



Poplar Island

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROJECT

Quick Facts

- Located in the Chesapeake Bay off Talbot County, Md.
- Working area of 1,140 acres
- Began operating in 2001
- Receives dredged material from Chesapeake Bay shipping channels
- Provides valuable habitat for birds, mammals, and marine life, including the diamondback terrapin
- No negative effects on water quality
- Has capacity for a total volume of 40 million cubic yards of dredged material
- Expansion plans are underway

Poplar Island is the site of an environmental restoration project in the mid-Chesapeake Bay using dredged material. The US Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Department of Transportation Port Administration began the project in the 1990s to achieve two goals: to restore the severely eroded island to its 1847 footprint and provide a much-needed placement capacity for sediment dredged from shipping channels. Formally named the "Paul S. Sarbanes Ecosystem Restoration Project at Poplar Island," the site has become a national model for the beneficial use of dredged material.

In 1996, only five acres remained of the 1,140 acres that were documented in 1847. After extensive environmental monitoring, dikes were constructed in the Chesapeake Bay to replicate the island's former boundaries. The first dredged material was placed within the dikes in 2001; the island now receives approximately 2 million cubic yards of dredged material each year, drawn from the approach channels to the Baltimore Harbor and southern approaches to the C&D Canal.

About half of the acreage will be shaped into upland habitat for wildlife. The other half is being managed as wetlands, in four "cells" that will total 570 acres. Tidal inlets allow bay water to flow into the cells.

In 2016, work began to expand the island footprint by an additional 575 acres and to raise existing upland dikes by five feet. The expansion will provide placement capacity for an additional 28 million cubic yards of dredged material. A 110-acre open water embayment will provide further environmental benefits.

Poplar Island is a safe and effective use of dredged material to restore lost habitat. Scientists from state and federal management and research organizations, as well as universities and nonprofit organizations, carefully monitor the environmental performance of the site, including the recruitment of fish, animal and bird species, establishment of marsh habitat, water quality, and the effects of storms and sea level rise. Diamondback terrapin and many species of birds are using the island for nesting. More than 200 species of birds have been observed. Poplar Island is one of the last remaining sites in the Chesapeake Bay to host a common tern colony.

For more information, including public tours, visit www.marylandports.com/greenport or email poplartours@menv.com.

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