

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN DELAWARE

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The Nature Conservancy is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) international membership organization. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. The Nature Conservancy meets all of the Standards for Charity Accountability established by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is a national charity watchdog affiliated with the Better Business Bureau.

From the Director

We have reached a fork in the road for the future of our planet.

One path—"business as usual"—will lead to increasingly severe storms, flooding and drought, causing untold human loss and suffering. The other path—one laid out by The Nature Conservancy—provides food, water, and energy to 11 billion people by 2100 while conserving the natural systems that sustain us.

TNC's best scientific minds have identified the four highestpriorities upon which we must focus to balance the needs of nature and a rapidly growing human populace. The Delaware Chapter is fully contributing to each of these conservation priorities:

- Protecting Land & Water: TNC is focused on protecting the world's most resilient and connected landscapes, what we call "preserving nature's stage." For Delaware, that means protecting the Delaware Bayshore and Nanticoke headwaters—our two most important ecosystems for maintaining biodiversity.
- Tackling Climate Change: As the lowest-lying state in the nation, Delaware will likely be
 hardest hit by sea-level rise and coastal storms. That's why we're working on a state-wide
 policy to bolster our natural defenses—marsh complexes and freshwater wetlands—and
 adapt to a changing climate. We're also advancing policies to facilitate Delaware's
 transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Building Healthy Cities: Wilmington is one of 25 cities in TNC's North American Cities Network. Our Vacant Lots Reclamation Program and assistance with the new South Wilmington Wetlands Park will transform the landscape of downtown Wilmington, while the Brandywine-Christina Revolving Water Fund will secure healthy drinking water for over 600,000 people in Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania.
- Providing Food and Water Sustainably: Working in tandem with TNC's Chesapeake Bay Program, we're helping reduce nitrogen loads in the Nanticoke River by restoring wetlands and improving soil health on Delaware farms.

Every day, I am deeply aware that the decisions we make today and in the coming decade will profoundly affect the future of our planet. I am inspired to work for an organization bold enough to take on these difficult challenges, and I am grateful for the continued support of people like you.

See you out there,

Richard I. G. Jones, Jr. State Director

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trees preserved



gal. water saved



.....

402.1 lbs. solid waste not generated



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COVER Launch your canoe or kayak at Milton Memorial Park and paddle two miles down the Broadkill River to our Edward H. McCabe Preserve. Bald eagles, ospreys, and belted kingfishers are common in this section of the river. Come ashore via the new floating dock (pictured here) and enjoy a picnic or a hike. Download the Milton-McCabe Greenway Trail brochure from the McCabe Preserve website at www.nature.org/mccabe; **ABOVE** Richie Jones © Courtesy Richie Jones

Fresh Faces at The Nature Conservancy

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD AND STAFF MEMBERS

Jennie Baver Board of Trustees; Marketing Manager, Dogfish Head Brewery

Jennie is the Marketing Manager at Dogfish **Head Craft Brewery** in Milton, Delaware and has over 25 years of experience in the beer and hospitality industry. She grew up in the City of Philadelphia and always loved camping, but her passion for the outdoors started about 20 years ago when she went on her first backpacking trip, hiking the New Hampshire section of the Appalachian Trail. Nature is where she finds inspiration, rejuvenation, and unequivocal beauty.

Mandy Cabot Board of Trustees

Mandy Cabot, co-founder

of Dansko, retired as CEO of the footwear company in 2018. In addition to her business accomplishments, Mandy is involved in numerous charitable endeavors, both in the United States and abroad. In 2015, Mandy and her husband Peter Kjellerup, both ardent conservationists and environmentalists, founded the Cabot Kjellerup Foundation to help "foster a healthy planet by supporting, developing, and promoting the responsible stewardship of our natural and human resources."

Richard Laird Board of Trustees; Wealth Advisor, Morgan Stanley

Richard grew up in Wilmington, where he lives today. He credits his father for sparking his love for the outdoors when he enrolled him in the Young Waterfowlers program when he was 12. He loves spending time outside, preferably playing golf and traveling around Delaware photographing landscapes and wildlife. "Being outside is peaceful and calming. I enjoy the isolation and feeling one with the environment. I really thrive on that—it's almost spiritual."

Laura de Ramel Director of Development

Prior to joining TNC, Laura worked for 6 years at Willistown **Conservation Trust** in Newtown Square, PA. Her previous experience includes fundraising for Boston University as well as working for environmental and energy consulting companies. Having grown up near the ocean, she is particularly interested in issues related to sealevel rise and coastal resiliency. She enjoys visiting local parks and preserves near her home and looks forward to exploring more of Delaware in her new role.

Melissa Donnelly Director of Finance & Operations

Melissa has lived in
Delaware for over
20 years and is
passionate about
preserving the
natural environment in
our state and beyond. She joins TNC
with experience in financial planning,
analysis, and operations and is excited
about the opportunity to use these
skills to advance our conservation
mission. Melissa enjoys spending her
free time hitting the trail on foot or on
bike, especially if that trail leads to
a beach!

Melisa SoysalDevelopment Program Associate

Melisa's face might seem familiar she served as an AmeriCorps Public Ally as the Urban Conservation



Coordinator in 2017 and 2018. Melisa most recently worked for Delaware State Parks at Lums Pond. Melisa's education, internships, and work experiences, along with her passion for people, animals, and the outdoors, make her an excellent addition to Delaware's team. When she is not busy working, Melisa enjoys photography, hiking, and spending time with her dog, Alvin.

Embracing Nature-based Solutions

DELAWARE FACES CHALLENGES RELATED TO SEA-LEVEL RISE

DNREC's DuPont Nature Center occupies a narrow spit of land at the edge of the Delaware Bay, where the Mispillion River flows into Mispillion Harbor. The Center, built in 2007, affords visitors a prime vantage point for the natural migrations that make the Delaware Bay globally significant—chief among them the spring arrival of the red knot just in time to feast on newly laid horseshoe crab eggs.

The Center is a must-visit for anyone interested in viewing nature in Delaware, but increasingly it is imperative that you plan your trip in accordance with the tides. Even on a bright sunny day, the two-lane road leading to the Center floods with up to a foot of water washing overland from the Bay. This is by no means an isolated occurrence. Sea-level rise is increasingly rendering Delaware's roads impassible, a harbinger of much bigger challenges to come.

With a mean elevation of 60 feet, Delaware is the lowest-lying state in the nation, and the rate of sea-level rise in our region is among the highest in the nation. The waters that form Delaware's eastern and southern boundaries are predicted to rise as much as five feet by





2100. To make matters worse, our land mass is subsiding at a high rate as well, meaning Delaware is getting lower at the same time the seas around us are rising. Add to this precarious situation a major hurricane or Nor'easter—think Superstorm Sandy, which narrowly missed roaring straight up the Delaware Bay—and you literally have the "perfect storm" devasting homes, property, businesses, and vital economic drivers like agriculture and ecotourism.

Fortunately, not all is doom and gloom. One of TNC's global strategic priorities is to promote the widespread use of nature-based solutions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. By nature-based solutions, we mean everything from enhanced marsh complexes to large-scale rain gardens to constructed wetlands. Outside our region, other examples include coral reef complexes and mangrove forests. In short, nature-based solutions are ways that nature is deployed to lessen

the impacts of storms, flooding, and other natural disasters.

In Delaware, we hope to lead the way in promoting nature-based solutions to climate change. We are helping Delaware communities like Wilmington and the beach towns to identify naturebased solutions in their geographies and develop plans to enhance them. At the same time, we are working with local, state, and federal officials to help fund the implementation of nature-based solutions. We are fortunate to have forward-looking elected officials at all levels supporting these efforts. You can help, too, by encouraging your community leaders to think about nature as providing at least part of the solution to a changing climate.

CoastalResilience.org is a TNC website featuring mapping tools, reports, and other resources to help communities understand their vulnerability to coastal hazards, reduce risks, and determine the value of nature-based solutions.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) DuPont Nature Center (red roof in photo) is located east of Milford, along the Delaware Bay. High water commonly floods the only road, making access difficult. © John Hinkson/TNC, Flight support provided by LightHawk; A car leaves the Center after the tide quickly began to rise. Other roads along the Delaware Bayshore, like Route 9, are increasingly facing the same problem. © John Hinkson/TNC

Saws and Fire Aren't Always Bad

CUTTING TREES AND PRESCRIBED BURNS HELP ENSURE HEALTHY, BIODIVERSE PRESERVE LANDS.





The dense thickets of loblolly pine at Pemberton Forest Preserve are eerily quiet during the winter months. Aside from the chirping of a few birds, the only sound is the hum of the wind in the trees. But this winter the sound of buzzing saws could be heard in the woods as harvesting crews thinned 400 acres of former pine plantation.

"I understand the concern of nature lovers," says Natasha Whetzel, TNC's Land Steward in charge of managing 5,000 acres of preserves in Delaware. "People might assume that all trees—and forests—are of equal value and wonder why we would cut down trees or conduct burns on our preserves."

Before being purchased by TNC in 1999, the lands at Pemberton had been managed as a pine plantation for commercial logging. Until recently, much of the forest remained dominated by these monoculture stands of trees. "We thinned nearly half of the immature loblolly pines, which provides funds that we can return to the land for further restoration," reports Natasha. "Next, fire will be used to clean up the remaining logging slash and to stir up diversity within the stands."

Natasha explains that the prescribed burn will reduce fuel (in the form of needles, dead leaves, brush, and branches) on the forest floor, as well as restore nutrients to the soil. Prescribed burns mimic the frequent, small fires that historically cleaned out the shrubs and small trees of the forest's undergrowth.

Excess underbrush and a build-up of needles and leaves could become fuel for severe wildfires with tall flames that reach into the crowns of trees. When paired with the intense heat, these conditions can kill even the most mature trees—the ones that store significant amounts of carbon and can take decades, even centuries, to regrow. Recent Forest

Service studies in New Jersey found that the carbon released from a prescribed burn is counterbalanced by new growth on-site over the following two to three years.

With more sunlight reaching the forest floor, a more diverse array of trees, shrubs, grasses, forbs, and wildflowers will grow. The hardwoods that remain—mostly oaks and hickories—will now have more room to branch out. The flowers, fruits, and nuts that grow on these trees will also provide more food for insects, birds, and animals than the pines did.

Natasha exclaims, "Thanks to better forest management, the improved habitat will offer more options for food and shelter for our native wildlife."



Pemberton Forest Preserve is not open to the public, but the adjacent Ponders Tract Trail System offers

nine miles of trails to explore. Visit **nature.org/ponders** for directions.

A portion of Pemberton Forest Preserve is pictured in the center of this photo from May 2017. The forest on adjacent properties are comprised of a more natural mix of hardwood trees. © *John Hinkson/TNC; Flight support provided by LightHawk;* Harvested pines are stacked for transport to the saw mill. © *Natasha Whetzel/TNC;* Swamp pink (*Helonias bullata*) is a rare plant found at Pemberton Forest Preserve. © *Chase McLean*

Meet a Stream Steward

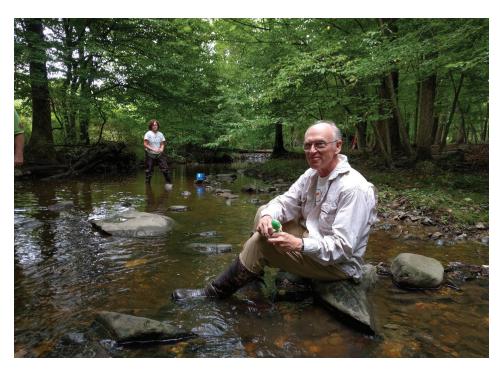
ROB TUTTLE PUTS HIS YEARS OF EXPERTISE TO WORK FOR TNC

No matter the weather, at least once a month Rob Tuttle meets up with Jeff Chambers at Ramsey Run, a gurgling brook in First State National Historical Park (FRST). They're both citizen scientists with The Nature Conservancy's Stream Stewards project and they're here to record water quality data and collect samples. Rob and Jeff park along Ramsey Road, nestled between two hills, and walk to their data collection site located just upstream from where Ramsey Run empties into the Brandywine Creek.

Stream Stewards is a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, The National Park Service, and Stroud Water Research Center and is funded by the William Penn Foundation and the Ernest E. Stempel Foundation. Stream Stewards are volunteers who are trained to collect water quality data from the streams that flow through FRST into the Brandywine, the source of Wilmington's drinking water.

Rob spent most of his career working for Siemens as a software and systems engineer in research and development. After retiring, Rob says he knew he wanted to spend more time volunteering and he also enjoyed spending time outdoors. "I have a desire to help, to do the most good for the most people for the most generations," Rob says. "I decided that spending my time on water quality improvement would serve that philosophy."

At the data collection site, sensors in the stream are continuously measuring the levels of dissolved chemicals and



particles in the water. Rob and Jeff take some additional measurements and give the stream sensors a quick scrub to keep them functioning properly. Rob's site visit for the month is now complete but his volunteer role doesn't end here.

Rob has been working for two years on a software program that is helping to analyze the copious amounts of data being collected at six stream sensor stations spread across FRST. The Stream Stewards program started collecting baseline data in 2016. Kim Hachadoorian, Stream Stewards Project Manager, says that the data have helped identify which streams are most in need of improvement and that several high-quality streams are benefitting from the protection of the national park.

When asked what he enjoys most about being a Stream Steward Rob replies,

"I like writing software so I'm glad to put that skill to use but I also love being outside and hiking to our data collection site each month. Plus, the other Stream Stewards are a great group of people to work with; I'd highly recommend this experience for anyone with similar interests."



Read a longer version of this article on our website, nature.org/delaware. Interested in becoming a Stream Steward? Contact Kim Hachadoorin at kim.hachadoorian@tnc.org.

Rob collects samples during the filming of a video segment by WHYY during the summer of 2018. Visit the Stream Stewards website, nature.org/destreamstewards, to watch the 5-minute video. © *Kim Hachadoorian/TNC*; The Stream Stewards make site visits monthly, even in winter. Rob and Kim are pictured here on a site visit in March 2018. © *John Hinkson/TNC*.

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OUR MISSION:

TO CONSERVE THE LANDS
AND WATERS ON WHICH
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Upcoming Events

For the latest information about our events please visit our Facebook page, Facebook.com/NatureConservancyDelaware, or subscribe to our monthly *Great Places* email list. To sign up, go to Nature.org/Delaware and register at the bottom of the page. These dates are subject to change; please check for latest information online before attending an event as some may require advanced registration.

Wednesday, June 5, 2019: Dogfish Port-to-Port back nip stop in Delaware, Beer and Benevalence Night Dogfish Head Brewpub in Belophoth Leach. Ten percent of all proceeds will benefit The Nature Consequence Delaware.

Wednesday, August 7, 2019: Stream Stewards Walk & Talk in First State National Historical Park's Beaver Valley Unit. Join us on an easy hike as we talk about the work that Stream Stewards citizen scientists have been doing over the past three years. Additional details will be posted on our website.

Saturday, September 21, 2019: Stream Stewards Fall Watershed Cleanup at First State National Historical Park's Beaver Valley Unit. Volunteers will pick up litter from streams in the park; groups and individuals of all ages are welcome.



dogfishdashvolunteer@gmail.com.

Volunteers at the Fall Watershed Clean-up in October 2017. © Witt Phillips

Sunday, September 29, 2019: Dogfish Dash at Dogfish Head Brewery in Milton. This will be the 13th year that proceeds raised from the Dogfish Dash will benefit The Nature Conservancy. We will need the help of a few volunteers on Friday, the 27th, and Saturday, the 28th, in addition to the day of the run. People age 18+ who are interested in volunteering should send an email to

Sunday, October 6, 2019: Coast Day at the University of Delaware's Sharp Campus in Lewes. Come find us under the non-profit tent and say hello. This family-friendly event features displays, demonstrations, and interactive exhibits related to the environment and our coastal communities. For more info visit www.decoastday.udel.edu.