

# A New Landscape at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

By Mike Tarquini

During the summer of 2019, the Museum decided to embark on a project to remove the existing foliage in front of the building and replace it with new landscaping. We partnered with Liam McKaig (*an Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 238, Hickory, MD*) who made this effort his Eagle Scout Service Project. Teams comprised of members of Troop 238 and some friends of the Decoy Museum in conjunction with some commercial partners began the project in earnest on Labor Day weekend.



**Stumps and roots from overgrown foliage is removed by JK Pierce, along with old soil near the Museum building.**

**Stage I** of the project involved the planning for the entire effort. It was learned early on that the Museum property lies in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and all new foliage was required to be Maryland native plants. Working closely with commercial partners Diane Klair (*City of Havre de Grace Planning*), John Akehurst (*Akehurst Landscaping*) and David Farrow (*Holly Hill Farm*), Liam and his team arrived at a concept that satisfied all the requirements of the City of Havre de Grace and the Decoy Museum. Special thanks to John Akehurst for drawing a concept from which we worked.

**Stage II** of the project involved the removal of all existing foliage. This stage went according to plan and presented no complications that were unexpected. The existing foliage was cut down using hand tools and the roots were removed using a small backhoe and hauled away for disposal. The soil was sampled, chemically tested and determined to be deficient to sustain the new plants. We were advised by one of our partners, Holly Hill Farm, to remove twelve inches of soil and replace it with more suitable top soil to give the new plants their best chance for survival.

**Stage III** saw all the old soil excavated, hauled away and replaced with new soil. This stage was heavily dependent on DXI Construction (*a local contractor who provided heavy equipment and dump trucks*). Prior to



**New soil is added to the landscape area and raked prior to planting.**



**Liam McKaig and David Farrow discuss plant placement on planting day.**

the soil replacement, it was discovered that the stucco was delaminating on parts of the Museum's exterior walls. Mark Gorrera (*Imark Builders*) was gracious enough to make the repairs and repaint the parts of the building that required it at no cost. The old soil removal proved much more challenging than originally expected. The drought conditions of the late summer/early fall made excavation very difficult. The new soil (*provided at no charge by DXI Construction*) was placed onto our site

**DXI Construction furnishes a rubber tire backhoe and dump truck to aid in old soil removal.**







**Scouts take a break for a photo with partner DXI Construction dump truck.**

without complication. Liam and his team completely hand raked the landscape areas and removed all rocks and debris that were present. A few large landscape boulders (*obtained at Wirtz & Daughters, Joppa, MD*) were used to accent the planting area.

The last stage of the project **Stage IV** saw 286 Maryland native plants (*provided by Holly Hill Farm at a reduced cost*) planted in our landscape area. David Farrow graciously came to lay out each plant to ensure its placement was consistent with the landscape plan. Once the plants were in position, Liam and his team dug the holes and inserted the plants. Once an area was planted, Liam led a separate team of volunteers to spread mulch (*provided at a reduced cost by Wirtz & Daughters*). Once the mulching was complete, the entire area was cleaned, and the excess mulch was relocated to the rear of the Museum for future use.

As an accent to our new landscape project, the Museum Board of Directors approved the contracting of Harris Metalsmith Studio (*Perryville, MD*) to design and fabricate full-size, three-dimensional aluminum flying waterfowl that give the appearance of flying from the Museum landscape area towards the Susquehanna Flats. It is currently envisioned that geese and canvasback ducks will be used. We thank County Executive Barry Glassman and Harford County Government for their generous support of this outdoor art project. It is our intention to light this outdoor artwork using LED lights and repair the pole lighting in the same area to provide an inviting area for visitors to the Promenade.

Liam McKaig and the Museum would like to thank the many volunteers that made this project successful. Special thanks to

James K. Pierce for operating all heavy equipment and dump trucks. His countless volunteer hours were instrumental for the success of this project. Liam and the Decoy Museum would like to thank the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl who provided major financial support to this effort. The Museum extends our thanks to Liam McKaig for his tireless effort in completing this project. We wish him luck as he completes his Eagle Scout requirements. We look forward to seeing our new Eagle Scout at the Museum on Friday, May 1 when we plan to reveal the new outdoor artwork.

**All plants are planted and mulch is added to produce a finished project.**

