Benefits of Incentive Programs

The Delaware Landowner Incentive Program is designed to:

1) provide information to private landowners on the programs available for restoring and enhancing habitat on their property;
2) provide technical assistance with developing a conservation plan for each participating landowner; and
3) assist the landowner with enrollment in applicable conservation programs and implementation of conservation practices.

Most programs provide some type of financial assistance. Typically, this assistance takes the form of cost-share in which a percentage of the actual cost of restoration costs will be paid for by the state and/or its partners. Cost-share may range from 50-100%. The landowner would be required to make up the rest of the cost either through an extra tax or through in-kind services. Some of the programs targeted at agricultural producers provide additional financial incentives to help farmers to maintain agricultural lands out of production. These may include additional payments for the length of the contract based on the average land rental rate for the county. Financial assistance may also be received in the form of easement. An easement is a legal agreement between the property owner and the conservation organization that restricts development on the property for a term period or in perpetuity. The landowner still retains ownership of the land and the right to work and sell the property. Payments are based on the fair market value of the property.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible lands vary per program. Select programs target specific types of land while others are available to all landowners. Programs provide assistance for wetland restoration and enhancement, riparian forest and grass buffer establishment, upland early successional habitat enhancement, and forest restoration and enhancement. Listed below are possible site conditions indicating if your land would be suitable for enrollment. (Please note that this is just a sample of the practices available. For further information please contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife.)

1. Wetland Restoration/Enhancement:
Financial and technical assistance is available from the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited Inc., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Natural Resource Conservation Service and county Conservation Districts.

- areas adjacent to or near wetlands
- areas that have low crop yields due to flooding or poor soil conditions
- areas that have been drained or flooded
- degraded or fenced farmed lands
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2. Riparian Forest / Grass Buffers:
Information is available for reforestation, urban agricultural fields, farmland, and riparian forest habitat benefit to sensitive species. Participants may receive cost-share for wetland restoration and enhancement, establishment of upland habitat, and reforestation projects.

3. Upland Early Successional Habitat:
Financial and technical assistance is available from the Division of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Delaware Forest Service and county Conservation Districts.

- areas adjacent to or near wetlands
- areas that have low crop yields due to flooding or poor soil conditions
- areas that have been drained or flooded
- degraded or fenced farmed lands
- areas that have a low crop yield due to flooding or poor soil conditions

Financial Assistance

The Delaware Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Preservation Program: The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Program was established in 1991 to protect land for agricultural purposes. Under this program landowners create or join an established land preservation district in which there has to be at least 200 acres of contiguous land devoted to agriculture for a period of at least 10 years. Landowners receive the “right-to-farm,” tax benefits and the right to sell a permanent land protection easement to the State of Delaware.

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Forest Land Enhancement Program: Under this program, funding is set aside for reforestation, afforestation, agroforestry implementation, water quality improvement, watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat, invasive species control and other special practices related to forest lands. To be eligible, landowners must have a forest stewardship plan, have less than 1,000 acres of forestland and must have at least five acres of non-industrial forestland. Property-owners enrolled in FLP may receive cost share assistance of up to 50% towards implementing one of the practices listed above, and must maintain the practice for a period of 10 years.

Property Tax Exemptions: Under the Commercial Forest Plantation Act, landowners who manage their forests for timber production are entitled to receive a 30-year exemption from their county property taxes. To be eligible the property must have at least 10 contiguous acres of forest.

Century Farm Program: Under this program DDA recognizes farms that have been owned and operated by the same family for at least 100 years. To qualify, farms must include at least 10 acres of the original parcel or gross over $10,000 annually from the sale of agricultural products.

Nutrient Management Program: DDA’s nutrient management program provides cost assistance to landowners interested in developing nutrient management plans and transporting excess nutrients to areas in need.
The Nature Conservancy: The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the lands and waters we love. The Conservancy works to ensure that these places can be enjoyed by future generations. The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the lands and waters we love. The Conservancy works to ensure that these places can be enjoyed by future generations.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for conserving America’s diverse fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats across the nearly 700 million acres of land and water in the United States. The Service manages the 84 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which consists of nearly 545 individual refuges.

National Wild Turkey Federation:
The National Wild Turkey Federation’s mission is to conserve and enhance turkey populations and their habitats in North America through science, education, management, and conservation.

The Conservation Districts of Delaware:
The Conservation Districts of Delaware are dedicated to protecting and enhancing Delaware’s environment and conservation. The districts provide services to landowners and communities, including water quality improvement, stormwater management, wildlife habitat creation, and natural resource management.

Ducks Unlimited Inc.:
Ducks Unlimited Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl. The organization promotes wetland conservation through education, research, and partnerships with other organizations and governments.

Promoting Wildlife Habitat:
Promoting Wildlife Habitat is a program that supports the conservation of wildlife habitats. The program aims to educate and engage people in conservation efforts and provide opportunities for individuals and communities to get involved in wildlife habitat protection and enhancement.