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July/August 2021

ENVIRONMENT

Gwynnda Puts on a Show

Fans got to watch Baltimore's newest member of the trash wheel family churn for the very first time during a [virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) held in June. Located at the mouth of Gwynns Falls, Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West is Baltimore's fourth trash wheel supported by the [Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration](#) (MDOT MPA).

The trash wheels are the brainchildren of John Kellett, founder of [Clearwater Mills LLC](#). "I was inspired to create the trash wheels because I worked on Baltimore's beautiful harbor for years, and I was constantly confronted with the negative impact of trash in the water. It became clear that the vast majority was carried to the harbor by stormwater through the tributaries from land sources. It seemed like a good approach to collect at the mouth of the tributaries before it scattered all over the harbor and eventually the bay and ocean. Of course, the best approach is to make sure it never gets to the water to begin with," said Kellett.



Photo: Continuing the tradition, Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West's name was chosen by public vote. The trash wheel family's main social media influencer is Mr. Trash Wheel who boasts more than 20,000 followers.

Photo Credit: [Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore](#)

For Terrapin Hatchlings, School is In Session

Just like their human classmates, the 2020 terrapin hatchlings that were supposed to get a head start in classrooms before their release on [Poplar Island](#) had a challenging school year because of COVID. This fall, the [Port of Baltimore Terrapin Education and Research Partnership \(TERP\) Program's](#) estimated 200 hatchlings will be returning to Maryland's classrooms.

Guided by their teachers, students serve as caretakers for their headstart terrapins that thrive in the classroom environment where they are safe from predators. Since the program began 13 years ago, more than 2,800 terrapins have been headstarted by students, and more than 700 classes have attended field trips to Poplar Island to release their terrapins which are typically the size of two or three-year-old terrapins in the wild.

Learn more about the program by watching a short video produced by educators stationed on Poplar Island.



Photo: The Port of Baltimore TERP headstart program gives terrapin hatchlings a better chance of survival and teaches Maryland school children how to be community scientists.

Photo Credit: [Maryland Environmental Service](#) (MES)/Mary Chiarella

MDOT MPA's Habitat Is Where It's at for Raising Eaglets



According to the National Geographic Society, a habitat is a place where an organism makes its home and meets all the environmental conditions an organism needs to survive. With mature trees near large bodies of water with healthy fish populations, several of MDOT MPA's urban environments are proving to be great habitats for eagles to raise their young.

"We are fortunate to have nesting bald eagles at several MDOT MPA sites, including the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility, Masonville Cove, Hart-Miller Island, and Poplar Island. This once-endangered species continues to flourish, especially since it is adaptable to urban environments," said MES Senior Environmental Specialist Timothy Carney.

To date, seven eaglets have fledged from Masonville Cove—two in 2019, two in 2020, and three in 2021.



Photos: Avid birder Wendy Crowe kindly shared these great photos of the 2021 Masonville eaglets
Photo Credit: Wendy Crowe

COMMUNITY

Green Leaders Help Aspiring Green Schools

Throughout Maryland, there are approximately 2,200 public and independent schools, and 656 of them are certified [Maryland Green Schools](#) by the [Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education](#) (MAEOE). The Port of Baltimore's Environmental Education Team has multiple Green Leaders who help schools complete the certification process and meet requirements as they work to achieve Green School status.

Founded in 1999, the Maryland Green Schools Program (MDGS) helps create the next generation of environmental stewards. Students learn about the environment and the role that they can have in creating a more sustainable future with every day practices.

The Team's Green Leaders reviewed more than 15 Green School applications this spring, attended an application workshop for Green School teachers, and will be helping provide educational resources for schools and professional development opportunities for educators during the upcoming school year. Several schools participate in the Port's terrapin headstart program and field trips to Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center (MCEEC) as part of their Green School activities. MCEEC is a certified Green Center.

Do you know a school interested pursuing a Maryland Green School certification? Contact the Green Leaders at outreachtours@menv.com for more information.



*Photos: Green Leader and MES Senior Outreach Environmental Specialist Caitlin Eversmier
Photo Credit: MES*

Baltimore Port Alliance Members Help Clean Up Community Lot in Curtis Bay

On June 5, 2021, 20 members of the [Baltimore Port Alliance](#) joined members of the [South Baltimore Community Land Trust](#) (SBCLT) to clear debris from a vandalized lot used by the community for education and recreation. Volunteers included current and former MDOT MPA employees and representatives of [Vane Brothers](#), [Ports America Chesapeake](#), [C. Steinweg](#), [Semmes, Bowen & Semmes](#), and [EcoLogix Group, Inc.](#)

Prior to the lot being vandalized, it had been transformed into a recreational space for local youth. A mini putt-putt course and a stage were constructed along with seating made from donated dunnage material by C. Steinweg.

"Thanks to the hard work of the volunteers, the area was cleaned up, and the lot is being prepared as the future site for the construction of urgently needed permanently affordable homes. A special thanks goes to the [Fraley Corporation](#) for donating the dumpster," said Meleny Thomas, executive director, SBCLT.

"The Port of Baltimore is part of a strong and vibrant community. It was a great day to be together supporting the good work of our neighbors and the SBCLT," said MDOT MPA Office of Safety, Environment & Risk Management (SERM) General Manager Bill Richardson.



Photo: Volunteers help SBCLT clean up debris on a lot that will next be home to permanently affordable homes.

Photo Credit: Vane Brothers/Blaise Willig

OUTREACH

Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee Marks 40 Years

Hart-Miller Island was originally a chain of three islands that had severely eroded. In the early 1970s the Hart-Miller Island Dredged Material Placement Site was identified as a potential location to accept dredged material from Baltimore Harbor. Fearful of pollution like chromium seeping from the dike, the neighboring communities opposed this measure and took their fight all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Ultimately, legislation mandated the formation of the [Hart-Miller Island Citizen Oversight Committee](#) (HMI COC) to hear and dispose of complaints about the project.



"The creation of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee in 1981 was a critical first step in building the Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) stakeholder committee structure that is in place today," said MDOT MPA's former Deputy Director for Harbor Development Frank Hamons, who directed the Hart-Miller Island project from the beginning.

Acting Education & Engagement Program Manager Katrina Jones stated "MDOT MPA is grateful to the many local citizens who have dedicated personal time and support over the last 40 years in ensuring the success of this project and setting the framework for how we engage with communities. It's encouraging to see the current membership take the lead in establishing the friends group to support park activities."

Today, the island has been rebuilt using dredged material creating over 1,140 acres of habitat, and now hundreds of acres are open to the public as a state park.

Paul Brylske, who chairs the HMI COC, recently joined others to create a new nonprofit, Friends of Hart-Miller Island State Park. For more information and to get involved, search "Friends of Hart-Miller Island" on Facebook.





Photo Above: Pictured left to right: Friends of Hart-Miller Island State Park Secretary Karen Wynn; District 6 State Senator Johnny Ray Salling and his wife, Charity; Friends of Hart-Miller Island State Park President Paul Brylske; and MDOT MPA's Acting Education & Engagement Program Manager Katrina Jones.

Photo Credit: Fran Taylor

Photo Below: Boaters enjoy Hart-Miller Island State Park on a summer weekend.
Photo Credit: Jody Couser/EcoLogix Group, Inc.



Masonville Cove Hosts Latino Conservation Day & 8th Annual BioBlitz

[South Baltimore Community Land Trust's](#) (SBCLT) youth leaders teamed up with the Baltimore Port Alliance (BPA) to find creative ways to reuse dunnage - cargo packing material from ocean-going vessels - keeping it out of the landfill and giving it a second life.

Created by the [Hispanic Access Foundation](#) (HAF), Latino Conservation Week, Disfrutando y Conservando Nuestra Tierra, supports public access to outdoor recreation for the Latino community and inspires the next generation of conservationists.



On July 17, 2021, Masonville Cove celebrated Latino Conservation Day by offering free outdoor activities such as fishing, animal encounters, kayaking, and hiking Masonville's beautiful trails. Many participants were first-time visitors to Masonville Cove.

Photo: Throughout the day, 40 paddlers soaked in the view at Masonville Cove during Latino Conservation Week.

Photo Credit: Julian Segovia/National Park Service & Chesapeake Conservancy

"It was really interesting to see so many organizations working together in order to bring conservation to a place that has been overlooked for so long in the past. Masonville Cove is definitely a partnership that leads by example," said first-time visitor Chesapeake Gateways Bilingual Ranger Julian Segovia, a position he holds with the [National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office](#) and [Chesapeake Conservancy](#).

Led by the [National Aquarium](#), the eighth annual BioBlitz at Masonville Cove, the nation's first [Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership](#), was also held on July 17th. Wildlife experts and community volunteers worked together to find, identify, and record plant and animal species that live at Masonville Cove's 70 acres of water and 54 acres of restored wetlands. A total of 137 species were found by 88 participants during 279 recorded observations.



Top Photo: The Masonville Cove partnership inspires the next generation of conservationists through experiences and opportunities at the nation's first urban wildlife refuge.

Bottom Photo: Participants take a look at some of the species collected at Masonville Cove during the 8th Annual BioBlitz.

Photo Credits: National Aquarium

Geocachers Cache In and Trash Out at Masonville Cove

On Sunday, July 11, 2021, MDOT MPA partnered with the [Maryland Geocaching Society](#) (MDGS) to host the first Cache in Trash Out (CITO) event at Masonville Cove. Geocaching is an activity, usually outdoors, in which participants use a GPS device to hide and seek containers with small tradeable items.

Within two hours, 20 participants collected approximately 329.5 pounds of trash, and 50 participant logs were recorded between the five caches on campus. Masonville's [EarthCache™](#), a special place that people can visit to learn about a unique geoscience feature or aspect about Earth, was also logged through the geocaching app.

"We believe in the Leave No Trace concept, and cleaning up our environment is important to geocachers. With about 20 attendees, we did a fantastic job collecting 329.5 pounds of trash," said MGS President Cindy, geocache handle, tazscouter.

"It was a very successful event, and we look forward to working with MGS again for another CITO event," said MES Environmental Specialist Olivia Gullede.

"Caches at other Port facilities include a geocache at Hart Miller Island Beach and an EarthCache at Poplar Island," noted MDOT MPA geocacher DredgeQueen.



Photo: Geocachers, MDOT MPA, and MES volunteers participate in a successful cleanup at Masonville Cove. As stewards of the environment, geocachers take pride in helping to care for their cache host sites. Photo Credit: MES/Olivia Gullede

Virtual Educational Resources to Continue

To help educators, families, and the community by providing virtual educational resources during the pandemic, the Port of Baltimore, with help from MES, created the [Environmental Education E-Learning Portal](#) (nicknamed the E3 Portal).

More than a year later, the E3 Portal has received 650 visitors and more than 3,000 collective page views. The portal provides virtual programs, lessons, activities, field trip information, green leader assistance, and information about the terrapin program, restoration sites, and educators.

While the Team is excited to resume in-person education safely, the E3 Portal will continue to exist as an additional resource with new features being added throughout the year. Check out the site at its new official web address, [portofbaltimoreeducation.org](#).



Photo: Originally created in response to meet the challenges of virtual learning during the pandemic, the "E3" portal will continue as a valuable resource. Image credit: MES/Mary Chiarella

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our meetings are open to the public. Since these meetings are virtual, if you are not on a meeting distribution list and would like to attend, please visit maryland-dmmp.com for details and access information.

DMMP Committee Field Trip - August 6th

For questions or to confirm attendance please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

DMMP Committee Field Trip - August 20th

For questions or to confirm attendance please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

DMMP Citizens Advisory Committee/Harbor Team Meeting - August 11th at 6:00PM

Virtual

For questions or to confirm attendance please visit maryland-dmmp.com.

Innovative Reuse Committee Workshop - August 24th at 5:30PM

Virtual

For questions or to confirm attendance please visit maryland-dmmp.com.

DMMP Executive Committee Meeting - August 25th at 10:00AM

TBD

For questions or to confirm attendance please visit maryland-dmmp.com.

DMMP Management Committee Meeting - September 22nd at 10:00AM

Virtual

or questions or to confirm attendance please visit maryland-dmmp.com.

Spotlight Series Webinar - September 29th at 12:00PM

Virtual

For questions or to confirm attendance please visit maryland-dmmp.com.

[MDOT MPA Website](#)

[Port of Baltimore Magazine](#)

[Environment Website](#)



ECO Port Newsletter is the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration's bi-monthly update of projects and programs that help the agency contribute to a thriving economy, environmental stewardship, and community partnerships. As always, we thank the many private sector businesses, government leaders, communities, and individual citizens who have helped make these achievements a reality.



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