



January/February 2022

ENVIRONMENT

Dredging is for the birds!

Using dredged material for beneficial habitat creates unique and sometimes otherwise scarce habitat for birds, as well as other wildlife. Starting with this issue, we will feature a new bird spotted at a Port of Baltimore dredged material management project site with each bimonthly EcoPort newsletter. We are excited to show you some of the amazing birds that are residents and visitors to the Port facilities around the state.

The Slaty-backed Gull: A New Tourist in Maryland

You may think you have seen this cute guy around, as for most people, it is just a seagull. However, to Maryland birders, it's a new species for their list: the [slaty-backed gull](#) (*Larus schistisagus*). It looks like our lesser black-backed gull, but it has bright pink (not yellow) legs. Native to Northern Pacific regions, it is vagrant to the rest of the U.S. and Canada, and it has never been seen in Maryland, until recently.

Maryland birders have been waiting for it, as it has been reportedly seen on two occasions at nearby states (New York and South Carolina), and finally, one adult was seen at the [Cox Creek Dredged Containment Management Facility](#) (DMCF) on January 14. Birders nearby at the Quarantine Road Landfill and at the Curtis Creek Drawbridge also reported its presence in the following week.



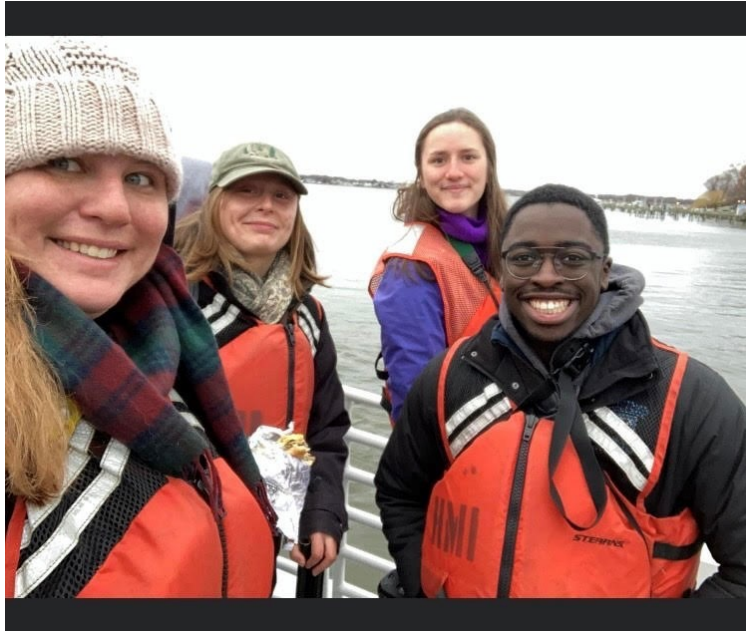
Photo: A stately slathey-back gull. Photo Credit: Tim Carney/MES

Successful Christmas Bird Count at Hart-Miller Island

Thanks to the support of the [Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration](#) (MDOT MPA) and the [Maryland Environmental Service](#) (MES), an [Audubon](#) Christmas Bird Count conducted by the [Baltimore Bird Club](#) at [Hart-Miller Island](#) (HMI) was a huge success. Ten hardy birders counted over 13,000 birds of 53 different species. Especially prevalent were many varieties of waterfowl, including a family of rare trumpeter swans! Here's the list on [eBird](#).

The [Audubon count](#) provides valuable community science data for bird population research. The Baltimore Bird Club counts in a 15-mile diameter circle which now includes HMI.

The very cold and windy conditions did not detract from the successful count and addition to Audubon's database.



Photos - Top: Baltimore Bird Club birders Libby Errickson, Alina Martin, Claire Wayner, and Kojo Baidoo. MES boat and crew provided transport for 10 birders to HMI. **Bottom:** Braving the cold, windy conditions to count the birds! Photo Credits: Baltimore Bird Club Community Science Chair Libby Errickson

Masonville DMCF Dike Raising Resumed in 2021

The [Masonville DMCF](#) is a critical facility to support harbor dredging operations at the Port of Baltimore.

To ensure maximum capacity, vertical expansion is necessary. The dike had previously been raised to +18'. In 2021, MDOT MPA successfully obtained State funding to start to raise the dike to +30'. The material used to build the dike is being delivered by truck from nearby [Vulcan Materials Company](#) on Frankfurst Avenue. Eventually, MDOT MPA plans to raise the dike to +42'.

Mitigation for the construction of the DMCF is complete with the installation of a fourth trash interceptor (Gwynnda the Good Wheel of the West) at Gwynns Falls with the [Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore](#).



Photo: Masonville DMCF. Photo Credit: MDOT MPA

COMMUNITY

The Howard Street Tunnel Expansion Considered a Great Step Forward

In November, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to expand the 127-year-old Howard Street Tunnel. The \$466 million expansion project will provide an additional 18 inches of clearance in the tunnel and at 21 other locations between Baltimore and Philadelphia, allowing double-stacked container trains to reach the Port. This will dramatically increase cargo capacity by approximately 160,000 containers per year and connect the Port to the shortest double-stack rail route to the Midwest.

A range of community benefits is also expected from the tunnel expansion. It will reduce fuel consumption by about 137 million gallons and alleviate congestion along the I-95 corridor. Approximately 14,000 new jobs in the Baltimore region will also be generated.

A recent expansion at Seagirt Terminal doubled its ability to receive ultra-large ships. The Howard Street tunnel expansion is key to managing expanded cargo capacity of the Seagirt Terminal.



Photo: Howard Street Tunnel Expansion Press Event November 29, 2021. Photo Credit: The Office of Governor Larry Hogan

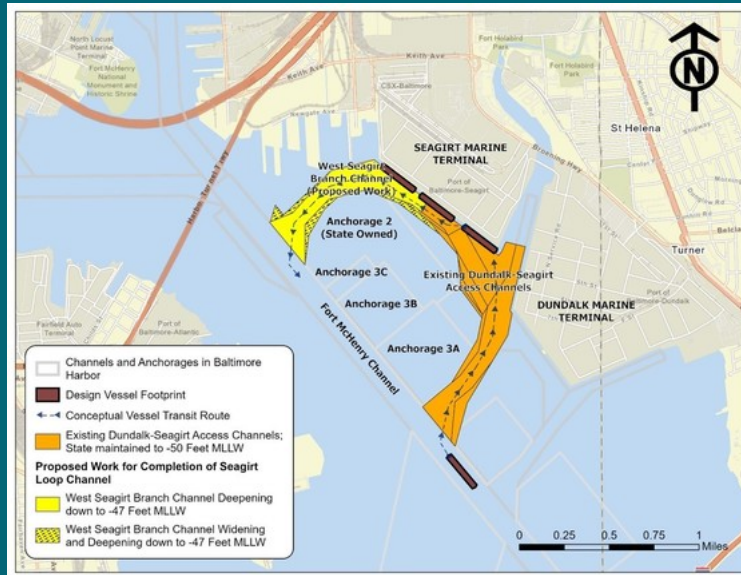
OUTREACH

USACE & MDOT MPA Host Public Virtual Meeting for the Seagirt Loop Channels Feasibility Study

The [US Army Corps of Engineers \(USACE\) Baltimore District](#) and MDOT MPA have prepared a draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the advisability of modifications to the [Seagirt Loop channels](#) (West Dundalk Branch, Dundalk-Seagirt Connecting, and the Seagirt West Branch), to accommodate the increased post-Panamax vessel traffic at the Seagirt Marine Terminal.

The draft Integrated Feasibility Report and EA is available online at the [USACE Baltimore District Website](#) for public review and comment from February 9 to March 11, 2022. Comments should be submitted electronically to: CENAB-CC@usace.army.mil.

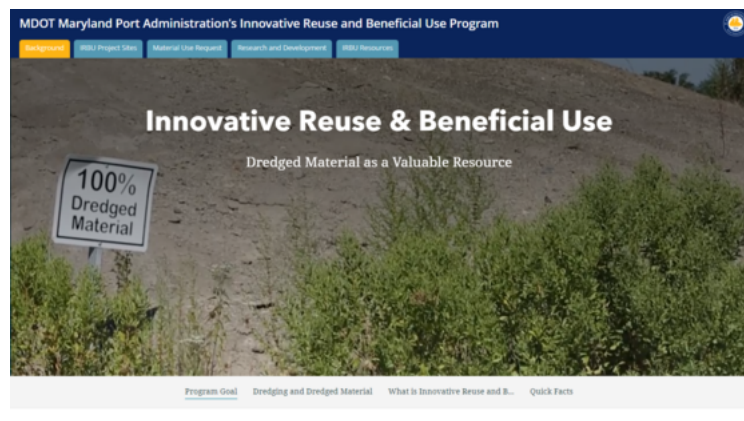
USACE and MDOT MPA will hold a **virtual public meeting** on **Thursday, February 24, 2022**, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm to present the draft report and receive comments. [Register here](#) in advance for this meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



New Web Tool for Innovative Reuse & Beneficial Use of Dredged Material

Developed by [Anchor QEA](#), the [Innovative Reuse and Beneficial Use Web Tool](#) (IRBU Web Tool) is a novel platform where users can retrieve information related to the MDOT MPA [IR/BU Program](#). The program targets long-term, sustainable reuse of dredged material to facilitate and support the continued viability of the Port of Baltimore.

The IRBU Web Tool provides users with background information on the IR/BU program, access to forms, informational videos, project descriptions and data, contacts, and links to regulatory information. Also, it includes an interactive map that allows users to view project locations of where dredged material has been successfully reused and provides a mechanism to facilitate dredged material requests for those interested in using it in their projects.



Mammals of Masonville Cove Community Science Program

In January, Ela-Sita Carpenter, Ph.D., hosted an engaging community science program affiliated with the [Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center](#). Dr. Carpenter is an urban biologist with the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service \(USFWS\)](#). The program allows citizen volunteers to join USFWS biologists as they investigate the animals that roam Masonville Cove after dark. This multi-day program took place online and on campus. The program provided participants an opportunity to become a community scientist and learn the importance of wildlife management in cities and how biologists track and identify mammals. As one respondent wrote on the feedback card, "The educational component combined with the hands-on field work made it especially rewarding."

Species documented on camera included red fox, raccoon, opossum, cottontail rabbit, deer, and even a pair of coyotes! Other outdoor skill community science programs will be conducted at Masonville Cove this year. Interested persons can sign up by contacting Dr. Carpenter at Ela_Carpenter@usfws.gov



Photos - Top: Community science data collection at Masonville Cove. **Bottom:** Class of community scientist volunteers at Masonville. Photo Credits: Dr. Ela-Sita Carpenter/USFWS

Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) Holds 2021 Annual Meeting

On December 8, 2021, the DMMP held an online annual meeting featuring keynote speaker USACE Colonel Estee S. Pinchasin, a virtual exhibit hall, and several informative presentations.



2021 was a big year! The 20th Anniversary of the Dredged Material Management Act of 2001 provided perspective on a 20-year plan that prioritized innovative reuse and beneficial uses of dredged material. Several long-term efforts began implementation in 2021, despite the challenges of COVID.

The meeting concluded with a State of the Port. After pandemic-related drops in cargo in 2020, the Port saw an uptick of 22% in 2021. The presentation offered year-end statistics that indicate the Port is thriving amid the global supply chain crisis.

In case you missed it, you can watch the meeting, see the presentations, and read the [Annual Report](#) at maryland-dmmp.com/annual-meeting.



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.

Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting - February 23rd at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, ecoport@marylandports.com.

Innovative Reuse Committee Meeting - March 15th at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Management Committee Meeting - March 23rd at 10:00 AM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Masonville Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting - April 5th at 5:30 PM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.com.

Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee Meeting - April 19th at 6:30 PM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, ecoport@marylandports.com.

Pearce Creek Implementation Committee Meeting - April 22nd at 10:00 AM

For more information, visit maryland-dmmp.com

For questions, please contact ecoport@marylandports.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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