

**Mill Swamp Ecological Restoration  
Whole Watershed Act Public Meeting Summary  
December 10, 2025**

**Attendees from JMT:**

- Catherine Hoy, Project Manager
- Kristina Higgins, PE, Lead Designer
- Steve Pawlak, Restoration Specialist

**Quick recap**

The meeting introduced JMT as the project manager and sponsor of Mill Swamp Mitigation Bank Ecological Restoration Project, with Catherine Hoy explaining their funding commitment and project objectives. The team discussed the project's design, ecological assessment, and restoration plans, including hydrological and grading plans, revegetation strategies, and monitoring requirements for the next 10 years. Concerns were raised about the project's transparency, scientific data, and cultural impacts, with community members expressing opposition to the private company profiting from environmental mitigation while disrupting local heritage and natural resources.

**Next steps**

- JMT: Respond to all written questions submitted by participants by December 19th (or after the extended comment period, if changed).
- JMT: Post meeting recording, meeting minutes, and presentation materials on the project website by December 17th. (Recording will be posted by December 31<sup>st</sup>)
- JMT: Post draft report with background information on the project website.
- JMT: Address all comments from the current and previous public hearings in the resubmittal to MDE.
- JMT: Note and consider consulting with Mount Vernon Viewshed Committee regarding potential viewshed impacts, as raised by participants.
- JMT: Extend the public comment period to at least 30 days after the meeting (and consider 60 days as requested), ensuring it extends beyond the holiday period.
- JMT: Resubmit updated project documentation to MDE and Army Corps by end of January.

- JMT: Provide copy of typed meeting comments to attendees who signed in and/or provided email addresses.

## **Summary**

### **JMT-Sponsored Mill Swamp Restoration**

The meeting introduced JMT, an engineering and architectural firm, as the project manager and sponsor of the mill swamp mitigation bank ecological restoration project. Catherine Hoy, the project manager, explained that JMT is funding the project and emphasized their commitment to its success, noting that they have never had a failed project. The team discussed the project's background, objectives, and design, highlighting their focus on ecological restoration and conservation. They also addressed the importance of keeping questions and comments related to the project and requested that participants use the chat function for online attendees.

### **Stream Restoration Project Public Meetings**

JMT explained that a stream restoration project on private property requires public meetings due to the Whole Watershed Act a new as of July 1, 2025, MDE regulation, with notifications extending beyond the 200-foot requirement to adjacent properties. The project involves three landowners, with plans to preserve and restore wetlands and streams across 23 acres that will be placed under conservation easement. The team has completed pre-submission meetings with Charles County and coordinated with various agencies including MDE, Army Corps, and Department of Natural Resources, with the goal of creating an environmentally diverse ecosystem and addressing flooding issues on Fenwick Road.

### **Ecological Restoration Plan Presentation**

JMT presented a detailed ecological assessment and restoration plan for a site, highlighting impairments such as erosion and habitat loss due to historical agricultural activities. The project aims to restore 16 acres of forested wetlands, 4,000 linear feet of perennial streams, and 500 linear feet of intermittent streams, with minimal tree removal of 23 trees, including 6 specimen trees. The design approach focuses on creating a contiguous ecosystem by preserving existing resources and using log boulder step structures to restore stream channels. The team will access the site from Marshall Hall Road, with staging and stockpile areas set up nearby.

### **Wetland Restoration and Monitoring Plan**

JMT explained the hydrological and grading plans for a wetland restoration project, which involves preserving existing high-quality wetlands and creating new ones through minimal grading. They detailed the revegetation plan, which includes planting over 4,400 trees and

1,800 shrubs, as well as the monitoring and adaptive management requirements for the next 10 years. The project will be handed over to the North American Land Trust after 10 years of monitoring, ensuring long-term stewardship of the restored wetlands.

### **Wetland Restoration and Flood Mitigation**

JMT presented the project involving wetland restoration and flood mitigation, explaining that it would take 6-8 months to build and would initially resemble a construction site before greening up. She addressed concerns about flooding on Fenwick Road, clarifying that the project would focus on reducing water flow in that area and would not increase the 100-year floodplain. JMT also discussed the project's history, noting that some landowners were dropped due to property owner changes and forested areas, and mentioned that the previous sponsor was NextEra.

### **Mill Swamp Mitigation Bank Discussion**

The meeting focused on a proposed mitigation bank project in Mill Swamp, where Joshua Kaufman and Ken Bawer raised concerns about transparency, scientific data, and cultural impacts. JMT discussed the project's purpose, which involves selling credits to developers to offset environmental impacts, and explained that their firm is paying for the project. The team addressed questions about floodplain considerations and climate change, acknowledging the need for further analysis. They noted that the current stage is 60% complete, with plans to post meeting materials online and MDE could potentially hold another public hearing after resubmission of the permit application.

### **Stream Restoration Project Concerns**

Ken raised concerns about the effectiveness of stream restoration projects, citing scientific studies that showed most projects did not improve stream biology or water quality. He criticized the proposed project for not addressing the root cause of erosion and questioned the financial benefits and guarantees for the project's structural integrity. Catherine explained that JMT would monitor the project for 10 years and that the long-term steward would ensure its functionality in perpetuity, with financial responsibility resting on JMT.

### **Wetland Mitigation Bank Opposition**

The meeting focused on concerns about a proposed wetland mitigation bank project on Fenwick Road, with community members expressing opposition to the private company profiting from environmental mitigation while disrupting local heritage and natural resources. The discussion revealed tensions between the project's financial incentives for landowners and the community's environmental justice concerns, particularly regarding the impact on African American residents and the broader environmental impact of Charles

County's development. The project team, including Kristina and Catherine, explained their timeline for resubmission to MDE in January after addressing public comments, while also acknowledging the need for better community outreach and coordination with Mount Vernon regarding viewshed impacts.