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May/June 2022

ENVIRONMENT

Common Terns: The Diving Bird

Although Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) are designated as an "S1B" or state endangered breeding species, we are happy to report that a colony of an estimated 40-50 pairs has nested on the offshore barge at Masonville Cove for the past several years. That is the only known nesting colony in Maryland, north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The other colonies are found farther south, including on Poplar Island, Skimmer Island, and several smaller islands in the bay.

Common Terns arrive at Masonville in late April and quickly begin nesting. Most birds depart by the end of August. You'll need a scope to get a good view of the terns if they're on the barge, but they can often be seen much closer when they dive for fish in the cove itself.



Photo: A Common Tern at Masonville Cove. Photo Credits: Tim Carney (MDOT MPA/MES)

MDOT Honors Katrina Jones with Environmental Hero Excellence Awards

Katrina Jones, Program Manager for Education & Stakeholder Engagement at the [Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration](#) (MDOT MPA), has been honored with the Environmental Hero Award by MDOT for her efforts and lasting contributions to the success and growth of the Port of Baltimore. She was also featured recently as a Chesapeake Insider for [Find Your Chesapeake](#), speaking about the mental health benefits of being outdoors, and how her geocaching adventures as 'DredgeQueen' have taken her to beautiful nature spaces across the state.

Katrina has championed MDOT MPA's continuing commitment to environmental stewardship by displaying exemplary leadership, vision, and motivation directing community engagement and environmental education activities associated with [Maryland's Dredged Material Management Program](#). She leads the Port's environmental education team at [Maryland Environmental Service](#), and works closely with program partners such as [Living Classrooms](#) Foundation, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, [Arlington Echo](#), and the [National Aquarium](#).

She also co-chairs the [Baltimore Port Alliance's](#) Education and Outreach Committee.



Photo: Pictured here at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Campus, Katrina Jones started her career with MDOT MPA more than 30 years ago, advancing to her present position leading public engagement and educational activities with Harbor Development. Photo Credit: Sergio Adantor

COMMUNITY

Terrapin Releases at Poplar Island

Every year, students visit Poplar Island for a one-of-a-kind experience! As part of the MDOT MPA sponsored Terrapin Education and Research Partnership (TERP), 127 diamondback terrapin ([Malaclemys terrapin](#)) hatchlings collected from Poplar Island were delivered to classrooms for the students to raise over the 2021/2022 school year, which gave the terrapins a good "head-start."



In late spring, the students travel to Poplar Island for a tour and to release their terrapins. The release trips are filled with bittersweet goodbyes as the students wish their terrapins good luck on their next journey. "The students would not have the interaction with animals without this program," said Mrs. Simpkins, teacher at [Ruth Parker Eason School](#).

The TERP program also conducts research in partnership with Ohio State University, studying how changes in the environment effect terrapin populations. Sometimes the terrapins are recaptured by onsite researchers who post updates on [Facebook](#)!

Photo: Diamondback terrapin release at Poplar Island. Photo credits: Kristina Motley (Maryland Environmental Service). Photo Credit: MES

MAEOE Youth Summit on May 26, 2022

The MDOT MPA Environmental Education Team participated in the [Maryland Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education](#)'s (MAEOE) annual Maryland Green Schools Youth Summit on May 26, 2022 at [Sandy Point State Park](#). The event gave an opportunity for nearly 600 students and teachers to celebrate their hard work in becoming official [Green Schools](#).

Students participated in leadership activities and learned from the Green Career Panel about the range of green careers offered by the [MDOT MPA](#). They also engaged in hands-on learning activities, including a simulated terrapin nest discovery. Each student found and uncovered wooden "eggs" buried in the sand to learn how biologists study diamondback terrapins ([*Malaclemys terrapin*](#)) on Poplar Island. According to JC, a [Park Elementary School](#) student, "Turtles are just like us but different. They are unique and have very special skills."



Photo: Simulated terrapin nest discovery activity at Sandy Point State Park. Photo credits: Kristina Motley (MES)

Literacy Celebration at the Boys and Girls Club



[Masonville Cove Partnership](#) arranged a special visit from local author [Aja Dorsey Jackson](#) to the [Boys and Girls Club](#) to read from her new book *Plane Jane and the Capital Bee*, thanks to the generous donation of books from the [Harbor City Links, Inc.](#)

Children experienced the thrill of meeting a real author and getting a signed copy of Aja's new book! This bonus event followed Masonville Cove's first Literacy Celebration event in April 2022, and after Aja reconnected to the Masonville Cove community she said "It was so much fun getting to know the children and seeing their excitement. I hope they had as much fun as I did, and I would love to come back once Plane Jane goes on another adventure!"

*Photo: Aja Dorsey Jackson reading to kids from her new book *Plane Jane and the Capital Bee* at the Boys and Girls Club in May 2022. Photo credits: Rachael Gilde (MES)*

OUTREACH

Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee Tours Site Expansion

The [Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee](#) (CC COC) meeting on May 25, 2022 included a site visit to the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF). Attendees toured the DMCF complex and the Cox Creek expansion project which raised the dikes from an elevation of 36 feet to 60 feet. Increasing capacity at the Cox Creek facility is critical for the long-term plan for placement capacity of Harbor material and maintaining the 50-foot deep channel necessary for the competitive movement of cargo.

The DMCF expansion began in August 2021, and the project is scheduled to be completed by May 2024. The CC COC oversees the implementation of the DMCF project and provides advice to MDOT MPA on the expansion and operation of the facility and the potential impacts on nearby communities. You can find more information on upcoming events at [Maryland-DMMP.com](#).



Photo: (Top) Members of the Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee and staff Photo courtesy of Katrina Jones MDOT MPA. **(Bottom)** Dike raising construction at Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility. Photo credit: Maryland Environmental Service Survey.

Conservation Easement for Masonville Cove Approved By the Board of Public Works

On April 27, 2022, the Masonville Cove Conservation Easement was approved by the [Maryland Board of Public Works](#). The MDOT MPA entered this easement with the [Maryland Environmental Trust](#) and the [Baltimore Green Space](#) (BGS).

The Easement is intended to prevent Masonville Cove from being used for any purposes except for environmental education, preservation of open space, and the protection of natural habitat. As pointed out by BGS's Executive Director Katherine Lautar: "BGS is so excited to be able to support the community in preserving this refuge for neighbors to enjoy the water and wildlife for generations to come. We are grateful for the restoration efforts here that have made this a lasting safe haven for families and friends ... eagles included!" In total, this easement will preserve in perpetuity roughly 47 acres of the restored Masonville Cove property, including approximately three miles of walking trails.



Photo: Masonville Cove. Photo Credit: Katrina Jones (MDOT MPA)

Captain Trash Wheel Turns Four

Happy Fourth Birthday to Captain Trash Wheel! [Captain Trash Wheel](#) is a 40-foot long, trash gobbling machine charged with the mission of keeping the waters of Masonville Cove free of debris for the benefit of humans and wildlife. Celebrating four years in action, Captain was originally installed on June 5, 2018, at the mouth of a small stream in Masonville Cove to intercept floating trash. Captain Trash Wheel is the third of four devices designed by [Clearwater Mills](#), and its operation and maintenance is funded by the MDOT MPA. The other trash wheels, [Mr. Trash Wheel](#), Professor Trash Wheel and Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West, were all partially funded by MDOT MPA to help prevent trash from entering the Baltimore Harbor and Patapsco River leading to the Chesapeake Bay.

Since 2018, Captain has removed over 30 tons of trash from Masonville, including roughly 93,300 cigarette butts; 32,183 plastic bottles; 20,350 Styrofoam containers; and 36,170 plastic bags. So far this year, Captain has prevented more than one ton of trash from reaching our beautiful cove and the Patapsco River.



Photo: Captain Trash Wheel at Masonville Cove. Photo Credit: Living Classrooms Foundation

UPCOMING EVENTS

These committee meetings are open to the public. Some meetings may be virtual or in-person in accordance with COVID protocols. Please visit maryland-dmmp.com for details and access information for each meeting. For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Hart-Miller Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting - July 19th at 6:30PM
Location TBD

DMMP Executive Committee Meeting - July 26th at 10:00AM
Location TBD

DMMP Annual Field Trip - August 19th (Rain Date August 24th)
Location TBD - Pre-registration required

Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting - August 24th at 5:30PM
Location TBD

[MDOT MPA Website](#)

[Port of Baltimore Magazine](#)

[Environment Website](#)

MDOT MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MARYLAND PORT ADMINISTRATION

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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William P. Doyle, Executive Director
MDOT Maryland Port Administration
The World Trade Center
401 East Pratt Street, Baltimore MD 21202
1-800-638-7519 / www.marylandports.com

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