

DNREC Wetlands Protection Recommendations

DNREC proposes the following recommendations to the Wetlands Advisory Committee for incentives and other mechanisms for wetlands conservation and protection in the future. Several ideas have already been mentioned during Wetlands Advisory Committee meetings. A few of these have become recommendations. Some have not been yet been discussed due to lengthy discussion of other recommendations and time constraints.

Coordinate state and federal wetlands protection responsibilities. In consideration of diminished Corps resources, DNREC could work with the Corps to identify program areas where improved coordination and wetland management could occur including: verifications, permitting, and enforcement. Additionally, DNREC would like to develop a Statewide Programmatic General Permit for common activities undertaken by state agencies in tidal wetlands, and investigate potential for special expedited permits for the similar activities in non-tidal wetlands. The Corps would provide technical support and training to DNREC in order to ensure consistency between the two agencies. More State and federal staff in the field could improve efficiencies in the permitting process and could help prevent unpermitted loss of all wetland types. Such coordination could be memorialized in a Memorandum of Agreement.

Develop a wetland fee in-lieu program. An integral part of an enhanced wetlands protection program would be an fee in-lieu program to offset impacts due to unavoidable losses of wetlands. The State would use the revenues generated by in-lieu fees to create, restore or enhance wetlands necessary to offset impacts. In most cases, the State can facilitate more ecologically functional wetlands than can be achieved by the individual permittee on the parcel being impacted due to site constraints. DelDOT has stated during committee meetings that a fee in-lieu would be very beneficial, and it could also assist other State agencies, and the regulated public.

Use outreach and education to increase wetland stewardship and protection. Education efforts should inform landowners of wetland values and conservation options. Outreach should also include working more closely with county land use planning personnel. This could be done with a landowner contact program or possibly through the Adopt-A-Wetland program, and would highlight incentive recommendations already approved by the Wetlands Advisory Committee.

Develop a state wetland delineator training program and delineation registry. Similar to the sediment and stormwater program, and land surveyors, this would provide for consistency across the state for delineations, allow for Delaware-specific on-the-ground conditions to be incorporated into the process, and provide a mechanism for consultants/delineators to stay current on delineation criteria. The Corps would assist with training Delaware personnel and private delineators. This recommendation would also provide the opportunity for a central repository of delineations completed on parcels throughout Delaware.