



The Maryland Port Administration **PRESS RELEASE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 14, 2015

CONTACT:

Richard Scher
Matthew Scales
MPA
(410) 385-4480

Cynthia Mitchell
USACE Baltimore
(410) 962-7522

POPLAR ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROJECT WINS DISTINGUISHED NATIONAL AWARD

(BALTIMORE, MD) --- The Poplar Island Environmental Restoration Project has been awarded the Innovation in Sustainable Engineering Award from the American Society of Civil Engineers. Located in Talbot County, Poplar Island is one of Maryland's top environmental restoration projects built with dredged material from shipping channels leading to the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore.

"We are very fortunate to have an outstanding partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," said Maryland Port Administration (MPA) Deputy Executive Director Kathy Broadwater. "Together we created a sustainable approach to keep the shipping channels safe and navigable while restoring the environment and providing opportunities to observe wildlife in its natural setting within the Chesapeake Bay."

The award recognizes the Poplar Island Project's innovation. The project combines traditional design and construction such as dikes, dredging and grading with techniques for constructing wetlands to create productive intertidal wetlands and upland habitat.

"The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has been a steadfast advocate of sustainable practices in engineering," said Robert D. Stevens, Ph.D., P.E., president of the American Society of Civil Engineers. "The Poplar Island restoration project is a stellar example of what can be accomplished when vision, collaboration and creativity come together to improve economic, social and environmental sustainability. We're very pleased to recognize the Maryland Port Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with our Innovation in Sustainable Engineering Award."

Poplar Island has become an international model for its beneficial use of dredged sediment from channels leading to the Port of Baltimore to create a fish and wildlife habitat. In the mid-1800s, Poplar Island was a 1,140-acre community for a small population of Chesapeake Bay fishermen and their families. It later became a retreat for Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. After decades of erosion and sea level rise, nearly all of the original acreage was underwater. By the late 1990s, only about four acres of the island remained. In 1998, restoration of Poplar Island began under a partnership between the MPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Today, Poplar Island has been restored to its former size with a thriving wetland habitat thanks to more than 27 million cubic yards of dredged material.

"We couldn't be more pleased to share this momentous recognition with our partners at the Maryland Port Administration," said Colonel Edward Chamberlayne, Baltimore District commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Poplar Island restoration has become an international model for habitat restoration, fulfilling our commitments to both protect and restore the health and natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and maintain a safe and economically viable Baltimore Harbor."

-MORE-

Poplar Island Wins National Engineering Award

The island is divided into two sections: 570 acres of upland habitat and 570 acres of wetland habitat. More than 200 species of birds have been identified onsite or just offshore. More than 150 diamondback terrapin nests were counted in 2014 and 1,163 terrapin hatchlings tagged and released in 2013. Dozens of species of trees, marsh shrubs, herbaceous plants and grasses have been planted by adult volunteers and school children. Due to its success, the island is scheduled to be expanded by another 575 acres of wetland, upland, and open water embayment beginning in 2016.

The Port of Baltimore's public marine terminals had a record year in 2014 and overall the Port saw 29.5 million tons of international cargo cross its docks at a value of nearly \$53 billion. Baltimore is ranked as the top port among all U.S. ports for handling autos and light trucks, farm and construction machinery, imported forest products, imported sugar and imported aluminum. Overall, Baltimore is ranked ninth for the total dollar value of cargo and 13th for cargo tonnage for all U.S. ports. Recently the Port of Baltimore was named as the top U.S. port for container berth productivity by a leading industry media company.

Business at the Port of Baltimore generates about 13,650 direct jobs, while about 127,600 jobs in Maryland are linked to Port activities. The Port is responsible for nearly \$3 billion in personal wages and salary and more than \$300 million in state and local tax revenues.

#