



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY

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July 29, 2011

The Honorable Jon Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Jarvis,

Thank you for visiting Delaware and meeting with Governor Jack Markell and our team to discuss President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative. We greatly appreciate the strong partnership that we enjoy with Secretary Salazar and across the entire Department of Interior and we are extremely excited about the potential to make further progress on key conservation and recreation projects in our state through the Initiative.

We are grateful for the numerous existing partnerships between Delaware and the Department of Interior. We have been working closely with our Senior Senator Thomas Carper and the National Park Service to advance the possibility of a physical National Park Service presence in the First State. We are also collaborating with NPS on America's first national water trail, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, which we recently dedicated along Delaware's majestic Nanticoke River. In addition, we are engaged with the Fish and Wildlife Service through our No Child Left Inside initiative and our state and federal wildlife refuges; with the newly constituted Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement as we pursue development of one of the nation's first offshore wind farms; and with the U.S. Geological Survey as we prepare our state to adapt to emerging climate impacts.

Building upon our successful collaborations in the past, we would like to advance three projects for inclusion as part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative:

Transforming Delaware's Bayshore into a World-Class Conservation & Recreation Area

The Delaware Bayshore is widely recognized as an area of national, hemispheric, and global ecological significance. Many experienced birders and avid hunters know that Delaware's Bayshore natural areas and agricultural landscape offer some of the very best birding and hunting on the East Coast. Extensive undeveloped coastal marshes, beaches, and agriculture lands support more than a half-million shorebirds annually during both spring and fall migration, including the

Delaware's Good Nature depends on you!

soon to be listed Red Knot. Thousands of horseshoe crabs spawn on the beaches in May and June supply vital shorebird sustenance. Bayshore marshes are home to breeding rails, sparrows and wrens. While herons, egrets, and terns gather in great aggregations to feed in marsh pools during the heat of summer. Forests along the Delaware Bayshore are vital to songbirds seeking a place to rest and refuel during migration, and in autumn raptor flights transgress the mouth of Delaware Bay. More than a dozen species of ducks, geese and other waterfowl jostle for space in coastal impoundments in late fall and winter brings with it clouds of Snow Geese creating a white-out effect as they settle in harvested farm fields and tidal marshes. We believe this region is worthy of designation as America's first "National Bayshore."

Following a half century of focused attention and investment, more than half of the Bayshore region, extending from Delaware City (Pea Patch Island) to Cape Henlopen State Park, is protected as refuges, wildlife areas, agriculture preserves, parks and cultural heritage sites (attached map illustrates that 55% of prime habitat is already protected, including Prime Hook and Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuges; 119,559 of 215,873 acres protected in Delaware). This specific project proposed for the AGO Initiative would leverage Federal, State and private resources to conserve, restore, and expand access to the globally significant wildlife habitat of the Delaware Bayshore, including evaluating the potential for establishing the area as America's first "National Bayshore." This project will build upon the legacy of former Governor Russell W. Peterson, who recognized the ecological significance of this region forty years ago and proposed the landmark Delaware Coastal Zone Act to protect the Bayshore from industrial development, and serve as model for the restoration of the entire shore of the Delmarva peninsula. Most importantly this project will provide unparalleled access to a world-class wildlife destination for 30 million Americans who live within a three hour drive (10 percent of the U.S. population).

While significant resources have been invested in this global treasure, now is the time to embark together upon a comprehensive package of improvements needed to make the Delaware Bayshore a premier global destination for wildlife-related recreational opportunities. Protection, enhancement, and promotion of the Delaware Bayshore as a world-class birding and wildlife-watching destination will link the significant economic impact that local businesses receive from visitors with the intrinsic value of the area's natural resources. Coordinated landscape-level conservation among federal, state and local agencies, private conservation organizations, private landowners, and local communities will ensure a diverse natural legacy for future generations and provide quality recreational opportunities for novice and elite birding enthusiast alike, hunters and anglers, casual wildlife watchers, families seeking outdoor opportunities to recreate and learn about nature, and young families seeking outdoor adventures and escape from the technical inundation of their daily lives.

With the Bombay Hook and Prime Hook Federal Wildlife Refuges and several State and NGO wildlife areas providing a solid foundation, additional Federal attention to this region would align the efforts of many partners engaged in protecting this region through existing initiatives:

Key Partners: The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, the Delaware Nature Society (affiliate of National Wildlife Federation), Delaware Wild Lands, the Delaware Ornithological Society, Ducks Unlimited, Delaware Chapter of the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, American Birding Association, American Bird Conservancy, Delaware Greenways, Bike Delaware, among others.

Alignment with State Initiatives: Open Space and Farmland Preservation Programs; Delaware's No Child Left Inside initiative; Delaware's Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise Adaptation Strategy; development of the First State Bike Trail Network and Route 9 Coastal Heritage Scenic Byway; Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; Bicycling in Delaware Program; Delaware Birding Trail; and the State's economic development and tourism strategy.

National/Regional Initiatives/Designations: Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network; Audubon/ABC Important Bird Area Designation; Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve; Delaware Wildlife Action Plan; North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative; the Northeast Regional Conservation Need Program; the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and North American Wetlands Conservation Act; and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation projects.

International: The Delaware Estuary is recognized as a wetland complex of global importance according to the Ramsar Convention.

Realizing the vision of the Delaware Bayshore becoming a premier global destination for birding, wildlife watching, hunting, and outdoor recreation requires a comprehensive approach, all of which aligns with the President's Initiative:

1. *Land and Waterway Conservation*: Expand landscape-level conservation, farmland preservation, and habitat connectivity through acquisition/easement of unprotected lands.
2. *Ecological Restoration*: Enhance critical habitat and restore waterways to support native flora and fauna, including adopting green infrastructure techniques to reduce flooding, improve water quality, and adapt to climate impacts; nourishing beaches to maintain horseshoe crab spawning sites and critical bird habitat; and removing invasive species.
3. *Resource Protection*: Coordinate enforcement of existing regulations that prohibit trespass, vandalism, poaching, and disturbance to wildlife and habitats.
4. *Connectivity with Local Communities and Waterways*: Focus strategic infrastructure investments to connect wildlife areas to urban centers by enhancing the Route 9 Coastal Heritage Scenic Byway, the Chesapeake/Delaware Canal Trail, local hiking trails, and navigable waterways (low-impact canoeing, kayaking, etc).
5. *Safe and Healthy Recreational Experiences*: Improve water quality to protect swimmers, seafood consumers, and other users and increase fish and shellfish populations to maximize enjoyment of outdoor recreational experiences.
6. *Access Enhancements*: Ensure safe, aesthetically pleasing, and more rewarding wildlife-viewing, photography, and other recreation opportunities in both urban and rural areas.
7. *Visitor Engagement/No Child Left Inside*: Focus educational programming, interpretation, and recreational efforts on inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards. Utilize multimedia and technology to educate, inform and instill in visitors an appreciation for the value of wildlife and habitats at access points and viewing areas.

8. *Marketing*: Coordinate with local communities, tourism offices, local business, and residents to aggressively promote the area regionally, nationally and internationally.
9. *Volunteerism Promotion*: Engage local residents, community groups, service organizations, schools and business to instill a sense of ownership and stewardship.

Establishment of the First State National Historical Park

We strongly support Senator Carper's tireless efforts to establish a National Historical Park in Delaware. While Congress considers this proposal, we stand ready to assist in any way we can to make this vision a reality. We believe that the First State National Park and the proposed Delaware National Bayshore initiative complement each other perfectly by connecting Delaware's key historical sites with Delaware's rich natural heritage. Together, these efforts will provide world-class historical and environmental experiences for all visitors to Delaware.

Restoration of the Nanticoke River Watershed

The Nanticoke River watershed (part of the Chesapeake Basin) supports an abundance of rare fauna and flora, while serving as the economic engine and recreational epicenter of the southwestern Delaware. The State has developed a comprehensive restoration plan for the Nanticoke River Watershed, which focuses on accelerating land conservation and ecological restoration activities with specific attention to headwaters, forests, habitat, cultural resources, buffers, recreational water access, flood mitigation, and lands most at risk from climate impacts.

Delaware is also partner with the Chesapeake Bay Program and is working in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture to achieve water quality goals and the required nutrient and sediment load reductions through our Watershed Implementation Plan, which provides a comprehensive approach to improve water quality and restore streams and wetlands throughout the Bay watershed.

In addition, the State has dedicated significant resources and effort towards promoting and enhancing access to the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail (Nanticoke River segment), which we view as a tangible initiative to raise public awareness of environmental conditions, engage youth, increase citizen-based stewardship, encourage recreation (water and hiking/biking trails), and promote ecotourism.

This specific AGO project would focus on accelerating implementation of Delaware's comprehensive ecological restoration plan for the Nanticoke River watershed and enhance the Captain John Smith Trail by leveraging additional investment for resource conservation and demonstrating best management practices. This project incorporates all of the strategic priorities of AGO, including engaging youth, providing urban recreational opportunities, expanding access to waterways, conserving wildlife habitat and protecting rural landscapes.

We believe that undertaking the three projects proposed above will significantly advance the vision and promise of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. We deeply appreciate President Obama's leadership in land conservation, as demonstrated through both AGO and the recommendation for full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the first time in decades. We believe that targeted investment of LWCF resources towards the projects identified above will go a long way in achieving our shared objectives. The importance of LWCF cannot be

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overstated, as reflected in our grant and community assistance programs for local governments. We have been able to direct investment in our state's outdoor recreation estate effectively and equitably by providing hundreds of local grants to small towns throughout the First State. These funds play a critical role in promoting conservation and recreation, particularly in rural communities which are generally unable to compete in national grant processes. For this reason, we encourage that the pool of funds continue to be as large and flexible as possible, rather than redirected from the state programs to a single nationally-competitive process.

On behalf of Governor Markell, we are ready to go here in Delaware! As the agency responsible for improving the quality of Delaware's air, land, and water, protecting wildlife and fisheries, and providing safe access to environmentally sustainable recreational opportunities, we are well positioned to bring together all of the necessary elements to advance a small but significant piece of America's Great Outdoors. Please let us know how best to proceed.

*We look forward
to working together!
-C*

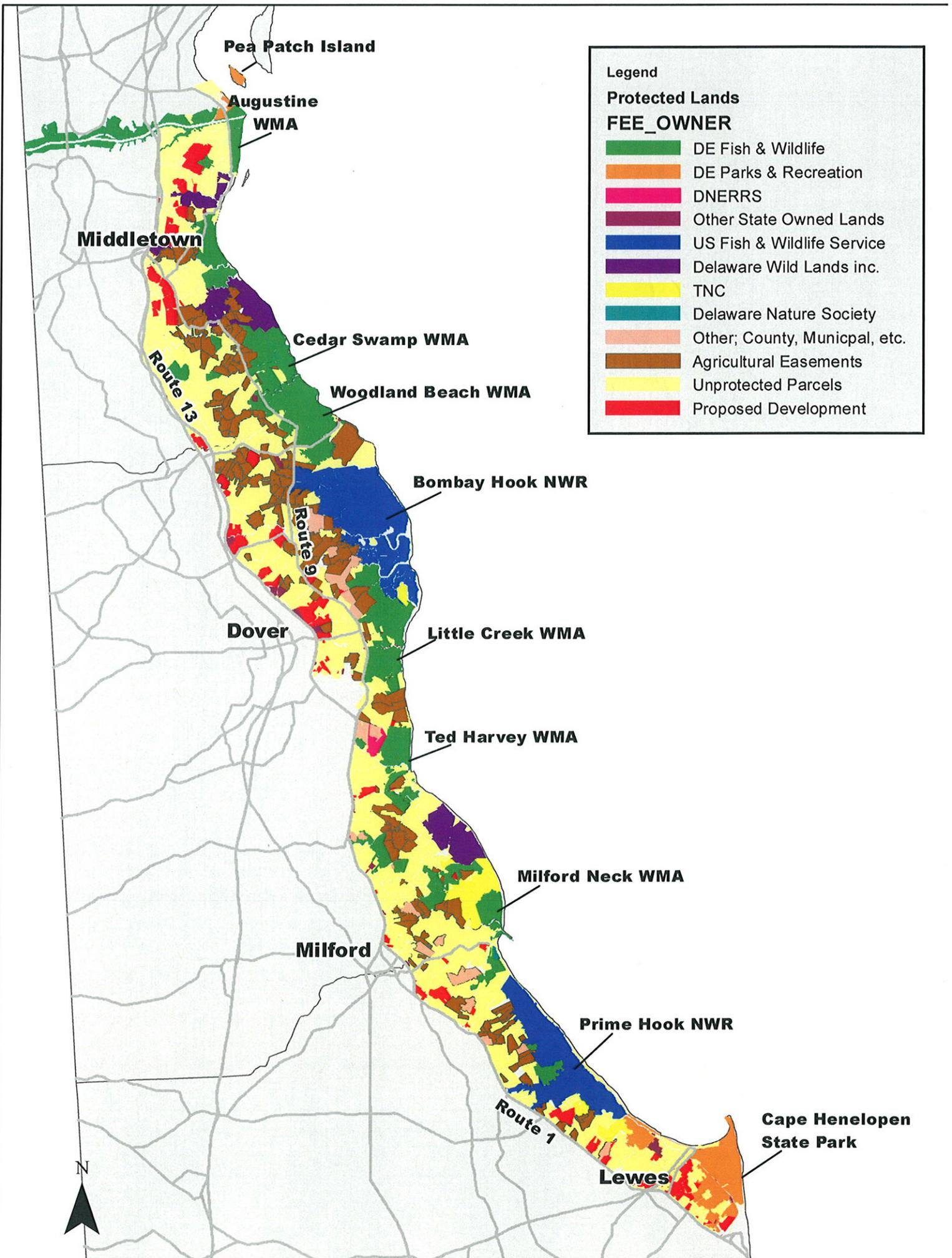
Sincerely,



Collin P. O'Mara
Secretary

cc: The Honorable Jack A. Markell, Governor

Enclosure



Pea Patch Island

Augustine WMA

Middletown

Route 13

Cedar Swamp WMA

Woodland Beach WMA

Bombay Hook NWR

Route 9

Dover

Little Creek WMA

Ted Harvey WMA

Milford Neck WMA

Milford

Prime Hook NWR

Route 1

Lewes

Cape Henlopen State Park

