

OPEN SPACE PROGRAM PLAN

Long-term Goal:

Provide Delaware residents and visitors with maximum opportunity to enjoy Delaware's natural and cultural assets by permanently protecting those assets and whenever possible provide public access.

Five-year Goal: Secure funding to add permanently protected lands to existing State Parks, State Wildlife Areas, State Forests, and historical and cultural sites. If exceptional opportunities arise, other lands will be protected as funds permit.

Draft Objectives:

Do public outreach to tell the success story of the Open Space Program and educate on the importance of open space in our communities.

Provide public outdoor recreational opportunities through expanding existing State Parks, State Wildlife Areas, State Forests, and historical and cultural sites.

Protect and connect high quality habitats for Delaware's native animals and plants, giving priority to woodlands and wetlands.

Protect and improve surface and ground water resources and alleviate flooding by preserving wetlands and floodplains.

Conserve Delaware's wildlife resources sustainably for public benefit.

Preserve Delaware's cultural heritage and geological sites to connect people with Delaware's past.

Connect existing protected public lands into a cohesive system of greenways.

Creative and innovative methods of protection:

5-year Goal: Leverage and maximize the use of Open Space Program funds by engaging in collaborative and innovative funding partnerships and by pursuing the strategic conservation of properties to meet the public need.

Objectives:

Explore the opportunity to partner with counties and municipalities to develop a program enabling them to use Open Space Program funds to match their contributions toward purchasing land for parks and other public open space.

Leverage Federal and private money with Open Space funds.

Encourage donations through the promotion of tax benefits and legacy/estate planning tools. Encourage use of the Land and Historic Resource Tax credit law.

Target conservation easements to protect areas where outright purchase is not needed.