



Poplar Island

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROJECT

Quick Facts

- Located in the Chesapeake Bay off Talbot County, Md.
- Over 1,700 acres of habitat restored at project completion
- Began operating in 2001
- Receives dredged material from Baltimore Harbor and C&D Canal southern approach channels
- Provides valuable habitat for birds, mammals, and marine life, including the State listed Endangered common tern
- Has capacity for a total volume of 68 million cubic yards of dredged material

The Paul S. Sarbanes Ecosystem Restoration Project at Poplar Island (Poplar Island) is an international model for the beneficial use of dredged material located in the mid-Chesapeake Bay. The US Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration began the project in the 1990s to achieve three goals: to restore the severely eroded remote island, provide much-needed placement capacity for sediment dredged from shipping channels, and to do no harm to the surrounding environment.

In 1996, only five acres remained of the 1,140 acres that were documented in 1847. The first dredged material was placed within the dikes in 2001; the island now receives approximately 2 million cubic yards (mcy) of dredged material each year, drawn from the approach channels to the Baltimore Harbor and C&D Canal southern approach channels.

In 2016, work began to increase the site's placement capacity by constructing an expansion of 575 acres to the northeast of the original project and temporarily raising existing upland dikes by five feet. The expansion and raising will provide capacity for an additional 28 mcy of dredged material, increasing the total site capacity to 68 mcy.

The final project will result in 1,715 acres of restored remote island habitat within the Chesapeake Bay consisting of approximately 776 acres of tidal wetlands, including low marsh and high marsh habitat, bird nesting islands, and open water ponds, and approximately 829 acres of upland habitat. The expansion also includes a 110-acre open water embayment which will remain primarily undisturbed, limiting impacts to the benthic habitat and providing semi-protected fisheries habitat.

Scientists from state and federal management and resource organizations, as well as universities and nonprofit organizations continue to 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.

Since monitoring began, more than 240 species of birds have been observed. Year after year, wildlife including the diamondback terrapin and many species of birds including the common tern (recently State listed as Endangered) return to the island for vital nesting habitat.

For more information, including public tours, visit

www.marylandports.com/greenport, poplarislandrestoration.com, or email poplartours@menv.com.

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