



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Baltimore District

Public Affairs Office

P.O. Box 1715

Baltimore, MD 21203

(410) 962-2809

Fax: (410) 962-3660

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Contact: Doug Garman

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Phone: (410) 962-2809

Corps of Engineers and Worcester County to dedicate restored salt marsh at Ocean Pines, May 13

Baltimore - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, and Worcester County officials will hold a special dedication ceremony Monday, May 13, to celebrate the restoration of 6.5 acres of salt marsh at the Ocean Pines residential community, Md. The ceremony begins at 11 a.m. at Section 17/"The Pointe" in Ocean Pines. Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr., commander of the Baltimore District; and John E. Bloxom, president of the Worcester County Board of Commissioners, are among the scheduled guest speakers.

"This salt marsh restoration project is the first of its kind within the Coastal Bay watershed," said Col. Fiala. "It also represents a significant step forward in improving Maryland's valuable marsh habitats, which benefit our environment by filtering contaminants, capturing harmful sediments, enhancing water quality and providing nesting areas for a variety of species."

The original salt marshes were degraded by the placement of fill material during early construction of the Ocean Pines community in the 1960s and before the establishment of federal and state wetland regulatory programs. To reverse this and restore these salt marsh areas to their historic condition, nearly 20,000 cubic yards of fill material were removed from two separate cells within the marshes. The areas were graded to historic inter-tidal elevations. Tidal creeks were created to enhance the tidal water flow through the marsh areas, and the areas were re-vegetated with native salt marsh plants. This \$1.3 million project was completed in October 2001.

As part of the Ocean Pines ceremony, a sign will be unveiled and the salt marsh dedicated in memory of a former Corps of Engineers' employee who was instrumental in managing the construction of this project.

Editor's Note: Following this ceremony (at approximately 12:45 p.m.), members of the Corps of Engineers and Maryland Department of Natural Resources will tour a similar salt marsh restoration project currently under construction at nearby Isle of Wight in Ocean City, Md. Directions to this site will be provided at the Ocean Pines event.

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