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National Aquarium Reclaims Contaminated Baltimore City Waterfront

As crucial environmental remediation project is completed, plans are unveiled for publically-accessible park

Baltimore (May 10, 2010) – National Aquarium leaders, joined by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the Environmental Protection Agency, partners and members of the business community, have unveiled plans for a publically-accessible waterfront park on its property on the Patapsco River. The once contaminated and underused property has been reclaimed through brownfield remediation work and is being transformed into an asset for the community and the environment.

“I am grateful for the National Aquarium for their role in this exciting project in South Baltimore,” said Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. “The waterfront park on remediated property will bring an eco-system back to life, and attract people to live, learn and play in South Baltimore.”

When purchased in 2007, the 12.5 acre development site at 101 W. Dickman Street was recognized as a brownfield site, created by filling a shallow flat in the river with construction and demolition debris from various projects around the city including the construction of Interstate 95. The remediation work was the first of a phased development process slated for the property.

"Just over two years ago, we stood in this same spot to present the National Aquarium with a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields check," said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "Here we are today with our partners recognizing that this site -- instead of languishing as a polluted, empty lot -- will now become part of a growing economy and a true asset for the community."

Potts & Callahan, Inc. was retained by the National Aquarium last fall to oversee the remediation project. The primary ground remediation work included installation of 18” to 24” of certified clean soil across the entire site, followed by the installation of grasses to stabilize the soil. In addition, all illegally dumped debris, trash and invasive grasses were removed from the site, repairs made to the damaged shoreline, and a vegetated swale installed to manage storm water. In total, over 7,500 tons of debris and hazardous materials were removed. The final pieces of the project will include asphalt repairs to the existing parking and the construction of a small visitor parking lot with landscape development.

The land’s transformation will continue with the development of a publically-accessible waterfront park. The park will include public access to the waterfront with native plantings, trails, a pier, and four overlook areas where people can sit and view the Patapsco River. The trails will eventually connect to the Gwynn’s Falls hiking and biking trail, providing a vital link between this waterfront and downtown. The park will be developed by the City of Baltimore, and is expected to be completed by Spring 2011.

“At the National Aquarium, our mission is to offer transforming experiences that inspire people to enjoy, respect and protect the aquatic world,” commented Dave Pittenger, Executive Director of the National Aquarium. “We are looking forward to working with the City to return this land to a place of respite and enjoyment of the natural world, and we hope that the park becomes a place where people can strengthen their connection to their Chesapeake Bay birthright.”

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The National Aquarium received Federal support for site remediation and park development, including a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Funding has also been secured from public and private sources, including State sources such as the Maryland Department of the Environment. The Aquarium is especially grateful for the continued support of Congressman Elijah Cummings, Congressman John Sarbanes, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Senator Barbara Mikulski, Senator Ben Cardin and former Senator Paul Sarbanes. Other partners for this project include Ayers St. Gross, RKK, CapEx Advisory Group and Coastal Resources, Inc.

This is not the first time the National Aquarium has been involved in revitalizing a city waterfront property: in the late 70s, with plans for revitalization of the Inner Harbor in their infancy, the Aquarium began building on Pier 3, then the middle of a blighted industrial area.

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