



Stewardship at Masonville Cove

www.mpasafepassage.org

The Maryland Port Administration's newest dredged material placement site in the Baltimore Harbor opened in 2010—and it has met with enormous success.

Known as Masonville, the dredged material placement site is simultaneously meeting critical needs for the Port of Baltimore and delivering environmental and educational benefits for the surrounding communities.

Masonville is part of an old industrial area along the Patapsco River's Middle Branch, one mile downstream of the Hanover Street Bridge. Over the course of approximately 19 years, the site will provide capacity for 15.4 million cubic yards of sediment dredged from the Baltimore Harbor. It will then become a new marine terminal to accommodate one of the Port's most valuable commodities: automobiles. (See the Masonville backgrounder for more information.)

Masonville operations have affected the Patapsco River where it is located, because



Environmental program at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, conducted by the Living Classrooms Foundation.



The Maryland Port Administration created the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center at the request of the community. The center opened in April 2009.

the dredged material placed at the site is transforming 127 acres of open water into solid land. As a result, the project has triggered a variety of projects that offset environmental losses. These projects are integral to the Masonville placement site because they help to balance its impact on the river.

The Maryland Port Administration recognized the value of community support and invited the neighboring communities to help shape the stewardship projects. They consulted closely with community members and responded to their needs and interests.

Because of the communities' strong support, a planning and permitting process that often takes ten years was completed in just four.

For the River

When the Port Administration began planning the Masonville placement site, the area was severely degraded by past industrial activity. Portions of the site once occupied by the Kurt Iron and Metal Company were pol-



Enhancements requested by local residents as part of the mitigation for the Masonville facility.

luted wastelands. Abandoned ships and piles of industrial waste created both an eyesore and a hostile shoreline environment.

The Port Administration has now addressed many of these problems, including the removal of 25 derelict and sunken vessels, an abandoned pier, and 60,000 tons of debris and waste material including old timbers, concrete, tires, and trash.

The next phase of the effort aims to heal the aquatic environment by creating and restoring both tidal and nontidal wetlands. This involves improving in-water fish habitat with new reefs and reef balls, and replenishing sand along portions of the shore,

For the Community

The centerpiece of the stewardship projects is the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, which opened in April 2009. Cited for its excellent use of “green” technologies, the center hosts environmental education programs for all ages and provides meeting space for the community.

The Port Administration is remediating the cove and land adjacent to the center, which includes ADA accessible trails, a pier, and floating dock. The refurbished site offers spectacular views of the downtown skyline and a place of respite in a community surrounded by industry and highways where visitors can now hike, bird watch, fish, canoe, or kayak.

Living Classrooms, the National Aquarium, and the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition work together to make community connections and to provide environmental education opportunities and free programming in the center. More information on programs and visits to the Masonville cove and environmental center can be found at www.masonvillecove.org.

A Model for the Future

The Masonville project also involves mitigation work that is occurring off site, in places that will benefit the environment of the Baltimore Harbor. They include:

- Stream restoration in Western Run and Biddison Run, which are tributaries to the harbor
- Eel population enhancement
- Fish stocking in upstream reaches of the Patapsco River
- Five trash interceptors near the harbor, one of which will be located at Masonville Cove

The Masonville project offers an example of the achievements that take place when government works proactively with communities to design projects that meet their needs as well as the natural environment.

Such efforts serve the public, enhance the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers, and benefit neighbors who, in another era, may have been opponents rather than partners. ■