

# Frequently Asked Questions for use of the Mallard Lodge

## *Who operates the Lodge and how is it funded?*

The Mallard Lodge is operated by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), Division of Fish and Wildlife, as an environmental education facility for its Aquatic Resources Education (ARE) Program. Primary funding comes from grants provided through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sport Fish Restoration Program.

## *Who may use the Lodge and for what purposes?*

Lodge use is primarily focused on accommodating school and youth groups participating in fishing, wetland field studies and other aquatic education activities in the surrounding ponds, marshes and Delaware Bay habitat areas. It is also available for use by governmental agencies and other conservation or education organizations for holding meetings, retreats, workshops, or conferences. The Lodge is not available for use by other groups or for parties or other non-work-related activities.

## *Is there a fee for use of the Lodge?*

In the past, fees were only charged for non-aquatic education groups, but due to recent operating cost increases, along with diminished funding, a modest fee structure has been instituted for all users. Fees for groups engaged in approved aquatic education programs are \$50 per day and \$50 per night, with typical costs for a weekend (check-in Friday night/check-out Sunday mid-day) totaling \$200. Non-aquatic education group users pay rental fees of \$175 per full day/night or \$100 per half-day. All groups are also required to submit a separate \$100 damage deposit to secure their reservation (deposit to be returned upon satisfactory attention to all Lodge care/check-out procedures).

## *Are there any other requirements for use of the Lodge?*

All groups requesting a fee reduction for aquatic-education focused use of the Lodge, must submit an Aquatic-ed activity planner & fee-waiver form and a detailed agenda with their reservation packet. At least one group leader is also required to attend an ARE-staff facilitated facilities use orientation training as a pre-requisite to bringing a group to the Lodge. Trainings are offered at several times of the year. Information on registering for trainings can be obtained by calling 302-735-8689.

## *Are there any restrictions on times of use?*

Due to funding issues, the Lodge is closed to group use between December 1 and March 1. Weekend use during the rest of the year is restricted to approved aquatic-education groups only, thus requiring that all non-aquatic users limit their visits to weekdays within the March through November timeframe. Due to the high demand for Lodge use and limited number of weekends available, group reservation of the Lodge is limited to no more than 1 weekend per season per group and two for the whole year.

## *How long in advance does one generally need to reserve use of the Lodge?*

Reservations for spring and fall weekends are in especially high demand and typically fill up six months to as far as a year ahead. Weekday availability is much more doable in the short term, although in recent years - during the especially high-use months of April, May and June - date options have also become more limited. We suggest planning well enough ahead to make your reservation requests if you wish to be sure of availability to accommodate your group during these busy use periods.

### *How are facilities reserved?*

Reservation request materials and information can be obtained by contacting AREC Administrative Specialist, Pearl Franklin at (302) 735-8689, [pearlie.franklin@state.de.us](mailto:pearlie.franklin@state.de.us). If you have specific dates in mind, she can provide information on availability, and follow-up by passing along the forms required for requesting a reservation. Once the initial reservation forms have been returned and dates reserved, additional materials, along with information on fees required, will be provided to secure the reservation. Separate checks - payable to "Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife" - should be submitted for rental fees and damage deposit. We are currently working on establishing an option for credit card payments. E-mail communication is the preferred process for handling send-out and submission of all forms, with U.S. mail available as the alternative for those without internet access.

### *What are the procedures for picking up and returning keys?*

When reservations are confirmed for a group, the group leader will be provided with an access code to the lockbox located next to the front/main entrance door to the Lodge. This lockbox contains two key ring chains, each having two keys. The larger key opens the Lodge doors and the smaller one accesses the small shed next to the AREC pavilion that contains all the equipment, activity kits and selected gear available for use by visiting groups.

### *How many people does the Lodge accommodate?*

The Lodge has 5 bedrooms on the second floor and one on the third floor that can accommodate a total of 34 people. All beds are twin, and many are bunk-style. Two additional Murphy style twin beds are available in the handicapped-access bedroom off the lobby on the first floor.

### *Are pets allowed?*

Absolutely no pets are allowed in the Mallard Lodge at any time.

### *Is staff available in support of environmental education activities at the center?*

Due to limited funding support, and the wide variety of other programs offered through ARE, staff is generally unavailable to help facilitate environmental education activities for groups using the Lodge. Orientation workshops, along with a wealth of equipment and activity kits targeting different age levels and aquatic education topics, are provided for use by group leaders in helping them build an effective environmental education program appropriate to their group needs during their visit.

### *What outdoor amenities are available in support of environmental education experiences?*

Given its location within the Woodland Beach Wildlife Area, and its proximity to extensive Delaware Bay bordering marshlands, ponds, tidal streams and other natural areas, the Lodge offers a wealth of natural world wonders for exploration and immersion. Prescribed amenities include a 940-foot tidal salt marsh interpretive boardwalk, two catch-and-release fishing ponds, a wildlife observation blind, an outdoor classroom/pavilion, a canoe/kayak launch area, and trails connecting the various areas.

### *Are there any restrictions on use of the boardwalk, canoes, and nature trails?*

Yes. On Tuesdays through Fridays in fall (September through mid-November), and spring (mid-March through the end of May), the area between the Pavilion and the Boardwalk area are reserved for the fifth grade *Eco-Explorers* school field trip programs between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

### *What do Lodge visitors need to bring for their overnight stay?*

Visitors need to bring their own pillows, linens, blankets and/or sleeping bags, as well as bath towels, soap, shampoo and other personal care items.

### *What bathroom facilities does the Lodge provide?*

There are 3 half-bath restrooms on the ground floor, men's and women's bathrooms (each with 2 showers, sinks and toilets) on the 2nd floor, and two additional restrooms (with individual shower/sink/toilet units) on the 3rd level. The handicapped access bedroom on the lower level also offers a full bathroom with walk-in (and wheelchair transfer) shower facilities.

### *What is offered in the way of kitchen/dining facilities?*

Seating for 40 is available in the dining area. The kitchen is equipped with a commercial gas range/oven, three-sink unit, microwave, coffee maker, and refrigerator. All food, utensils, pots, pans, dishes, cleaning supplies, paper products, etc. must be provided by the user groups. Thorough clean-up of these facilities and removal of all unused food is required upon check-out.

### *Is there a source for ice at the Lodge facility?*

A commercial icemaker is located in the first floor utility alcove on the parking lot side of the Lodge. The icemaker is NOT to be used as a freezer, and groups who do so will be charged an additional fee to have the ice bin emptied, sterilized and re-filled with ice.

### *Is the tap water at the Lodge drinkable?*

Although the Lodge well water is tested by Public Health regularly, and a chlorination system is in place to provide treatment, the water tends to be high in iron and sulfur which imparts an off-taste that some people find unpleasant. To provide an alternative, a bottled water jug system is provided in the dining room for use in drinking, cooking and making coffee. Groups are asked to provide their own source of water and beverages for field trips and other uses.

### *Are food provision or catering services available?*

All arrangements for catering must be made by the user group. The Lodge/AREC staff cannot recommend or contact caterers for user groups. Caterers (or user groups) are expected to provide clean-up and removal of excess foods and food containers following service.

### *Are campfire and fireplace facilities available?*

Thanks to that same BSA Troop 283 group, the Lodge offers a totally refurbished outdoor firepit, complete with strong wooden benches, graveled-in ground area, and a double-ringed fire stone campfire circle. Groups must supply their own firewood. Due to concerns about invasive forest pests, all wood brought in must be from local/in-state sources. No pallets or other scrap lumber containing screws, nails and other such material should be burned. The Lodge living room also features a working fireplace (for cold-weather season use only). The same requirements for bringing in local source wood apply here. **NO COOKING** of any kind, including the roasting of marshmallows, is permitted in the indoor fireplace! Both fireplace and firepit fires must be fully extinguished before check-out.

### *Are there facilities available for doing cookouts?*

Thanks to impressive work by Boy Scout Troop 283 from Newark during the summer of 2014, the Lodge features a fully-equipped stone outdoor grill unit, with a wide cooking surface and two large removable trays (adjustable for charcoal and/or wood fire cooking). Groups must provide their own wood and charcoal, and are asked to see that the grill is cleaned and ashes emptied before check-out.

### *What meeting amenities are available?*

A monitor, cart, DVD and VCR players, and stereo system are available in the living room area. Pull-down screens (for projecting programs) are provided in both the living and dining area, but visitors will need to supply their own LCD projector (and any other A/V equipment needed). There is currently no cable or other form of TV reception available at the Lodge.

### *Is internet or computer access provided?*

We now have WiFi at the Lodge! This works best in the downstairs areas. Internet access is also available via a visitor desktop PC located in the 1st floor handicapped-access bedroom off the Lodge lobby. A laminated instruction sheet for use of the Lodge computer and WiFi is posted in this room.

### *Are phones available for Lodge visitors?*

Cell phone coverage in and around the Lodge is unreliable. Messages and routine calls should not be directed to the ARE Center office phones. In case of emergency, a land-line phone is available for group leader use in the handicapped access bedroom (adjacent to Lodge lobby). Users must dial '9' to get an outside line before dialing the call-out number. The number for this phone (for emergency calls coming into a Lodge visitor from outside) is 302-653-2847.

### *What emergency procedures do lodge users need to be aware of?*

Emergency procedures (including staff contact numbers) are posted in several places at the Lodge. Any true emergencies should be called into the Kent County Emergency Dispatch Center by dialing 911. Group leaders are asked to use the small blackboard in the lobby to tally numbers staying at each sleeping level in case of fire emergency. Instructions for cancelling false alarms are posted on the wall near the door to the handicap-access 1st floor bedroom. Smoking is prohibited in all indoor areas.

### *What is expected of Lodge users while there?*

Lodge users are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, and care for the Lodge, its furnishings and the surrounding lands as if they were in their own home. Damage must be reported immediately. Damage resulting from inappropriate use or negligence of any member of the user group will result in forfeiture of the damage deposit, and if necessary, additional expenses to the user group. Past experience has shown that youngsters **MUST** be supervised carefully or damage will result.

### *What is expected of Lodge users upon leaving?*

A Lodge check-out checklist form (detailing all clean-up and close-up responsibilities) is provided and must be completed and signed by the group leader at departure. Volunteer forms (for aquatic-education user groups only) should also be completed (with careful attention to following instructions). Both sets of forms are to be placed in the black mail box on the lobby wall by the main door upon leaving. Groups who do not follow these requirements risk forfeiture of future Lodge use privileges.