

Recreation & Living Resources

Today, despite nearly 400 years of natural resource consumption and the conversion of habitats for agriculture and industry, the Piedmont Basin's remaining woodlands, rivers, and marshes still provide viable habitats and a biological history of Delaware. Yet these few remaining natural areas are under continually increasing pressure from humans. This so-called "open space" is an important part of the social fabric of the community and is a significant resource that enhances both the health of the Piedmont Basin and the health of its citizens.



Freshwater wetlands in the Piedmont Basin were, at one time, among the most productive in the state for waterfowl.

RECREATION

Recreation is any type of conscious enjoyment that occurs during leisure time.

From golfing to fishing, our recreational options are linked to the quality of our environment, the health and diversity of our natural resources, and the amount of available open space.

More than 9,000 acres of land are dedicated to public recreational use in state, county, and municipal parks in the Piedmont Basin.

Although the current acreage meets the minimum national standard for recreational space per person, the demand for recreational facilities already has exceeded the capacity of a significant portion of the basin's recreational resources.



Improved access to fishing, boating, and canoeing facilities has been identified as a priority need by the public.

FISH & WILDLIFE RECREATION

Hunting, fishing, and boating in the Piedmont Basin traditionally have been limited by suburban sprawl and high human population. However, the sporting activities available in the basin provide some of the most unique opportunities in the state. For example, freshwater trout fishing is available at six designated trout streams in the basin. Over 30,000 legal-sized trout are stocked annually along 19 miles of these streams — the only streams in Delaware that receive trout. Sales of the state trout stamp annually exceed 5,500, with 49% (2,718) of these anglers residing in the Piedmont Basin.

Hunting occurs primarily on private properties, as no State Wildlife Areas exist in the Piedmont Basin. However, White Clay Creek and Brandywine Creek state parks periodically allow recreational hunting to control excessive deer populations. Although opportunities are limited, hunting is an important recreational activity among Piedmont Basin residents, as approximately 30% (5,992) of all state resident hunting licenses are sold here.

LIVING RESOURCES

The Piedmont Basin once supported a rich diversity of plants and animals. Today, nearly 75% of the basin's forests are gone, having been cleared long ago for pasture and settlements or more recently for homes and businesses. Most of the remaining forests are young, second-growth woods that have lost many of their former species, especially spring wildflowers, which have been replaced by non-native or exotic species.

The Department conducts ongoing inventories of natural communities as well as rare and declining species, including plants, birds, insects, mussels, reptiles, and amphibians. These data indicate that an alarming number of species once common in the Piedmont Basin are now found in only one or two locations, or have become extinct. Delaware has lost a higher percentage of its native plant species than any other state in the U.S.

Our native species, which have evolved to depend upon, as well as to play their role in, the intricate web of life are generally the first indicators of change or disruption. Freshwater mussels, notoriously sensitive to the effects of erosion and

Challenges for the Future

- ◆ Identify upland forests in the Piedmont Basin, evaluate them by such factors as biodiversity, size, age, and exotic species infestation, and prioritize them for protection.
- ◆ Protect and restore floodplains, wetlands, and upland buffers along all streams in the basin. Reforest cleared uplands and restore degraded wetlands to improve water quality. Gradually eliminate sewer lines from the floodplain.
- ◆ Develop management strategies to protect natural habitats from being overrun by exotic species. The threat of exotic species, combined with habitat destruction and overpopulation by species such as white-tailed deer, has placed the basin's remaining natural habitat under severe pressure.
- ◆ Identify and protect remaining rare habitat. The loss of habitat, as well as the loss of connectivity between habitats, has resulted in significant loss of species diversity in the basin.
- ◆ Continue providing recreational opportunities to a continually increasing population without causing negative environmental impacts.
- ◆ Decrease conflicts between wildlife and humans. Some species (deer and non-migratory geese) benefit from increased human presence and eventually become nuisances. We need to stabilize nuisance populations and increase species negatively affected by human pressure.

pollutants, are an indicator of poor water quality and loss of habitat for many other aquatic animals. Steep population declines in insect-eating forest birds, such as the Kentucky warbler, may indicate the loss and fragmentation of mature forests in our area. The elusive bog turtle, found in Piedmont streamside wetlands, is becoming increasingly difficult to locate as its habitat disappears and may be facing extinction in Delaware.

Group	No. Imperiled Statewide	No. Imperiled in Piedmont	No. Gone from State	No. Secure Statewide
Reptiles & Amphibians	20	9	2	48
Birds	61	16	9	313
Fish	14	4	0	57
Mammals	2	0	1	53
Insects	57	10	13	n/a
Mussels	6	0	4	3
Plants	403	173	210	1325

CHRISTINA RIVER



BOATING ACCESS AREA

