



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

November 7, 2008

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Ms. Jennifer Davis and Mr. Mike Jackson
Director and Acting Director, Office of Management & Budget
Governor's Office of the Budget
122 William Penn St.
Dover, DE 19901

Mr. Austin F. Short
Acting Secretary, Delaware Department of Agriculture
2320 South DuPont Highway
Dover, DE 19901

Re: Dept. of Agriculture FY2010 Budget Hearing Comments from The Nature Conservancy

Dear Ms. Davis and Acting Secretary Short:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments on behalf of The Nature Conservancy with respect to the Department of Agriculture's proposed FY10 budget. The Nature Conservancy requests Governor Minner and the General Assembly restore funding levels to Delaware's Farmland and Forestland Preservation Programs at \$10,000,000 and \$1,000,000 respectively.

The attached July 2008 report clearly demonstrates the need. The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation has received applications to purchase 14,693 acres in development rights valued at more than \$160,000,000 for FY09 and FY10. We have an unprecedented opportunity to preserve more land now at heavily discounted values if funding levels are increased.

Over the last decade, more land has been developed in Delaware than preserved. The state has lost 80 percent of native forest since colonial times; 36 percent of productive farmland since the 1950's; and, additional open space to roads, highways and new development.

In 2006 products from Delaware's farms and forests generated a production value of more than \$1 billion. Our farms and forest land provide important environmental services, provide a stable base of property tax revenue, and require very little in the way of public services.

Together I hope we can find a way identify funding to maintains Delaware's leadership in farm and forestland preservation. When it comes to land preservation, it's time to remain the first State. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Roger L. Jones, Jr.
Vice-President and State Director

Enclosure

cc: Members, Delaware Joint Committee on Capital Improvements