



# DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

NOVEMBER 01, 2011

## DELAWARE WILD LANDS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENTS

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Delaware Wild Lands



In 1961, the founding year of Delaware Wild Lands, the first American astronaut entered space, a gallon of gas cost 27 cents, and Mickey Mantle became the highest paid baseball player after signing a \$75,000 contract. In 2011, the cost of a 200-acre farm in Delaware is roughly equivalent to the average annual salary of a major league baseball player and energy prices are soaring. In this same span of 50 years, and with the help of our founders, Board members, and supporters, Delaware Wild Lands protected forever 30,000 acres of Delaware Bayshores and the Great Cypress Swamp.

These efforts began when, in 1961, a few conservationists joined together to form Delaware Wild Lands and protect Trussum Pond, a unique spot seemingly plucked from the Deep South and deposited into Sussex County. This purchase fueled a desire to do more. Over the course of five decades, Delaware Wild Lands thwarted the construction of the Shell Oil Refinery, worked with Governor Peterson to advance the Coastal Zone Act, and acquired expansive blocks of habitat in each of Delaware's three counties.

Delaware Wild Lands' founders felt strongly about maintaining a balance between restoring natural habitats, preserving cultural treasures and sustaining traditional uses of the landscape such as hunting, trapping, agriculture and forestry.

Our commitment to that vision remains undiminished. Recently, we initiated wildlife habitat improvement and restoration projects at our 430-acre Sharp Farm. Extensive restoration efforts, many based on our sustainable forestry management plans have been underway for several years on our Great Cypress Swamp holdings. These efforts are possible because of our dedicated staff, former and current Board members, founders and the commitment of our supporters, which have led Delaware Wild Lands to become Delaware's largest non-profit, non-government landowner.

In honor of these accomplishments, Delaware Wild Lands hosted 50th anniversary picnics at our 430-acre Sharp Farm, located in New Castle County, and the



Rob Line of DE Division of Parks & Recreation talks about ecology & habitat at the Sharp Farm.



Dick Carter of the DE Heritage Commission, Christopher Martin, and Eugene Bayard, Esq., DWL Board Member enjoying festivities at the Fisher Farm.

Roman Fisher Farm, located in Sussex County. Activities at the Sharp Farm included music and hay wagon rides around the farm narrated by ecologists, ornithologists, foresters, and geologists. At the Roman Fisher Farm, photo displays, videos and slide shows demonstrated all aspects of our agricultural, forestry, wildlife management and habitat restoration projects. Both events offered an opportunity to commemorate our many successes with our good friends and supporters.

## WORKING WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IN THE CLASS AND IN THE FIELD

Two new collaborations with the University of Delaware, one in the classroom and one in the field, bear fruit for Delaware Wild Lands!

Undergrad students enrolled in the University of Delaware's Department of Food and Resource Economics Spring 2011 Sustainable Development class selected Delaware Wild Lands as the beneficiary of money generated from their in-class economics work. A primary goal of this class, taught by Dr. Kent Messer, is to explore sustainable development initiatives and the many environmental, economic, and social issues that should factor into environmental and economic decision-making processes. Delaware Wild Lands' sustainable forestry operation at the Great Cypress Swamp was used as an example of such work. As part of the class, students participate in a series of economic "experiments", with real economic gains and losses, which highlight how markets can be used to enhance environmental outcomes.



Dr. Judith Goldstein-Huff and Andrew Martin collecting weevils.

At the end of the semester, students donate class earnings to the non-profit of their choice. Delaware Wild Lands graciously received this contribution and is enthusiastic about partnering with Dr. Kent Messer and the University of Delaware in cultivating the next generation of environmental leaders and decision-makers!

In July, and with the help of the University of Delaware's Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, Delaware Wild Lands put nature to work for us by utilizing the Asiatic weevil to control the highly invasive and rapidly spreading mile-a-minute weed. Field survey and research confirm this weevil is host-specific and intolerant of other food sources, making it an effective control for mile-a-minute weed. This weed, if left uncontrolled, "crawls" over plants and eventually smothers them leaving the underlying plant with insufficient access to sunlight and air.

Over time, the mile-a-minute weed, like other invasive species, outcompetes native species and degrades the ecological biodiversity in the area. Release of the Asiatic weevil at the Great Cypress Swamp will inhibit the spread of the mile-a-minute into our recent 48-acre forest restoration site enhancing the viability of the 48,000 Atlantic White Cedar and bald cypress seedlings planted this spring.



# Sustainable Forestry Operations Support Habitat Restorations

Even in the face of poor timber markets, our certified sustainable operations serve as an integral part of large-scale wetland restoration and reforestation efforts in the Great Cypress Swamp. Site preparation included timber operations ranging from chipping to pulp logs and saw timber harvest, light root raking of slash debris into windows, and disking with a heavy forestry plough. Following these activities, this Spring, we planted more than 48,000 Atlantic White Cedar and bald cypress seedlings, our largest planting ever. Since 2008, we have restored nearly 90 acres of Atlantic White Cedar at the Swamp.

In late 2010 we harvested nearly 150 acres of timber as part of site preparations for wetland restoration projects that are part of a North American Waterfowl Conservation Act (NAWCA) project in the Swamp. This is a long-term project in conjunction with our property-wide wetland restorations and will eventually be planted in Atlantic White Cedar. Partners in this effort include Ducks Unlimited, USF&W Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Center for the Inland Bays, and the Delaware Forest Service.

All of our projects utilize our sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Certified timber operations as an integral part of site preparation. Our operations are subject to annual audits and in our September 2011 audit we exceeded all of the certification requirements.



*Atlantic White Cedar planting*

## Roman Fisher Farm Re-construction

Construction at the Roman Fisher Farm progresses with the completion of our guest house in September 2011. This structure is built in the footprint of and resembles the stable that once stood in the same location. As with our other completed structures, lumber from our sustainable forestry operations was utilized in all phases of construction. The guest house will host travelling overnight visitors-academic researchers and other professionals who require lodging to conduct their work. This structure can also accommodate small group meetings with those who share our interests.

The guest house joins our other structures; The Sweet Potato House-restoration completed 2008; shop-completed 2008; and barn-completed 2009. Our Roman Fisher Farm has experienced increased visitation and public interest as each structure has been completed. By the end of 2011, nearly 300 visitors will have toured our properties including; the Sussex County Farm Bureau; Delaware Forestry Association; Society of American Foresters; Delaware Wild Lands 50th Anniversary Celebration; local birding groups; various government representatives; and Federal, State and local politicians.



*Restored Guest House*

Next on the construction list is to build a structure that resembles the original Roman Fisher Farm house. This structure will house our resident caretaker and a small office. The overall goals are to recreate the farm as it might have appeared in the early 1900's and to develop the infrastructure necessary to support our activities in the Great Cypress Swamp.