



# Delaware Land Protection Coalition

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RASCL Coffee Hour

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# Delaware Land Protection Coalition

## **Mission—**

Protect the most ecologically, culturally, and recreationally important resources in Delaware through expanded partner collaboration and funding to meet diverse community needs.

## **Vision—**

We envision a Delaware with interconnected open space and productive land, clean water, thriving native flora and fauna, and resilience to climate change. We envision an equitable future that enriches the lives of those who live, work, and play here tomorrow and for generations to come.



# DLPC Membership

- Brandywine Red Clay Alliance
- Delaware Center for the Inland Bays
- Delaware Audubon
- Delaware Nature Society
- Delaware Dept. of Ag (Advisory)
- Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (Advisory)
- Delaware Wild Lands
- Delaware Native Species Council
- Delaware Ornithological Society
- Delaware Open Space Council (Advisory)
- Ducks Unlimited
- Kent County Conservancy
- Land Trust Alliance
- League of Women Voters in Delaware
- Mt. Cuba
- Nanticoke River Watershed Conservancy
- New Castle County Public Works
- Preservation Delaware
- Sierra Club
- Sussex County Land Trust
- Sussex Preservation Coalition
- The Nature Conservancy
- Tri-State Bird Rescue



# DLPC Goals



Increase the amount of state and county level funding dedicated to land protection.



Implement creative solutions that enable NGO partners to assist the state in protecting critical lands throughout the state.



# Why Open Space?

- **Outdoor recreation and open space is important to Delawareans and for Delawareans.** It is also a major economic driver and brings thousands of people to visit our state each year.
- **Open space is good for mental and physical health.** Time spent in nature lowers stress and provides opportunities for physical exercise and community cohesion. It is also good for mental health.
- **Open space aids in climate mitigation and adaptation, protects critical habitat, and helps achieve cleaner water.** Natural lands that make up open space serve as sponges that help control flooding and offsets carbon emissions. Forests capture and store almost 15% of the U.S. carbon dioxide emissions every year— equivalent to annual emissions of 165 million cars.



# DE Open Space Program

- Created in 1990 through the Delaware Land Protection Act
- Managed by DNREC with guidance from the Open Space Council
- 100% voluntary program and includes conservation easement and direct acquisition
- Four agencies are eligible to use Open Space funding:
  - DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation;
  - DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife;
  - Delaware Forest Service; and
  - Department of State's Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs.



# DE Open Space Program

Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund funded by a portion of the state's realty transfer taxes (30 Del. C. Chapter 54, Subchapter II)

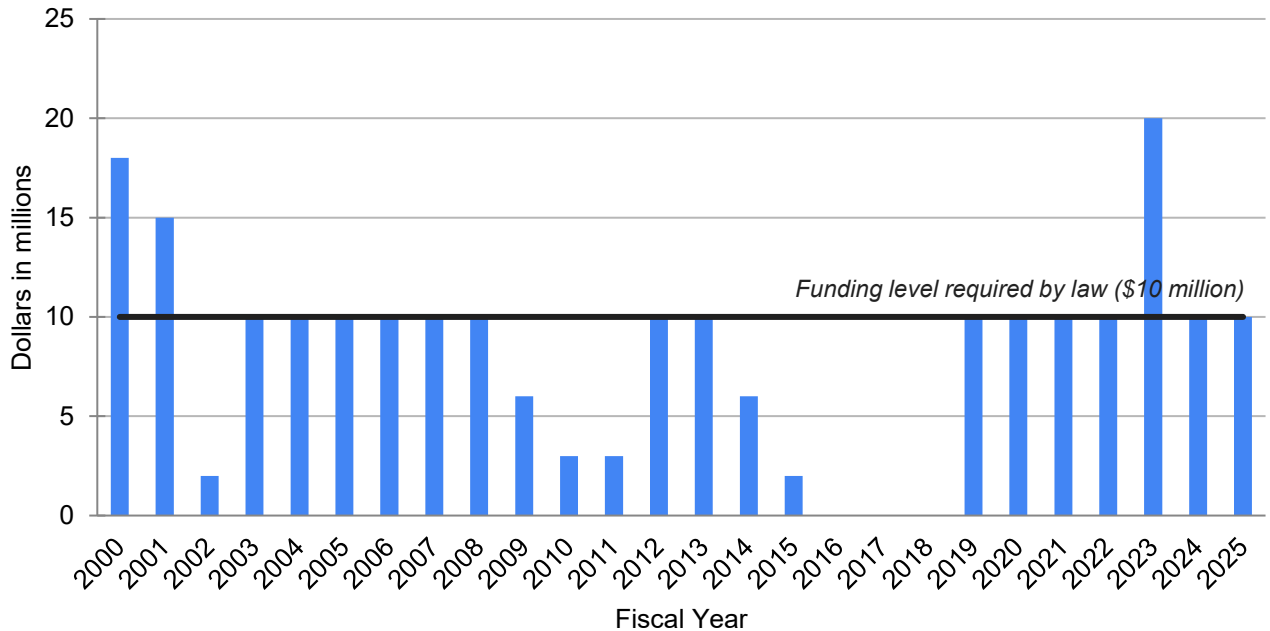
By law, the OSP receives \$10m each year, of which \$1m goes into an infrastructure account and the remaining \$9m becomes available for land conservation





# Open Space Program Funding

Appropriations to the Open Space Program from  
2001-2025





# Why do we need more funding?

- **The cost of land is higher than it was in 1990.** As a result, the \$9 million in state funding can be spent on one - three properties very easily at current land prices and the problem will only get more challenging.
- **The purchasing power of \$9 million has significantly decreased** due to land values increasing markedly and the intense development pressures in some parts of the state.
- **Development is soaring** and the opportunities to protect Delaware's biodiversity are dwindling.



2025



2022



2024

Open spaces are key to protecting our water, heritage, wellness, and way of life.

AND NOW IS  
THE TIME TO  
INVEST IN  
OPEN SPACE.

### Maintain \$10m for FY26

Delaware law mandates an annual appropriation of \$10 million to the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) for open space protection. The Delaware Land Protection Coalition (DLPC) urges the state to ensure this funding level is maintained in FY26.

### Support a change in open space funding for FY27

For FY 2027, DLPC is advocating to revise the Delaware Land Protection Act to allocate a dedicated percentage of the Realty Transfer Tax and set a minimum annual funding amount of \$20 million. Under the proposed changes, DNREC would receive 60% of these funds, while local governments and conservation organizations would receive 40%. This funding adjustment is crucial to addressing the rising costs of

### Why is it important to preserve open spaces?

#### Open space aids in climate mitigation and adaptation

Natural lands that make up open space serve as sponges that help control flooding and offsets carbon emissions. Forests capture and store almost 15% of the U.S. carbon dioxide emissions every year—equivalent to annual emissions of 165 million cars.

Open space is  
good for the  
health of  
Delawareans

EVERY \$1  
invested in  
land  
protection  
BETTER FOR  
DELT



# Thank you!

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