

BALTIMORE SUN

Maritime dump to public park

Ground broken on Patapsco restoration project

By Bradley Olson

Sun reporter

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Gov. Martin O'Malley, Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon and children from Maree Farring Elementary School kicked off Earth Week by breaking ground yesterday on an environmental education center that will help anchor a \$153 million waterfront restoration project near Baltimore's Brooklyn and Curtis Bay communities.

The cleanup of 22 acres of shoreline along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River - one of the most contaminated areas in the city's harbor - has led to recovery by the Maryland Port Administration of 30,000 tons of trash, roughly the same weight as 4,000 buses, including timber, concrete, pollutant-containing electrical equipment, more than two dozen shipwrecks and nearly 200,000 gallons of petroleum-tainted water. Some of the debris dates to the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904.

The Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center will be one step in the effort to transform the maritime junkyard into a public park, wildlife preserve and marine terminal that will be built on dredged sand and dirt cleared from the harbor's shipping lanes.

"Like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, this land behind us is about to undergo a remarkable transformation," O'Malley said before the groundbreaking. "From pollution to progress, from a place where people for years and years used to dump debris and toxic stuff and everything else to a place where people can actually go with their own kids and bike and hike and yes, maybe even kayak, and enjoy the proximity of the land and the water."

The governor used the ceremony to trumpet a number of environmental reforms achieved during his administration, part of a series of events planned this week that will deal with similar topics. Today, he is scheduled to join elementary, middle and high school students from around the Baltimore region at a field trip to the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge in Laurel, after which he will testify before a U.S. House subcommittee on "Environmental Education: Teaching Our Children to Preserve Our Future."

And Thursday, he plans to sign bills the General Assembly passed during the recently concluded session dealing with the environment and energy, said his spokesman, Rick Abbruzzese.

Although a major global warming measure that sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland failed in the waning hours of the legislative session, several other environmental bills passed. They included measures to double the waterfront buffer zone on shoreline development, to require that new public schools and state buildings be built to "green" specifications, to dedicate funding to energy efficiency and conservation, to increase reliance on renewable energy and to fund Chesapeake Bay cleanup projects.

O'Malley cast the Middle Branch restoration project as part of the broader effort to step up environmental protections.

"Instead of looking at this area as a dump, we imagined what it could be," he said.

Dixon, a former elementary school teacher, urged students at the event to write a paper about its significance and asked their teacher to send her copies. She said the project is an example of what could make Maryland an example to other states.

"What we need to do is not kick off Earth Week, we should make Earth Day every day, and make it a part of our everyday living," she said. "We're taking a great dump, can you imagine, a great dump, and we're turning it into a great jewel, a great jewel that's going to benefit all of us."

The communities surrounding Brooklyn and Curtis Bay are thrilled with the change, said Carol Eshelman, executive director of the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition.

"We are so excited to have reached this stage in the development of this unique urban park," she said. "The Masonville Cove Nature Center will provide Brooklyn and Curtis Bay residents waterfront access for the first time in decades."

BALTIMORE EXAMINER

Former dump site near Baltimore Harbor to become nature center

Sara Michael, The Examiner
BALTIMORE -

A few piles of concrete and pieces of a rusted ship peeking out of the water stand as the only reminders of a 22-acre dumping ground on the edge of the Baltimore Harbor.

Soon the once-contaminated shoreline of the Patapsco River, which flows into the harbor, will become home to a park with walking paths and a nature center.

"Brooklyn and Curtis Bay have been landlocked for years, and this is one of the first opportunities to get waterfront access," said Carol Kefford Eshelman, executive director of the nonprofit Brooklyn and Curtis

Bay Coalition Inc., which has been actively involved in the site's restoration.

Community leaders and officials broke ground Monday for the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, which is part of a \$153 million project to restore the former dump for ships, timber and garbage.

"We want to leave this part of the Earth to you in a much cleaner and better shape than we received it," Gov. Martin O'Malley said to a group of fifth-graders from Maree Garnett Farring Elementary School in Baltimore City who attended the event.

The Maryland Port Administration, which owns the site, began clearing the debris last year.

Twenty-five abandoned and destroyed boats were removed from the water, along with:

- 122 tons of concrete
- 30 tons of tires
- 30,000 tons of trash
- 3,520 tons of solid waste
- More than 1,200 tons of scrap metal

Classes at the center will be run by the Living Classrooms Foundation, a Baltimore City-based nonprofit, and students from around the state can participate in a variety of hands-on environmental programs, said Scott Raymond, the foundation's vice president for education.

The center, scheduled to be open by December, will be designed to produce nearly as much energy as it uses through technology such as solar energy and a ground source heating system, Raymond said.

Baltimore City Mayor Sheila Dixon, who attended the groundbreaking, said, "We are taking a great dump and turning it into a great jewel."

MARYLAND DAILY RECORD

6-week ad campaign to gain public support for port

ANDY ROSEN

Daily Record Business Writer

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In a radio spot appearing recently on Baltimore airwaves, a grateful-sounding woman expresses her appreciation for the Port of Baltimore, the jobs it creates and the goods it brings into area markets.

The advertisement, which is concluding a six-week run around Central Maryland, was conceived and paid for by the Steamship Trade Association of

Baltimore. The campaign is not aimed toward drawing new business for the port, though. Instead, it is intended to explain to people what the port contributes to the local economy, said Michael Collins, counsel to the association, which represents companies and groups that do business at the port.

“We thought that it made sense to do something here in Baltimore, given that the port has an economic importance that maybe a lot of people don’t realize,” he said. Collins said the association decided to run the ads because its members all have a vested interest in the success of the port.

Collins said the campaign is not backing any immediate agenda, but the association did run the ads during the recently concluded General Assembly session. He said the association wants to have general support behind the Port of Baltimore as it deals with land use issues as well as the issue of dredging the harbor to make room for increasingly bigger ships.

The association got the idea from a maritime trade group in New York City, Collins said, and thought it would work here. The association wants public support for maintaining the Maritime Industrial Zoning Overlay District, which was enacted by Baltimore City in 2004 to stem increasing conflicts between mixed-use and maritime development on the waterfront.

Baltimore’s waterfront areas, many of which have access to deep water shipping channels, have become some of the most popular areas for residential, entertainment and office development. These uses can be difficult to coordinate with industry, which is often noisy and traffic intensive, and can run late into the night.

The zone prohibits developers from converting land to a non-industrial use in certain parts of the harbor, and shipping advocates want to keep it that way because port industries require costly and permanent infrastructure improvements.

William McMullen, professor of Maritime Administration at Texas A&M University at Galveston, said it can help port business to remind people of what the maritime industry brings to the community, even if the positive effects are not readily apparent.

Sometimes perceived negative effects — such as noise and traffic congestion — are more apparent than positive ones such as job creation, he said.

“People don’t use ports unless they’re going to be taking a cruise,” McMullen said. “So they’re unaware of the overall impact they have on the health ... of a region.”

Richard Scher, spokesman for the Maryland Port Administration, said dredging projects are among those that require the tightest coordination with affected communities — where the port plans to store material it brings up from the harbor floor.

An event Monday provided one example of that, as state and local officials broke ground on a project at Masonville Cove in Fairfield. The state is spending \$153 million on a cleanup project at that site, which was formerly a dumping ground for old ship parts and has been among the most contaminated parts of the city.

Masonville will become a depository for dredge material in late 2009, and accept about 16 million cubic yards by 2039. Eventually, the MPA plans a new marine terminal for the site.

Scher said the state elected to make further improvements to the area after consulting with the local community. These include a large-scale environmental cleanup and a new environmental education center at Masonville. The projects are expected to create public waterfront access for the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay neighborhoods for the first time in decades.