



DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE
INLAND BAYS
Research. Educate. Restore.

The Center for the Inland Bays was established by the Delaware General Assembly as a nonprofit organization in 1994. Its creation was the culmination of more than 20 years of active public participation and investigation into the decline of the Inland Bays and the remedies for the restoration and preservation of the watershed.

Wetland creation, natural lands protection, reforestation, oyster reef creation, and extensive scientific studies on the health of the Bays are all undertaken by Center staff. A dedicated core of volunteers supports this work, which is shared with the public through an integrated system of education and outreach programs tailored to schools, communities, and decision-makers. Most notable of these is the Day on the Bay program, which provides experiential outdoor learning to a significant population of underserved students at James Farm Ecological Preserve.

Lessons in Nature at James Farm Ecological Preserve

The Preserve is currently undergoing a series of improvements that were identified in a community-collaborative Master Plan. In order to raise the funding needed to complete these improvements, the Center has launched the Lessons in Nature at James Farm Ecological Preserve capital campaign. A committee of Center representatives and other stakeholders oversees the campaign, which is anticipated to reach its goal by the end of 2021. The information contained here seeks to orient you to the project, its importance to the community, and how you can help the Preserve reach its full potential.

Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

the Center's Mission

to PRESERVE, PROTECT, and RESTORE Delaware's Inland Bays and their watershed.

INLAND BAYS WATERSHED



OUTREACH



RESEARCH



RESTORATION



EDUCATION



ADVOCACY

James Farm Ecological Preserve

A cooperative partnership between
Sussex County Council & the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays

What is the Preserve?

- A 150-acre collection of diverse coastal ecosystems that embody the entire Delmarva Peninsula.
- Donated to Sussex County in 1992 by Mary Lighthipe.
- Preserved for environmental education and outdoor recreation.
- Open to the public year-round.
- Free admission.
- Over 37,000 visits per year and growing!

The Preserve is also the centerpiece of the Center's environmental education efforts.

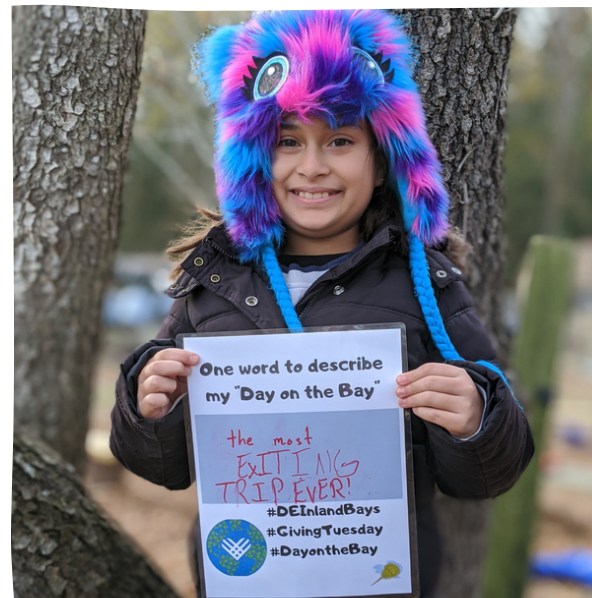
Day on the Bay

Environmental Education Program

Established in the year 2000 as a partnership with the Indian River School District (IRSD), Day on the Bay has served over 19,000 students with curriculum-aligned, science-based environmental education. It is a full day of immersive, hands-on learning at James Farm Ecological Preserve.

Day on the Bay seeks to nurture students relationship with natural world to improve quality of life, propagate future learning, and encourage action through community involvement.

Of the students enrolled in IRSD schools, nearly **51%** are minorities and **38%** come from low-income families, which is representative of underserved populations residing in the Inland Bays watershed. For many, Day on the Bay is their **first opportunity** to experience the **beauty and wonder of the Bays despite living less than 20 miles inland.**



But despite the critical nature of education at the Preserve, it faces challenges.

Two of the greatest barriers to the Day on the Bay program are capacity and the elements.

The only existing covered structure is a small pavilion which also houses equipment necessary for maintaining the Preserve's ecosystems. This lack of adequate shelter results in overcrowding and cancellations due to inclement weather.

And because the Preserve's maintenance activities currently share space with the Day on the Bay facilities, program disruptions and safety are cause for concern.

Improvements set forth by the **James Farm Ecological Preserve Master Plan** will address these issues and others facing the Preserve, while significantly increasing the quality of environmental education programming.



James Farm Ecological Preserve

MASTER PLAN

When originally developed in 1998, the Preserve's facilities were installed piecemeal and without foresight of Sussex County's forthcoming growth in population. As the Preserve's popularity increased and programs expanded, the need to plan for greater visitation while protecting its ecosystems became evident.

So, the Center embarked on the development of holistic plan that would address the needs of Preserve users and collectively envision its future. The Center and Sussex County sought input and ideas from key stakeholders of the Center and the Preserve, including staff, elected officials, community leaders, educators, volunteers, donors and other community members.



The resulting James Farm Ecological Preserve Master Plan identified a series of infrastructure enhancements to better serve residents and visitors of Delaware while protecting the Preserve's ecosystems and improving education and outreach opportunities.




James Farm Ecological Preserve

MASTER PLAN

PHASE ONE



Implementation of the Master Plan began in 2017 with Phase One, which focused on safer access for an increasing number of Preserve users. Infrastructure enhancements included:

-  Expanded parking facilities to increase capacity while safely accommodating increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic.
-  Designated school bus parking for safe student loading and unloading.
-  A multi-purpose event lawn to accommodate greater attendance at community events and provide open space for public recreation.

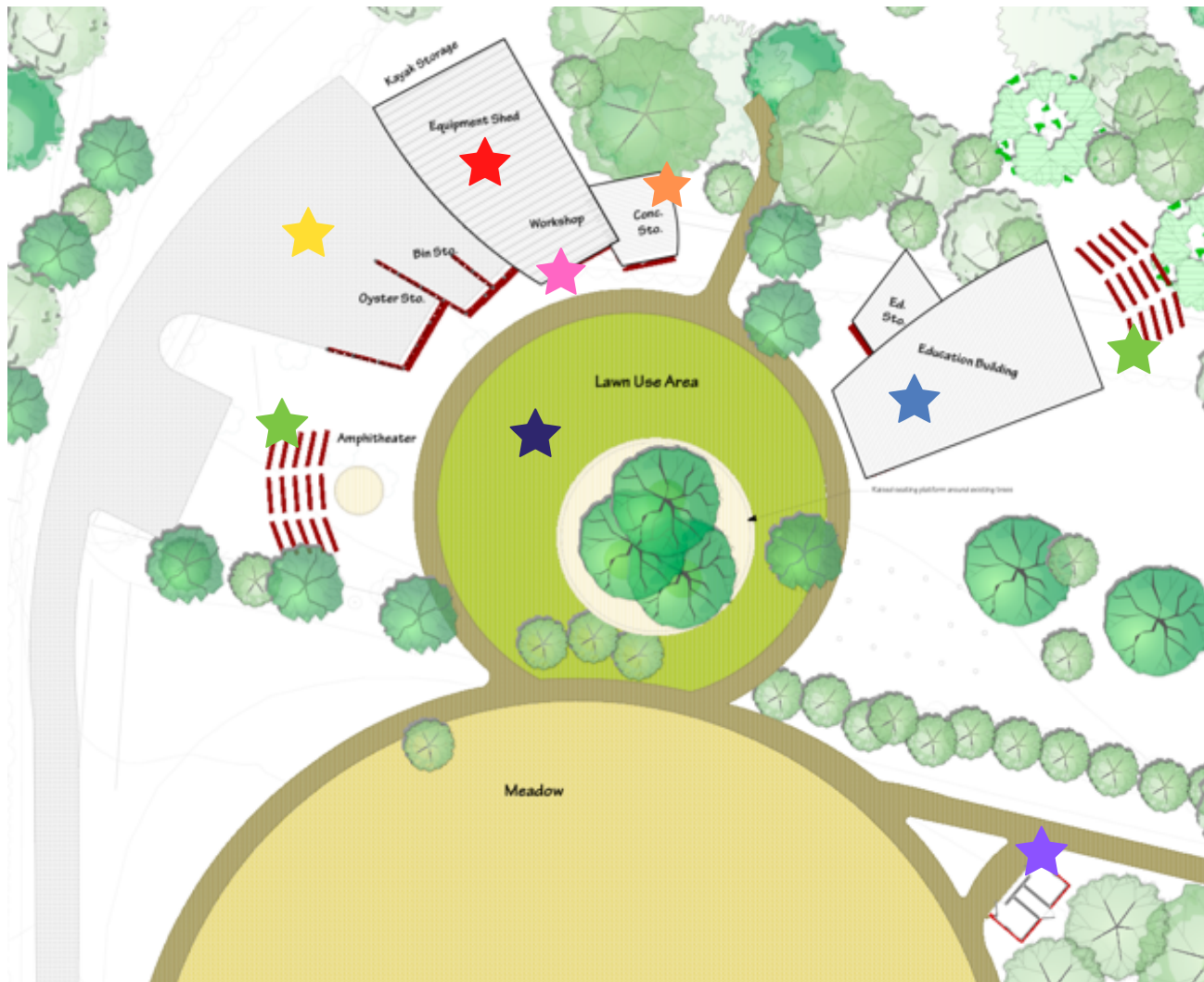


With generous support from **Sussex County Council**, the **Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails (ORPT)** program, Community Transportation Funds, and private donations, the Center secured all necessary funding and Phase One was completed in spring of 2019.

James Farm Ecological Preserve

MASTER PLAN PHASE TWO

Phase Two of the Master Plan, for which the Lessons in Nature capital campaign is seeking support, focuses on further enhancing Campus-area infrastructure to better accommodate activities associated with environmental education, restoration, research, and community recreation. The design, engineering, and permitting process for these enhancements is nearly complete and construction will begin in May 2021.



The reimagining of the Campus, down to every function and aesthetic, will be as **unique** and **appealing** as the natural wonder of the Preserve itself.

- ★ Education Building
- ★ ADA Restrooms
- ★ Outdoor Classrooms
- ★ Large Equipment Storage
- ★ Workshop
- ★ Ecotour Concessionaire Storage
- ★ Habitat Restoration Storage
- ★ Multi-use Gathering Space

James Farm Ecological Preserve

MASTER PLAN PHASE TWO



Certain enhancements set forth by Phase Two extend beyond the Campus, including:



Realignment of the trail system to address stressors on ecosystems and create a more immersive natural experience for visitors.



Replacement and extension of the Preserve's boardwalk system which is currently in need of constant repair due to storm damage from Hurricane Sandy.



Aesthetically and structurally integrated wayfinding system to guide visitors on their exploration of the Preserve.



Updated and expanded interpretive signage placed in different 18 locations to educate visitors about the Preserve's ecosystems and environmental processes.



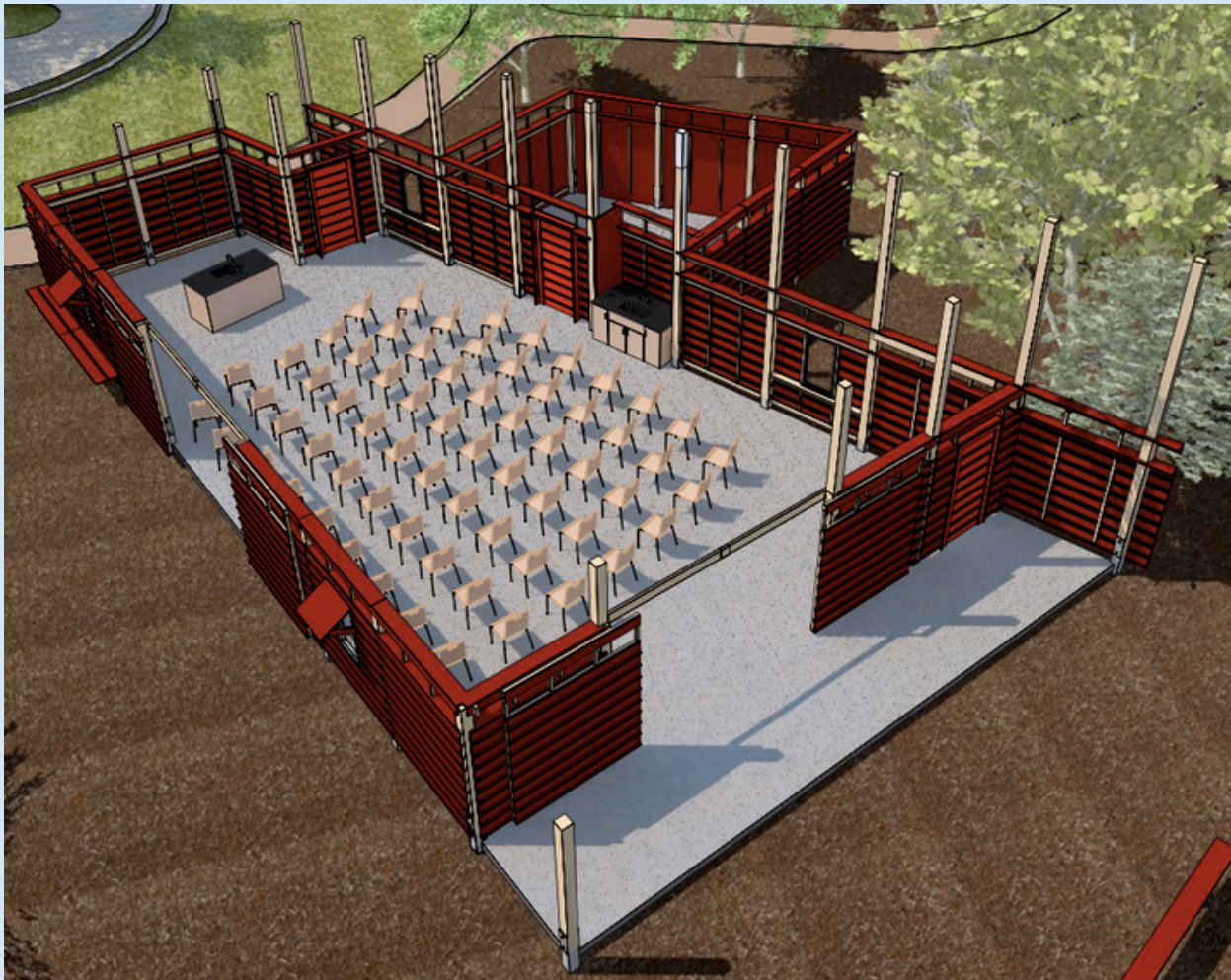
New Gateway signage and pier marker to increase visibility and properly welcome visitors to the Preserve.



*Possible formats identified through signage research and discovery.

THE *Gem* OF PHASE TWO...

The Preserve currently offers critical environmental education to students through the Day on the Bay program. However, this program faces challenges when it comes to capacity and the elements. The gem of Phase Two, a new education building, will address these challenges. Not only will it allow a greater number of students to participate in Day on the Bay. It will also ensure continued programming in inclement weather and a more immersive learning experience so that students can foster a meaningful connection with the outdoors.



The education building (roof not shown) will have a 70-person capacity and sliding barn doors will allow for teaching out into the lawn areas.

The features of the building, such as lab space, wireless connectivity, and audio/visual presentation capabilities, will facilitate an elevated curriculum for the Day on the Bay program.

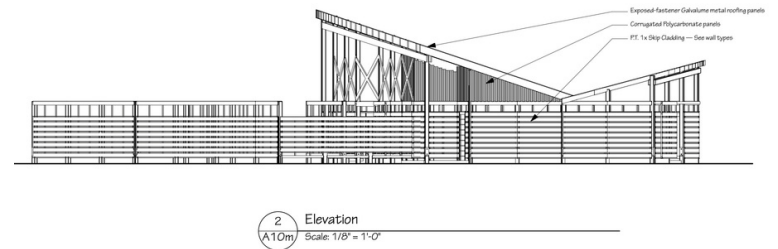
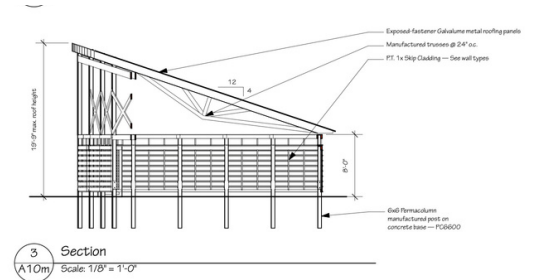
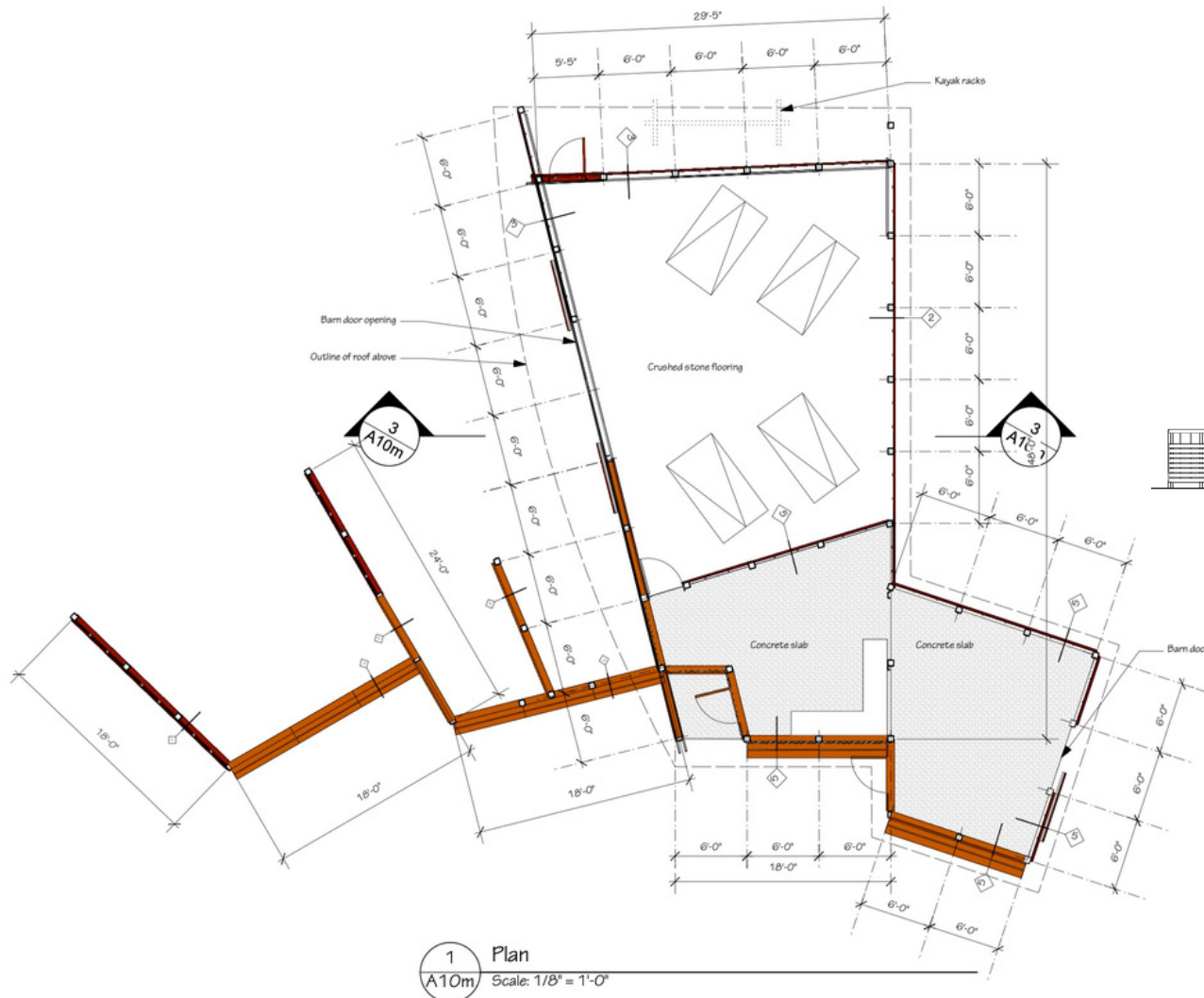
These features will also allow for other intergenerational programs, such as public education, film screenings, and orientations for the Center's citizen science volunteers. The building will also be available to rent for non-Center events, allowing additional income generation to support operations.

It will be a regionally important venue for environmental education and unlike anything that currently exists in Sussex County.

DIVERSE ECOSYSTEMS

require **CONSTANT MAINTENANCE**

The Preserve's maintenance facilities, which are currently intermingled with its education facilities, will be separated to minimize program disruptions and allow these two important functions to occur simultaneously. Large equipment storage, a fully equipped workshop, and a habitat restoration staging area will provide infrastructure to better care for the Preserve ecosystems while supporting the Center's restoration efforts elsewhere in the watershed.



The new maintenance facilities will also include much-needed storage for the Preserve's ecotour concessionaire, EcoBay Kayak, allowing a local woman-owned business to grow while generating additional revenue to support the Center's mission.



The reimaging of the Campus area will be as unique and appealing as the natural wonder of the Preserve itself. Structural designs hold true to the agricultural heritage of the property and the region, making it a truly special place for Delaware.



The new education building will allow for elevated curriculum and expanded indoor/outdoor programming for all ages. It will be a regionally important venue for environmental education and unlike anything that currently exists in Sussex County.

Why should you fund this project?



Learning beyond the classroom is a portal to the wider world.

New facilities at the Preserve will improve and expand environmental education programs, which heighten imagination, increase critical thinking, and empower students to take responsible action.



Outdoor recreation creates healthier communities.

Improving access to the Preserve ensures that Delawareans have the opportunity to further develop their relationship with the natural world while reaping the health benefits of time spent outdoors.



Your support today means a brighter future for the Inland Bays.

Realizing the full potential of the Preserve will give rise to more successful restoration of the Inland Bays through increased awareness of and philanthropic support for the Center's mission.



Thank You!

Lessons in Nature

at James Farm Ecological Preserve

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