conducted maritime salvage and ship-breaking operations contributing to the environmental degradation of the waterfront and surrounding area. In 2007, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA), in identifying this site as a future location of a new dredge material containment facility, began a massive cleanup effort of this site. More than 61,000 tons of trash and debris were removed. Some of the debris was believed to have dated back to the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904. The clean-up included the removal of:

- 306,074 gallons of petroleum-tainted water;
- 17,398 tons of timber;
- 6,588 tons of concrete rubble;
- 5,265 feet of electrical wire; and
- 4,047 pounds of PCB-containing electrical equipment.

Besides trash, there were also 27 abandoned vessels that needed to be remediated or removed from the water at the site.

"Living Classrooms is tremendously excited to be the primary partner for operating the Masonville Cove environmental education campus," said Living Classrooms Foundation President James Piper Bond. **"With access to the nature conservation area, our programs for the community will take on a whole new dimension. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the MPA, the National Aquarium, and BayBrook to create new opportunities for community participation."**

"Restoring Baltimore Harbor is one of the National Aquarium's top priorities," said John Racanelli, National Aquarium CEO. **"We continue to lead conservation and education efforts throughout Baltimore and the state of Maryland and we're proud to be a partner of the Masonville Cove restoration project."**

The MPA has worked on this project from the beginning with BayBrook. One of the BayBrook's top priorities in becoming involved with the project was to provide their residents with easy access to enjoy the Patapsco River.

"The Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition expresses its sincere appreciation to the Maryland Port Administration for its foresight and support of this nationally unique learning and teaching facility," said BayBrook Executive Director Rob Catlin. **"By connecting this rehabilitated land, Middle Branch waterfront, and environmental center with the Masonville Dredged Material Containment Facility, the MPA has enabled hundreds of local students from Brooklyn and Curtis Bay to become environmentally sensitive to their local surroundings, aware of the vital impact and importance of the Port of Baltimore and open to new areas of interest and possible future careers."**

The Masonville location also provided a much-needed dredged material containment location for accepting material from Baltimore Harbor. Shipping channels leading to the Port of Baltimore need to continuously be dredged in order to accommodate the massive shipping vessels that bring cargo and generate thousands of jobs at the port. With the closing in 2009 of Hart-Miller Island, the only other dredging site that can accept material from Baltimore Harbor is the Cox Creek containment site in Anne Arundel County. Maryland Environmental Service (MES) manages the entire Masonville site for the MPA.

"It is rare to work on a project that goes as fast and smoothly as the Masonville project," said MES Director Jim Harkins. **"That success is due to a great partnership with the Port of Baltimore and the community. Together, the Masonville partners have turned an unattractive, inaccessible site into a beautiful place for kids and families to relax and learn about the environment. Maryland Environmental Service is very proud to be a part of this effort. Through our work at Masonville, we've also enjoyed working with the young people of the Chesapeake Center for Youth Development. Six of them are now employees at Maryland Environmental Service. Masonville is a win for the economy, for the environment, and for our agency."**

The Masonville restoration project has received national and local awards over the past several years, including a 2007 Mayor's Business Recognition award given by the Greater Baltimore Committee to organizations that have demonstrated outstanding community service and significantly improved the City of Baltimore.