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Director's Note

With the lowest average elevation in the nation, Delaware faces increased risk from flooding events that occur because of climate change. In addition to being home to many communities, the First State's bayshore ecosystems support more than 50,000 acres of coastal wetlands and provide habitat for important species, including horseshoe crabs, fish and migratory birds. Read on for more about our new oceans and coasts program that will create equitable outcomes for people and nature in Delaware.

Your support remains critical as we work to secure the future of our lands and waters both locally and globally. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Brennan".

Lori Brennan

Executive Director,
Pennsylvania and Delaware

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A sunrise view over the Delaware Bay at TNC's Milford Neck Preserve © John Hinkson/TNC

New Oceans and Coasts program Tackling climate change in Delaware

Delaware is home to iconic coastal communities, important wildlife habitats and critical wetland ecosystems. Yet it is also struggling with the effects of a changing climate and more intense storm events.

The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania and Delaware is committed to addressing these threats head on. Will Helt, our new Director of the Oceans and Coasts program, will lead a multi-disciplinary team of scientists and practitioners focused on implementing science-based strategies to improve the resilience of coastal habitats and natural communities along the Delaware Bayshore while incorporating natural infrastructure solutions that help people and nature adapt.

“We know that as sea levels rise, freshwater marshes are threatened and saltwater marshes will move inland,” Helt says. “TNC’s goal is to help facilitate the inland migration of coastal habitats as sea levels rise because these habitats, such as salt marshes, provide numerous ecosystem services and benefits, like water filtration, habitat for migratory birds, and protection from storm surge.”

Supported by a grant from the Longwood Foundation, Helt will create a Coastal Resiliency Roadmap for Kent and Sussex Counties, identifying nature-based strategies to increase the resilience of coastal ecosystems and vulnerable human communities while uncovering shared funding opportunities and capacity needs.

Learn more about the Oceans and Coasts program at nature.org/DEcoasts.



An excavator adds wood to a Blakeslee Preserve stream during the restoration project in August 2022. © Su Fanok/TNC

Restoring Waterways in Cherry Valley

Innovative stream work focuses on woody materials

In the past, many Pennsylvania streams have been cleared of woody materials such as trees, logs and branches. More recently, however, scientists have highlighted the benefits of leaving these materials in place.

In 2022, TNC scientists completed a unique restoration project at the Blakeslee Preserve in Pennsylvania's Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge. For the first time, the goal was to incorporate woody materials back into the creek rather than removing them. With more trees and branches available, turtles and frogs can bask in the sun,

birds can use them as stopover perches, fish can find more places to hide and spawn, and eroding streambanks are protected.

“We’re advancing an innovative approach here that’s improving wildlife habitat and water quality.”

Su Fanok, Director of Freshwater Conservation, PA/DE

“The refuge is a special place—you really connect with nature here,” says Su Fanok, Director of Freshwater Conservation in Pennsylvania and Delaware. “We have a

thriving community of partners and residents here—including the Friends of Cherry Valley—which allows a project like this to come together.”

Last fall, TNC hosted a workshop and training with 50 partners from across the region, many of whom toured the project site and learned about techniques for incorporating woody debris into future stream restorations around the region. The session helped to establish best practices and disseminate important takeaways that can now be shared with others. Funding for the project was provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the William Penn Foundation.

Watch a video about the Blakeslee project at nature.org/PADERestoration.

PENNSYLVANIA DELAWARE



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As Seen on Instagram

The warm weather will be here again before you know it. Need some photo inspiration from our preserves in the meantime? Follow us on Instagram in both states: [@conservate_pa](https://www.instagram.com/conservate_pa) and [@nature_delaware](https://www.instagram.com/nature_delaware).



The Lehigh River in Carbon County, Pennsylvania, at Lehigh Gap Nature Center.
© Nicholas Tonelli

A Carbon County conservation win

Last November, voters in Carbon County, Pennsylvania, overwhelmingly approved a \$10 million county bond program that will provide funding to improve water quality, support working farms and protect wildlife habitat. The measure earned 82.7 percent approval, one of the highest passage rates in TNC's 30-plus year history of supporting open-space ballot initiatives.

We applaud this important conservation win for the Kittatinny Ridge, a biodiversity superhighway in the Central Appalachians and one of TNC's top priorities for protection.