WE WORK FOR YOU EVERY DAY

Wm. Donald Clifton II
Secretary of Agriculture

PUBLIC HEARING PRESENTATION

FISCAL YEAR 2028



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

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AGRICULTURE

DELAWARE'S NO. 1 INDUSTRY

FAMILY FARMS

On 520,000 acres of farmland, Delaware's 2,150 family farms produce a wide variety of agricultural products. These include corn, soybeans, wheat, poultry, fruits, and vegetables. For livestock, the First State is home to more than 276 million broiler chickens and 10,500 head of cattle.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Food and agriculture industries provide more than 76,000 direct jobs and more than $31 billion in total economic activity to the state, including $3.8 billion in direct wages.

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VISION AND MISSION

VISION

The Delaware Department of Agriculture supports farmers and consumers alike, working to sustain and grow our industry, promote fresh and seasonal products, and build consumer trust in Delaware.

MISSION

The staff of the Delaware Department of Agriculture strive to effectively and efficiently sustain and promote the viability of food, fiber, and agricultural industries in Delaware through quality services that protect and enhance the environment, health, and welfare of the general public.

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DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OPERATING BUDGET AND STAFFING

$13.650 Million

Requested Budget

Delaware Department of Agriculture Sections		
Administration (Office of the Secretary, Communications & Marketing, Finance)	Standardbred Breeders' Fund	Plant Industries
Aglands Preservation & Planning	Food Products Inspection	Poultry & Animal Health
Agricultural Compliance	Nutrient Management	Thoroughbred Racing Commission
Delaware Forest Service	Pesticides	Weights & Measures
Harness Racing Commission		

- 192 full-time and casual/seasonal employees in 11 sections and two commissions.

- **Position Updates:**
  - In collaborating with DHR we have reclassified some positions, allowing us to hire high performers and adapt to the changes affecting DDA's program responsibilities, including two new **Nutrient Management** positions to enforce and create a training program for our newly adopted turf regulations.

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REQUEST: AGRICULTURE TRADE ANALYST

ASK: $116,208 (PERSONNEL, SUPPLY, TRAVEL)

BACKGROUND

- Would monitor global and domestic ag markets to identify and pursue trade opportunities for Delaware producers. Would work closely with World Trade Center Delaware, Food Export Northeast, commodity groups and foreign delegations.



GOALS/TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Position supports First State farmers, agribusiness, traders and help DDA make informed decisions on production, imports/exports, and risk management.
- **Key Subjects:** Timber markets, food scarcity, alternative energy, fertilizer/fuel, input costs.

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REQUEST: AVIAN INFLUENZA TESTING

ASK: $105,000

BACKGROUND

- High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been found on Delaware commercial broiler farms three of the last five years. This is a tremendous threat to a multi-billion-dollar industry. **77 percent of cash farm income in Delaware is directly linked to chickens**.



REQUESTED FUNDS WILL …

- Would provide additional testing needs for the poultry industry. While USDA pays for a portion of HPAI testing at University of Delaware labs through a cooperative agreement, there has been a gap in what has been needed to protect First State flocks.

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WEIGHTS & MEASURES EV REQUEST

ASK: $36,489 (GF) – 1% INCREASE

BACKGROUND

- DDA internal funds purchased testing equipment, including approximately $150,000 for a trailer.
- Throughout Delaware, there are 233 public electric-vehicle charging locations to monitor/maintain.

REQUESTED FUNDS WILL …

- Increase contractual funding to cover the additional cost of fleet vehicles and calibration expenses. This request also is an increase of $5,000 in energy funds to cover the cost of testing the EV machines.



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NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TURF PROGRAM

ASK: $27,268 (GF) – 1% INCREASE

BACKGROUND

• Nutrient Management requests a budget increase to establish and maintain the Turf Management program, which was introduced in FY27, to expand enforcement and handler certification for managed turf nutrients under Title 3 Chapter 22 and supporting Regulation 1204, which dates to May 2025.



REQUESTED FUNDS WILL …

• Cover contractual expenses such as fleet rental, communication services, an update to Salesforce software in the amount of $17,168.

• An increase of supplies to purchase workstations, an iPad for inspections and other operating and office supplies.

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FARMER ADVOCATE PROGRAM

ASK: $36,000 (GF) – 1% INCREASE

DDA to submit a reclassification request of a current position for a full-time employee.

BACKGROUND

• Would focus on providing one-on-one technical assistance, advocacy and support to farmers, including those in start-up, small and diverse operations. Farmers often face financial distress and operational challenges while building strong, trust-based relationships to help grow their business.



• Would serve as a bridge between farmers and resources, including financial institutions, government programs and community partners. They will strive for farmer engagement and drive continuous improvement in production, performance and profitability.

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FARMER ADVOCATE PROGRAM

ASK: $36,000 (GF) – 1% INCREASE

REQUESTED FUNDS WILL ..

- **Expert One-on-One Technical Assistance ($25,000):** Funds will secure specialized agricultural consultants, financial advisors, or experienced mediator contractors.
- **Community & Institutional Liaison Services ($5,000):** This covers dedicated contractual hours for advocates to act as formal intermediaries.
- **Supplies: ($6,000):** This allocation provides the necessary operational tools, outreach materials, and technology required to establish trust, reach rural farmers, and effectively manage case data.



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AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT

ASK: $30,000 (GF) – 1% INCREASE

BACKGROUND

This restoration will bring the total funding for the program back to its baseline of $139,000.

FUNDING WOULD BOOST

- **Sponsorships:** Financial backing for vital local agricultural events, youth programs (such as 4-H and FFA), and educational clinics.
- **Community Projects:** Targeted initiatives designed to improve infrastructure, implement sustainable farming practices, and boost local market access.
- **Economic Development:** Direct resources that help farmers scale operations, modernizing our regional food supply chain and economic resilience.



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COVER CROP INVESTMENT

REQUEST: $10 MILLION

BACKGROUND

Research shows that cover crops are the best tool in Delaware – environmentally and economically – to reduce agricultural nutrient runoff, improve water quality, and mitigate climate change. This management tool improves soil health, increases the resiliency of fields to pests, and reduces fertilizers and pesticides use.



THESE FUNDS WILL…

Offset the costs for farmers to plant cover crops. These crops are not harvested; therefore, they do not provide any income for the farmer, but they help Delaware reach its nutrient reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

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FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

REQUEST: $200,000 (MCI) & $750,000 (CRITICAL EQUIPMENT)

MINOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

• Maintain state facilities in good condition and provide regular replacement of building equipment. DDA facilities provide infrastructure needed to support the department's mission.



CRITICAL EQUIPMENT FOR OPERATIONS

• Acquisition, replacement and repair of equipment is essential to perform agricultural and consumer protection operations.

• The equipment provides public services and infrastructure support for 20,000 acres of Delaware State Forests as well as analytical chemistry and biological laboratory services.

• Ask includes $500K for a Forestry transporter to respond to all-hazard events.

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AGLANDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM

REQUEST: $20 MILLION ($10M REALTY TAX; $10M STATE FUNDS)

PURPOSE

• Increasing Aglands Preservation resources was a goal mentioned in Gov. Meyer's campaign policy booklet.

• Ask is up from the Code-required $10 million due to the increased cost of land. Development has resulted in the irreversible loss of farmland, which is necessary to maintain Delaware's leading industry.

• Landowners have donated **$410 million** to the program, representing a discount of **57 percent of the easement value**. All told, the program has permanently protected **155,800 acres** at a cost of **more than $310 million** from a combination of state, federal and county funds.



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AQUACULTURE – OYSTER HATCHERY

REQUEST: $1 MILLION

PURPOSE

• Advance development of inland bays aquaculture, funding will support creation of a commercial dock and an oyster hatchery, which have been identified as key steps by the Delaware Aquaculture Association.

• Will provide reliable "Water to highway" access for commercial oyster farmers and access to high-quality seed stock, supporting local producers as they work to meet increasing market demand.

• Continued investment in this infrastructure will bolster economic growth, enhance environmental stewardship through sustainable shellfish production, and position Delaware as a regional leader in aquaculture innovation.



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PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **$ of gross receipts for Delaware farmers markets**
  - **$5.002 million:** Delaware farmers markets set a record in sales last year, reaching the $5 million mark for the first time, which indicates strong consumer support for family farms producing **Delaware Grown** produce and value-added products, which in turn bolsters the local economy.
- **# of pet food/animal/livestock feed products approved for registration**
  - **21,274:** The funds from these registrations through our Agriculture Compliance Lab are provided to the Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare to conduct its spay and neuter program, which reduces unwanted litters, pet homelessness, and the risk of zoonotic disease to the public.
- **# of pesticide applicators certified**
  - **2,926:** Anyone buying or using a restricted use pesticide must be certified by the DDA. Anyone in the business of applying pesticides, either restricted use or general use, to the land or property of another entity must be certified and obtain a Pesticide Business License from the DDA.

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **Weights and Measures – By The Numbers**
  - **14,493:** Petroleum meters inspected
  - **4,609:** Small/large scales tested
  - **3,524:** Petroleum meters rejected
  - **705:** Licensed weighmasters
  - **374:** Technicians registered
  - **293:** Vehicle tank meters tested
  - **284:** Price verifications performed
  - **148:** Truck scales tested
  - **88:** Consumer complaints
  - **42:** Delaware State Police enforcement scales tested



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PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **# of avian influenza (AI) tests & # of positive AI tests**
  - **6,605 tests; 4 positive tests:** An indicator of the number of flocks sent for processing. When/if there is a positive result, it shows the testing system working, which prevents the monitored flock from ever leaving the farm. We have had extraordinary cooperation the last two winters as we dealt with a handful of positive AI tests. This is part of the process of protecting a multi-billion dollar industry.
- **Tons of poultry litter/manure relocated for land application**
  - **6,103 tons:** Our farms find a use for a valuable soil amendment, which, when applied in accordance with a nutrient management plan, decreases the need for chemical fertilizers and protects waterways.
- **# of saved farms in Aglands Preservation Foundation**
  - **More than 1,250 farms:** Since the **Aglands Preservation Foundation's** inception three decades ago, close to 160,000 acres have been preserved. In 2020, the **American Farmland Trust** ranked **Delaware's Aglands Preservation Program** as the top example of its kind in the nation.

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DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

BIOENERGY DEVELOPMENT

- Working with regional and national partners to develop framework for a Delaware-based bio-fuels market. Bio-fuels would be leftover or low-grade wood to be utilized for energy generation.

- Fuel generators are not equal to the ones in years past. They are highly efficient with little impact to air quality.

- **Key Takeaways:**
    - Supports sustainable management and healthy forests.
    - Improves forest values
    - Carbon neutral or closed carbon



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DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

STATE OF OUR FORESTS (351,000 ACRES)

MARKETS DRIVE FOREST HEALTH AND HEALTHY FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

- **78 percent of Delaware hardwood species is at or above 60 years of age** (50-60 years of age is where growth levels and decline begins in unmanaged stands).
- **60 percent** of our hardwood leaves the state to be processed, resulting in fewer Delaware-based jobs/products in all three counties.
- **802 million board feet** of loblolly pine sit on 75,000 acres within our state with an annual harvest of around **4.8 million board feet** (all processed in other states). Economic impact is fewer products/jobs in Kent/Sussex.



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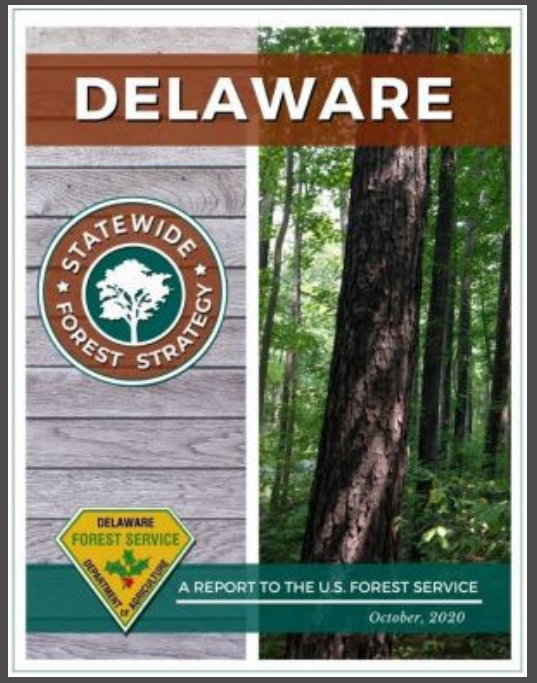


DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

PROGRAMS AND STATE FORESTS

TOP DUTIES: FOREST HEALTH, URBAN & COMMUNITY WILDLAND FIRE, FOREST STEWARDSHIP, FOREST EDUCATION

- **70 percent completion on Statewide Forest Strategies (highest in region) in five years out of a 10-year focus period.**
- Increased demand on all programs with a smaller staff than 2006 to cover more than 351,000 acres, within 57 municipalities and 1,900 homeowners associations.
- Management is increasing across all three state forests with an increase in timber harvest aimed at future markets and forest health needs. Additional facility and user offerings are also taking place.



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POSSIBLE BUDGET REDUCTIONS

1 PERCENT DECREASE OPTIONS

- **PERSONNEL COSTS, $99,300:** Switch Fund (BP# 11379) from GF to ASF. This program has a sufficient amount of funds in their ASF lines to support the position long term. There is no impact to services.

- **UD CARVEL CENTER/IRRIGATION, $30,500:** Reduce funding from the University of Delaware Carvel Center for Irrigation or Field Crop Research. This program also received a reduction in FY27 – a further reduction will significantly reduce their research ability.



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