



Poplar Island

DREDGED MATERIAL PLACEMENT SITE

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 Bay shipping channels
- Provides valuable habitat for birds, mammals, and marine life, including the diamondback terrapin
- Has capacity for a total volume of 40 million cubic yards of dredged material
- Expansion plans are underway

Poplar Island, a dredged material placement site in the mid-Chesapeake Bay, is a joint project of the US Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Port Administration. Begun in the 1990s, the project was designed to achieve two goals: to restore the severely eroded island to its original footprint and provide a much-needed placement site for sediment dredged from shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay. 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.

By 1996, when work began on the project, only 5 acres remained of Poplar's original 1,140-acre footprint. After extensive environmental monitoring, dikes were constructed in the Bay to replicate the island's former boundaries. The first dredged material was placed within the dikes in 2001, and the island continues to receive approximately 3 million cubic tons of dredged material each year, drawn only from the approach channels to the Baltimore Harbor.

About half of the new sediment has been shaped into upland habitat for wildlife. The other half is being managed as wetlands, in five "cells" that total 177 acres. Tidal inlets allow Bay water to flow into the cells. The upland cells and wetland cell are continuing to receive dredged material.

Plans are underway to expand the island footprint by an additional 575 acres. The design was approved in 2012 and work is expected to begin in 2015. The expansion will include 110 acres of open water to provide further environmental benefits. The diked acreage will provide placement capacity for an additional 28 million cubic yards of dredged material. Existing dikes in the upland area will be raised five feet, creating additional capacity there.

Poplar Island has been closely watched as an important science experiment on the 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. Over 200 species of birds have been observed. Poplar is the only site in Maryland to host a common tern colony.

For more information, including public tours, visit www.mpa.maryland.gov/greenport.



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