

Delaware Native Species Commission Top Ten List

The Statewide Ecological Extinction Task Force (Task Force) identified a series of recommendations to be considered by the Native Species Commission. The Commission is tasked with completing or assisting with the completion of all recommendations. To provide a focal point, the Commission, over the course of 5 months, created a “top ten” list of recommendations to start working on. The list below reflects the Commissions “top ten” with the remaining recommendations listed in no particular order. Bold text following recommendation refers to the Task Force’s original categorizing of the recommendations.

Top Ten

1. Recommend the Task force promote the distribution of a list of native plants and trees that are easy to grow in our area. *(Please note that the Commission assumes this recommendation should read Recommend the Commission promote..)* **Education**
2. Make the sale of invasive plants illegal in Delaware, allowing an appropriate phase-out period after legislation passes. (A) Invasive species are those on the Delaware Invasive Species Council plant list, as periodically amended. (B) The Delaware Invasive Species Council plant list must be reviewed and amended if necessary on a regular basis. **Legislation to Prohibit the Sale of Invasive Species**
3. Educational material should be developed, tailored to the specific target audience, which will explain the benefit of native species as well as the effect of non-native and invasive species proliferation, and their contribution to the decline of our local species. **Education**
4. Encourage the preservation of the remaining intact forest habitat (largest tracts should receive highest priority). **Incentivizing Private Landowners**
5. All Delaware state facilities and departments should set the example, reducing lawn and replacing with native plants or pollinator gardens, and revising land management practices to be more pollinator friendly. **Government Leads by Example**
6. Encourage municipalities to adopt native landscaping in their codes. **Government Leads by Example**
7. Encourage new public facilities to use native plants in landscaping. **Government Leads by Example**
8. Encourage protection of Delaware’s rarest plant communities such as Atlantic White Cedar Swamps, Coastal Plain Ponds, Interdunal Swales, Sea-level Fens, Piedmont Streamside Seepage Wetland, and Piedmont Tuliptree Rich Woods. **Legislation Affecting Development**
9. Encourage all counties to adopt environmental design standards for development projects in order to protect key wildlife habitats and species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). **Legislation Affecting Development**
10. Fund the Delaware Open Space Program at the level required by statute. **Funding Open Space Program at Statutory Level**

Education

11. Educational material should be developed, tailored to the specific audience, on the preservation and management of open spaces within communities, on private property, and on public property.
12. Educational material should be developed to specifically guide property owners on the identification of non-native and invasive species, the native species alternatives, and proper management of property landscaping.
13. A curriculum should be developed to bring the educational material into our children's classrooms and various outreach programs.
14. The educational material should be distributed to professional organizations having responsibility in property development such as engineers, landscape design professionals, landscape contractors, and professional builders.
15. Encourage incorporating the educational material in obtaining or maintaining professional licensing.
16. The educational material should be distributed to homeowner associations and property management associations. This will not only inform those organizations, but this should be encouraged as one method of subsequent distribution to the individual homeowners.
17. (A) The educational material should be available to individual property owners through home and garden centers, state and local government, and other organizations as available.
(B) Recommend to the Delaware Real Estate Commission to add a line on the Sellers Disclosure forms directing homeowners to a webpage of educational material.
18. The educational material should form the basis of training seminars and trade symposiums geared toward local government officials involved in land use planning.
19. Education through media outlets should be investigated and implemented. Examples include advertising and discussion on social media, radio and television (including local cable television and New Castle County's television station).
20. Education through demonstration projects by local government, business owners, non-profits and others should be encouraged and properly recognized. Signage associated with the project is critical and should be encouraged.
21. Education through public presentations to interested groups and organizations should be encouraged.
22. Methods of funding centered on implementing the educational initiatives recommended by the Task Force should be explored, including public/private arrangements.
23. Educational campaigns centered around informing the public on the value of wildlife and how wildlife and their native habitats benefit humans including how all three are interconnected should be encouraged.
24. A program to either educate landowners on living/green shoreline options and their benefits and/or a program to train engineers in living/green shoreline construction including the pros and cons of various options to minimize shoreline erosion should be encouraged.
25. Encourage landscape contractors to remove, manage, and control invasive plants and replant with native species.

26. Promote/follow Delaware Livable Lawns practices on lawns in Delaware.
(<https://www.delawarelivablelawns.org/>).
27. Recommend that education and incentives be used to encourage property owners to plant and or convert to native plants and trees on their properties.
28. Prepare several examples of single family home landscape plans that use native trees and plants (+ or - 75% of those chosen) to show how native plants and trees may provide an aesthetically pleasing yard and one that is easy to maintain.
29. Encourage the development of a training course and/or seminar that developers, landscape professionals, and others may attend to provide education and a forum for collaboration of ideas to promote the planting of native trees and plants.
30. Governmental, educational, and environmental organizations should work together to develop a comprehensive, environmental education program regarding using native species versus non-native and invasive species.

Incentivizing Private Landowners

31. Method of Incentivizing: Establish incentives such as expedited permitting and density bonuses for environmentally sensitive landscape design practices such as those included in Sustainable Sites, the National Green Building Standard, Energy Star, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, or green technology best management practices.
32. Incentivize land development applicants to incorporate DNREC's PLUS recommendations regarding specific potential impacts to state rare and federally listed species and their habitats into their development plans.
33. Create incentives for reducing lawn area and replacing it with native plants.
34. Encourage the incorporation of pollinator and other insect habitat into incentive programs.
35. Provide incentives for home buyers with native landscaping such as the Green4Green program.
36. Seek funding to cost share native habitat improvements on private lands.
37. Incentivize homeowners and developers to retain tree species of high wildlife value (e.g. oaks, hickories).
38. Encourage the funding of the Forestland Preservation easement program.
39. Explore opportunities to provide state-level add-on incentives and best management practices to targeted species via NRCS and FSA programs.
40. Explore opportunities to provide state income tax exemptions for state or federal conservation incentive payments.
41. Encourage tax ditch associations to implement BMPs that minimize impacts to key habitats.
42. Encourage the development of and/or marketing of biodiversity certification programs for private forestland and farmland.
43. Encourage enrollment in the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Certification Program.
44. Increase access to prescribed fire as a management tool.
45. Encourage support of the Landowner Incentives Program.

46. Preserve or otherwise conserve and manage as much of the remaining (*non-tidal*) freshwater wetlands as possible – e.g. Delmarva Bays (Coastal Plain Ponds).

Government Leads by Example

47. Create incentives for using native plants on public property.
48. Provide funding/incentives for the removal of invasive plants on public property and, where appropriate, replant with native species.
49. Provide incentives/requirements for reduced lawn areas in passive open space public landscapes.
50. Provide funding/incentives for demonstration landscapes on public land to demonstrate sustainable landscape practices including reduced lawn, use of native plants, reduced mulch, etc.
51. On all highway medians, mow a strip of grass adjacent to the roadway (beauty strip) and allow the rest of the vegetation to grow. Mow median once or twice a year in late fall or early spring.*
52. On all highway roadsides, mow one mower pass above the ditch line to allow for designed drainage function. Mow the rest of the right of way once or twice a year in early Spring or late Fall as needed to control invasive species. Woody vegetation may be allowed to grow on some rights of way if invasives are controlled.*
53. On highway cloverleaves created by on/off ramps, mow one mower pass adjacent to the ramp/roadway. Mow the rest of the cloverleaf one or two times a year as needed to control height, visibility and invasive species. Woody vegetation may be allowed to grow on some rights of way if invasive species are controlled.
54. On secondary roads, apply reduced mowing standards whenever feasible.
55. Encourage the removal and stump treatment of woody invasive plants on DelDOT rights of way.
56. On new highway projects that involve landscaping, plant predominantly native species.
57. Develop model legislation or policy to make it easier for state or local government to make changes, such as adopting legislation or policy requiring native species of new government buildings and parks.
58. Encourage state and local governments to make better use of existing land by creating better habitats on available land. Examples could include creating native meadows, creation of wetlands, reforestation, etc.
59. Review DelDOT's policies and work collaboratively to enhance the role of DelDOT in species conservation, without reducing highway safety, by: (A) designating reduced salt use in environmentally sensitive areas (B) native plantings (C) increased collaborative management of ROWs and water control structures (D) Coordinate timing of mowing and construction to minimize impacts (E) Integrate key habitat and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) conservation into long-range transportation planning.

* Ideally, if mowing once per year, mowing should take place in early spring, with late fall being a less desirable alternative. The second mowing, if desired, should occur in late June. (Technical clarification provided by Susan Barton, Delaware Landscape and Nursery Association)

60. Given the State of Delaware owns a large percentage of land in the state, we recommend increasing funding, staffing, and better management practices of state owned lands.
61. Work with DNREC and the individual Tax Ditch Organizations to explore the feasibility of establishing landscape buffers along tax ditches in order to reduce erosion along ditch banks, reduce maintenance requirements, and improve water quality.

Legislation Affecting Development

62. Review existing regulations to determine their effectiveness in protecting state-endangered species.
63. Look for linkages and connectivity between native habitats in existing and new development to connect native habitat in subdivision site plans.
64. Encourage drafting of legislation for use by local governments that would provide exemptions for common areas, buffer zones, and open space areas from tall weeds/grass property code violations, when maintained in accordance with an approved plan.
65. Encourage Kent and Sussex Counties to adopt overlay zoning ordinances incorporating sensitive natural resources.
66. Encourage the revisitation of wetlands regulations to ensure protection of freshwater non-tidal wetlands via regulation and incentives.
67. Ensure that all State, County, and local codes allow for managed meadow areas as defined by neatly mowed edges, mowed paths, and management plans.

Funding Open Space Program at Statutory Level

68. Open Space Program funds should be used for purchasing high-quality habitats with native plants and trees, especially those habitats required for species of special concern and those that connect existing protected lands.
69. Continue dedicating funds toward the Agricultural Land Preservation Program as finances permit.

Deer Management

70. Encourage the review of county code or local ordinances that may be inhibiting adequate deer harvest.
71. Encourage land owners and land managers to increase deer harvest as necessary to reduce impacts to key habitats.
72. Promote the availability of deer damage permits to non-agricultural land owners.
73. Encourage farmers to utilize their crop damage tags by allowing hunting on their property.
74. The sign-up process for the DE Severe Damage Program should be streamlined and more user-friendly.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act

75. By offering support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, the Delaware Ecological Extinction Task Force supports the efforts of the Blue Ribbon Panel to identify an adequate and sustainable source of money dedicated to the conservation of species in

greatest conservation need in an effort to prevent further population declines in some species of wildlife thus reducing the risk of more species becoming endangered.

76. The Delaware Ecological Extinction Task Force supports the efforts of the Blue Ribbon Panel to identify an adequate and sustainable source of money dedicated to the conservation of species in greatest conservation need and offers support of this effort by joining the Recovering America's Wildlife Sign-On Letter which can be found here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvMgnygWgk_nLeygYJ4tTVpX4bCDpFG_cbbZ_tOPA_JRwUlg/viewform
77. Following the introduction of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act a letter on behalf of the Delaware Ecological Extinction Task Force shall be sent to Representative Lisa Blunt-Rochester and Senators Thomas R. Carper and Christopher A. Coons requesting their support for the legislation.

Formation of the Delaware Native Species Commission **COMPLETE**

78. The Delaware Native Species Commission should be formed by an action of the General Assembly to implement the recommendations of the Task Force and report back to the General Assembly on a yearly basis. Its membership should reflect a balance of interests between environmental professionals, government, and other stakeholders, and meet on a regular basis to be determined by the Commission. The Commission will sunset ten (10) years after enactment unless reauthorized by the General Assembly.