

# Linkwood Public Hearing (2024-04-18 19:00 GMT-4) - Transcript

## Attendees

+1 614-\*\*\*-\*\*34, +1 737-\*\*\*-\*\*96, Amanda Sigillito -MDE-, Bill & Matt Blanchet, Christian Preziosi, Corey Novak, Kelly Neff -MDE-, Kelly Neff -MDE-'s Presentation

## Transcript

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**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** Okay, great.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** All right, good evening. I would like to welcome everyone to the Maryland Department of the environment's public information hearing for the proposed Linkwood mitigation Bank application number 23-2075 backslash twenty twenty three six zero three four zero. My name is Amanda sigillito mde. Also in attendance with me from the Department is Kelly Neff who is mitigation and Assistance section chief of the non-title wetlands Division. I would like to thank everyone for taking the time to participate in the public comment process.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** It is a responsibility of my office to evaluate applications that propose impacts to non-title Wetlands. The Department's Authority is found in subtitles five and nine of the environment article. Each application received through our regulatory program has specific and unique issues and impacts that must be considered in relationship to weighing the potential benefits and detriments of the project the department is neither a proponent nor opponent of any project. The logistics for this evening's hearing are as follows. I will make a few opening remarks about the purpose of the public information hearing and briefly lists the proposed impacts. I will then call on the Wetland Resource Center LLC for the applicant statement regarding their project. Through these required presentation the department will facilitate public statements by first calling on any elected officials or their representatives to make a statement.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** I will then call on those of you who indicate that you wish to speak. It is not necessary to read a statement to make it part of the official record written comments will also be accepted and received the same consideration as any oral statement. In fact for accuracy, if you have a letter to read into the record, I suggest you also provide us with a copy of the letter via email or regular mail. We do not permit cross-examination of the speakers during their presentation's but you may pose questions as part of your statement for our consideration in our permit evaluation. Please note that we will not be responding to questions or comments posed this evening. This venue is for the Department to hear and record your public comments. The public information hearing is being recorded and the recording will be used to facilitate the final permit decision.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** At this time, I would like to acknowledge any elected officials who may be present here this evening. If you are representing elected official. Please raise your virtual hand now to be recognized.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** All right. It doesn't look like we have anyone representing an elected official with us this evening. The department is conducting this evening's public informational hearing pursuant to subsection 5-204 of the environment article and code of Maryland regulations. Twenty six twenty three zero two zero two. The purpose of this public information hearing is that is for the applicant to present an analysis of impacts that may be associated with the proposed activity. I would like to emphasize that the purpose of this public information on hearing is to consider the application pending before the department. There may be several additional concerns related to issues that are beyond the scope of this particular hearing, but I would like to have this hearing remained focused on the proposed Linkwood Wetland mitigation Bank.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** Wetland Resource Center LLC has applied to establish an approximately 244 acre multi-user non-title Wetland mitigation bank that would include Rehabilitation enhancement and preservation of aquatic resources. This mitigation bank would provide compensatory mitigation for future non-title Wetland impacts authorized by the department in the USGS eight digit hydrologic unit code or Huck's of Tangier Pocomoke Western lower Delmarva and Choptank. The proposed mitigation project includes grading and planting that would result in approximately 38.5 Acres of wetland reestablishment 10.6 Acres of wetland Rehabilitation, 97.3 Acres of wetland enhancement, 44.4 Acres of wetland preservation, 49.6 Acres of Upland restoration and

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** 3.3 Acres of Upland preservation separate from the mitigation bank and prior to Restoration activities the areas dominated by loblolly pine will be commercially harvested following a forestry plan developed by a registered Forester. The project will temporarily impact 495,234 square feet a forested non-title wetland and 47,350 square feet of the 25 foot non-title, Wetland buffer. The project is proposed along the within the trans quaking River Watershed a use one Watershed and it's located at 5317 Linkwood in Dorchester County.

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**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** I will now ask the applicant to provide a brief presentation of their proposed project. So would you please Begin by giving us your name for the record?

**Corey Novak:** Corey Novak with Davey Resource Group representing, Wetland Resource Center

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** Great, go ahead. As soon as the presentation is up.

**Corey Novak:** All right. I'm gonna give you a brief overview of our proposed project. It's called the mitigation Bank. located at 5317 Linkwood Road that's in Dorchester County and the size located in the Tangier sound sub Basin or the Subways and is also known as a hydrologic unit code or a hook. As I said the sponsors Wetlands resource center, and we're the environmental Consultants where Davey Resource Group next slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** Hey, this is a really zoomed out map of the site. This is our Geographic service area map. As I mentioned the site is the Little Red Dot there in the center of the map that's located in the northwest corner of the Tangier hook or sub basin. The site is located only 1.4 miles from the adjacent Chop Tank

helicopter to the northwest. The other hooks or so basins that are adjacent to the teams here would be the Nana cook and the Pokemon Western blue or Delmarva next slide, please.

**Kelly Neff -MDE-:** It's stuck.

**Kelly Neff -MDE-:** There we go. That's the next one, right?

**Corey Novak:** Yeah, that's next one a little bit more zoomed in map This is the USGS topographic map. You can see our site in the center of the map there in The total property boundary is 269.3 Acres.

**Corey Novak:** I was going to use a laser pointer. It's a little bit hard to see but hopefully you can see in the northwest corner. Yeah, thanks. Kelly is the trans quaking river that begins north of the site and it flows to the South it flows through the site there in that corner and then to the West Coast Linkwood Road. That transquaking river flows eventually into fishing Bay which then flows into the Tangier sound which is part of the Chesapeake Bay. And also want to point out that to the south of our site there is the Linkwood State Wildlife Management Area. Are known as the WMA for short. a butts our site and that's protected State lands. That's a 313 Acres. So it's just a little bit bigger than our site and it's contiguous with our site. Next slide please.

**Corey Novak:** This is a really zoomed in map of the site. This is a 1995 infrared aerial photographs with the infrared lens. You can see the water you can see the Saturation in the fields there to the west and the inundation in the woods to the east you can see the river transquaking river up there in the northwest corner. And notice how the Western half of the site was an agricultural Fields there in 1995. You can see some of the ditches in those fields. Some of them are more apparent than others, but there are several digits throughout those agricultural fields,...

**Kelly Neff -MDE-:** the road

**Corey Novak:** and they all Outlet into the quaking river there to the northern part of the site. And you can also see a long Linkwood drive or liquid road on the western part of the site there. You can see that dark tone indicating saturation the soils that's the remnants of a Delmarva Bay.

**Corey Novak:** As you can see was being farmed in 1995 was still some signatures of wetness. Next slide please.

**Corey Novak:** So as I mentioned the site consists of ditch and drain former agricultural fields, and the rest of the site is in current silver cultural production. About 180 Acres of the 24 the 244 acres is our proposed conservation easement as the vast majority of the site. That's in La volley Pine stands for About 83 Acres where those fields in agricultural production that lasted until 2005 that was planted with Loblolly pond. About 97 Acres where clear-cut in the early 2000s. Those were replanted also with Loblolly between 03 and no five. And the owner of the property is going to remove the majority of the remainder of the pies prior to the start of mitigation activities as part of a Timber Harvest activity. Three main near the site includes about 37 Acres of wet hardwood Flats.

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**Corey Novak:** 11 acres of bottom lands along the river there and that Delmarva Bay that I mentioned is about seven acres. The transplating river flows through the site and we've got that Linkwood WMA to So the prior drainage for agriculture those ditches has altered the hydrology of the site next slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** This is a photo from the vegetative enhancement area, which I'll show you on a map here in a slider, too. This is the Baseline condition for the majority of the site that's in monoculture. This is a typical view of the vegetative enhancement area. And also the Wetland reestablishment area next slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** So our goals for the project are to provide high quality compensatory mitigation for permanent impacts that's in those four hooks or sub basins. I mentioned earlier. And that's via the restoration enhancement and preservation of Wetlands. Now the restoration also includes areas that historically were Wetlands, but were drained there's in the agfields trained by the ditches. So we want to restore high level functions and values that includes both our parenting Wetlands. The riparian wetlands would be those Wetlands along the river there and that are interact with the river affected by the river now hearing Wetlands would be those Wetland flesh located further upgrading.

**Corey Novak:** So the restoration includes both reestablishment and Rehabilitation, which I'll explain a little further here in a couple slides. We've got an enhancement and preservation. We want to preserve those functions because they're critical to water quality and wildlife habitat. We want to capture in store the hydrologic input that's currently showed it via those ditches hydrologic input meaning mostly precipitation and some groundwater. Goals are to improve water quality both within the Watershed and they're also will be broader effects on Regional level. I want to provide for an expand the protected wildlife habitat. and increasing landscape connectivity and that is a part of that is being adjacent to the South next slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** So this is a preliminary drawing of our conceptual mitigation plan. We are in the early stages of the project. It's a complicated map. I'm not going to go through every single unit in the legend, but I want to point out some of the larger Kelly if you could help me point out. The purple areas in the northeastern part of the site. That's our proposed weathering preservation. That area has mature Hardwoods and looks similar to the WMA. It's not affected by ditches. The dishes are shown on this map and - mostly red and blue lines. So you'll notice there aren't any ditches in the preservation areas. that large green area Eastern portion of the site. Yeah right there. That's our proposed vegetative Wetland enhancement.

**Corey Novak:** That's mostly in monoculture Pine relax material Hardwoods, but it's not affected by the ditches. There are leading ditches in there as you move to the West you get into the blue. That's our Wetland reestablishment area. Those are those fields that you can see in the 1995 area. You can see all those ditches running through there. They don't drain it made it no longer well and the yellow is the Upland buffer, which I'll explain a little bit more and slider too. But on the western side that Delmarva Bay we're showing that in Orange that's a proposed Wetland Part of the rehabilitation is that we're proposing to do some light grading to reestablish natural Contours because that was graded when they farmed it. You can see those red dashed lines in there. Are these little swales that are draining it to the West And we're also proposing to construct a small burn on the western side to try to retain hydrology.

**Corey Novak:** The green line there on the Northwestern portion of the site is the trans quaking River. On the north side of the river in the blue. We've got some proposed riparian preservation. But on the south side where the gray is. You can also see some narrow red polygons on the southern side of the river. They're spoil Burns that were placed historically when the river was dug out on channel eyes. And so we want to remove the burns and restore some interaction between the river and the floodplain. Next slide please.

00:15:00

**Corey Novak:** So this is a table basically showing what was in the previous map. And again, I'm not going to go through every line just note that all the wetlands are forested and also the Upland buffer. And some of the larger areas would be the reestablishment of 38 acres. That was the blue area in the previous map. Endpoint says Acres of Rehabilitation that includes the seven acre Delmarva Bay in a couple 93 Acres of vegetative enhancement. That was the large green area with the monoculture ponds. 37.5 Acres of preservation that was the purple with the mature Hardwoods. We got 49.6 Acres of proposed Upland buffer restoration. That was the yellow and the previous map. And we're going to restore that Upland buffer by planting native Hardwoods, and we also want to create some vernal pools for habitat. It's slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** So here's our Wheatland restoration plan. I'm going to go into each of those mitigation units as we call them and that photo on the right is the That's our reference area. That's our Vegetative Community. We got the 38 acres of reestablishment. Those are former Wetlands that were drained for agriculture and silver culture. We're gonna plant Hardwoods. Plug and fill the digits to restore hydrology because that area currently lacks hydrology. It's in common culture pond. We got the rehabilitation including that Delmarva Bay that was graded for agriculture. That area also lacks desire their target vegetation. So that's why we want to do some light grading to reestablish the natural topography and also plant native Horrors in there. Enhancement. I mean 97 Acres those are existing wetlands.

**Corey Novak:** Most of that is the vegetative enhancement where it's monoculture Pond and we want to play a Hardwoods. Some of that is all that riparian floodplain and that would be hydrologic enhancement rather than vegetative by removing those berms and increasing interaction between the river and the floodplain Next slide please.

**Corey Novak:** It's another photo of the WMA there on the Eastern side and some of those purple preservation areas on our side. Also, look very similar to that. So that's the presentation the 44.4 Acres. of undisturbed reference wetlands we've got that Upland buffer restoration, which I mentioned we want to establish the hardwoods to create some vernal pools. We got a little over three acres of Upland buffer preservation that already contains Hardwoods. And so the site protection is going to consist of a permanent conservation easement that's going to protect the site and perpetuity and that easement is either going to get into a nonprofit organization. Or we've been to some preliminary discussions with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

**Corey Novak:** So that's all highly preliminary at this point, but they've expressed some interest and if they do end up taking ownership of the site, then that would effectively expand the WMA next slide, please.

**Corey Novak:** So in conclusion, the site's been managed for agriculture and silver culture that's been happening for over 40 years. So that's resulted in a loss of degradation of some well in habitats and their functions. Drain some of the whales completely. some partially so our goal is to provide functional uplift. Through those different mitigation units the rehabilitation enhancement and preservation. And all these Wetland habitats are designed to be self-sustaining so they should require very little maintenance over the years. So the size can restore Headwater wetlands and preserve the existing wet hardwood Flats. Some wits are reference quality. We're gonna have direct water quality benefits from the project by

**Corey Novak:** taking out the drainage effect of those ditches that's going to increase hydrologic residency times, and we'll also decrease nutrient and sediment loading Downstream in the river. so one of the main goals of the project is the expansion of protected habitats, we're going to do that through the

Conservation easement that's going to protect the site and perpetuity. And we'll also expand that adjacent Wildlife Management Area. Next slide please.

**Corey Novak:** Does anyone have any questions?

00:20:00

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** All right. thank you.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** All right. I will now ask any elected officials or their representatives who may be present. If they would care to make a statement. Please limit your remarks to five minutes. I will then call on members of the general public to make a statement. Please raise your virtual hand and leave it raised until we call on you when we call your name. We will unmute you and you may begin to speak. Please start by clearly stating your name and any interest which you may be representing speakers representing a group or organization are allotted five minutes to make their remarks and individuals are a lot of three minutes for their remarks. So I don't see any virtual hands rays that we do have two people who called in. So I will ask if they would like to make a comment this evening.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** Okay, and again, you don't have to make a comment this evening. You can send in written comments afterwards and they're given as same amount of weight as any comment. This evening at the hearing.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** I don't see any virtual hands and I don't hear if anyone who would like to make a comment so last call for comments this evening before we move forward with the rest of the hearing.

**Amanda Sigillito -MDE-:** All there are no comments then we will move forward with them closing out the hearing. The hearing record will remain open for two weeks or until five pm on Thursday, May 2nd 2024. Public comments received during the public comment period will become part of the project file and will be considered by the department when rendering a decision on application number 2075 backslash 2023-60340. On behalf of the department you're interested in this project and attendance at this evenings hearing is appreciated. The hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

Meeting ended after 00:22:21 🙌