

The Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration Project (Mid-Bay Project) is a federal and state partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District and the Maryland Port Administration (MPA). The Mid-Bay Project will restore remote island habitats near James and Barren Islands in Dorchester County, using dredged material from the Chesapeake Bay's Maryland navigation channels. The restoration will provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species, enhance shoreline protection and recreation activities, and assist with maintaining navigational safety.

Project Newsletter

Spring 2026



Safety Contact Information

All work vessels will monitor VHF-FM Channel 13, 16, and 18.



DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

James Island Safety Information

Construction at James Island is beginning this spring. In addition to the safety zone around Barren Island construction www.nab.usace.army.mil/midbayworkzone/, please refer to the safety announcement below.

Water users should avoid the construction safety zone shown in the broad area north of James Island remnants (Figure 1). The active construction area will be marked with buoys. Anyone entering the active construction area and the surrounding construction safety zone will do so at their own risk and extreme caution is urged. Unseen underwater construction activities can cause damage to water users' equipment and vessels. Please expect to see increased barge and vessel traffic, as well as marked material pipes (both on the surface and underwater), throughout the area.



Figure 1: James Island Construction Safety Zone



Mid-Bay Progress and Highlights

As of December 2025, the Tidal Wetlands License and Water Quality Certification permits have been received, enabling restoration activities at James Island to begin. The first phase for James Island construction is expected to start in late spring 2026. At Barren Island, Phase 2 construction continues with notable progress. Dredging of the Honga River is expected to occur in the fall of 2026. This material will be used to build the first restored wetland area in the southwest section of the project footprint.

A 20+ Year Vision Becomes Reality

The start of construction at James Island marks a momentous milestone for Maryland — more than 20 years in the making. After decades of technical analysis, thoroughly vetting islands from a list of 105 sites for a cost-effective solution that would restore remote island ecosystem habitat; regulatory review; phased funding, and coordination across agencies, we can finally say: construction is starting.

At more than 2,000 acres, James Island (Figure 2) is the largest island restoration effort yet, modeled after the innovative success of Poplar Island — one of the first major projects led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to formally tie navigation dredging to holistic ecosystem restoration.

Guaranteeing 30+ years of dredged material capacity has global implications, amplifying the Port of Baltimore’s attractiveness to the shipping industry for long term investment. The local implications are significant as well — the wide array of benefits for the area surrounding the project are detailed in the Dorchester County maryland-dmmp.com/dorchesterimpact and Talbot County maryland-dmmp.com/talbotimpact iMPAct reports.

Few projects nationwide match this combination of scale, longevity, and ecological performance monitoring. Science-driven and adaptive, James Island moves beyond simple “placement” to evidence-based restoration engineering and is essential to our state’s economic success and environmental health.

This is not just restoration. It is coastal resilience infrastructure — engineered with precision, functioning ecologically, and built through a partnership model other states now seek to replicate.

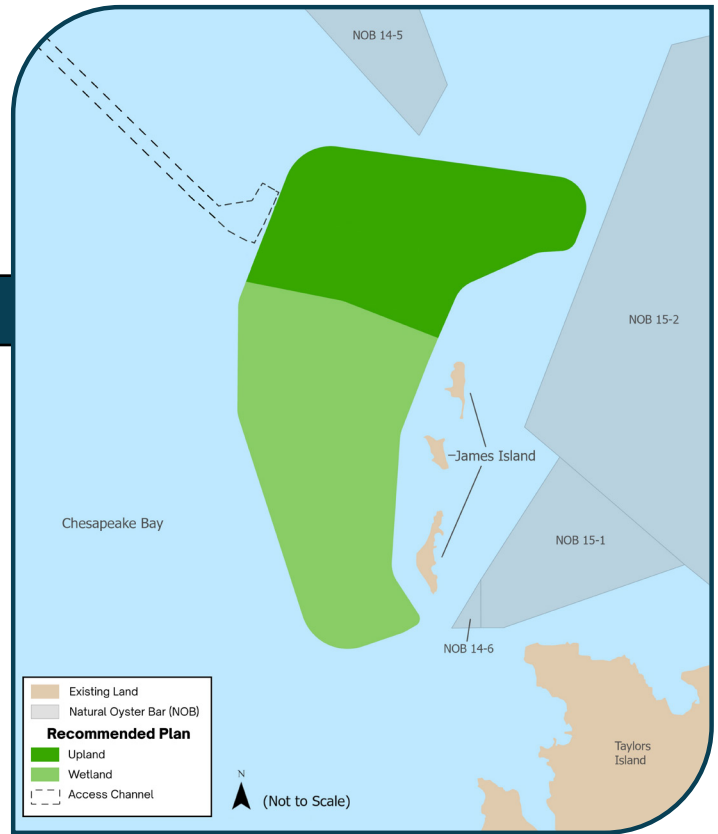


Figure 2: Wetland and upland habitat will be restored at James Island using dredged material.



Voices of the Mid-Bay Community

Since 2024, MPA has convened the Mid-Bay Community Stakeholder Group with the Mid-Bay Project Delivery Team to strengthen communication and foster understanding around MPA's restoration and dredging initiatives. A Tribal chief, Dorchester County Watermen, small business owners, environmental conservationists, and longtime maritime stakeholders are among the community leaders who make up the stakeholder group.

Their discussions help to apply local insight in balancing the needs of the Mid-Bay Project construction and restoration with the needs of day-to-day life for the people who live near it. In addition to the business of providing transparent access to technical project information, the project team has been gifted glimpses into the deeper connections that tie the community and local culture to these islands.



Fred Pomeroy trot lining on the Little Choptank River; Photo by Dave Harp

Waterman Fred Pomeroy, a member of the Mid-Bay Community Stakeholder Group, shares that he is “one of the few watermen still working that remembers when James Island was still a substantial body of land. I first worked there in the 1960s and later proposed to my wife (Lex) on a camping trip to this magical island that divided the Bay from the river. Lex and I are still married but the island is long gone. I look forward to seeing it come back in a new incarnation under the Mid-Bay Project.”

Long-term environmental progress is a reality through this project, but MPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must also tackle the challenge of balancing long-term engineering and environmental outcomes with the short term needs of the people whose lives are intertwined with these islands and the waters around them. To that end, voices of the Mid-Bay community become a critical component.

Share Your Story

Do you have a personal connection to James or Barren Islands? We would love to hear it! Please reach out to Rachael Gilde (Rgilde@marylandports.com).



Let Us Come to You

Is your community or special interest group interested in learning more about the Mid-Bay Project? Please reach out to Rob Etgen (retgen@councilfire.org) of the Mid-Bay Outreach Team and let us know how we can connect with you! We look forward to helping your community learn about the benefits of the Mid-Bay Project.

Learn More



US Army Corps of Engineers

To learn more about the USACE and the Mid-Bay Project, please visit: www.nab.usace.army.mil/



To learn more about the MPA and the Mid-Bay Project, including a short informational video, please visit: maryland-dmmp.com

Questions? Comments?

If you have any questions, please contact Rachael Gilde at rgilde@marylandports.com

Stay "In The Know"!

Sign up for project updates at the Maryland Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) website: maryland-dmmp.com/placement-sites/mid-bay-island/



More Information

MPA will provide updates on future events when available.

Scan the QR code or use the link below to find more resources:



- USACE Mid-Bay Website
- USACE Mid-Bay Work Zone
- MPA Mid-Bay Project Website
- MPA DMMP Website
- MPA DMMP Dorchester County iMPAct Report
- MPA DMMP Talbot County iMPAct Report

<https://linktr.ee/MidBay>