

Open spaces are key to protecting our water, heritage, wellness, and way of life.

AND NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN OPEN SPACE.

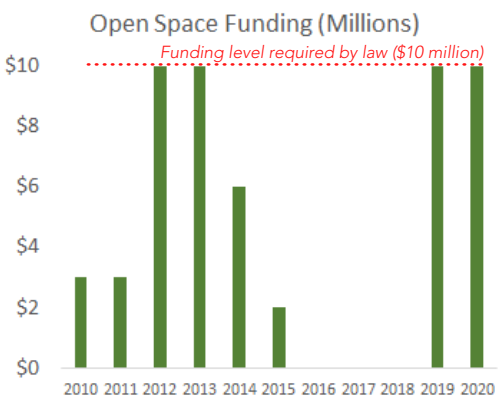
SUPPORT AN INCREASE OF \$15 MILLION IN FY23 FOR THE OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

The Delaware Land Protection Coalition (DLPC) is requesting to increase funding for the Open Space Program from \$10 million to \$25 million in FY 2023. Currently, the Open Space Program by law receives \$10 million each year but only \$9 million is directly invested for land preservation. The remaining \$1 million is allocated to infrastructure costs.

Delaware needs more investments to protect open space. The ability for the Open Space Program to continue to protect land has been drastically hindered by decreased purchasing power and under-allocated funding. Due to inflation, the purchasing power of \$10 million is half of what it was in 1990. This means that we aren't able to protect as many acres as we used to.

This problem will only become more challenging as land prices continue to rise, putting critical land out of reach. In addition, the state has under-allocated funding to this program by \$68 million when considering the authorized investments made over the life of the program.

Historic Funding Levels for Delaware's Open Space Program



Source: Delaware's Open Space Program

The Governor's recommended FY 2023 budget proposes \$10 million for open space. At current prices, these funds might only purchase 2 – 3 properties a year, in some cases the funding could be spent on one property alone.

Open space provides numerous benefits to the state of Delaware.

Open space aids in climate mitigation and adaptation -

Natural lands that make up open space serve as sponges that help control flooding and offsets carbon emissions. Forests capture and store almost 15% of the

EVERY \$1
invested in
land
protection

RETURNS ~\$5
in reduced flood impacts

U.S. carbon dioxide emissions every year—equivalent to annual emissions of 165 million cars. Coastal flooding is becoming a greater concern in Delaware due to sea level rise and increasing precipitation intensity.

On average, every \$1 invested in land protection in the U.S. returns an estimated \$5 in reduced flood impacts.

Open space is good for the health of Delawareans -

Time spent in nature lowers stress and provides opportunities for physical exercise and community cohesion. It is also good for mental health. Studies have shown that spending just two hours a week in nature can positively enhance a person's mental well-being. A study from the Medical College of Wisconsin has found time spent outdoors can also decrease the risk of chronic illnesses (Beyer et al., 2018).

Open space is good for the economy -

Delaware's tourism industry contributes \$3.5 billion to the economy and much of that industry is linked to outdoor experiences. Delaware has also become a retirement destination of choice for out-of-state retirees, and while our low taxes are an important factor, the quality of life and easy access to natural resources is another important driver to attract and retain this important tax base for the state.

Help the DLPC support the future of Delaware by taking a stand in increasing funding for open space.



Protecting open space has long been a priority in Delaware, and the DLPC recognizes the importance and success of the Open Space Program. Since 1988, the state has preserved over 64,000 acres in all three counties through the Open Space Program. Places like Cape Henlopen and Trap Pond State Parks would not exist as they are today without Delaware's Open Space Program.

But more must be done for protecting land during this critical time as we face increased pressures of development and a changing climate.

The DLPC wishes to support Delaware in its efforts to increase the amount and access to open space for its residents and visitors. As a group of conservation-focused organizations, we are committed to increasing the amount of lands, including natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources, protected through acquisition or conservation easement.

We seek to expand land conservation by identifying new sources of funding for land conservation, increasing our partnership with the State, working collaboratively with each other, and continuing the work of each of our respective organizations. We see increasing funding to the Open Space Program as an important first step in our coalition efforts.

WILL YOU WORK WITH US TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

DLPC Members:

