

Oversight committee to keep watch on Hart-Miller Island restoration

By ANNA RENAULT avenewsanna@yahoo.com | Posted: Wednesday, October 23, 2013 8:30 am

Residents of the Back River Neck Peninsula attended the Back River Neck Peninsula Community Association meeting to be updated on the status of Hart-Miller Island along with Pleasure Island.

Many local residents, such as Al Clasing and Carl Maynard, have been involved in the dredged-material containment facility (DMCF) project (the dike) at the island, since the project's start. Many others have been watching, with interest, as the dike was filled and the island is in the restoration process for animal habitat and public recreational uses.

David Bibo, project manager with the Maryland Port Administration, gave a historical overview of the project. He highlighted the goals and progress of the Island's DMCF, which was capped and closed in 2009.

Lincoln Tracy works for the Maryland Environmental Service as the Section Head of Environment Dredging & Restoration Division, Technical & Environmental Services Group. Tracy provided a detailed report on the successful completion of the north cell of Hart-Miller Island.

Tracy then explained the current status of the rest of the island, including the difficulties in removing large quantities of low-pH-level rain water than cannot be released from the island into the waters of Middle River and the Chesapeake Bay. He explained that this buildup of unhealthy water is slowing the progress of creating acceptable habitat and recreational areas. He provided a brief summary of what the team expects to do to combat this problem and speed the recovery process.

A great deal of time was spent on Tracy's explanation of the low-pH readings for the current collection of rain water. He explained several times that until the water's pH level is within acceptable levels, it cannot and will not be released from the island. The lack of vegetation on the south cell of the island is partially to blame for this problem. With the buildup of the rain water and without proper buffers to balance its pH levels, the project is being delayed. Several remedies are being considered.

David Riter of Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Resource Management's Waterway Restoration Program Supervisor provided the meeting with an overview of Pleasure Island, its history and its current status in our local waterway.