

DELAWARE CENTER for the INLAND BAYS

Annual Report 2020



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

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



The strokes of luck that give momentum to initiatives long in the making are thrilling to me. It is because the initial breakthrough of success, even if it is a small success, breeds more. The age-old adage is true.

This year, two such breakthroughs happened for the Inland Bays. The first was in the area of conservation. When we identified a high-value conservation property on Indian River as being for sale, we quickly partnered with Delaware's Open Space Program to permanently protect it. This rapidly led to a Center-supported partnership of organizations seeking to preserve more land in Sussex County, and resulted in the identification of another high-value conservation property near Burton Pond that was acquired by Sussex County this summer. I am confident that more preservation will result, given the shared recognition of the value of open space for both public and environmental health that I have observed this year.

The second breakthrough was in water quality monitoring. One of the Center's most important jobs is to understand the status and trends of water quality in the Bays. Are the Bays improving, are they degrading, and are all of the restoration efforts paying off? In 2018, we completed an ambitious Environmental Monitoring Plan to provide better answers to these questions.

In 2020, many fruits of this planning effort were realized. We upgraded our data infrastructure to bring citizen water quality data online to everyone. We launched two new studies to determine the distribution of baygrasses and the population of Diamondback terrapins. We expanded our network of water quality monitoring sensors that continuously collect data (from one station to three) and established a partnership that will add more sensors to examine possible acidification of the Bays due to climate change. On top of that, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control began development of a sophisticated model to track and predict nutrient pollution for all the watersheds of the state. An essential element to tracking and planning the actions needed to restore healthy water quality in the Bays is now on its way.

It has been a challenging year, but through it all the partnerships that keep the Center thriving have remained strong. We are so thankful for the support and partnership with business, the state of Delaware, Sussex County, our towns, our universities, and so many individuals who care about the health of people and the environment.

Thank you for everything you do for the Inland Bays.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Bason".

Chris Bason
Executive Director



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

Printed on recycled paper.

PRESERVING OPEN SPACE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE BAYS

It all began with one parcel.

The Center worked with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to purchase 52 acres of land along the Indian River next to the Assawoman Wildlife Area. That set in motion a new partnership-based effort in 2020 that now aims to advance conservation efforts in Sussex County.

“We saw the need for it and went after it,” says Michelle Schmidt, the Center’s Watershed Coordinator. “Now that’s bloomed into this amazing partnership.”

As rapid development continues around the Inland Bays, purchasing, restoring, and reforesting parcels of land with a high conservation value is key to preserving them for future generations of Delawareans, visitors, and wildlife. But the Center is not in the business of becoming a big-time land-owner.

That’s where the Sussex County Conservation Partnership comes in.

The Partnership includes representatives from the Delaware Department of Agriculture, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Delaware Wildlands, Ducks Unlimited, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, the Sussex Conservation District, Sussex County government, the Sussex County Land Trust, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. These

partners aim to take a holistic look at preserving open space, not just in the Inland Bays watershed, but throughout southern Delaware.

Since that first successful save, a second property that the Center identified as having a high conservation value also has been protected for future generations. In 2020, Sussex County purchased 17.5 acres near Angola on Route 24, currently one of the area’s most popular places for commercial and residential development.

“There is a lot of concern out there about development in Sussex County, and for good reason,” County Councilman Doug Hudson, whose district includes the parcel, said in a press release. “This shows the County is listening, balancing the rights of property owners to sell or develop their parcels, while recognizing – and doing something about – the public’s desire for more open space.”

The idea is not just to preserve places for the sake of preservation, though. It’s about public access, too. Preserving properties like these will expand outdoor recreation opportunities in new areas of the county, where people may have previously lacked easy access in the face of traffic congestion or a lack of transportation.

Not only will these preservation and reforestation efforts reestablish and grow coastal habitats that are rapidly disappearing, but they also will reduce nutrient pollution and help improve water quality, trap carbon and help fight climate change, and offer flood protection for nearby residents.

(continued on page 4)



When this 3-year-old is 80, the seedlings planted here will be 100-foot tall trees of a mature forest, providing clean water to the Indian River.

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"It's all connected to the health of the Inland Bays," Michelle says. "People come here because it's a beautiful place to live, because it's not as developed as a city might be. Protecting land like these properties helps preserve that for the future."

The Center is working to identify promising parcels to present to partners for future acquisition and restoration. This effort also allows for the leveraging of funding from multiple sources, rather than relying on one state-level funding for open space that faces the threat of being cut each budgeting cycle.

"We're working piece-by-piece, parcel-by-parcel," Michelle says. "And we've had a really great start." →

Wood thrushes are migratory songbirds that are facing declines and will benefit from reforestation efforts. Photo by Anita Gould.



BY THE NUMBERS: Dollars Doing Well for the Inland Bays

To improve the health of the Bays, the Center implements the objectives and goals of the Inland Bays Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). But the Center can't do that alone, and relies on its supportive partners. Below is a glance at how those partners invested in the health of the Inland Bays in Fiscal Year 2020.

HOW FUNDING HELPS RESTORE THE BAYS

\$23,779,526 TOTAL DOLLARS

invested to implement the projects and goals of the CCMP: *Including...*

\$5,183

invested in recycling 4,000 bushels of oyster shell per year on average

\$725,827

invested in 10,225 acres of cover crops

\$22,384,512

invested in county-wide upgrades to wastewater treatment plants and expansion of centralized sewer

STRENGTHENING HABITAT

\$2,421,717 TOTAL INVESTMENT

to restore and protect the Bays: *Including protecting and restoring...*

690 acres + **863** linear feet of shoreline

25 acres treated for invasive Phragmites at Assawoman Wildlife Area

7 easements protected **300** acres of agricultural land

10 acres reforested and restored on Burbage Road

ADVANCING SCIENCE FOR THE HEALTH OF THE BAYS IN 2020

Research and data are at the forefront of every Center project and program throughout the watershed, from reforestation to shellfish enhancement. Noteworthy highlights include new scientific surveys, methods, and tools undertaken in 2020.

The Center has expanded its long-term, continuous water quality monitoring efforts from one site in the upper Indian River to three sites, adding another in the lower Indian River and one in Pepper Creek. At these sites, water quality indicators such as dissolved oxygen levels are measured every 30 minutes, allowing scientists to track daily changes, measure the true water quality of an area, and highlight any problems such as algal blooms. The Center also worked with the University of Delaware to make citizen monitoring water quality data publicly available online.

Center staff also continued monitoring the success of three pilot oyster reefs that were constructed in fall 2019 to determine where oysters thrive in the Bays and to identify the challenges these bivalves face, such as predators, disease, and water quality.


New this year is a land- and water-based Diamondback terrapin survey that will engage volunteers to monitor the abundance and distributions of this iconic turtle species, which could in turn drive future restoration efforts and management decisions. A new baygrass survey was also added this spring to search for these underwater beacons of healthy bays. ➡



BAYGRASS SURVEY
Nearly 9 linear miles of shoreline surveyed!

START DATE: Spring 2020

GOAL: To locate and measure baygrass patches in the Bays, to inform future protection and restoration efforts.



CREATED OYSTER REEFS
3 reefs monitored for oyster survival, water quality, and threats!

START DATE: Fall 2019, monitoring in 2020

GOAL: To better understand the challenges oyster reefs face and identify locations where future, larger reefs are more likely to succeed.



DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN SURVEY
1,179 turtles counted at 16 sites!

START DATE: Spring 2020

GOAL: To collect baseline data on terrapin populations and distribution in the Inland Bays to better inform management and restoration efforts.



CONTINUOUS WATER QUALITY MONITORING
6 indicators measured at 3 sites!

START DATE: Summer 2018, expanded in Summer 2020

GOAL: To continually monitor water quality to capture the true conditions of tributaries in the Inland Bays.

Read Avenue in Dewey Beach has been known to flood so badly and frequently during coastal storms and above-normal high tides that residents would be cut off from their homes.

Recognizing this challenge along Read Avenue and other areas of this low-lying coastal town, the Center worked with local officials to develop a plan to reduce flooding and address stormwater issues that are only worsening due to climate change and rising sea level.

“Flooding is a concern for a number of the Town’s bayside streets,” explains Dr. Marianne Walch, the Center’s Science & Restoration Coordinator. “Read Avenue has 30 acres contributing runoff to a single outfall at Monigle Park. There are a lot more projects to do in this area.”

At the end of Read Avenue along Rehoboth Bay, the Center worked with the Delaware Department of Transportation and contractors RK&K Engineering, Sovereign Consulting Inc., and Brightfields Inc., to build a living shoreline that also includes an offshore oyster reef, a 3.5-foot dune, and bigger and better outfall pipes that include tide gates to help prevent flooding during high tide or storm events.

“This integrated living shoreline and stormwater retrofit project already has reduced the frequency and duration of flooding events on Read Avenue,” Dr. Walch says.

That project was the first of multiple shoreline and stormwater projects planned for Dewey Beach. Since the living shoreline’s completion in the spring of 2020, the Center has also completed another stormwater retrofit project at the intersection of Read Avenue and Coastal Highway, closer to the Atlantic Ocean side of town.

Outside of the Little Store in Dewey Beach, a bioretention facility and permeable concrete reduce runoff and remove nutrient pollution entering Rehoboth Bay.

Dewey Beach and its Read Avenue, marked and labeled with project sites, are bordered on one side by Rehoboth Bay and the other by the Atlantic Ocean. Photo by Larry Trout, RK&K.




nitrogen pollution. The result is less flooding and cleaner water flowing to the Bay.

In Dewey Beach, partnerships with town officials and state agencies like the Department of Transportation were key in securing the funding needed to address problems that are only getting worse as sea level rises and climate change impacts continue to threaten coastal communities.

Partnerships also played a key role in Delaware’s latest living shoreline project along the banks of Pepper Creek at the Delaware Botanic Gardens near Dagsboro.

The Center and the Botanic Gardens partnered in the summer and fall of 2020 to stabilize about 300 feet of shoreline there with an innovative living shoreline method called an “anchored branch toe”— a hardy structure that looks almost like a fence at the low-tide line. The toe was built with logs and branches collected on the site and secured firmly to the creek bottom. This structure prevents further erosion and allows sediment to build up behind it, restoring lost wetlands. Volunteers were crucial in helping build and plant the project.

Biochar, a special form of charcoal, added to the bioretention soil helps rainwater infiltrate more quickly into the ground and also removes even more

Both the Read Avenue and Delaware Botanic Gardens living shoreline projects will serve as examples of successful community partnerships and demonstration sites for visitors to see how natural infrastructure works in reality. 

RESTORING STRONGER SHORELINES

Valuing Our Volunteers

In Fiscal Year 2020...

159 VOLUNTEERS

contributed...

1,571 HOURS

which is worth...

\$42,731

Thank you for
all that you do!



"We need to be able to show people what living shorelines are and how they can fit in with the landscape naturally," Dr. Walch says. "Both of these projects are great examples of not only how resilient these shorelines can become, but also how attractive nature-based solutions can be."

IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES

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Organizations listed here reflect funds received during the 2020 Fiscal Year 10/2019–9/2020. A special thank you to these funders for their generous support of the Center and its projects and programs.

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 Sue Scaglione
 Susan Amato
 Susan and Mark Cummings
 Susan Delaney
 Susan Hamadock
 Susan Manners
 Susan Nyden
 Susan Savarese
 Susan Smith
 Suzanne Swanger
 Teri MacMillan
 Terri Newlin
 Theodore Parker, Jr.
 Thomas and Felicetta Ryan
 Tom and Joanna Lyckberg

Tom and Lisa Kiracofe
 Tom Berkman
 Tom Wirt
 Tracy Schwanger
 Tracy Weese
 Tricia Precht
 Trish Woods
 Tyler and Sarah Powell
 Verity L. Watson
 Vincent Kornmeyer
 Virginia Boyce
 Wally and Paula Flepsen
 William Cooper
 William Swain Lee
 Wilson Mann
 Women's Civic Club of
 Bethany Beach
 Zachary Garmoe

DONORS OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Arena Signs
 Austin Dill
 Bayshore Marina
 Bella Terra Landscapes and
 Nursery
 Bill Hitz
 Condon's Locksmith
 Delaware State Parks
 Dave Ritondo
 Hyett Refrigeration
 Indian River Marina
 Jerry Daugherty
 Ken Sigvardson
 S & M Small Engine Repair

TRIBUTES AND MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In Memory of Anne Harrity
 Barbara Galligan

In Memory of Anthony Walch
 Elizabeth Walch
 Hugh Reinhart

In Memory of Beth Thompson
 Christine and David Thompson

In Memory of Betty Trivits
 Sue and Ken Sigvardson

In Memory of Buzz Henifin
 Barbara Rosa
 James Wilson
 Nancy Munnikhuisen
 Tony Dwyer

In Honor of Carla and Jerry
 Moose
 Benjamin Mariano

In Honor of Clement D. Bason
 Christopher Bason

In Honor of Danielle Sobieski
 and Robby Looney
 Anonymous

In Honor of Gary and Barbara
Jayne
Sean Brant

In Honor of Ginger Boyce
Bunny Meyer

In Memory of Jim Alderman
Anne J. Ratledge
Barbara Chiacchierini
Bob, Kelly, and Carly Collins
Christopher Bason
Christopher Kelly
EJ Chalabala
Elizabeth DeVos
Fred Vesper
George H. Bunting Jr.
Dr. George Luther
Judi and Danielle Ebelhar
Judy and Steve Denver
Judy Pinsdorf
Keith Donovan
Mindy MacRone-Wojton
Nancy V. Kelly
Penn and Sharon Emerson
Ronson and Teri Burton
Terri Newlin

In Memory of Joanne Micallef
Louise Micallef

In Honor of Julie and
Richard Dimmick
Jill and John Stauffer
Lee and Jeff Bagaglio

In Honor of Mary and
Fred Delaney
Min and Helen

In Memory of
Richard P. Malone, M.D.
Mary Delaney

In Honor of Ronald Bowen
Mike Bowen

In Honor of Susan Ball, M.D.
Mary Delaney
Steve and Judy Britz

In Honor of Team Osprey
Karen Ritgert
Kathy Malliton and
Steve Carson
Maryanne Yingst
Robert Brownell, Esq.
Steve Piron

In Memory of Walt Trela
Maria Cramer
Nancy Trela

In Memory of Wilbert Peter
Susan Sigvardson

In Memory of William Holt
Clare Moore
Eleanor Morrow
Emma Trammell
Erika Narducci
Jacqueline York
Laurel Brown
Mark Brockbank
Nancy Rafert
Roberta and Gary Bell

Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances

September 30, 2020 and September 30, 2019

ASSETS

Current Assets	2020	2019
Cash	\$ 526,759	\$ 637,466
Grants Receivable	227,786	211,759
Prepaid Expenses	15,054	15,029
Accounts Receivable	37,900	29,923
Total Current Assets	807,499	894,177

Property, Plant and Equipment (at cost)

Land	125,000	125,000
Building	907,257	894,696
Furniture and Equipment	325,733	333,644
	1,357,990	1,353,340
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(613,507)	(597,128)
Net Property, Plant and Equipment	744,483	756,212

Other Assets

DE Community Foundation Endowment Fund	155,391	133,815
Total Assets	\$1,707,373	\$1,784,204

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

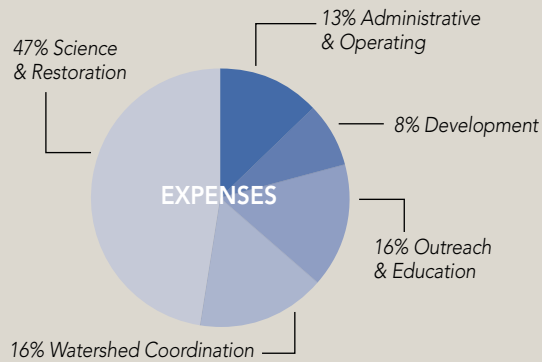
Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 12,238	\$ 6,326
Accrued Salaries and Benefits	31,206	45,857
Accrued Payroll Taxes	9,568	2,912
PPP Loan	132,437	0
Total Current Liabilities (all current)	185,449	55,095

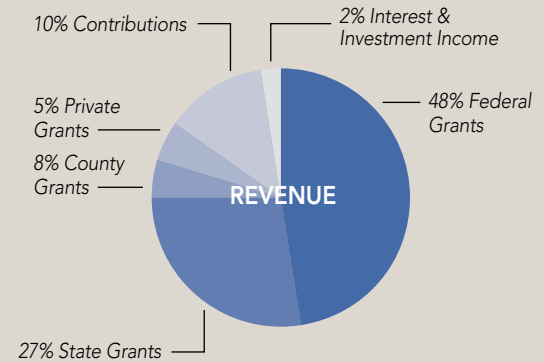
Net Assets

Unrestricted		
Board Designated*	155,391	133,815
Invested in Property and Equipment	619,483	631,212
Undesignated	231,489	331,570
Total Unrestricted	1,006,363	1,096,597
Temporarily Restricted	515,561	632,512
Total Net Assets	1,521,924	1,729,109
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,707,373	\$ 1,784,204

* Endowment Fund



Total Expenses \$1,288,740



Total Revenue \$1,166,124



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OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

"Ales After Trails" event (shown) and guided nature walks at the James Farm Ecological Preserve.



VIDEO DEBUTS

Living shorelines and Diamondback terrapins (shown) at National Estuaries Week & Coast Day, respectively.



GOING VIRTUAL

"Journey Up the Coast" children's program (shown) and more than two dozen online speaking engagements.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Making connections through creative efforts in the face of COVID-19