

Chesapeake Marshlands Wetland Restoration Update

Why Restore Wetlands?

- **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) has lost over 8,000 acres of wetlands since the 1930s**
- **Blackwater NWR wetlands have international significance (RAMSAR)**
- **Barren Island (part of Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex) provides critical habitat and protects the community of Hooper's Island (pop. est. 500)**
- **James Island (privately owned) protects the communities of Taylor's Island, Woolford, and Madison (collective population estimate 1,000 residents)**
- **Global warming results in sea level rise which threatens all of these areas and active management (wetland restoration) is one option to address wetland loss**
- **Blackwater NWR tidal wetlands lie on the lowest geomorphic terrace on the Delmarva Peninsula.**
- **Natural creation of new tidal wetlands via landward migration will not be adequate to replace the significant loss of wetlands that has occurred.**
- **Maintenance of existing wetlands and restoration of lost wetlands on the lowest terrace is necessary if the Chesapeake Bay inventory of tidal wetlands is to be maintained for the foreseeable future.**

Why Use Dredged Material?

- **Each year the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) removes 3-4 million cubic yards of material to keep the Port of Baltimore open**
- **2006 – U.S. Army Corps Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) outlined 3 placement options for the material in the Chesapeake Bay watershed:**
 1. **Expansion of Poplar Island**
 2. **Mid-Bay Islands (Barren Island and James Island)**
 3. **Blackwater NWR/Dorchester County**
- **Successful environmental wetland restoration demonstrated at Poplar Island using dredged material (1998 – Present)**
- **Funding for Poplar Island Environmental Restoration Project is provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (75% federal) and Maryland Port Administration (25% non-federal)**
- **Army Corps used Kent Narrows dredged material to restore wetlands at Eastern Neck NWR (1994-Present)**

International Tidal Wetlands Conference

- **May 31 – June 2, 2006 at Salisbury University; 125 attendees**
- **International wetland experts from England, Italy, and various states**
- **Work groups reviewed and commented on plans to restore Blackwater NWR/Dorchester County (20,000 acre or landscape-scale wetland restoration)**
- **Partners included FWS, USGS, Army Corps, NOAA, NMFS, EPA, MD Port Administration, MD Environmental Service, Uni of MD, MD DNR, MD**

Geological Survey, LA State Uni, Uni of New Orleans, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon, National Aquarium, VA Marine Resources Commission

Demonstration Strategy Group (DSG)

- **March 2007, MD Port Administration agreed to fund design of a demonstration project to mimic the landscape-scale 20,000 acre restoration**
- **April 2007, Army Corps prepared a draft Detailed Project Report for coordination and negotiation with the MD Port Administration. The Report is awaiting internal Baltimore District review that would provide approval for public release.**
- **The Report includes several components: 1) Proposal to implement an emergency fix project at Barbados Island to prevent further wetland loss and restore wetlands (<100 acres) under Section 510 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996; 2) Project Management Plan for future Chesapeake Marshlands Restoration Study (proposed landscape-scale tidal wetlands restoration making beneficial use of dredged material from Baltimore Approach Channels in Chesapeake Bay as recommended by the Dredged Material Management Plan); and 3) Summary of activities completed under the Corps' Continuing Authorities Program Section 206 Study for Blackwater NWR.**
- **Coordination and negotiation of the Project Management Plan will not occur until additional funding is provided to support the Army Corps and MPA to review and negotiate the Plan.**
- **MD Port asked FWS to convene a meeting of the local stakeholders in a Citizen's Advisory Group (previously established in 2005 at the suggestion of the U.S. Army Corps)**

Public Meeting: "Chesapeake Bay Marshlands: Sea Level Rise and What Can Be Done About It"

- **Held May 30, 2007 in Cambridge, MD**
- **110 attendees**
- **8 presentations: U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (Global warming and threats to MD via DVD broadcast); USGS (Global warming and sea level rise); Uni of MD (Economic Costs and Benefits to wetland restoration); Army Corps (3 wetland restoration projects: Demo; Barbados; 20,000 acres); Uni of MD (Carbon Sequestration); Uni of MD (Using Dredged Material to Restore Wetlands); MD Port/GBA (Blackwater Demonstration Project); FWS (Citizen Involvement and Participation)**
- **Public Opinion Survey (60% response rate – majority favor restoring wetlands at Blackwater, Barren, and James Island)**

Dorchester County Citizen's Advisory Group (DCCAG)

- **Initial meeting July 9, 2007 at Blackwater Visitor Center**
- **Approximately 30 stakeholders to recommend which of 12 potential sites will be used to restore wetlands in Blackwater Demonstration Project and method of transportation of dredged material**

- **Coordination with MD Port Administration, Citizen's Advisory Group for Management of Dredged Material, and FWS**
- **Interim Organizing Committee (IOC) established to lead the Group**
- **Recommendation for site selection and method of transportation pending**

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

- **Initially established in 2005**
- **July 16, 2007 – meeting on 3 wetland projects and break-out groups (Biology, Hydrology, Geology, Sediments and Contaminants, Economics and Permits)**
- **Participation by partners including: USGS, Army Corps, NOAA, NMFS, EPA, MD Port Administration, MD Environmental Service, Uni of MD, MD DNR, MD Geological Survey, MD Dept of Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon, National Aquarium in Baltimore**
- **Chairs of Sub-groups identified and Co-Chairs for future direction of TAG established (Bob Shedlock, USGS and Dr. Andrew Baldwin, Uni of MD)**
- **Recommendations to expand Blackwater's web site to include information on research and monitoring projects; future grant opportunities; coordination of research and monitoring among scientific partners**
- **Scientists present results of their research at the Annual Science Meetings of the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex each year in March**

Funding

- **Funding provided by MD Port Administration (MPA) to design the demonstration project and awarded to the engineering firm of Gahagan and Bryant**
- **No federal funding has been made available to implement the Demonstration Project, Barbados Island, or the landscape-scale restoration project**
- **No funding available for Army Corps or the MD Port Administration to review the draft Project Management Plan (PMP)**
- **Senate mark-up for Senate Energy and Water Bill to provide \$200,000 for Army Corps and MD Port to execute a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement and begin review of the draft PMP with MPA and begin Chesapeake Marshlands feasibility study**
- **Funding for all projects would come through annual appropriations bills**
- **All project authorizations would come through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA); last WRDA appropriation was in 2000.**
- **WRDA 2007 is pending in conference committee (Senate version would authorize expansion of Poplar Island and Smith Island (Martin NWR) partial shoreline erosion protection**