

Talking Points: Michael T. Scuse
FY25 Budget Hearing
Monday, November 13, 2023
1:00 p.m. at Haslet Armory, Room 133

- We have taken great care to submit a budget request that prioritizes support for Delaware farms and protects Delaware citizens while being fiscally responsible and sustainable.
- Our FY25 budget requests include items that will benefit the agricultural community and increase resiliency within the industry. This includes:
 - A new Trainer/Educator position that will work to improve agricultural profitability for Delaware producers, growers, and agribusinesses through three related roles. They will be co-director of LEADelaware with University of Delaware. LEADelaware provides leadership training to emerging leaders in agriculture and natural resources. They will also support the next generation by acting as Executive Secretary for Delaware FFA. Lastly, this position will work to increase Delaware producers' access to markets through programs that provide market development and expansion opportunities for Delaware Grown products.
 - Our bond bill request includes \$2.5 million for a Delaware Agricultural Production Assistance Program, currently being considered by the Delaware Legislature under House Bill 87. The program will provide a subsidy up to 30% of the premium for eligible producers' multi-peril crop insurance premium, or whole farm revenue protection premium, up to a maximum of \$10.00 per acre. The subsidy would be directly paid by the Delaware Department of Agriculture to the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation on behalf of eligible producers to reduce their premiums.

One additional item that we could not fit in our 1% discretionary increase is an in-house Deputy Attorney General. The Department needs this position to assist with criminal penalties, animal and plant health control activities, regulatory updates and legal counseling for our mission critical work in our many programs. Currently, the Department does not fund a DAG and it's DAG is spread across several other Departments and Commissions.

I would also like to provide an update on some of our previously funded programs.

- On behalf of the Delaware Department of Agriculture and farmers across our state, I want to thank you for approving \$20 Million for Aglands Preservation in last year's budget. We recently announced our 27 round of easement purchases using that funding and were able to select 60 farms covering 5,300 acres. Interest in our

Talking Points: Michael T. Scuse
FY25 Budget Hearing
Monday, November 13, 2023
1:00 p.m. at Haslet Armory, Room 133

programs remains strong and we are appraising almost 300 farms for next round of easements to be announced next year. With this we have preserved over 151,000 acres of Delaware farmland, 28% of that valuable resource

- We also received FY23 funding for the Delaware Forest Service's Forest Initiative Fund and planted over 75,000 trees in areas that previously were not forest. The Fund is designed to enhance rural and urban forests throughout Delaware and assist landowners and communities, while providing the key benefits we all need without cumbersome agreements and requirements. The program is designed for willing landowners interested in making a lasting impression on future generations. A second year of funding was received in FY24 so we will be repeating the planting effort this year. This is also in addition to the Delaware Forest Service's normal replanting work and assistance to regenerate forests after a timber harvest.