

Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

Baltimore, Maryland



What began as the restoration of an abandoned and contaminated area near Baltimore Harbor has grown into a nationally recognized partnership connecting the city's residents to the outdoors. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated Masonville Cove as the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership on September 26, 2013.

A thriving community once flourished at Masonville Cove. However, railroad tracks were built in the mid-1900s preventing access to the river, and the area was eventually abandoned.

The Maryland Port Administration built the Masonville Dredged Material Containment Facility, east of the cove on the Patapsco River. The facility is a repository for material dredged from Baltimore Harbor to maintain shipping channels. To mitigate impacts from the construction of the facility, the local community is working with MPA to implement a plan with three core elements: to restore Masonville Cove; to establish an environmental education facility at the site; and to secure seed funding for environmental education. Since 2007, the Masonville Cove project has resulted in the removal or recycling of more than 60,000 tons of debris, some of which is said to have originated from the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904.

The partnership has also established the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center, housed in a prototype

net-zero energy efficient building opened in 2009. Living Classrooms, the National Aquarium and other organizations have provided environmental education programming at the center since that time, as well as in the Baltimore schools since 2007. To date, they have reached more than 8,000 students and 330 teachers.

In October 2012, a portion of Masonville Cove's nature area was opened to the public. To ready the site, invasive plants, unhealthy trees, and dangerous and hazardous debris were removed from an 11-acre parcel of land. The area was capped with clean soil and is being replanted with native trees, shrubs and wetland plants. The nature area includes walking trails and offers opportunities for bird watching and fishing from a designated pier. A floating dock was installed for kayakers and canoeists. The nature area in just a few years time is planned to include 71 acres of water and 54 acres of land open for free use by the public.

In May 2013, Masonville Cove competed nationally to be designated as an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has

been working with Masonville Cove partners for almost two years to provide assistance with visitor services and wildlife management at the site.

The designation of the Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is a formal recognition of excellence under the Service's Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative. Under the initiative, the Service is striving to make the outdoors more meaningful and accessible to urban audiences. This partnership provides a cost effective, innovative way to enable urban communities to learn more about the National Wildlife Refuge System and wildlife conservation, and to gain an appreciation for the outdoors.

Living Classrooms will continue to provide environmental education opportunities, field trips, community programs and internships at Masonville Cove. The National Aquarium will provide community-based restoration opportunities, volunteer environmental monitoring training, and reach students through their field-based education programs.

Learn more at <http://www.masonvillecove.org>



Shoreline planting at Baltimore Harbor

