

**Title of Program Recommendation:** *Revitalizing a Forestlands Preservation Program*

**Goal/Purpose:** *(Include a synopsis of how the recommendation would be utilized).* There are a number of appealing reasons to revitalize this program. Foremost among them is the fact that 80-85% of the remaining non-tidal wetlands are embedded in the State's approximately 385,000 acres of forested landscapes and the majorities are privately owned. Additionally this program contains a number of the key attributes of an incentive program that the Carrot Committee identified as important back in January 2014. Briefly several of these attributes include that the incentive proposed be: voluntary for private landowners; be capable of leveraging of funding sources such as ENGO and Federal funds; be transparent in the manner in which implemented and have understandable criteria; target forest and help foster public and private partnerships for conservation.

**Major Program Components:**

If the Forestland Preservation Program were to be revitalized, there already exists statutory language that provides for the implementation and administration of the program through the existing Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation.

All necessary major implementation and administrative components for this program are referenced and can be found in Subchapter V, Chapter 9, Title 3, Delaware Code.

**Action Steps required to implement:** *(Important to note here who is responsible for each action step and the approximate time to complete it. Also include here any impediments that may need to be resolved).*

The Governor can make this priority by including the program as a line item in his annual Bond Bill budget.

The Bond Bill Committee can make this a priority by inserting this program in the annual Bond Bill that is considered by the General Assembly.

**Performance Measures:** *(Suggest ways that the recommendation's performance 3 to 5 years out might be evaluated).*

- In 2009 the State put up \$1,000,000 and TNC put up \$500,000 for Forestland Preservation (Round 14 of the Aglands Preservation Program)
- Nine (9) properties totaling 872.46 forested acres were protected with the purchase of development rights at a cost of \$1,450,803.91
- The average cost per acre was \$1,662.89; the average forest area size was 96.94 acres
- The average discount was 67% or \$2,845,054.66
- Currently, as of April 20, 2014, there are 34 forested properties (parcels) totaling 2,582 acres that have been approved as Forestland Preservation Areas ("in the queue" so to speak)

**Fiscal Note:** *(Include an annual estimated cost to implement).*

- With a conservative estimate of a discounted price of \$1,750/acre, the Forestland Preservation Program can protect about 57 acres per \$100,000 of funding
- The Delaware Forest Service believes there is a high potential for future projects given a steady stream of funding (even with zero funding we have 34 properties in waiting)
- The potential (exact level is unknown) to bring in additional funding from partners is also very high

Even a mere \$200,000 per year will help DDA acquire about 100 acres with no outside additional funding. A million will protect about 570 acres and so on. The important thing to stress with this is any amount of dedicated funding will help the State incrementally protect forests and over the long run this can add up to a significant number. Aglands has done this and over 18 years (Rounds) the State has protected 116,187 acres of farmland. As farmland is a critical component to all of agri-business in the State so is protecting forest habitat critical to protecting healthy non-tidal wetland complexes that are embedded in them.