

Delaware

Open Space

Program



January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025

5-Year Report

Auburn Valley State Park

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
Compiled by the Division of Parks and Recreation

Executive Summary

The Delaware Open Space Program¹ (“The Program”) was established in 1990 through the Delaware Land Protection Act² and has preserved lands to protect natural resources, cultural resources, biological diversity and/or for public outdoor recreation and water resource conservation. The Program has preserved lands to protect natural and cultural resources, biological diversity, public outdoor recreation opportunities and water resources. The Program has worked to protect land by adding acreage to the State’s wildlife areas, parks, forests and cultural and historic resources, as well as through the use of conservation easements on private lands. The Program is 100 percent voluntary and is guided by the Open Space Council³.

There are four agencies that are eligible to participate in the Open Space Program:

- The Division of Parks and Recreation (Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control)
- The Division of Fish and Wildlife (Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control)
- The Delaware Forest Service (Department of Agriculture)
- The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (Department of State)

This report summarizes the total number of acres protected through the Program, along with Open Space Program funds and partner contributions used to secure these lands, organized by county. It covers both the Program’s entire history and the five-year reporting period from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2025 (Page 3). Since the Program’s inception, approximately 66,921 acres have been protected in Delaware—an area roughly the size of Washington, D.C.—with nearly half a billion dollars in Open Space and partner funds invested in land acquisition. Over the past five years alone, almost \$60 million has been spent to protect about 3,139 acres, an area roughly equivalent to four New York City Central Parks. The report also includes detailed charts for each project acquired during the reporting period, providing information on acquisition dates, property names, acquiring agencies, property interests, acquisition types, funding and purchase price breakdowns, due diligence costs and the corresponding Senate and House districts (Pages 12-15).

In addition, the report provides county-level maps illustrating lands protected through the Open Space Program during the reporting period (Pages 4-6), as well as spotlight features highlighting selected acquisitions from each of the four eligible agencies (Pages 7-10).

The Open Space Program has played—and continues to play—a vital role in permanently protecting land and ensuring that Delaware’s natural resources are preserved for future generations. As land becomes increasingly scarce and land prices continue to rise (Page 11), the importance of the Open Space Program grows ever more critical.

1 <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/parks/open-space/>

2 <https://delcode.delaware.gov/title7/c075/index.html>

3 <https://dnrec.delaware.gov/parks/open-space/council/>

Ten million dollars is appropriated annually from the proceeds of the Realty Transfer Tax through the General Assembly. Each year, the Governor may reduce or add to this funding. Of the total appropriation, \$9 million is allocated for land acquisition, while the remaining \$1 million is deposited into an infrastructure account to support reinvestment in key open space infrastructure, including campgrounds, trails, visitor centers, recreational amenities, and hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing areas.

Fiscal Year	Open Space Funds Received
2021	\$5,000,000
2022	\$10,000,000
2023	\$20,000,000
2024	\$10,000,000
2025	\$10,000,000
2026	\$10,000,000

The Open Space Program was appropriated a total of \$65 million from Fiscal Year 2021-2026 as seen in the chart.

The charts below illustrate cumulative totals for the number of projects, purchase prices, Open Space Funds, partner funds and acres during the reporting period and across the full lifespan of the Program.

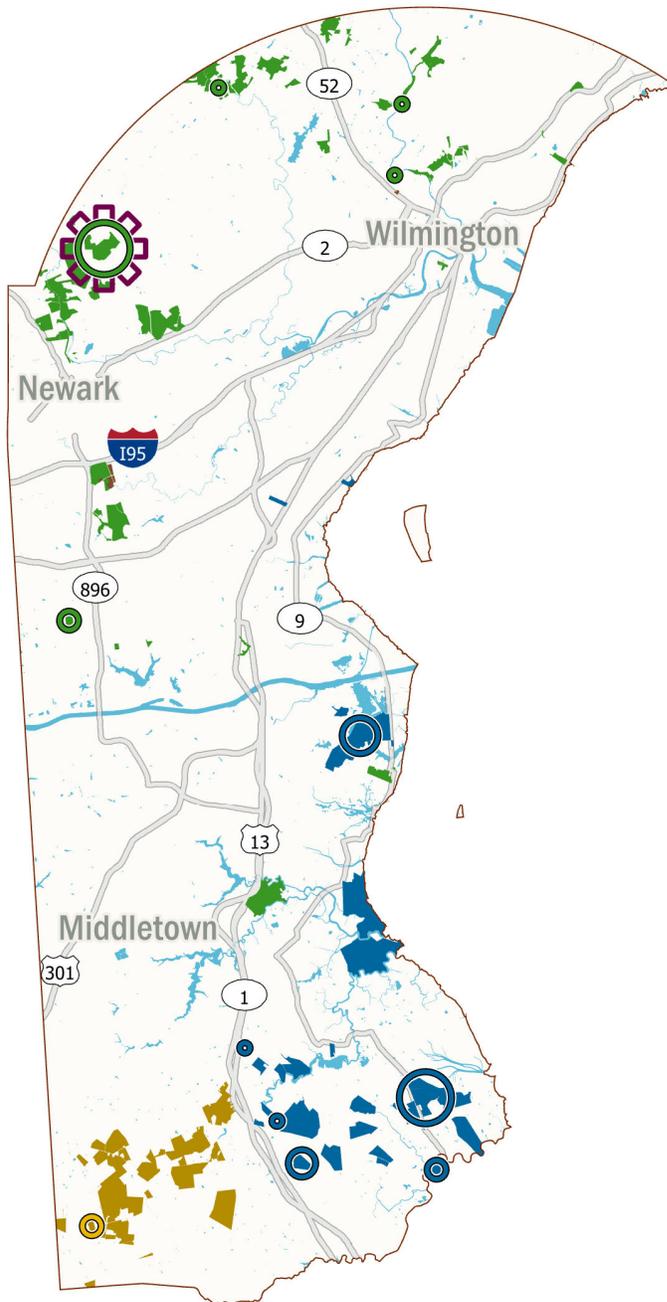
2021- 2025 PROJECT SUMMARY BY COUNTY					
County	Projects	Purchase Price	Open Space Funds	Total Partner Funds	Acres
NEW CASTLE	14	\$33,184,131	\$23,999,131	\$9,185,000	1,092
KENT	22	\$7,147,225	\$6,837,225	\$310,000	872
SUSSEX	28	\$19,186,780	\$16,085,278	\$3,101,502	1,176
Grand Total	64	\$59,518,136	\$46,921,634	\$12,596,502	3,140

1990- 2025 PROJECT SUMMARY BY COUNTY					
County	Projects	Purchase Price	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Acres
NEW CASTLE	201	\$205,298,157	\$165,436,938	\$39,861,219	15,233
KENT	115	\$35,289,675	\$29,528,280	\$5,761,395	11,051
SUSSEX	235	\$206,749,764	\$134,713,132	\$72,036,632	40,638
Grand Total	551	\$447,337,596	\$329,678,350	\$117,659,246	66,922



Cape Henlopen State Park

New Castle County Open Space Acquisitions



Open Space Acquisitions

-  Fish and Wildlife
-  Forest Service
-  Historical and Cultural Affairs
-  Parks and Recreation

2021-2025 Open Space Acquisitions

-  0-50 Acres
-  51-100 Acres
-  101-150 Acres
-  151-200 Acres
-  201-250 Acres
-  251-300 Acres
-  Spotlight Properties
(see pages 7-10)

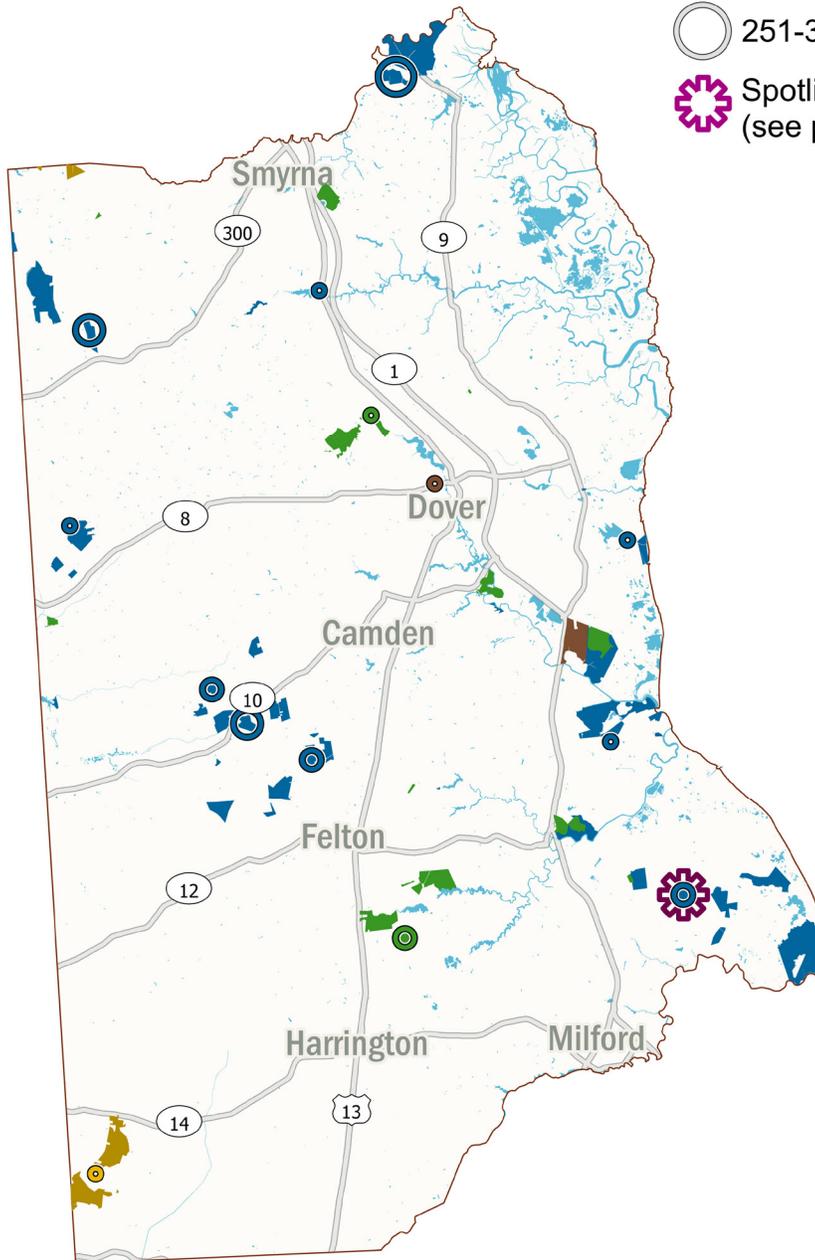
Kent County Open Space Acquisitons

Open Space Acquisitions

-  Fish and Wildlife
-  Forest Service
-  Historical and Cultural Affairs
-  Parks and Recreation

2021-2025 Open Space Acquisitions

-  0-50 Acres
-  51-100 Acres
-  101-150 Acres
-  151-200 Acres
-  201-250 Acres
-  251-300 Acres
-  Spotlight Properties (see pages 7-10)



January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025

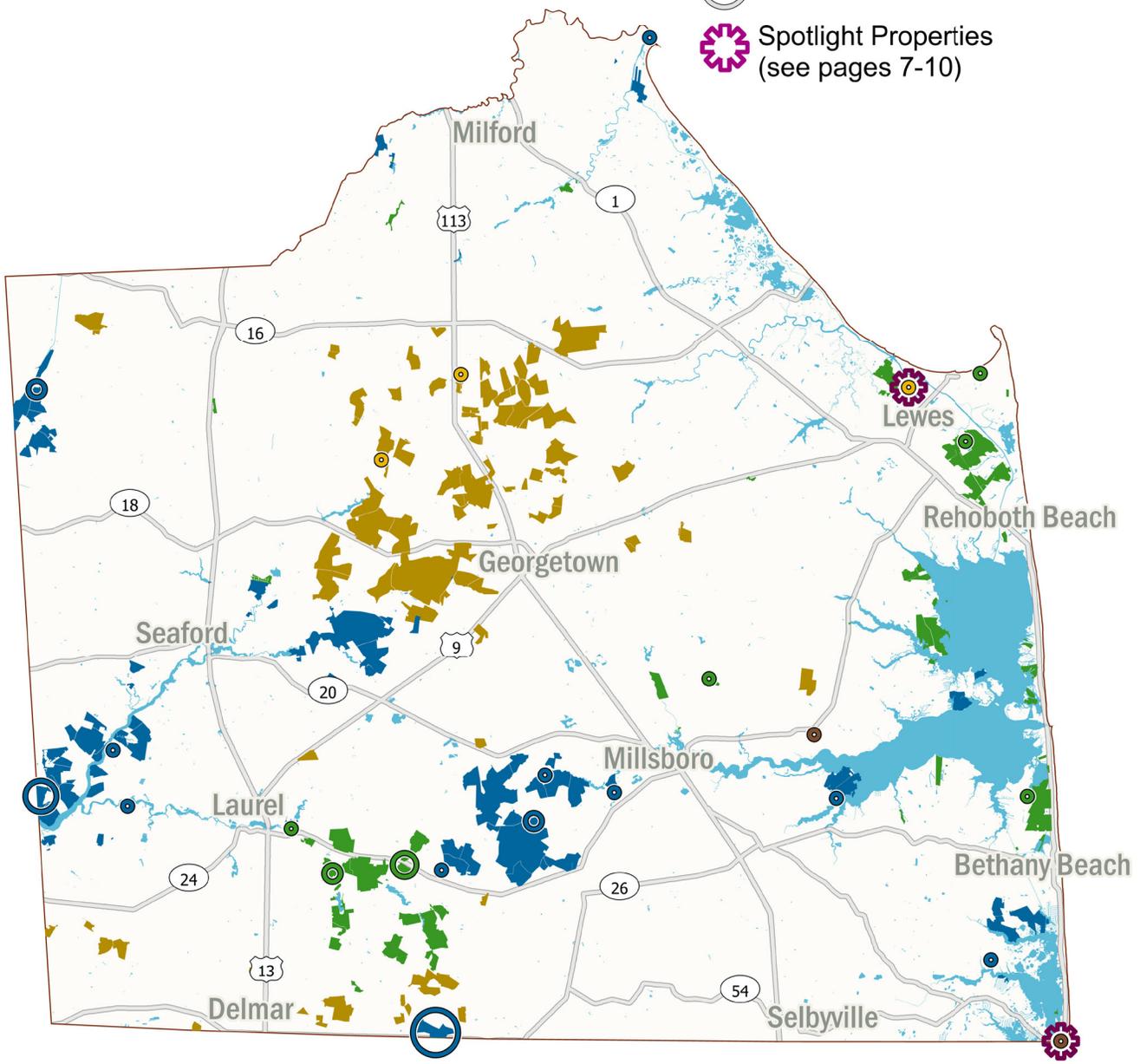
Sussex County Open Space Acquisitions

2021-2025 Open Space Acquisitions

-  Fish and Wildlife
-  Forest Service
-  Historical and Cultural Affairs
-  Parks and Recreation

2021-2025 Open Space Acquisitions

-  0-50 Acres
-  51-100 Acres
-  101-150 Acres
-  151-200 Acres
-  201-250 Acres
-  251-300 Acres
-  Spotlight Properties (see pages 7-10)



Division of Parks and Recreation - Spotlight Acquisition

du Pont–Langenegger Property
White Clay Creek State Park, New Castle County

Acquisition Details

Acres: 274.4

Purchase Price: \$26,069,131

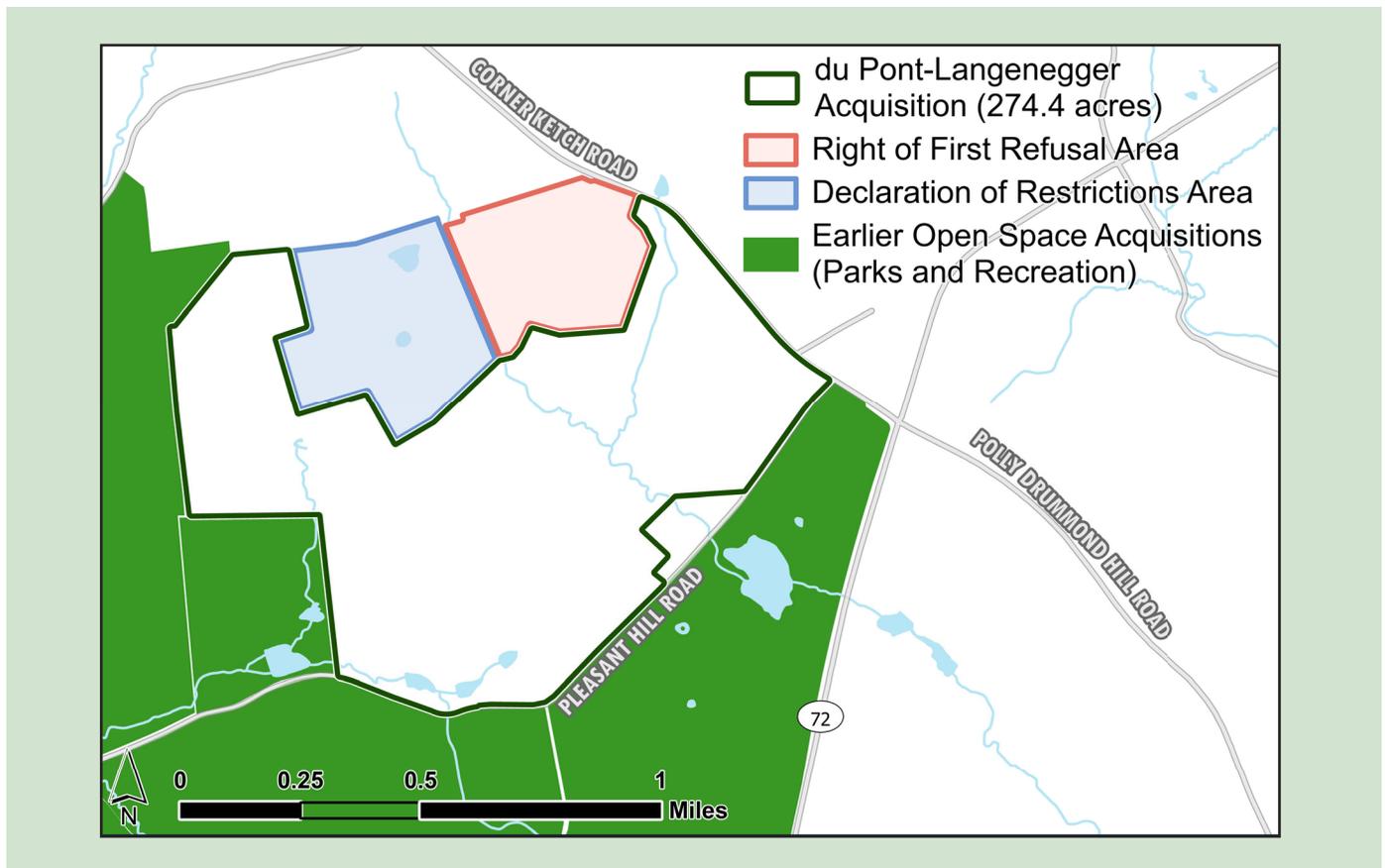
Open Space Funds: \$19,749,131

Partner Funds: \$6,320,000

The Conservation Fund: \$5,820,000

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Acres for America Grant: \$500,000

The du Pont–Langenegger Property, located in Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County, was the final major inholding of White Clay Creek State Park. The acquisition entailed the largest Open Space Program funding investment and the largest private partner contribution ever made to a Division of Parks and Recreation project. In addition, the du Pont–Langenegger family gifted a \$1.3 million endowment to the Delaware Community Foundation that established the William K. du Pont Stewardship Fund which supports statewide Division projects related to cultural preservation, conservation of plants and animals and habitat management on public lands. They also placed a Declaration of Restrictions on the portion of their retained property west of Middle Run Creek and granted Parks a Right of First refusal on the portion east of Middle Run Creek.



January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (with the Division of Parks and Recreation) - Spotlight Acquisition

Fenwick Island Lots Property Sussex County

Acquisition Details

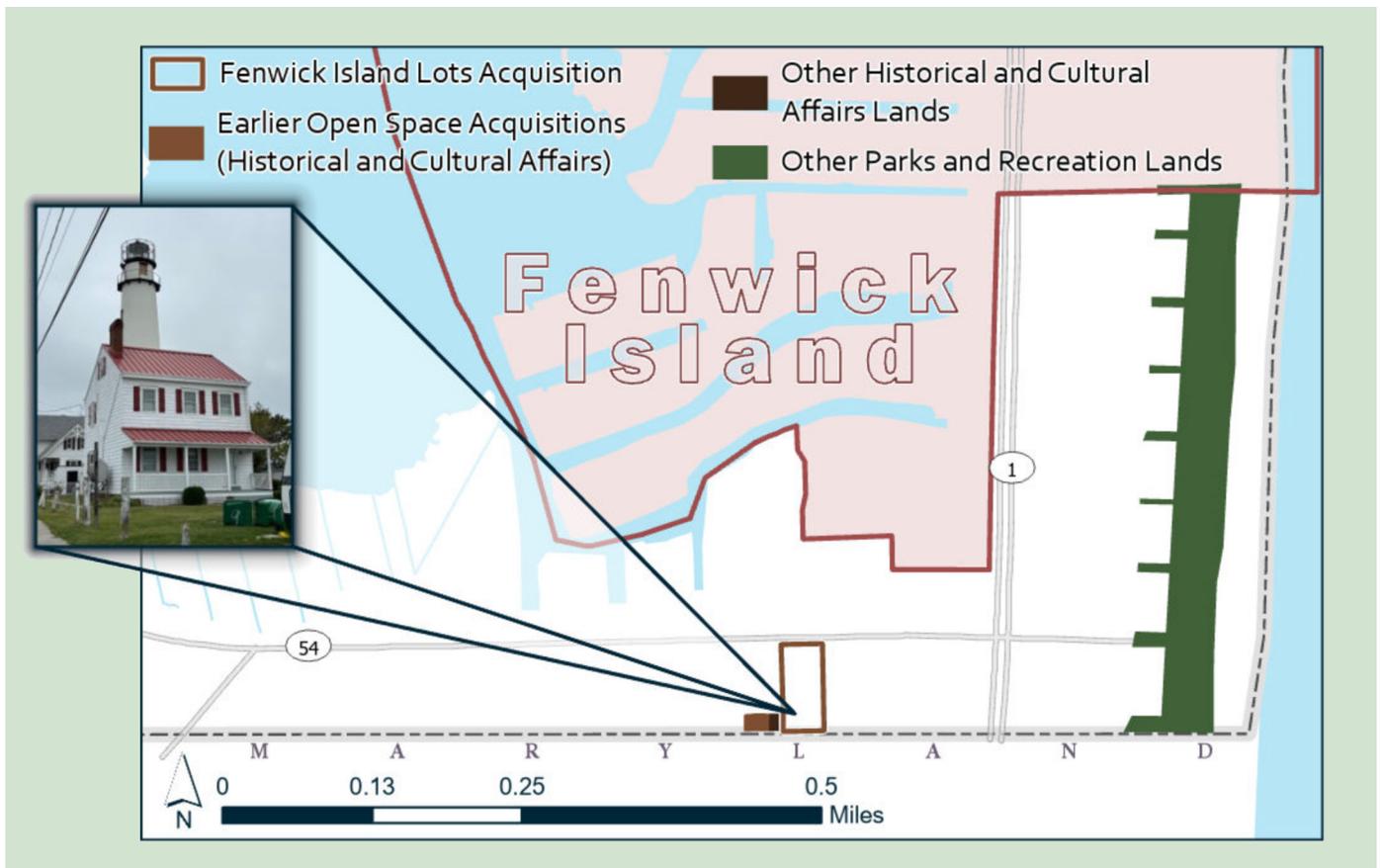
Acres: 1

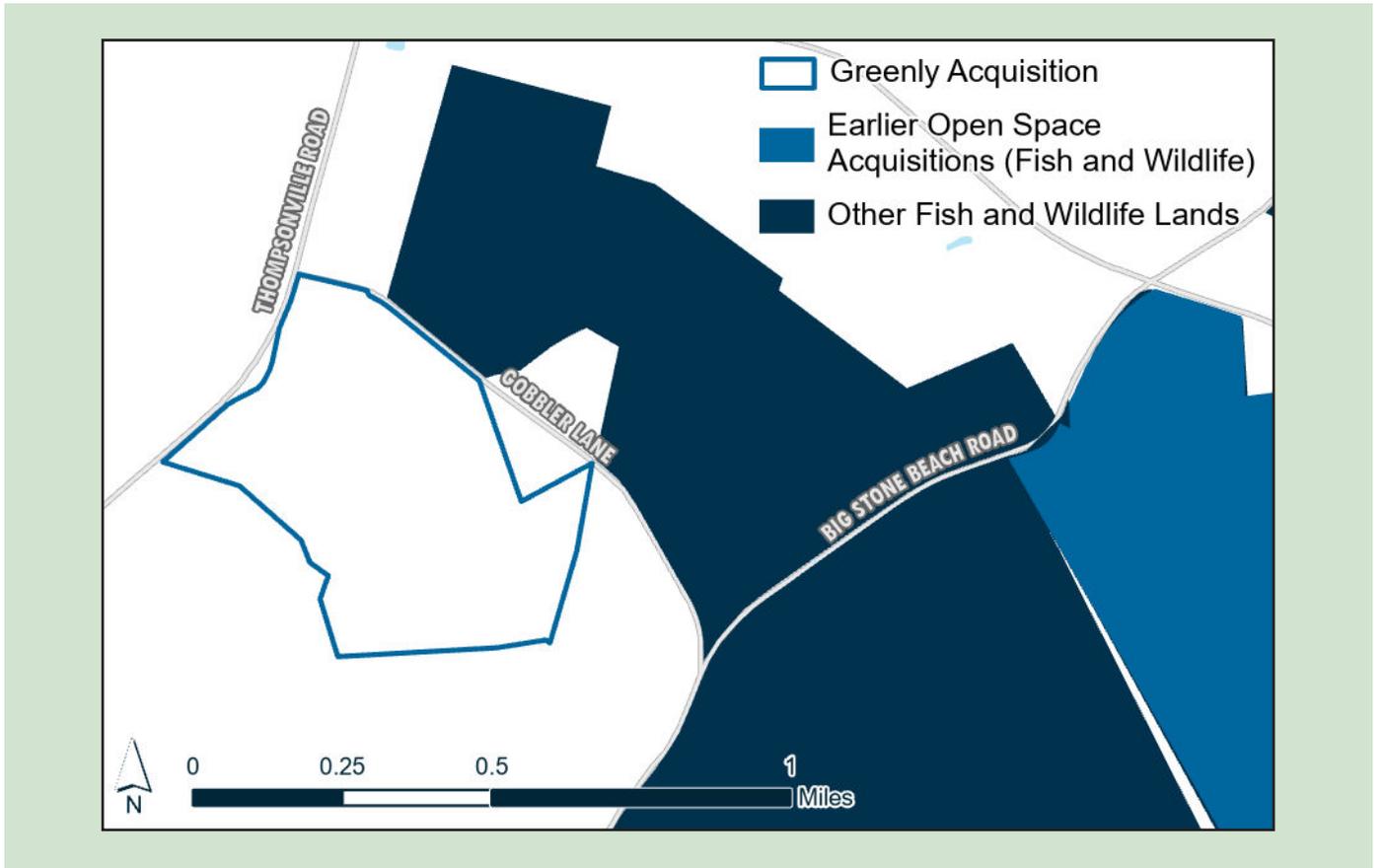
Purchase Price: \$3,900,000

Open Space Funds: \$3,900,000

The Fenwick Island Lots, located in Baltimore Hundred, Sussex County, just south of Fenwick Island proper, were placed on the market by the previous owners. The property consists of two tax parcels, each owned by a different family. The families agreed that the parcels would be sold together or not at all.

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (HCA) expressed interest in acquiring the lots because one parcel contains the original lightkeeper's house, a structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places. HCA subsequently approached the Division of Parks and Recreation to explore a partnership, given the proximity of Fenwick Island State Park. As a result, portions of the property will be managed by HCA, while the remaining areas will be managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation.





Division of Fish and Wildlife - Spotlight Acquisition

Greenly Property
Milford Neck Wildlife Area, Kent County

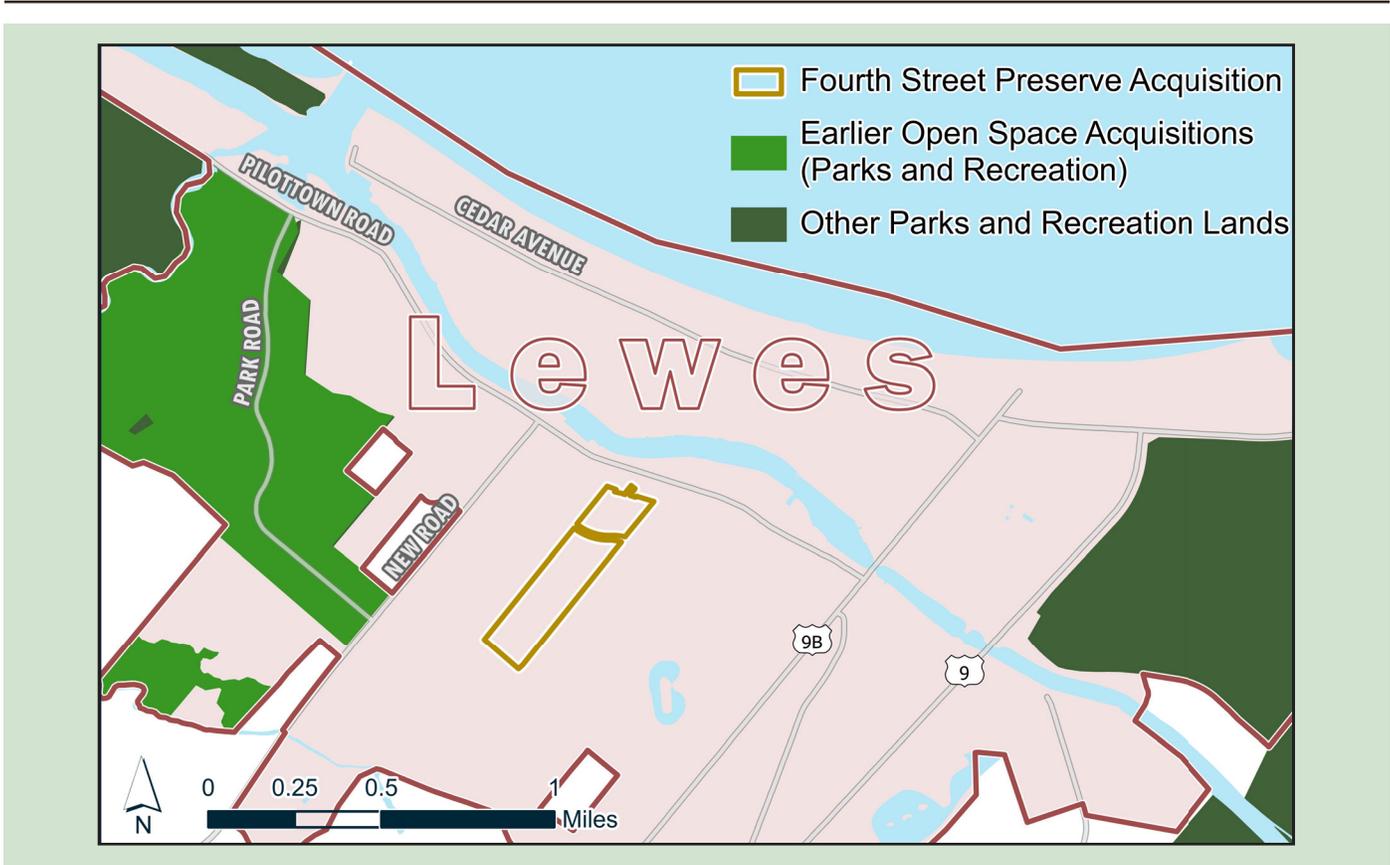
Acquisition Details

Acres: 97.5

Purchase Price: \$1,292,000

Open Space Funds: \$1,292,000

The Greenly Property, located in Milford, Kent County, consists of 97.5 acres and was acquired in 2025. This acquisition represents the largest addition by acreage to the Milford Neck Wildlife Area since 1997. The land was farmed and maintained by a single family for more than two centuries prior to its acquisition by the Division. With increasing development pressure across Kent County, the Division was eager to acquire this land allowing it to be managed appropriately for Delaware’s native plants and wildlife.



Delaware Forest Service – Spotlight Acquisition

Fourth Street Preserve Conservation Easement, Sussex County

Acquisition Details

Acres: 30

Conservation Easement Value: \$8,000,000

Open Space Funds: \$3,037,500

The Fourth Street Preserve Property, located in Lewes, was sold by a private landowner to the City of Lewes. To facilitate the City’s purchase of the property, a portion of the funding was provided through the Open Space Program, through which the Delaware Forest Service acquired a conservation easement⁴ via a bargain sale⁵.

The Delaware Forest Service expressed interest in holding the conservation easement because the Preserve will serve as a model for future urban forest conservation efforts and function as a community forest with public access. In addition to Open Space funding, the City of Lewes secured contributions from multiple partners, including the City itself, the Capital Transportation Fund, the Longwood Foundation and more than 1,600 individual donors.

⁴ Conservation Easement: A voluntary, legally binding agreement that permanently restricts certain land uses to protect conservation or historic values.

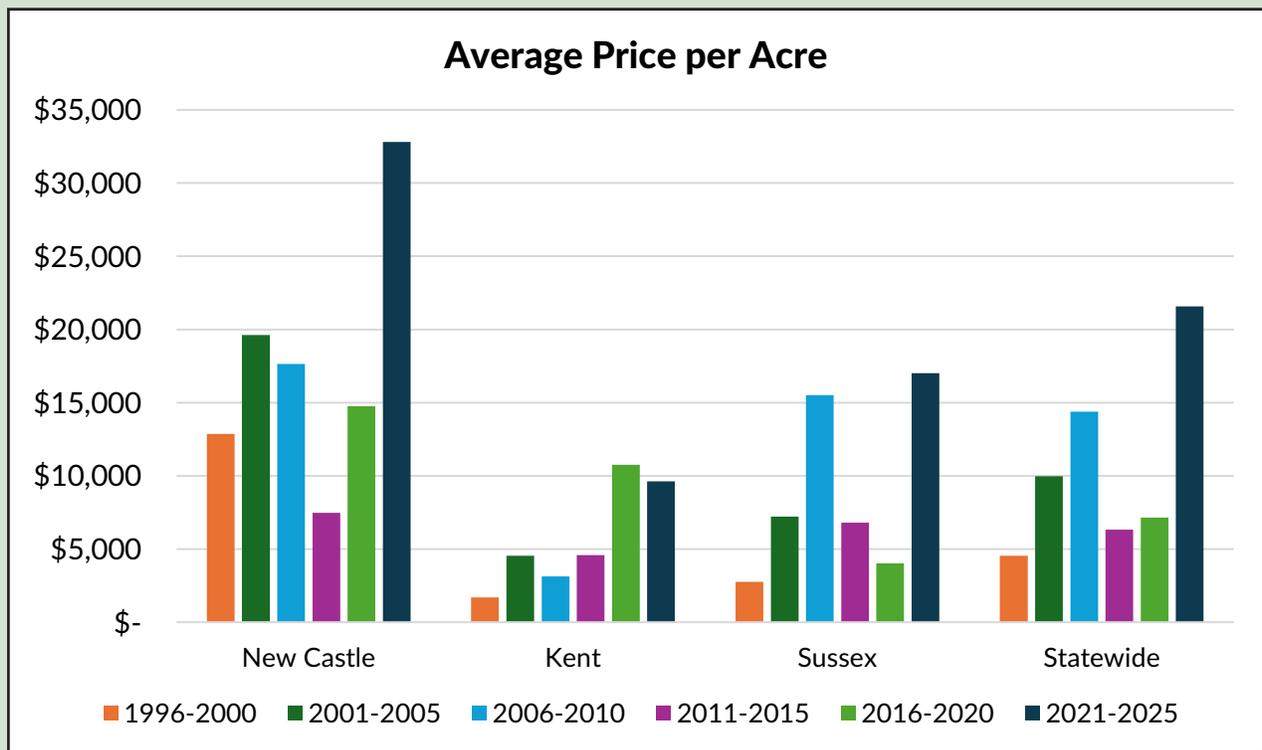
⁵ Bargain Sale: A sale of property or property interest for less than fair market value, with the difference treated as a public or charitable benefit.

Cost Per Acre of Land Purchases

“Land—they aren’t making any more of it.” This familiar saying underscores a growing reality in Delaware. As the state has become increasingly attractive to developers, development pressure has accelerated, making the preservation of land more critical than ever. One consequence of this pressure has been a steady increase in land prices.

The chart below illustrates the average price per acre for properties acquired through the Open Space Program from 1996 to the present. Data from 1995 and earlier are excluded from the analysis due to potential inaccuracies. Data are presented in five-year increments, broken out by county and statewide. Average price per acre was calculated by dividing the total purchase price by the total number of acres acquired within each five-year period.

This analysis excludes conservation easements, bargain sales and donated properties. It does not differentiate between wetland and upland acreage, where per-acre values can vary significantly, nor does it account for the presence of structures, which can substantially increase purchase costs. In addition, the inclusion of buildable lots under ten acres, which often command higher per-acre prices, can skew average cost figures. Together, these factors help explain the variation shown in the chart, as average price per acre does not follow a steady upward trend across all periods. However, the data does generally indicate a significant increase in average price per acre during the most recent five-year period, reflecting heightened development pressure and land market dynamics.



January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025

2021 Open Space Acquisitions

Date	Name	Agency	County	Acres	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Purchase Price	Due Diligence Costs	Senate District	House District
1/29/2021	Auman	F&W	SUSSEX	0.3	\$600,000	\$0	\$600,000	\$18,712	18	36
2/11/2021	Grubb	FOR	NEW CASTLE	58.7	\$410,000	\$0	\$410,000	\$10,876	14	11
2/26/2021	Selby	F&W	NEW CASTLE	200.0	\$800,000	\$900,000	\$1,700,000	\$39,328	12	9
3/10/2021	Seaver	F&W	KENT	2.5	\$7,525	\$0	\$7,525	\$8,061	16	32
4/20/2021	Briggs	F&W	SUSSEX	9.4	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$1,500,000	\$20,192	20	41
4/22/2021	Epps	FOR	SUSSEX	24.4	\$135,000	\$0	\$135,000	\$3,857	18	35
4/26/2021	Kersey 	F&W	KENT	81.3	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000	\$11,866	15	30
4/26/2021	Res-North State Street LLC	HCA	KENT	0.3	\$325,000	\$0	\$325,000	\$0	17	31
4/30/2021	Absher Farms 	F&W	SUSSEX	41.3	\$200,000	\$536,000	\$736,000	\$0	21	40
5/17/2021	Bell 	F&W	KENT	0.3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,051	16	32
5/18/2021	Sunshine Builders Inc. 	F&W	KENT	0.1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$911	16	32
5/25/2021	Levernier 	F&W	KENT	0.1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$931	16	32
6/2/2021	Silvey 	F&W	KENT	0.1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$921	16	32
7/30/2021	Vines	F&W	NEW CASTLE	118.4	\$25,000	\$880,000	\$905,000	\$28,318	14	11
8/4/2021	Fahnestock 	F&W	KENT	0.2	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$931	16	32
8/12/2021	The City of Lewes 	P&R	SUSSEX	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	6	14
8/18/2021	Schwandt 	F&W	KENT	0.1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,071	16	32
8/25/2021	Barcroft Company 	P&R	SUSSEX	1.5	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	6	14
9/3/2021	Lilly	F&W	KENT	54.4	\$270,000	\$0	\$270,000	\$17,951	15	30
10/26/2021	The Conservation Fund 	HCA	SUSSEX	29.8	\$275,000	\$0	\$275,000	\$0	20	4
10/29/2021	G and G Farms	F&W	NEW CASTLE	271.4	\$200,000	\$1,050,000	\$1,250,000	\$18,281	14	9
12/30/2021	Chesapeake Conservancy	F&W	SUSSEX	39.2	\$335,000	\$0	\$335,000	\$53,049	21	39

Key

-  Conservation Easement
-  Donation

2022 Open Space Acquisitions

Date	Name	Agency	County	Acres	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Purchase Price	Due Diligence Costs	Senate District	House District
2/24/2022	George Wayne Jagers 	P&R	SUSSEX	9.2	\$71,000	\$0	\$71,000	\$0	21	40
5/13/2022	Meyer	F&W	KENT	150.7	\$1,260,000	\$0	\$1,260,000	\$25,792	15	11
5/20/2022	Rocky Run Ventures LLC	P&R	NEW CASTLE	2.3	\$450,000	\$0	\$450,000	\$0	4	12
6/7/2022	The Conservation Fund 	P&R	KENT	11.1	\$0	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$0	17	29
7/28/2022	Sussex Ventures INC	P&R	SUSSEX	39.0	\$1,691,000	\$0	\$1,691,000	\$0	21	40
7/29/2022	Cataldi	F&W	KENT	166.4	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$23,366	14	28
9/30/2022	Fortney Residual Lands	F&W	KENT	4.2	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$10,205	15	11
10/21/2022	Duffy	F&W	NEW CASTLE	3.8	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$22,280	14	11
12/19/2022	Shockley 	F&W	SUSSEX	13.3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$18,819	20	38

2023 Open Space Acquisitions

Date	Name	Agency	County	Acres	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Purchase Price	Due Diligence Costs	Senate District	House District
2/16/2023	Greenly Property	P&R	KENT	98.2	\$925,000	\$0	\$925,000	\$60,359	15	30
2/17/2023	Ewing Property	F&W	KENT	1.2	\$245,000	\$0	\$245,000	\$7,581	14	29
3/9/2023	DelDOT Custodial Resolution 	P&R	KENT	10.1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	17	31
3/31/2023	Jestice	P&R	SUSSEX	85.5	\$780,000	\$0	\$780,000	\$0	21	40
7/14/2023	Glatfelter State Line	F&W	SUSSEX	269.9	\$675,000	\$0	\$675,000	\$11,985	21	40
7/21/2023	Pini	FOR	SUSSEX	40.0	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000	\$4,030	18	35
7/28/2023	Sussex County 	F&W	SUSSEX	46.1	\$302,500	\$0	\$302,500	\$7,088	21	40
8/1/2023	Wilgus	P&R	SUSSEX	14.2	\$42,000	\$0	\$42,000	\$13,678	20	38
9/14/2023	Warren 	F&W	KENT	137.4	\$515,000	\$35,000	\$550,000	\$22,641	15	30
9/29/2023	DuPont-Langenegger Phase 1 (of 3)	P&R	NEW CASTLE	89.5	\$7,048,460	\$1,455,000	\$8,503,460	\$117,294	8	23
12/21/2023	Murray	F&W	SUSSEX	19.1	\$203,300	\$0	\$203,300	\$16,384	21	41

Key

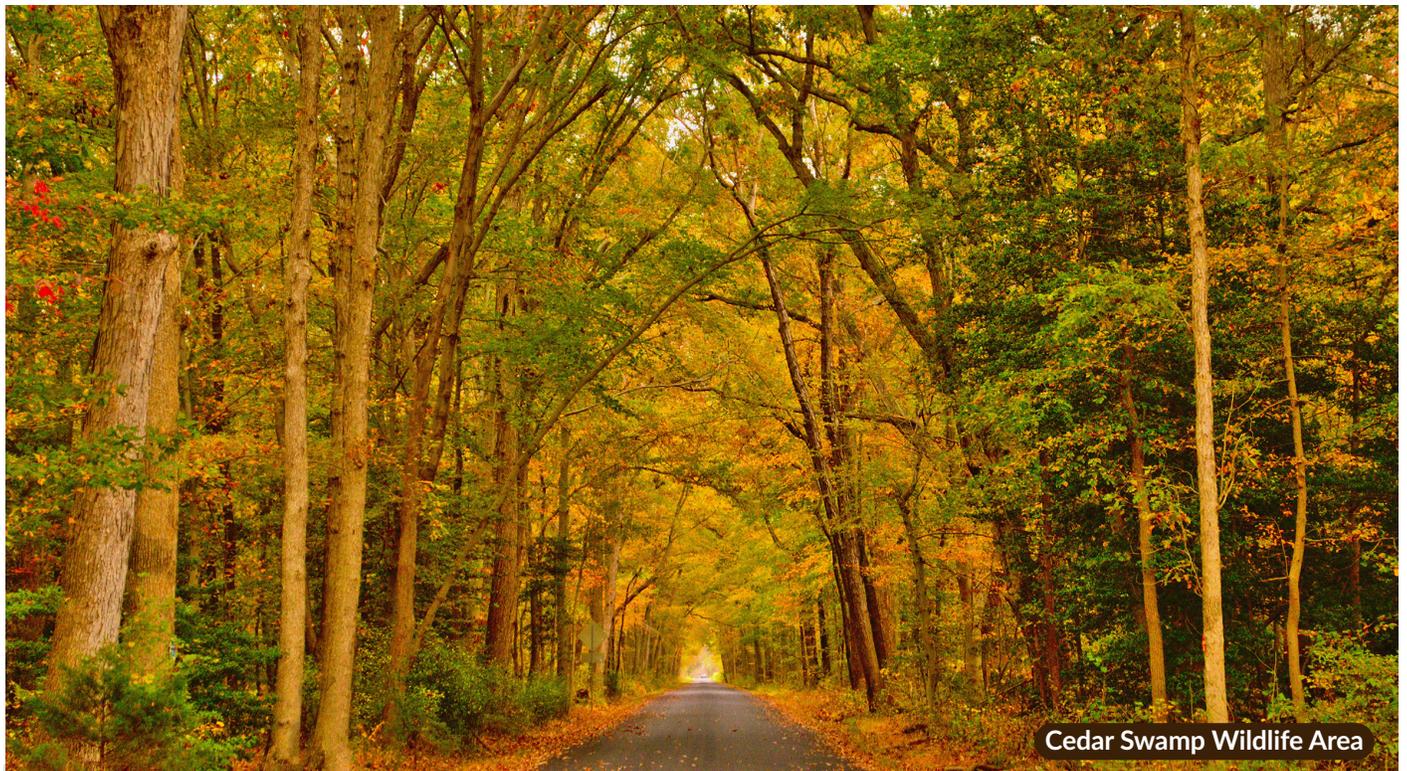
 Conservation Easement
  Donation
  Bargain Sale

2024 Open Space Acquisitions

Date	Name	Agency	County	Acres	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Purchase Price	Due Diligence Costs	Senate District	House District
1/1/2024	DuPont-Langenegger Phase 2 (of 3)	P&R	NEW CASTLE	97.3	\$8,742,531	\$500,000	\$9,242,531	\$118,867	8	23
5/3/2024	Evans 🍏	P&R	NEW CASTLE	0.7	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$82,418	1	12
5/24/2024	Woolfolk	P&R	NEW CASTLE	65.0	\$515,000	\$35,000	\$550,000	\$59,061	10	27
5/31/2024	DuPont-Langenegger Phase 3 (of 3)	P&R	NEW CASTLE	87.6	\$3,958,140	\$4,365,000	\$8,323,140	\$32,439	8	23
6/24/2024	Mehal	F&W	KENT	0.1	\$2,100	\$0	\$2,100	\$2,263	16	32
7/2/2024	Freepoint Solar ❤️	F&W	NEW CASTLE	57.3	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	14	9
8/30/2024	Givens	F&W	SUSSEX	0.5	\$115,000	\$0	\$115,000	\$15,027	21	40
12/20/2024	Brittingham 🌿	F&W	SUSSEX	70.0	\$766,700	\$0	\$766,700	\$55,823	21	40
12/20/2024	Vickers	F&W	NEW CASTLE	25.7	\$400,000	\$0	\$400,000	\$48,350	14	11
12/27/2024	Woodenhawk Properties, LLC	F&W	SUSSEX	92.1	\$743,000	\$0	\$743,000	\$58,903	18	35
12/31/2024	Calhoun ❤️	P&R	SUSSEX	4.8	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,381	21	40

Key

🌿 Conservation Easement
 ❤️ Donation
 🍏 Bargain Sale



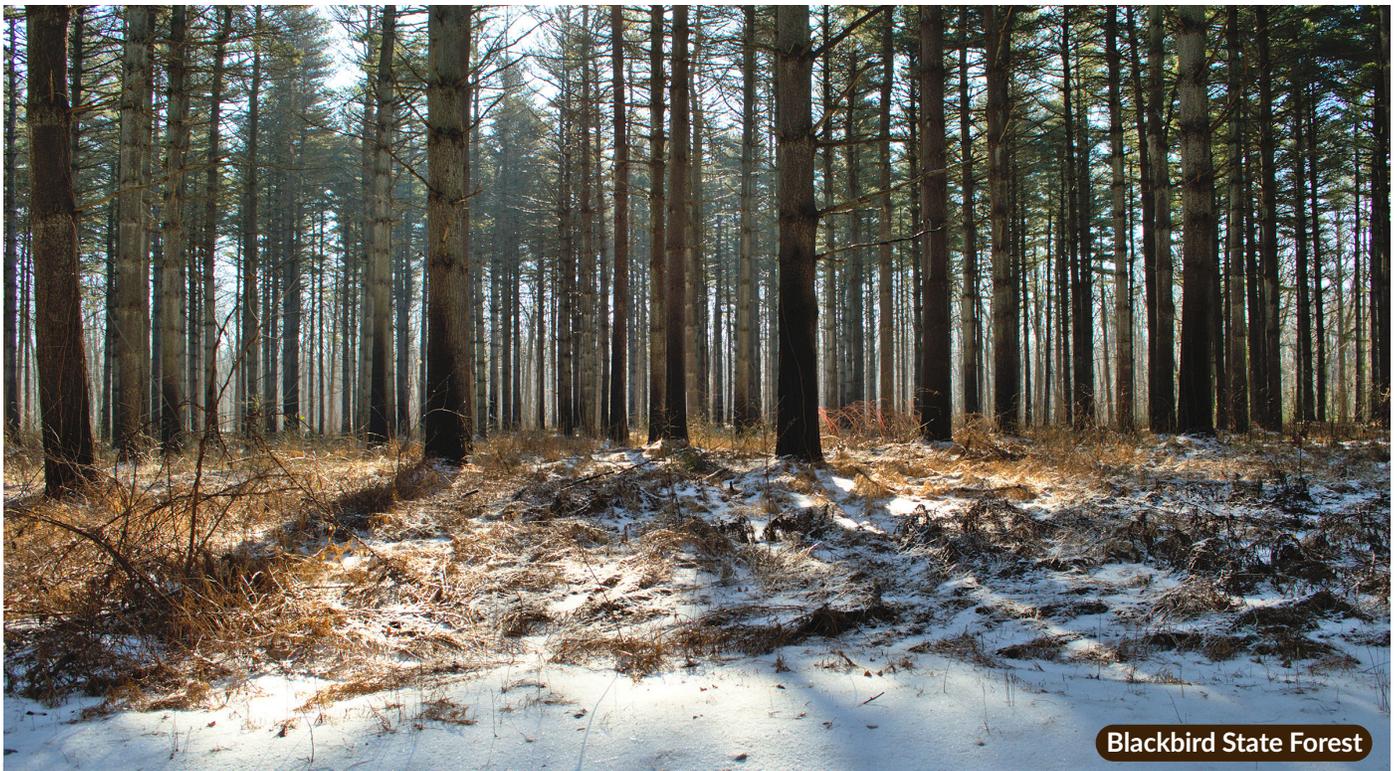
Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area

2025 Open Space Acquisitions

Date	Name	Agency	County	Acres	Open Space Funds	Partner Funds	Purchase Price	Due Diligence Costs	Senate District	House District
1/13/2025	Draine 	P&R	SUSSEX	63.0	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$600,000	\$77,336	19	37
4/15/2025	Porter-Burtelle 	F&W	SUSSEX	132.2	\$34,601	\$1,141,825	\$1,176,426	\$3,832	21	39
5/30/2025	Little Property	F&W	KENT	37.9	\$530,600	\$0	\$530,600	\$42,229	16	33
6/13/2025	Truitt Farms Property	P&R	SUSSEX	57.1	\$373,678	\$373,678	\$747,355	\$67,253	21	40
6/13/2025	Greenly Property	F&W	KENT	97.5	\$1,292,000	\$0	\$1,292,000	\$59,223	16	33
6/18/2025	Lynch Property	P&R	SUSSEX	20.7	\$190,000	\$0	\$190,000	\$59,405	21	40
6/27/2025	Fenwick Island Lots	OTHER	SUSSEX	1.0	\$3,900,000	\$0	\$3,900,000	\$67,253	20	38
7/11/2025	Stevenson	FOR	KENT	17.6	\$125,000	\$0	\$125,000	\$42,960	15	30
9/15/2025	Fourth Street Preserve  	FOR	SUSSEX	30.0	\$3,037,500	\$0	\$3,037,500	\$2,400	6	20
10/28/2025	Hearn Property	F&W	SUSSEX	22.5	\$265,000	\$0	\$265,000	\$20,868	21	40
12/31/2025	Yorklyn SE Properties LLC	P&R	NEW CASTLE	13.9	\$1,050,000	\$0	\$1,050,000	\$56,263	4	12

Key

 Conservation Easement  Bargain Sale



Blackbird State Forest



Ted Harvey Conservation Area
Photo by Errol Ebanks (DNREC)