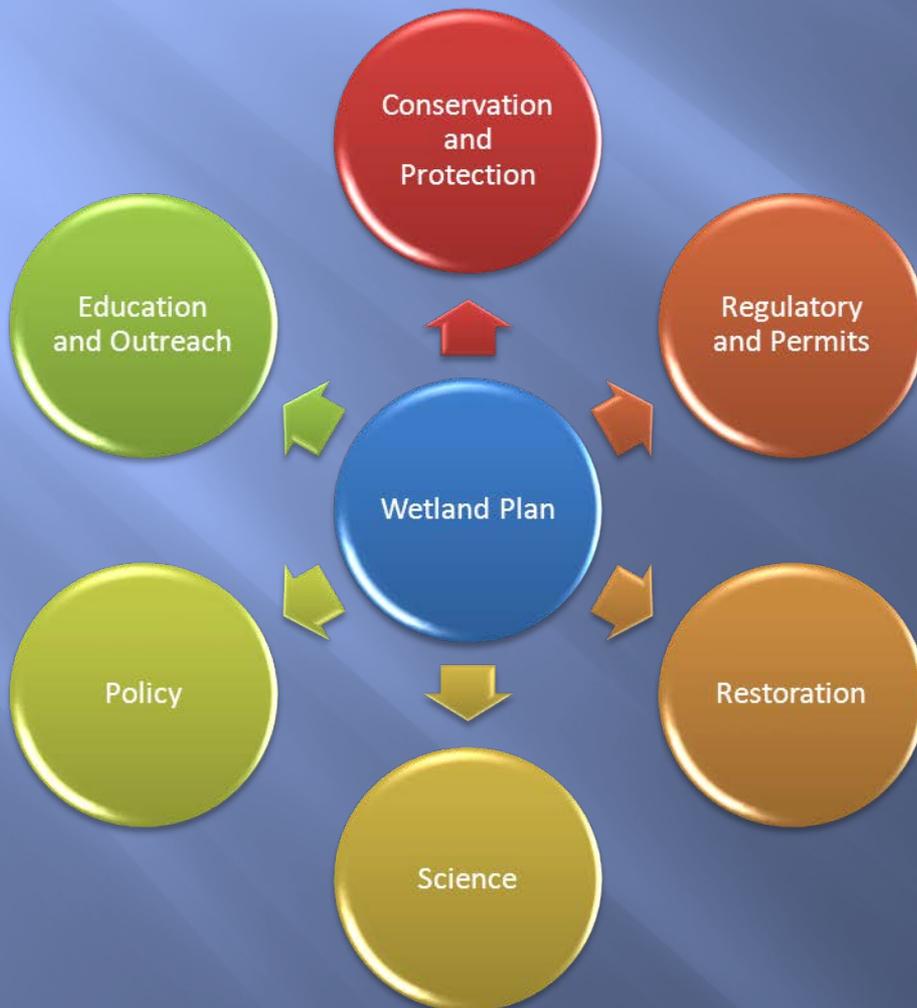


# Wetland Evaluation Process with 6 Functional Areas



# Conservation & Protection Team

Members from 4 DNREC Divisions

Includes planners, land managers and scientists working on acquisition, research, permitting and site management

## Overall Goals:

- Develop wetland protection priorities based on science and best available data
- Coordinate landowner incentives ranging from fee simple acquisition to technical assistance
- Strengthen partnerships with public and private entities



# Conservation & Protection Team

## Specific Tasks

1. Use status and trends, natural heritage, current protected lands, and ecosystem services data sets along with land use patterns to develop wetland protection priorities
2. Organize/characterize funding for acquisition, easements and technical assistance as reflected in typical public/private sources; research non-typical sources and other incentive programs
3. Determine long-term management needs for conservation of specific wetland types along with assistance and funding sources
4. Meet with federal, state, local partners to discuss specific opportunities for wetland conservation/protection projects; coordinate DNREC efforts with private organizations and funders

# Assessing Functional Areas

## Conservation and Protection

- What mechanisms are available for conservation and protection (programs, etc.)?
- **Are existing incentive programs enough? If not, what others could be established or leveraged? What would be the cost, including more staff?**
- What are the current financial resources and is this enough or is more funding needed?
- Who is willing to accept long term management for these protected areas?
- Do we have funding for long term management?
- Do we need to improve relationships with other groups capable of long term management?
- What is right balance of government vs. private conservation? Who are these private groups and is better cooperation needed?
- Should the Department have a program for in-lieu fee mitigation where the Department does restoration and acquisition which aids conservation and protection?
- **Do we have the right conservation priorities identified for wetlands? What are they?**
- Which privately owned wetlands are most in need of protection (e.g. unique ecological communities, SLR marsh migration, priority wetlands/best of the best)?

# Regulatory Team

Seven (7) member team from 3 DNREC Divisions

- 3 from the current tidal wetlands program
- 3 from other Divisions that obtain project specific federal and state permits
- 1 from a Division that reviews federal actions and permits.

## Overall Goals:

- Identify realistic options for a State non-tidal wetlands regulatory program for Delaware.



# Regulatory Team - Specific Tasks

1. Review existing State and federal permitting processes in Delaware to identify inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement.
2. Review successful programs implemented by other states in the region.
3. Communicate with the Committee and subcommittees to evaluate Delaware's most important wetland protection needs.
4. Make recommendations for the development of a responsible and efficient State non-tidal wetlands regulatory program.



# Assessing Functional Areas

## Regulatory and Permitting

- How well are existing programs functioning (Federal and State)? What resources are not adequately protected?
- Are permits being issued in a timely manner at the State and Federal levels?
- What are current regulatory exemptions and are they affecting the resource?
- **Would improvements in enforcement, gaps in coverage, and other areas be beneficial in protecting the resource?**
- How could wetland protection be designed to be more effective? Is this better accomplished and more efficient at a localized level?
- **What resources does the State have and/or need to implement federal regulations? What would be the cost, including more staff? What does the process involved of accepting the 404 program?**
- What are the various options for new regulation? Which of these would be roundly supported vs. which may fail to be supported?
- What tools does the Department have and/or need to aid permitting decisions and permit tracking?
- What regulatory incentives exist and what new incentives could be built into permitting programs?
- How do we improve coordination with the Corps? What options exist for the Department to help their program?

# Restoration Team

Members from 5 DNREC Divisions

Includes scientists and engineers working on wetland restoration and monitoring projects.



## Overall Goals:

- Identify ways to enhance wetland restoration efforts throughout the State
- Evaluate any obstacles that may exist related to wetland restoration efforts and policy changes needed to alleviate these obstacles
- Perform an evaluation of resources that exist or are needed to provide for a comprehensive and sustainable wetland restoration program

# Restoration Team - Specific Tasks

1. Identify restoration partners and ways to maximize resources directed to wetland restoration, monitoring and long-term maintenance
2. Update the existing database of wetland restoration projects throughout the State
3. Identify opportunities for wetland restoration on both public and private lands
4. Evaluate the need for incentive-based programs for landowners which promote wetland restoration
5. Investigate and evaluate restoration programs and approaches used in other states

# Assessing Functional Areas

## Restoration

- How and where is restoration being completed? Are there set priorities?
- Where are the opportunities for restoration on both public and private lands?
- What existing programs are used for restoration? Who is doing restoration? Are there untapped opportunities? (should consider both tidal and nontidal)
- **Are restoration projects effective in increasing wetlands acreage and function? Are restoration projects tracked effectively?**
- What are the funding sources used for restoration? Is this enough or are new sources needed?
- Identify the benefits to and how funding is leveraged by working with conservation groups and/or other agencies. What are these groups? How can the Department better support and improve partnerships?
- Should the Department have a program for in-lieu fee mitigation where the Department does restoration and acquisition?
- **Do current incentives from existing programs work or are better incentives needed? What new incentives could be used?**



# Science Team

Members from 4 DNREC Divisions

Includes scientists working on current research and active ecological improvement projects

## Overall Goals:

- Deliver science based data and information to the Committee and to Wetland Teams to inform decision making and recommendations
- Determine existing and needed data and information already available to support more efficient and effective wetland conservation, restoration and protection
- Investigate science-based data and information from other states that could benefit Delaware



# Science Team - Specific Tasks

1. Focus on wetland ecosystem services – the functions wetland provide to the people of Delaware – such as Flood Control and Water Quality Improvement
2. Investigate further the economic valuation of each of these functions
3. Determine which wetlands are most vulnerable and determine their current condition
4. Examine which wetlands are most important for flood protection in a landscape context
5. Determine funding sources to continue wetland mapping and trends reports at 10 year intervals to track wetland acreage and wetland health

# Assessing Functional Areas

## Science

- What data and information supports the need for stronger nontidal wetland protection?
- What data and information does the Department have that would support better wetland protection at the federal or state level?
- What future wetland data and information is needed to support wetland permitting decisions?
- **Which wetlands (location, type, ownership) are the most vulnerable and what is their condition?** (will feed into other workgroups)
- What tools does the Department have to determine/track wetland acreage and health? Are they effective and comprehensive?
- What is our role in delivering data and information for use by other workgroups, especially messaging?
- What outside groups can we support with meaningful data?
- Define non-tidal wetlands (coordinate with Regulatory workgroup).
- Is there science-based information and data from other states that could benefit Delaware?
- **Where could new science and research benefit wetland protection and where is it needed (gaps)? What funding sources could be used for this research?**

# Outreach & Education Team

Members from 4 DNREC Divisions

Includes staff responsible for coordinating several state-run nature center facilities and programs, including delivery of numerous outreach and education programs of a wetland focus targeting diverse audiences.

## Overall Goals:

- Acquaint the Committee and the other Wetland Teams with existing outreach & education programs, resources and approaches available
- Determine – based on feedback from the Committee and other working groups – priorities for development of additional resources (including key audiences and outcomes) in support of wetland conservation goals
- Take the lead in developing and delivering outreach and education materials, messages and programs to address the prioritized needs, audiences and outcomes identified

# Outreach & Education Team - Tasks

1. Compile a summary of existing Delaware wetland outreach and education facilities, programs, media, print materials and other resources, along with the audiences they presently serve
2. Clarify and prioritize key gaps and needs in existing wetland education resources, and identify avenues for funding and developing new resources to address them
3. Flesh out significant fears, misconceptions and other concerns regarding wetlands protection amongst key stakeholder groups
4. Identify messages and means for addressing those fears, misconceptions and concerns, and research/design/implement effective strategies and materials for delivering them
5. Devise methods and materials for optimal communication of the many benefits wetlands provide at a level that holds real meaning and impact to stakeholder/general public audiences receiving them

# Assessing Functional Areas

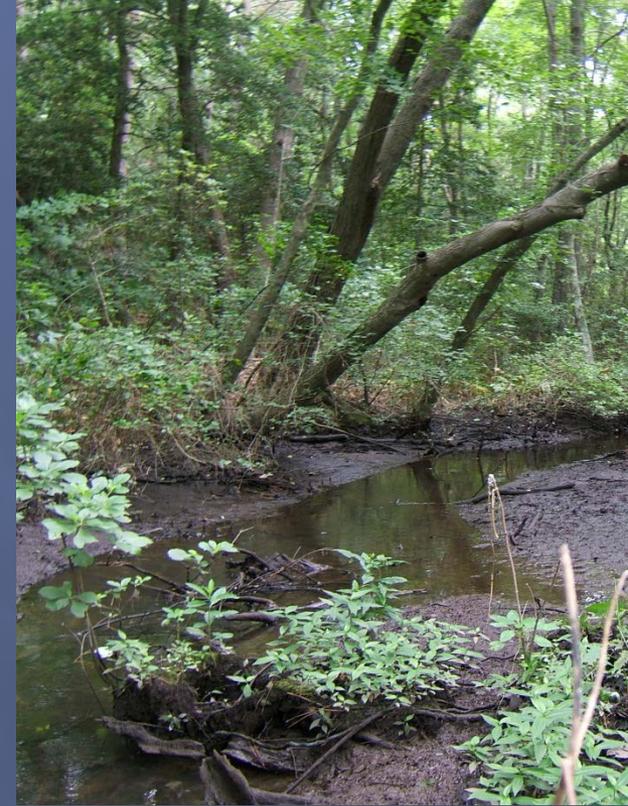
## Education and Outreach

- **What should be our Department message regarding wetland protection, conservation and restoration?**
- What audiences do we need to target for education?
- How can the Department better serve and educate opposing stakeholder groups?
- What are the fears surrounding nontidal wetland protection and how should we address them?
- What are the biggest misconceptions about wetlands and wetland benefits?
- Do we need to message how this new wetland protection effort is different than previous efforts?
- **What education and outreach tools exist that we can promote to provide information to all groups? Are new ones needed?**
- Is there a need for more funding and what are those sources (WPDG, foundation grants, etc)?
- What media/avenues for information and education do our audiences use?
- What is the best method of communicating the benefit of wetlands (both functionally and economically)?
- How do we develop outreach on wetland conservation incentives?

# Policy Team

Members from 6 DNREC Divisions

Includes scientists and managers with wetlands monitoring, assessment, protection, and restoration experience and environmental project funding experience.



## Overall Goals:

- Identify policies and practices that enhance or hinder wetlands resources.
- Determine what approaches should be included as part of a future Delaware program.
- Consider program elements and funding mechanisms from other states that may serve as appropriate models for Delaware.

# Policy Team - Specific Tasks

1. Evaluate the current status of wetland protection efforts (federal, state, local government, nonprofit organizations).
2. Determine if there is a need for a unified policy for conserving wetlands among governmental agencies.
3. Evaluate the pros and cons of a Delaware non-tidal regulatory program versus continuing with a Federal program.
4. Suggest what a future State program would look like and how it would be funded.

# Assessing Functional Areas

## Policy

- Is there a need for Delaware to have a unified policy for conserving wetlands, and what are the key components to this policy?
- **Are there Department specific policies that can be developed to support incentives to conserve wetlands? What are the existing policies?**
- From a policy perspective, is it beneficial for Delaware to administer a non-tidal regulatory program vs. the federal government? Possibly contact other states for their experience.
- What should a state program look like? In regard to policy, what type of program should the state develop (e.g. purely regulatory, lightly incentivized, heavily incentivized with light regulatory)?
- **What policies can be developed for sustainable wetland protection funding? Identify funding gaps currently.** (considering that funding crosses all workgroups)
- How do other states fund their wetland programs (see ELI and ASWM reports) and are there opportunities to use any of these?
- What would it involve for the Delaware to have an in-lieu fee policy and program?

