

Delaware's Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel Conservation Plan

Questions and Answers March 2014

1. What is the Goal of this Plan? The goal of the Delaware Delmarva Fox Squirrel Conservation Plan (Plan) is to restore and recover the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger cinereus*), more commonly called the Delmarva fox squirrel (DFS), in Delaware without causing regulatory actions often associated with endangered species protection. This will be accomplished primarily through translocations of animals to start new populations in the State. Translocations have been shown to be an effective method for increasing the distribution of this animal.

2. What is the impetus for this Plan? The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recently completed a review of all available information about the DFS which has been on the list of threatened and endangered wildlife as endangered since 1967. The review concludes that the squirrel is recovered and recommends that it be proposed for delisting. This change in federal status allows additional management opportunities at the state level and DNREC plans to use this opportunity to restore the DFS as a more common resident in the state.

3. Once the DFS is taken off the federal endangered species list, will development and other projects in Sussex County still need federal consultation for potential impacts to DFS? No, once they are removed from the federal endangered species list, there will not be a need for federal consultations of behalf of DFS.

4. Once the DFS is taken off the federal endangered species list, will development and other projects that can affect DFS need state permits or consultations? No, not due to DFS presence (other state permitting laws will still be in effect). Even though DFS will remain state listed as endangered until the species is longer considered vulnerable to extinction, the state law has no “take” provision for endangered species and project applicants will not be required to protect the animals or their habitat.

5. When will this plan be implemented? Because of challenges associated with federal law and endangered species, many of the actions listed in this plan will not occur until the species is delisted from the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 list; which is anticipated to occur before the year 2015. However, some actions (outreach, education, potential translocation site scoping, etc.) are anticipated to start in 2014.

6. Why do we need a Plan? The species is still rare in Delaware with only two locations known. Recovery of the species in the state will benefit both the long-term survival of the species and provide future generations the ability to observe and enjoy the DFS. DNREC is developing this plan to provide a coordinated and effective framework for conservation actions to increase DFS populations in Sussex County, Delaware.

7. How would the Plan work and what does it entail? The DFS plan focuses on increasing DFS populations in Delaware on specific conservation lands (state, federal and/or private conservation lands) and calls for monitoring the existing squirrels, increasing occupied habitat

through translocation efforts and providing more suitable habitat through voluntary efforts on public and private lands. Translocation is the most effective way to increase DFS populations within a reasonable time frame, and is the cornerstone of this plan. DFS have small home ranges and tend not to travel far. Since the availability of suitable, unoccupied habitat is disjunct in the landscape of Sussex County, it is unlikely that DFS populations can expand quickly on their own from current locations.

8. Who is going to use this Plan? The Plan is a cooperative effort that engaged multiple government, NGO and private stakeholders. The Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife will be the primary implementation organization but the actions recommended in this Plan are designed to benefit all these parties and the Plan's success relies on the participation of all these sectors. To not reinvent the wheel and integrate it with existing Delaware efforts, it also supports the habitat and wildlife management planning for forested lands in Delaware's Wildlife Action Plan (WAP, Section 6) and the Delaware Forest Service's Strategy (2010) and Resource Assessment.