

Delaware Landowner Incentive Programs

Benefits of Incentive Programs

Delaware is a biologically diverse state with hardwood forests, swamps and coastal marshes that support over 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Despite significant strides in conservation, much of the wildlife habitat in Delaware remains isolated, degraded and unprotected as more land is converted to urban, commercial and industrial uses.

Over 80 percent of the available and/or restorable wildlife habitat in Delaware occurs on private lands. The future of Delaware's wildlife and habitat resources hinges on finding cooperative solutions with Delaware's private landowners to restore and enhance wildlife habitat on their properties. A variety of programs are now available which offer private landowners, particularly agricultural producers, technical and financial incentives to protect, enhance and restore habitats on their properties. Eligible conservation practices include the restoration and/or enhancement of wetlands, riparian forest, and grass buffers, and creation of forested areas and grasslands that support a variety of species.

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.



Eligibility Requirements

Eligible lands vary per program. Select programs target agricultural producers 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/or 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.

- *invasive and alien species encroachment, into wetland areas, specifically Phragmites, also known as common reed*
- *areas with low crop yields due to ponding or flooding*
- *areas that have been ditched or tiled*
- *degraded or farmed wetlands*
- *areas that flood periodically*
- *floodplains*

2. Riparian Forest / Grass Buffers:

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 ditches or stream*
- *highly erodible lands*
- *field borders*

3. Upland Early Successional Habitat:

The Division of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Conservation Districts all have programs available to establish or maintain early successional habitats.

- *urban, open spaces*
- *agricultural fields*
- *fallow fields*

4. Reforestation:

Assistance is provided for reforestation projects from the Division of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Delaware Forest Service.

- *urban, open spaces*
- *agricultural fields*
- *fallow fields*



Financial Assistance

Most programs provide some type of financial assistance. Typically, this assistance takes the form of cost-share in which a percentage of the actual 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 a monetary contribution or through in-kind services. Some of the programs targeted at agricultural producers provide additional financial incentives to take marginal agricultural lands out of production. These may include annual rental

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 an 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 foregone development.



DNREC

Division of Fish and Wildlife

Phragmites Control Cost-Share Program: The Phragmites Control Cost-Share Program administered by DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife consists of aerial spraying of *Phragmites australis* (an invasive species commonly found throughout Delaware's wetlands) for three consecutive years with a glyphosate-based aquatic herbicide. The Division of Fish and Wildlife provides matching funds to qualifying landowners. Landowners must have between five and 200 undeveloped acres of Phragmites to be eligible for the program.

Delaware Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program: WHEP provides technical and financial assistance to enhance and/or protect early successional stage wildlife habitat. It offers \$70 per acre per year for five years to landowners that agree to set aside part of their agricultural land for wildlife. The land must either be left fallow or planted with approved species. Fees are paid in lump sum for five years upon signing a contract.

Delaware Landowner Incentive Program: DELIP offers financial and technical assistance to private landowners interested in enhancing and/or establishing the following habitats that benefit Delaware Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Piedmont Stream Valley Wetlands, Coastal Plain Seasonal Ponds, Coastal Plain Upland Forests, Early Successional Habitats, and Coastal Plain Forested Floodplains and Riparian Swamps. Landowners may receive cost-share for wetland restoration and enhancement, establishment of upland habitat, and reforestation projects. The highest ranking individual projects will be funded.

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Bill Jones
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89 Kings Highway
Dover, DE 19901
(302) 284-4795
William.Jones@state.de.us



Division of Parks and Recreation

Open Space Program: Delaware's Open Space Program was established in 1990 to support the Delaware Land Protection Act. Program funds are used for the acquisition of land for the expansion of state parks, state forests, state fish and wildlife areas, cultural resources sites, and state nature preserves. Once purchased, the area is managed by the appropriate agency as public open space to protect the natural, recreational and cultural resources on site.

Ron Vickers, Division of Parks and Recreation
89 Kings Highway Dover, DE 19901 (302) 739-9235

Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Drainage Program: Wetland and Channel Restoration:

This program provides technical and financial cost-share assistance to private and public land managers to implement projects such as wetland restoration, channel restoration and establishing Tax Ditch Best Management Practices (BMP's).

Tax Ditch BMP's: Installation of structures to control water levels in channels, one-sided construction and maintenance, saving trees within the construction zone, minimizing clearing widths, and blocking off old channels which only drain wetland areas. Additionally, tax ditches are targeted to establish trees or tree clusters along the channel banks to decrease water temperature, increase dissolved oxygen and reconnect fragmented forests.

Wetland Restoration: Performed in marginal, poorly drained agricultural fields as well as in odd shaped fields such as "corners" or "points". Efforts focus on restoration techniques that promote diversity in plant and animal species and result in the creation of a functional ecosystem.

Tom Barthelmeh, Division of Soil and Water Conservation
89 Kings Highway Dover, DE 19901 (302) 739-9921



Delaware Department of Agriculture

Agriculture Preservation Program: 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 must be at least 200 acres of contiguous land devoted to agriculture for a period of at least 10 years. Farms of ten acres or more can join as an expansion of a district. Landowners receive the "right-to-farm", tax-benefits and the right to sell a permanent land protection easement to the State of Delaware. Ultimately, land in districts can be permanently preserved when owners reach an agreement to sell an easement to the state.

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 ten acres of the original parcel or, if less than ten acres, 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.

Delaware Department of Agriculture
2320 S. Dupont Highway
Dover, DE 19901
(302) 698-4500
1-800-282-8685



Delaware Forest Service

Forest Stewardship Program: Through the Forest Stewardship Program, the Delaware Forest Service provides technical assistance to landowners for a variety of forest management activities including: reforestation, afforestation, timber stand improvement, prescribed fires, watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat, invasive species control, and other special practices related to forest lands. To be eligible, landowners must have between 5 and 1,000 acres of forestland and a forest stewardship plan that describes the landowner's goals for the property and the activities necessary to reach these goals. Delaware Forest Service staff can prepare the forest stewardship plan. A forest stewardship plan also enables landowners to qualify for federal cost-shares for forest management activities through the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

State-Funded Cost Share Program: The General Assembly established a state-funded forestry cost share program in 2006 to support private forest landowners as well as the local forest industry. Cost-share assistance is available to reimburse landowners up to fifty percent of their actual costs for a variety of forest management activities, including tree planting and timber stand improvement projects, which the landowner must agree to maintain for a period of ten years.

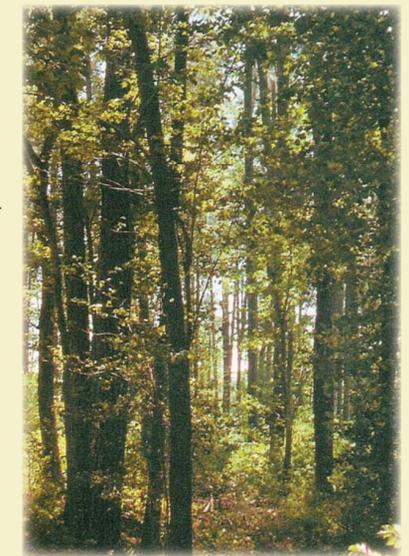
Forestland Preservation Program: Delaware's Forestland Preservation Program (FPP) protects forestlands through perpetual conservation easements, which are permanent deed restrictions prohibiting activities like development while allowing landowners to retain ownership of their property. The land can still be bought and sold, but all future owners must agree to follow the same restrictions. Under FPP, each property is required to have a forest management plan that is prepared by a professional forester and updated every five years. Designed to protect Delaware's working forests, the program permits forest activities such as timber harvesting to continue according to the guidelines of the forest management plan. Hunting activities are also permitted. To be eligible, a property must be: at least 10 acres of forestland (no part of which may be excluded from the preservation area), zoned for agricultural use, have no major subdivision

recorded, and located outside of Delaware's designated growth areas.

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 forestland and have a forest management plan approved by the Delaware Forest Service.

Forest Legacy Program: FLP provides funds to states to protect working forestlands that are threatened by development or other land uses, either through outright purchase or conservation easements. Landowners who choose to sell an easement must also have a forest stewardship plan for their property that describes the activities needed to help achieve their objectives for the property; the Delaware Forest Service can write this plan with the landowner. Easements may only be purchased in Forest Legacy Areas: White Clay Creek, Blackbird/Blackiston, Redden/Ellendale, and Cypress Swamp.

Delaware Forest Service
2320 S. Dupont Highway
Dover, DE 19901
(302) 698-4500



Natural Resources Conservation Service



Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program: FRPP provides funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA joins with state or local governments to acquire conservation easements or other interests from landowners. USDA provides up to 50% of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.

Paul Petrichenko, Assistant State Conservationist
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Agricultural Management Assistance: AMA provides payments to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through product diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. For more information refer to the USDA website www.usda.gov/farmbill or the Delaware NRCS home page at www.de.nrcs.usda.gov.

Conservation Reserve Program: CRP is an effective, voluntary approach to improving the environment using partnerships between individuals and the government. Landowners establish long-term conservation practices on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land in exchange for 10-15 years of annual rental payments. They also receive cost-share assistance in adopting and maintaining those practices.

Natural Resources Conservation Service
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 100
Dover, DE 19904
(302) 678-4160
<http://www.de.nrcs.usda.gov/>



Environmental Quality Incentives Program: EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial incentives to producers to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimizes environmental benefits,

and helps farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental regulations. Three to five year contracts are made with the producers and cost share payments are made for eligible practices, such as nutrient management, buffer strips, and animal waste storage structures. For more information refer to the USDA website www.usda.gov/farmbill or the Delaware NRCS home page at www.de.nrcs.usda.gov.

Timothy Garrahan
Farm Bill Program Specialist
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Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program: WHIP provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and Indian lands. Ineligible lands are publicly owned lands. One of the National priorities is to promote the restoration of declining or important native fish and wildlife habitats. Participants agree to implement a wildlife habitat development plan and the USDA agrees to provide cost-share assistance for the initial implementation of wildlife habitat development practices. The agreement is for a minimum of one year after the completion of the last practice but not more than 10 years.

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Wetland Reserve Program: WRP is a voluntary program to restore wetlands. Participants that have owned their land for at least seven years can establish conservation easements of either permanent or 30-year duration, or they can enter restoration cost-share agreements where no easement is involved. The landowner receives payment based on the fair market value of land, a geographic area rate cap, or their offer and up to 100% of the wetland restoration costs.

Jayne Arthurs
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC): The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Using scientific and systematic analyses, TNC identifies specific places where plant and animal species can survive for generations to come. They select places large enough in scale and rich enough in plant and animal species to ensure long-lasting and meaningful conservation results.

At each selected location, TNC employs a range of strategies tailored to local needs and circumstances. They buy and/or accept donations of land and conservation easements from willing

Statewide:
The Nature Conservancy
100 West 10th Street, Suite 1107
Wilmington, DE 19801 (302) 654-4707

landowners. TNC works with landowners to develop land conservation options that meet their long term land management, financial, and estate planning goals. They test reforestation and wetlands restoration techniques on their own lands as demonstrations of natural lands management. TNC helps other landowners apply successful land management and restoration methods to their properties.

The Nature Conservancy facilitates public-private partnerships at both the individual and organizational levels. Seeking to engage the business community in practicing and supporting conservation and collaborate with like-minded partners to implement pragmatic solutions.

For the Delaware Bay, Nanticoke, and their respective watersheds:
Kate Hackett, The Nature Conservancy; Conservation Programs Office
703 Chestnut Street
Milton, DE 19968 (302) 684-5348



National Wild Turkey Federation

Wild Turkey Woodlands Recognition: Private landowners can receive recognition for their habitat work and at the same time teach others how to manage their land. The Wild Turkey Woodlands local awards program recognizes local landowners for their efforts to ensure the future of wildlife. Landowners and hunting clubs are nominated through your local NWTF chapter and landowners accepted in the program receive a Wild Turkey Woodlands sign to post on their land. To enroll in this program contact your local NWTF chapter or call 1-800-THE-NWTF. Additional information is also available on the NWTF website at www.nwtf.org.

Operation Appleseed: Wild turkeys and many grassland species depend on open areas for nesting and feeding. Operation Appleseed's focus is two-fold: to develop crabapple orchards for fall and winter food sources for wild turkeys and other wildlife, and to promote the management of utility rights-of-way as simulated old field habitats. National Wild Turkey Federation chapters receive the seedlings and survival kits to plant on both public and private lands. For additional information, contact your local NWTF chapter representative.



Ducks Unlimited Incorporated

Ducks Unlimited, Habitat Stewardship Program: DU and its full compliment of staff provide comprehensive wetland conservation services including protection, restoration, enhancement, and technical assistance. A unique component of DU is the integrated team effort between biologists and engineers, who combine their respective professions to deliver the complete package from planning and design to contracting, construction and monitoring.

Ducks Unlimited Conservation Easement Program: DU also accepts donated easements, termed or in perpetuity through its affiliate Wetlands American Trust. A legal agreement is formed between Ducks Unlimited and the property owner that restricts the type and amount of development on the property and protects valuable natural resources. Under the agreement the landowner still retains ownership of the land and may continue to use the area for economic gain and/or recreation.

Kurt Anderson, Biologist DE/NJ
Ducks Unlimited Inc., Annapolis Office
34 Defense Street, Suite 200
Annapolis, MD 21401 410-224-6620



Conservation Districts

Conservation Districts provide technical and financial assistance to landowners and property managers interested in implementing conservation practices to control soil erosion, improve water quality, manage agricultural and animal waste, enhance stormwater basins and restore wildlife habitat. These practices and cost-share rates vary by district. For more detailed information please contact the Conservation District in your county.

Erosion and Sediment Control Practices: Cost-share is provided to landowners interested in installing water and sediment control basins, critical area treatments, structures, terraces, windbreaks and grassed waterways for the purpose of preventing soil erosion.

Water Quality Practices: Assistance is provided to landowners interested in improving water quality through nutrient sequestration and sediment filtration. Eligible practices include ditch impoundments and shallow water wetlands.

Animal and Agricultural Waste Management Systems: Funding is available to landowners interested in reducing nutrient and sediment loads that enter ground and/or surface water by implementing best management practices. Cost-sharing is authorized for animal waste storage

facilities, poultry composters, dairy waste systems, equipment (calibratable spinner manure spreader or front-end loader), concrete pads for chicken houses and manure storage structures, spray irrigation equipment, establishment of winter cover crops and stream fencing to restrict cattle access to streams.

Water Management Practices (New Castle and Kent): Practices funded under water management programs include the installation of water control structures, tiles and the construction of ditches to control water elevations. Assistance is also available for land grading and/or smoothing.

Stormwater Basin Management (New Castle and Kent): Financial and technical assistance is available to civic/homeowner associations to improve existing stormwater basins in their communities. Practices include structure modifications, creating permanent water in dry basins and the establishment of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants to enhance the quality of habitat available to wildlife.

Wildlife Habitat Management: A variety of practices are available to landowners interested in improving habitat for wildlife species, including upland, riparian and wetland habitat restoration and enhancement.



New Castle Conservation District
Newark Service Center
2430 Old County Rd.
Newark, DE 19702
(302) 832-3100, ext 3



Kent Conservation District
800 Bay Road, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901
(302) 741-2600, ext 3



Sussex Conservation District
23818 Shortly Road
Georgetown, DE 19947
(302) 856-3990, ext 3.



Collin O'Mara
Secretary

All of these programs have been instrumental in restoring and protecting habitats for wildlife and biodiversity. The potential to do more in the future is almost unlimited. If you are interested in enrolling in one of the many conservation programs listed above, or have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the biologists below.

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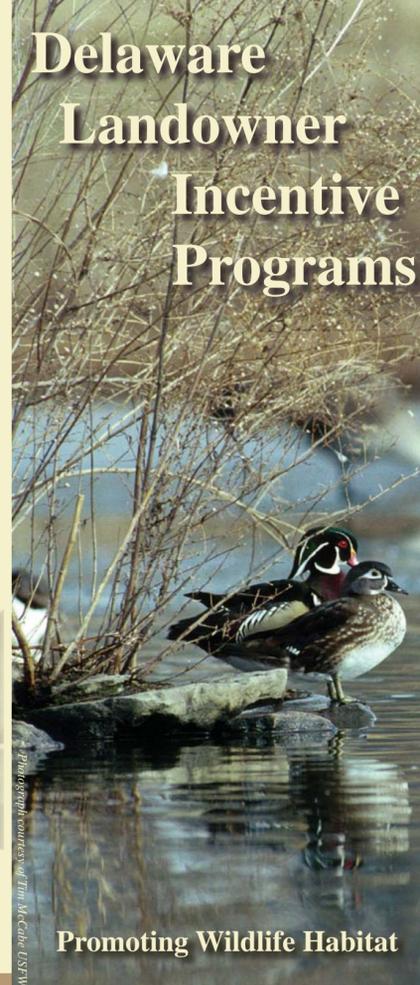
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife: PFW provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners interested in restoring wetland hydrology, riparian, grassland and upland forest habitats. When available, funding from the PFW program requires landowners to sign an agreement to protect the public investment for a minimum of 10 years, with greater priority given to agreements of longer duration that restore threatened and endangered species habitats.

Al Rizzo, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office
177 Admiral Cochrane Drive, Annapolis, MD 2401
(410) 573-4500

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program: The Coastal Program's habitat conservation efforts are primarily focused on wetland restoration, reforestation and riparian habitat restoration to benefit migratory songbirds and waterfowl in priority areas. Working with a variety of partners, this program offers financial and technical assistance to landowners interested in restoring habitat. Please contact us for additional information.

Rick McCorkle, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Delaware Bay Estuary Project Office
2610 Whitehall Rd., Smyrna, DE 19977
(302) 653-9152



Promoting Wildlife Habitat