

The Power of Freshwater Wetlands: A Vital Natural Resource At Risk

The Importance of Freshwater Wetlands

- Flood Control: Wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing excess rainwater and reducing the impact of floods.
- Water Filtration: They filter pollutants, improving water quality.
- Carbon Sequestration: Wetlands store carbon, helping to mitigate climate change.
- Wildlife Habitat: They support diverse plant and animal species, including threatened and endangered wildlife in Delaware.

Threats to Delaware's Wetlands

- Delaware has lost thousands of acres of freshwater wetlands over the past century due to human activity.
- A 2023 Supreme Court ruling (Sackett v. EPA) severely limited the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate certain wetlands.
- Approximately 75,000 acres of Delaware's freshwater wetlands are now unprotected.

Next Step: Support passage of a freshwater wetlands permit program.

A Statewide Solution

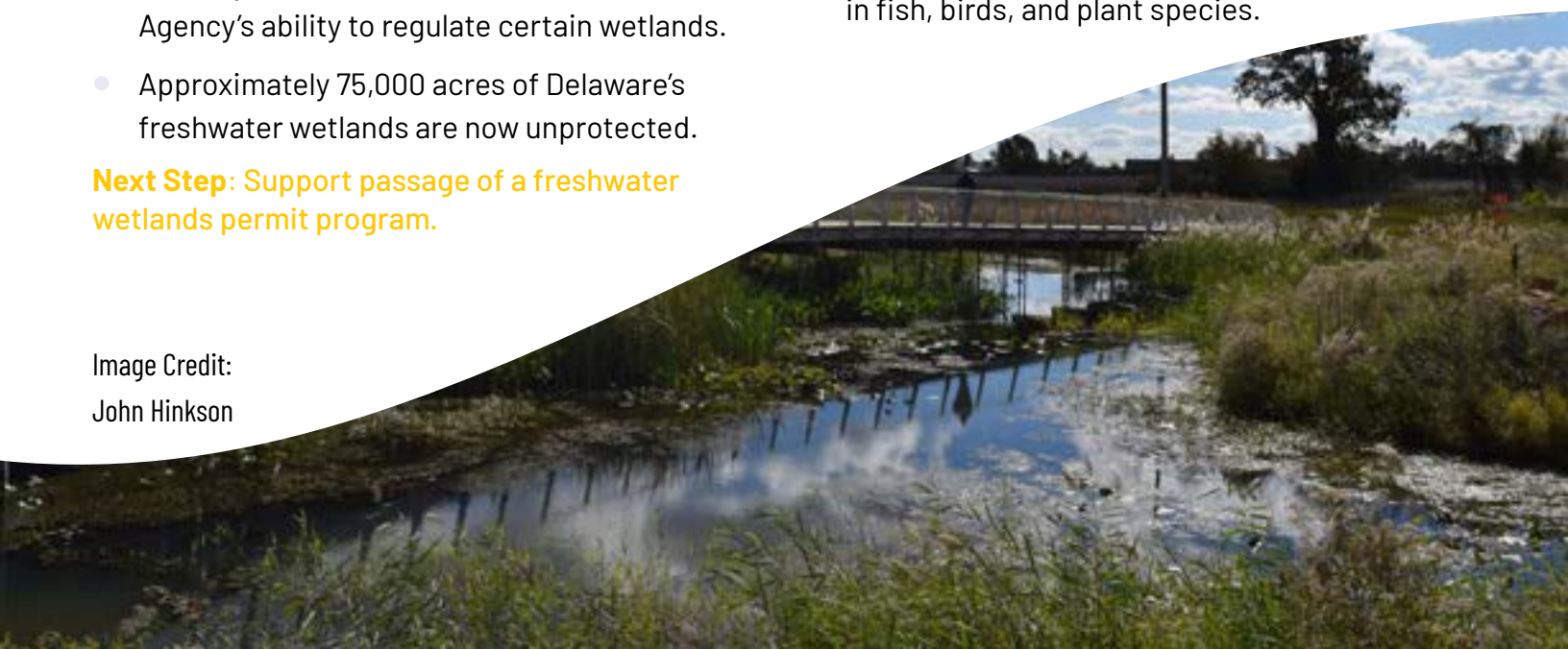
- Purpose: Establishes state freshwater wetlands permit program filling the gap left by federal protection.
- Regulatory Consistency: Ensures a uniform approach to wetland regulation, permitting, and mitigation.
- Preserving Ecosystem Services: Strengthens local safeguards to maintain water quality, flood mitigation, and habitat conservation.

The Consequences of Inaction

Without increased protection, Delaware faces:

- Higher flood risks due to the loss of wetlands' natural water absorption abilities.
- Increased water pollution from unfiltered runoff and stormwater overflow.
- Loss of essential habitats, leading to declines in fish, birds, and plant species.

Image Credit:
John Hinkson



Senate Bill 9: The Wetlands Stewardship Act

Important Elements

- Establishes a statewide permit framework for freshwater wetlands
- Creates a Wetlands Screening tool to simplify field evaluations

Smarter, More Efficient Permitting

- Establishes clear timelines for DNREC permit decisions
- Creates a general permit for many situations
- Reduces duplication with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Science-Driven, Collaborative Approach

- Creates a Wetlands Regulatory Advisory Committee (RAC) to help develop regs
- RAC is comprised of agriculture, business, conservation, and scientific experts
- Ensures ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program

Permit Exemption Examples

- Residential lawn maintenance, hunting, trapping, fishing and duck blinds
- 10 years rolling exemption for agricultural activities
- Drainage projects
- Conservation District projects
- Footbridges
- Freshwater wetlands smaller than .5 acre

Image Credit:
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