



DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

Update

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GREAT CYPRESS SWAMP RESTORATION AND FORESTRY PROJECTS MOVE FORWARD

In May 2006 the Delaware Wild Lands Board of Directors approved a five year, long-term sustainable forest management plan for the Great Cypress Swamp. The plan, based on a strong conservation ethic, included limited annual timber harvests as well as wetland restoration projects of native Atlantic white cedar and Bald Cypress swamp habitat. We will be one of the first landowners on Delmarva to be dual certified under both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council guidelines for sustainable forestry operations. One of our goals is to generate funds through forestry operations to support all of our management activities in the Great Cypress Swamp. It is now 18 months later and we are pleased to announce that the plan is well

underway. During late summer 2006 we conducted a 52-acre harvest demonstrating four different levels and techniques of harvest. This summer we harvested an additional 28 acres and currently are conducting a harvest designed to enhance expansion of an existing Atlantic white cedar stand. In addition, we are initiating an experimental 35-acre Atlantic white cedar restoration in an area overgrown with maple and sweet gum. All of these projects are being conducted with considerations for increasing biodiversity and restoring native forest types. This represents a small step forward for what will become a long-term project of restoring as much of the Great Cypress Swamp as possible.

DWL LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE



In October 2007 DWL launched a new website designed to better promote our efforts to conserve and preserve natural areas. The site will also provide information on current and future projects. We are confident that our new site will afford us valuable exposure while educating the public about our mission. We invite you to take a moment to visit us at www.delawarewildlands.org.

WILDLIFE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR SHARP PROPERTY

In 2006 DWL acquired the 431-acre Sharp Farm just north of Odessa, Delaware. This high visibility property borders both Drawyers Creek and Appoquinimink Creek and hosts dramatic cliffs with scenic views of both creeks and adjacent marshes. The associated upland forest is one of the prime examples of a Chestnut Oak forest in Delaware. The high ecological value of this property is obvious. Equally obvious is the challenge to manage this property to preserve the existing natural area values as well as to restore and enhance essential wildlife and habitat values for future generations. With this in mind, we have enlisted help from several partners including DNREC Parks and Recreation Natural Resource Stewardship Program, DNREC Fish and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program, USDA NRCS programs, and Ducks Unlimited.

Some of our priorities for the property are to preserve and expand the Chestnut Oak forest community through reforestation and the control of invasive plants, control existing erosion associated with agricultural operations, and to create additional waterfowl habitat. We have had several meetings with these partners over the past months and hope to formalize plans by spring 2008.



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“WHAT EXACTLY IS DELAWARE WILD LANDS, INC.?”

The one question we are asked more than any other.

The tough part of this question has to do with the length of time available in which to answer. Quite simply, Delaware Wild Lands, Inc. is a private, non-profit, tax exempt conservation organization whose purpose is to buy and preserve certain natural areas. The problem with this short answer is that it leads to many other questions which cannot be answered with a short, concise description. The good part about this short answer is that it usually sparks enough curiosity on the part of the questioner to demand further explanation.

We believe that Delaware Wild Lands is as much a philosophy as it is a working organization. When we first started our goal was simple. We raised some money to buy 80 acres bordering Trussum Pond near Laurel. Trussum was the catalyst...An eerie and beautiful spot that seemingly was kidnapped from the Deep South and somehow deposited in Sussex County. Our primary reason for beginning was to preserve that lovely spot for future generations of Delawareans to enjoy.

The next thing we knew a major oil company began purchasing properties in southeastern New Castle County, threatening the delicate balance of the salt marshes in that area. We stepped in there and purchased some 1,900 acres before it was lost forever. Do you see what happened? In the case of Trussum Pond we acted “because it was there” and not immediately threatened. With the salt marsh area in New Castle County we acted because the threat was immediate. So in less than one year our philosophy had changed. And it has continued to change, or rather to build or expand, as the years passed and the circumstances changed. Each new acquisition has been brought about by different sets of circumstances. They have all been based on the idea that they should be preserved, but not all for the same set of reasons.

It should be pointed out here that we do not go out and buy every property that we see. Obviously this would be impossible from any standpoint. We look at each individual case and make our judgments accordingly. Those properties which, in the opinion of our Board of Directors, are deemed to be important according to several criteria, are the ones that we make every effort to preserve. These judgments are not made lightly. Neither are we always successful. Sometimes conditions and circumstances are such that we are unable to accomplish our goals. When this happens it is disappointing but it does not lessen our commitment in any way.

Some areas are much more endangered than others. In some cases the danger is imminent, in others, simply threatened. In yet others there really is no danger, although some may be implied. These are the factors, among others, which must be weighed. It is not a simple task. And up to this point we are

only talking about whether or not we can or should direct our efforts toward the preservation of a particular piece of property.

In most cases the acquisition of these properties involved large sums of money. Our job at this point is to raise the funds necessary to purchase the lands, purchase still being the most effective means available by which to achieve our goal. We are very fortunate in that there are a great many people who share our beliefs and who make tax-deductible contributions to our organization. These funds are used exclusively for acquisition. In addition, several foundations have given substantial sums of money to us, again strictly for acquisition. We must justify our expenditures by seeing to it that they are not made without careful scrutiny being given to each acquisition. While we have been fortunate in the past in raising necessary funds, we must be ever increasingly aware that as prices go up, less and less can be done on a large scale basis. Because of this, our decisions become increasingly difficult to make. Ten or fifteen years ago we were able to acquire lands at a fraction of today's costs. Who knows what the cost will be in the next ten or fifteen years; or the next five, for that matter. The obvious time to purchase property is NOW. We cannot let this ever-increasing problem alter our thinking, however. We still must decide realistically which properties are to be sought after and acquired.

It would be nice if we could simply save every natural area that comes to mind but this is an obvious impossibility. When the conservation movement became fashionable some twenty years ago or so, there was a great groundswell of emotion and idealism was king. We have learned a lot since those days and one of the great realizations is that as long as populations continue to increase and the demand for land increases in kind, and as long as the demand for energy soars, real conservation problems will increase accordingly. What we at Delaware Wild Lands are trying to do is tackle one of those problems and that is the problem, or rather the duty, to see to it that future generations of Delawareans will be able to see and to enjoy some of the rapidly dwindling natural areas and the natural resources that those areas provide.

We cannot say that “there it is in a nutshell.” Neither can we say these are complete and total answers to the question “what exactly is Delaware Wild Lands, Inc.?”

We have attempted to give some insight as to our reasons for being, and hope we have sparked enough curiosity on your part to request further explanation.

This article was first printed in 1980 but we feel it is still timely.