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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

PUBLIC HEARING

APRIL 23, 2026

Kent Island Volunteer Fire Dept.

1610 Main Street

Chester, MD 21619

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Transcription Service By: CRC Salomon

Proceedings recorded by electronic sound recording;
transcript produced by transcription service.

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APPEARANCES

ON BEHALF OF THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT:

JONATHAN STEWART

Chief of the Tidal Wetlands Division

MATT WALLACH

Eastern Region Chief, Tidal Wetlands Division

ED TINNEY

Tidal Wetlands Project Manager

1800 Washington Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21230

ON BEHALF OF THE MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY:

TEKESTE AMARE, P.E.

Deputy Director of Engineering

2310 Broening Highway

Silver Spring, Maryland 21224

P R O C E E D I N G S

- - - - -

HEARING FACILITATOR: Good evening. I am Andrew Bing, and I will be the facilitator for tonight's public hearing. A few quick announcements:

This hearing is for the Joint Federal/State Application for the alteration of any Floodplain Waterway or Tidal Wetland in Maryland for Maryland Transportation Authority's Bay Protection Design-Build Project.

I'd like to thank the Kent Island Volunteer Fire Department for the use of their facility tonight. And the restrooms are behind me, out in the lobby.

Please make sure you have signed in tonight. This will ensure that everyone is provided with updates as this process moves forward. If you would like to provide public testimony, visit the staff at the sign-in table at the front of the room to add your name to the list if you have not already done so.

If you are here for informational purposes and do not wish to provide testimony, or if you are unable to stay for the entire hearing, MDE will post a hearing of

1 the transcript online following the hearing.

2 We will start with a welcome and introductory
3 comments from the Maryland Department of the Environment,
4 followed by a brief presentation from the Applicant, the
5 Maryland Transportation Authority. After the
6 presentation, I will review the ground rules for this
7 hearing, and then we will start taking public comments.

8 Please note that MDE maintains an official
9 interested party list. To be placed on this list, you
10 must do at least one of the following: Provide your
11 contact information tonight, explicitly request to be
12 added, or submit written comments during the open public
13 comment period. Joining this list ensures you will
14 receive MDE's final decision. It also allows us to send
15 you a copy of the hearing report upon request.

16 I would now like to introduce Mr. Jonathan
17 Stewart, Chief of the Tidal Wetlands Division with the
18 Water and Science Administration of the Maryland
19 Department of the Environment and the Hearing Officer for
20 tonight's public informational hearing.

21 HEARING OFFICER: All right. Thank you,

1 Andrew.

2 Good evening. My name is Jonathan Stewart. I
3 am the Chief of the Tidal Wetland Division within the
4 Water and Science Administration at the Maryland
5 Department of the Environment. I will be the hearing
6 officer for tonight's public information hearing.

7 Also in attendance from the Department is Matt
8 Wallach, Eastern Region Chief of the Tidal Wetlands
9 Division, and Ed Tinney, Tidal Wetlands Project Manager.

10 At this time, I would like to acknowledge any
11 elected officials or their representatives who may be
12 present here this evening. If you are an elected
13 official or representing an elected official, please
14 raise your hand now to be recognized.

15 Thank you for attending this hearing. We will
16 be hearing your testimony shortly if you have signed up
17 to speak.

18 Please ensure your attendance is officially
19 recorded before the hearing concludes this evening by
20 using the sign-in sheets at the sign-up table. Your
21 registration allows us to identify tonight's speakers and

1 ensures, as attendees, you receive the final decision
2 documents, including the Tidal Division's Report and
3 Recommendation. The attendance record will also be
4 forwarded to the Board of Public Works for use in its
5 review process related to the Tidal Wetlands application.

6 Statements from the public will be heard at the
7 conclusion of the Applicant's presentation. Lastly,
8 please place all communication devices on silent mode for
9 the duration of the hearing.

10 We are conducting a public informational
11 hearing pursuant to Subsection 5-204 of the Environment
12 Article, Code of Maryland Regulations, or COMAR,
13 26.24.01.05 and 26.08.02.10F(2). The purpose of this
14 public informational hearing is for the Applicant to
15 present their proposal project regarding tidal wetland
16 impacts. In addition, the hearing provides the
17 Department with an opportunity to solicit additional
18 information from interested persons. This hearing is not
19 a contested case hearing under Maryland's Administrative
20 Procedure Act.

21 While we are here to share information, we will

1 establish a structure for the hearing regarding the order
2 and length of the presentations and statements. Please
3 be advised that it is not necessary to read a statement
4 to make it a part of the official record. Written
5 statements will also be accepted and will receive the
6 same consideration as any oral statement. In fact, for
7 accuracy, if you have written statements to read into the
8 record, please provide a copy of those statements before
9 you leave. This evening's hearing is being transcribed.

10 The statutory authority for issuance of a Tidal
11 Wetlands License is Title 16 of the Environment Article,
12 Annotated Code of Maryland, as implemented under COMAR
13 §§23.02.04 and 26.24. A State Tidal Wetlands License is
14 issued by the Board of Public Works, consisting of the
15 governor, state treasurer, and comptroller of the State
16 of Maryland, based upon a Report and Recommendation
17 submitted to the Board by the Department.

18 In accordance with the Maryland Constitution,
19 the Board is a sole body with authority over state
20 property, including State tidal wetlands. In its
21 proprietary authority, the Board has the right to grant a

1 third party a license to construct or conduct an activity
2 in State tidal wetlands.

3 According to Section 16-202 of the Environment
4 Article, the Secretary of the Department shall assist the
5 Board in determining whether to issue a license to dredge
6 or fill state wetlands. The secretary shall submit a
7 report indicating whether the license should be granted,
8 including any recommended terms, conditions, and
9 consideration, after consultation with applicable
10 federal, state, and local entities; issuance of
11 sufficient public notice and conducting any requested
12 hearing; consideration of any public comments received;
13 and consideration of any other information the secretary
14 thinks advisable.

15 In making this decision, the Board is guided by
16 the public policy of the state, considering applicable
17 ecologic, economic, developmental, recreational, and
18 aesthetic values, to preserve tidal wetlands and prevent
19 their destruction.

20 Next, I'll briefly read the regulations that
21 govern these hearings so we all know exactly how tonight

1 may proceed. Comes from COMAR 26.24.01.05E-G:

2 "An applicant and any interested persons shall
3 be given an opportunity at the informational hearing
4 to present facts and make statements supporting or
5 opposing the license. Questions may be asked of and
6 directed to the hearing officer, but answers may not
7 be provided tonight, and cross-examination shall not
8 be conducted. The hearing is not a contested case
9 hearing under Maryland's Administrative Procedure
10 Act.

11 "The order of the presentation is determined by
12 the hearing officer and may be conducted as follows:
13 introduction of the activity and participants by the
14 hearing officer; presentation of the proposed
15 project by the applicant; questions about the
16 activity; statements by the public officials;
17 statements in opposition; statements in support; and
18 closing of the public informational hearing by the
19 hearing officer.

20 "The hearing officer has the authority and duty
21 to conduct a full and fair public informational

1 hearing; act to avoid unnecessary delays and to
2 maintain order; regulate the course of the hearing
3 and the conduct of the participants; extend the time
4 period for providing supplemental written comments
5 or information for inclusion in the hearing record;
6 and rule upon a request for a continuance of the
7 hearing.

8 "At the close of the public comment period, the
9 hearing officer shall prepare an official record of
10 the public informational hearing, including
11 comments."

12 It is also the responsibility of my office to
13 evaluate requests for Water Quality Certifications or
14 "WQCs," under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which
15 requires Maryland, as the certifying authority, to
16 determine whether the discharge associated with US Army
17 Corps of Engineers, referred to as the "Corps," permit
18 application NAB-2025-61639-N43, complies with the State's
19 water quality standards.

20 The Department's authority is found in Subtitle
21 9 of the Environment Article. Each certification request

1 received through our regulatory program has specific and
2 unique issues and impacts that must be considered with
3 regard to Maryland's water quality standards. The
4 Department is neither an opponent or a proponent of any
5 project.

6 In summary, the Maryland Department of the
7 Environment is conducting a public informational hearing
8 for State Tidal Wetlands application number 25-WL-1047,
9 submitted November 19, 2025, and Clean Water Act, Section
10 401 Water Quality Certification request 26-WQC-0001,
11 which was requested January 16, 2026.

12 The Applicant has applied for an Authorization
13 for Construction of Pier Protection Structures at the
14 Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The project will include
15 construction of a protection system to the piers closest
16 to the main navigation spans that accommodate inbound and
17 outbound vessel traffic in the federal navigation
18 channel. The protection structures are designed to
19 protect the Chesapeake Bay Bridge against vessel impacts,
20 mainly the four towers supporting the main spans of the
21 Eastbound and Westbound Bay Bridges adjacent to the

1 federal navigation channel.

2 The total proposed permanent impacts are
3 147,280 square feet of fill, or 3.38 acres, within State
4 tidal waters. Mitigation for impacts to the Chesapeake
5 Bay resulting in loss of open water may be assessed.

6 There may be additional concerns related to
7 issues that are beyond the scope of this particular
8 hearing. I ask that this hearing remain focused on the
9 Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program license
10 application and request for the Water Quality
11 Certification pending before the Department.

12 At this time, I'd like to turn it back over to
13 Andrew. Thank you.

14 HEARING FACILITATOR: Thank you, Jon. Next, we
15 will hear from Tekeste Amare, Deputy Director of
16 Engineering at the Maryland Transportation Authority.
17 Tekeste will provide a short presentation of the proposed
18 project. After this, we will begin with any public
19 comments.

20 MR. AMARE: Thank you, Andrew. Good evening.
21 My name is Tekeste Amare, Deputy Director of Engineering

1 at the Maryland Transportation Authority.

2 The Maryland Transportation Authority, MDTA,
3 submitted a Joint Application and Water Quality
4 Certification request to the Maryland Department of the
5 Environment to authorize impacts associated with the
6 proposed Bay Bridge Protection Design-Build Project.

7 The proposed project is located at both spans
8 of the existing Chesapeake Bay Bridge that connects the
9 Eastern and Western Shores in Queen Anne's County and
10 Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

11 The figures on this slide show the approximate
12 limits of the proposed work. Work is not proposed within
13 the federal navigation channel. The proposed project
14 includes construction of a protection system for the
15 piers closest to the main navigation spans that
16 accommodate inbound and outbound vessel traffic in the
17 federal navigation channel.

18 The protection structures are designed to
19 protect the Chesapeake Bay Bridge against vessel impacts,
20 mainly the four towers supporting the main spans of the
21 Eastbound and Westbound Bay Bridges adjacent to the

1 federal navigation channel.

2 The purpose of the project is to protect the
3 infrastructure of the Bay Bridge and ensure the safety of
4 the traveling public by installing pier protection
5 systems. Construction is proposed from barges that would
6 be secured in place by spudding.

7 A Request for Proposals was issued in February
8 2026 seeking the services of a qualified design-builder
9 for a contract to provide complete design and
10 construction of the marine-based installation of
11 protection systems. Once a design-builder is procured,
12 construction is expected to begin in spring 2027.

13 This concludes MDTA's presentation, and I will
14 turn it back to Andrew. Thank you.

15 HEARING FACILITATOR: Thank you, Tekeste.

16 The purpose of this public hearing is to allow
17 interested parties to provide public testimony related to
18 the State tidal water impacts associated with the Bay
19 Bridge Protection Design-Build Project.

20 My role as the hearing facilitator is to run a
21 professional and orderly public hearing. I understand

1 how important these issues are, and I take my role as
2 hearing facilitator seriously. I am committed to
3 providing members of the public an opportunity to provide
4 public testimony in an organized, fair, professional, and
5 orderly manner. We look forward to hearing your
6 perspectives, but please be courteous to all speakers and
7 understand that offensive or profane language will not be
8 allowed.

9 We are interested in hearing public testimony
10 related to the Joint Federal/State Application for the
11 Alteration of any Floodplain Waterway or Tidal Wetland in
12 Maryland for the Maryland Transportation Authority's Bay
13 Bridge Protection Design-Build Project from all
14 interested individuals. Please keep in mind this hearing
15 is for the State tidal water impacts.

16 Neither the panelists nor I will respond to any
17 questions or comments. We are here to listen. Speak
18 directly and clearly into the microphone, and provide
19 your full name, address, and any organization you may be
20 representing.

21 To ensure all will be heard, there will be a 3-

1 minute time limit for public testimony and a 5-minute
2 time limit for elected officials. The time will start
3 after you introduce yourself. I will remind you when you
4 have 30 seconds remaining so you can begin to wrap up
5 your testimony. As the hearing facilitator, if you are
6 unable to conclude your comments at the end of your time
7 period, I will let you know that your time is up, and we
8 will move on to the next person.

9 As a reminder, this hearing will conclude at
10 8:00 p.m. Everyone who signs up prior to 7:00 p.m. will
11 be allowed to speak, even if we run past 8:00 p.m.
12 However, you must sign up prior to 7:00 p.m. If you sign
13 up after 7:00 p.m., you will only be allowed to provide
14 testimony if time permits. You always have the
15 opportunity to provide your comments in writing. Please
16 speak with someone at the sign-up table, and they can
17 assist you.

18 Okay. I'll start with elected officials, but
19 we do not have any elected officials who have signed up
20 to provide testimony.

21 I'll now go to the members of the public, but

1 again, no members of the public have indicated they want
2 to provide testimony. Again, if anyone would like to
3 provide testimony, you can go to the sign-up table, and
4 we'll bring you right up to provide your comments.

5 So, since we don't have anyone here who would
6 like to provide testimony, this hearing will remain open
7 until 8 o'clock tonight, but we will go into recess right
8 now. And right now, it is 6:45 p.m. I will come back at
9 7 o'clock to provide an update or sooner if someone shows
10 up who wants to provide testimony, but I will give an
11 update at seven. So, it's 6:45, and we are in recess.

12 (Recess at 6:45 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.)

13 HEARING FACILITATOR: Okay. It's 7:00 p.m. We
14 still do not have anyone here who would like to provide
15 comments or provide any testimony. So, we are going to
16 remain in recess. I'll come back at 7:20 to provide an
17 update. Again, it's 7:00, and we are in recess.

18 (Recess at 7:00 p.m. until 7:20 p.m.)

19 HEARING FACILITATOR: Still do not have anyone
20 here who would like to make any comments or provide
21 testimony. The hearing will remain open until 8:00 p.m.,

1 but for right now it's 7:20, and we will remain in
2 recess. I will come back at 7:40 for the next update.

3 (Recess at 7:20 p.m. until 7:40 p.m.)

4 HEARING FACILITATOR: Okay. It's 7:40. We
5 will remain in recess. The hearing will conclude at 8
6 o'clock. But right now, we do not have anyone here who
7 wants to provide testimony, so we are in recess.

8 (Recess at 7:40 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.)

9 HEARING FACILITATOR: Thank you for attending
10 tonight's hearing. The formal hearing record will remain
11 open until Thursday, April 30, 2026. All correspondence
12 must be postmarked or emailed by that date.

13 There are a number of sheets explaining how to
14 submit additional comments. You can find these sheets at
15 the sign-in table in the back. Please send any
16 additional comments that you would like to make for the
17 record to MDE to the following staff: by email to Matthew
18 Wallach@Maryland.gov, that's M-A-T-T-H-E-W dot Wallach,
19 W-A-L-L-A-C-H, at Maryland, Maryland spelled out, dot
20 gov. Or by mail at Maryland Department of the
21 Environment, care of Matt Wallach/2025-61639, Wetlands

1 and Waterways Protection Program, 1800 Washington
2 Boulevard, Suite 430, Baltimore, Maryland 21230.

3 After the hearing record closes, the Department
4 will review and consider all the comments it received
5 during the comment period. If necessary, the Department
6 may request additional information from the Applicant to
7 address certain comments. After all relevant issues have
8 been resolved, the Title Wetlands Division will make its
9 decision and final report and recommendations to the
10 Wetlands administrator for the Board, who shall then
11 present the proposed project for decision at a public
12 meeting of the Board in accordance with COMAR Chapter
13 23.02.04.

14 The Board's decision will be final, and there
15 will be no further opportunity for administrative review.
16 Any person withstanding may petition for judicial review
17 of the Board's decision in the circuit court of the
18 respected jurisdiction that they reside in, either Anne
19 Arundel County or Queen Anne's County. The petition for
20 judicial review must be filed within 30 days of the
21 Board's decision. The public comments received will also

1 be considered by the Department when rendering a decision
2 on the Water Quality Certification Request, 26-WQC-0001.

3 The Department is obligated to issue, deny, or
4 waive certification of the project by August 28, 2026.

5 The Department's decision and accompanying information
6 will be sent to the interested persons list, the
7 Applicant, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Any person
8 who is aggrieved by the Department's decision may appeal
9 the decision by filing a request within 30 days of the
10 publication of the WQC's decision in accordance with
11 COMAR 26.08.02.10f(4).

12 If you are unsure if you are on the interested
13 person list, for example, if you learned of the hearing
14 through MDE's website, please ensure your name is added
15 to the signature sheets at the registration desk, and
16 your name will be added to that list.

17 We appreciate your interest in this project and
18 thank you for attending tonight's hearing. The time is
19 now 8 o'clock, and this hearing is now adjourned. Thank
20 you.

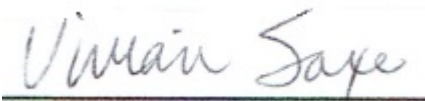
21 (At 8:00 p.m., hearing adjourned.)

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TRANSCRIBER CERTIFICATE

I, Vivian Saxe, hereby certify that I transcribed from audio file the proceedings to the best of my ability in the foregoing-entitled matter; and I further certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct transcript of the audio files produced.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have subscribed my name on the 4th day of May 2026.



Vivian Saxe, CET
Transcriber

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