

## Appendix G. Wetlands Priority Component

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Delaware is endowed with exceptional wetland resources that improve our water quality, protect us from storms and flooding, provide food and shelter for wildlife species and nursery grounds for commercial fisheries, improve air quality, and beautify our landscape. But, since colonial times, Delaware has lost approximately 50 percent of our wetland resources primarily due to ditching and draining and direct conversion to agriculture. More recently, pressure from development threatens our forested wetlands. Additionally, the wetlands that remain are often degraded by human activities causing altered water flow, introduction of invasive species, and habitat alterations such as filling, dredging and fragmentation.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is working to reverse the damage of the past and prevent any additional harm while sharing the dynamic beauty and function of wetlands with the people who live here. The Delaware Wetlands Conservation Strategy is a collaborative effort among DNREC, other State agencies, and conservation partners to slow wetland loss and improve existing wetland conditions. This strategy will guide improvement of Delaware's wetland resources through increased agency coordination, data availability, education, monitoring, and restoration efforts. Initiatives will be implemented over five years and will be reevaluated in 2013.

The Delaware Wetlands Conservation Strategy outlines six goals to focus efforts with the aim of maximizing the use of resources to best protect wetland resources in the state and the services that they provide:

1. Update wetland inventory maps and improve access to wetland related data.
2. Increase monitoring efficiency and effort to provide insight into wetland function and health.
3. Integrate wetland restoration, creation, enhancement, and protection efforts to ensure efficient use of resources.
4. Coordinate information and resources sharing among wetland protection programs, professionals, and agencies.
5. Enhance education and outreach efforts to broaden wetland stewardship among all wetland stakeholders.

6. Work with partners to provide support and enhancement for existing regulatory programs and to provide protection of wetlands that are not covered by state and federal regulations.

The Delaware Wetlands Conservation Strategy fulfills the Emergency Wetlands Act of 1986 requirement. The complete document can be found online at:

<http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Admin/DelawareWetlands/Documents/Delaware%20Wetlands%20Conservation%20Strategy%2008.29.08.pdf>