

# III. Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the DNERR



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### A. Overall Mission of the DNERR

The DNERR's mission is to preserve and manage the natural resources within the Reserve as a place for research, to provide education and outreach programs that promote better understanding of Delaware's estuarine and coastal areas, and to promote informed coastal decision-making.

### B. Administration Goals and Objectives

The DNERR has these primary goals for administration of the Reserve:

- Establish a strong volunteer program that is involved in both the research and education conducted at the Reserve
- Maintain current staff positions
- Provide the education and research programs with all necessary support to ensure successful programs
- Promote science based management

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Contracting with an outside organization to provide a Volunteer Coordinator
- Ensuring that all staff positions are fully funded through State and Federal monies. As stable non-federal monies become available, the objective is to switch position funding to non-federal sources.
- Continuing the efforts of the Reserve Manager to (1) work with the Research and Education Coordinators to ensure proper funding and staffing levels for each year's activities, and (2) track all grants and tasks.

### C. Facilities and Construction Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the DNERR related to facilities and construction revolve around the St. Jones Center at the St. Jones Reserve component. The DNERR has these primary goals for the Center:

- Provide and maintain facilities that enable research to be conducted at the Reserve.
- Provide and maintain facilities that support education and outreach programming for both the general public and coastal decision-makers.
- Increase awareness that outside individuals and groups working in environmental science and management fields can use the DNERR's labs and meeting space.

- Explore an increased presence and establishment of a facility in the Blackbird Creek Component.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Maintaining all meeting spaces, visiting researcher dormitory quarters and educational facilities at the St. Jones Center.
- Featuring the DNERR's facilities in Reserve publications, on the website, and at public events and speaking engagements to promote their use by outside groups. Scientists, educators, environmental nonprofit groups, and other State agencies will be the primary groups targeted.
- Explore facility establishment at the Blackbird component.

#### **D. Public Access Goals and Objectives**

The DNERR has these primary goals for public access to the Reserve:

- Maintain each Reserve component's integrity for research, long-term resource protection, and education while permitting traditional uses that do not conflict with Reserve goals.
- Minimize adverse impacts to the Reserve resulting from illegal and/or improper conduct of visitors.
- Enhance public access to the St. Jones component and allow compatible low impact public access to the Blackbird component.
- Continue to expand the visibility of the DNERR and its recreational and educational offerings.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Assisting in the coordination of hunting regulation efforts with the DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW).
- Exploring the feasibility of using volunteers to open the St. Jones Center on weekends.
- Heightening the visibility of the Reserve through participation in local public events and advertisement in the local media.
- Developing partnerships with local agencies and organizations, and cosponsoring and/or participating in public events in order to promote public awareness of the Reserve and its opportunities for visitation.
- Conducting an assessment, and development of a public access plan that protects the ecosystem of the Blackbird component.

#### **E. Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Goals and Objectives**

The DNERR has these primary goals for education, interpretation, and outreach:

- Enhance public awareness and understanding of the value and functions of estuarine ecosystems in the Middle Atlantic Region.
- Promote the wise use of estuarine resources and encourage an environmental

stewardship ethic among Reserve users and visitors as well as coastal decision-makers.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Promoting the Reserve, its resources, and its programs through publication of the Reserve newsletter and Public Programs Brochure, public displays, and guest speaking appearances to community groups.
- Promoting awareness of the NERRS and the values of estuarine/marine protected areas by maintaining interpretive displays at the St. Jones Center, maintaining the Reserve website, and participating in a variety of public events.
- Providing on-site educational and interpretive services directly to students, coastal decision-makers, and the general public through field-trip experiences, in-classroom activities, workshops, and regularly scheduled public activity programs. These programs include boat and canoe trips, marsh walks, nature crafts, and lectures.
- Implementing the Coastal Training Program (CTP) to address conservation and protection of Delaware's estuarine and coastal areas through the translation of research into usable management tools. This Program will target specific audiences such as landowners, the farming community, government officials, and science professionals.
- Providing teacher training, internships, and guidance for student projects, whereby enrollees work jointly with scientists to gain field experience and learn how research activities guide management decisions.

## **F. Research and Monitoring Goals and Objectives**

The research and monitoring task of greatest importance to the DNERR and the entire Delaware Estuary is the characterization of habitats and of anthropogenic impacts that contribute to habitat degradation or loss. In addressing these issues, the goals of the Reserve's Research and Monitoring Program are:

- To identify the various types, quality, and quantity of habitats available in the estuary to facilitate the proper management and protection of the estuarine ecosystem; and
- To identify, monitor, and limit the anthropogenic impacts to the estuarine system.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Collecting and building baseline databases for use in long-term and interdisciplinary studies, for monitoring differences over time, and for making comparisons to other areas to increase the knowledge of habitats and anthropogenic changes;
- Continuing to develop the on-site library's collection of research and reference materials and data repository;
- Promoting the Reserve's components in the research community as long-term field laboratories to be used by State or Federal agencies, academic institutions, and local or private environmental organizations in the study of anthropogenic changes;
- Disseminating research results and other pertinent information to local/regional

- decision-makers to foster proper management and protection of the estuarine system;
- Improving laboratory facilities, increasing field monitoring stations, and procuring scientific equipment and gear as necessary to support the Reserve's research and monitoring efforts; and
  - Seeking agreements with other research organizations or institutions to facilitate and augment research and monitoring projects to meet the goals of the Reserve.

## **G. Stewardship Goals and Objectives**

### **1. Resource Protection Goals and Objectives**

The goals of the DNERR for resource protection are to:

- Promote the adoption of conservation practices within the Reserve's two watersheds;
- Protect the Reserve from disruptive practices occurring inside its boundaries;
- Develop invasive-species monitoring and control strategies; and
- Provide education and outreach programs that focus on stewardship.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Developing conservation plans for each Reserve component;
- Monitoring land-use issues within each Reserve component's watershed and providing local decision-makers with information that promotes the protection of water quality;
- Controlling the invasive species with an emphasis on known problem species including *Autumn Olive*, *Multiflora Rose*, *Japanese Honeysuckle*, *Phragmites australis*, *Purple Loosestrife*, and *Canadian Thistle* in the Reserve components;
- Developing BMPs for the agricultural lands surrounding both Reserve sites, where appropriate.
- Seek funding for land acquisition.

### **2. Boundaries and Land Acquisition Goals and Objectives**

The goals of the DNERR for land acquisition are to:

- Promote fee-simple acquisition and conservation easements to protect essential habitat and water-quality areas within each Reserve component's watershed.
- Identify significant unprotected estuarine areas within the State of Delaware.

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Develop a land-acquisition plan that prioritizes properties in each Reserve component's core and buffer areas.
- Increase local awareness of land preservation options.
- Seek funds for land protection.

