

V. Administration Plan



V. Administration Plan

A. Historical Perspective

Over the last several years, the administration of the Reserve has undergone some significant changes. The management and oversight of the Reserve, however, began and remains with the DNREC. At the time of designation, three Divisions within the DNREC—Soil and Water Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and Fish and Wildlife—were responsible for carrying out the DNERR’s mission. This framework provided the best means to pool the necessary resources for a successful designation. As the Reserve became operational, it became clear that each Division had its own priorities and management styles. In the interest of best utilizing State resources, it was determined that one Division would be responsible for the management of the Reserve. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation now administers the DNERR Program through the Delaware Coastal Programs (DCP). This move streamlined decision-making and ensured that national program requirements will consistently be met.

B. 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

Specific objectives to aid in achieving these goals include:

- Promote science based management
- 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. State Administration of the Reserve and Related Programs

The DCP is located within the Capitol complex in the city of Dover, which is only 6 miles from the St. Jones Reserve component. The Administrator for the DCP is responsible for the administration of all DCP programs including DNERR. The DCP Program Manager II also provides guidance to the Reserve Manager and helps promote direct collaboration between the DNERR and DCMP. State staff assigned to the DNERR are responsible for both components of the Reserve: the Lower St. Jones River Reserve component and the Upper Blackbird Creek Reserve component.

Wetlands regulations, the Delaware Coastal Zone Act, the Beach Preservation Act, the Sediment and Stormwater Program, the Nonpoint Source and Point Source Programs, hunting and fishing regulations, and natural resource management are all areas that also fall within the authority of the DNREC, which supports this agency's administrative lead in regard to the DNERR.

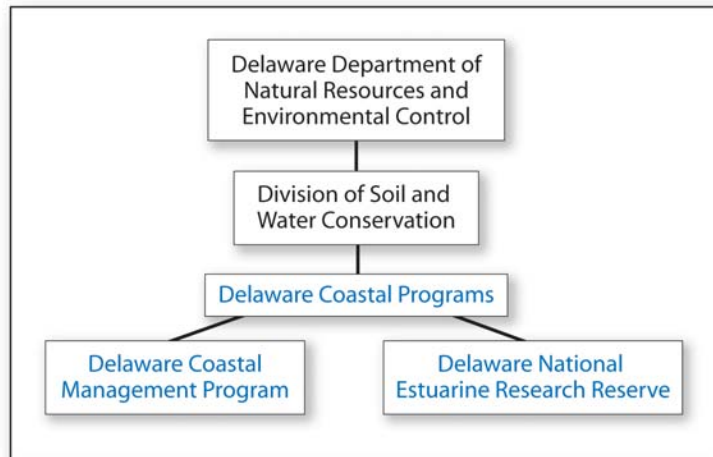


Figure V-1. Organizational position of the DNERR within the DNREC.

D. Reserve Staff Responsibilities

The Reserve Manager, Research Coordinator, and Education Coordinator are core staff positions prescribed by the NERRS, and assume major responsibilities in the function of the Reserve. All Reserve staff offices are located in the Visitors Center at the St. Jones Reserve component, where all staff members assume responsibility for handling visitor questions and requests.

1. Reserve Management

The DNERR Program Manager I, the Reserve Manager, provides overall coordination of Reserve operations and programming with the guidance of the Program Manager II of the DCP. The State funds 100% of the Reserve Manager position.

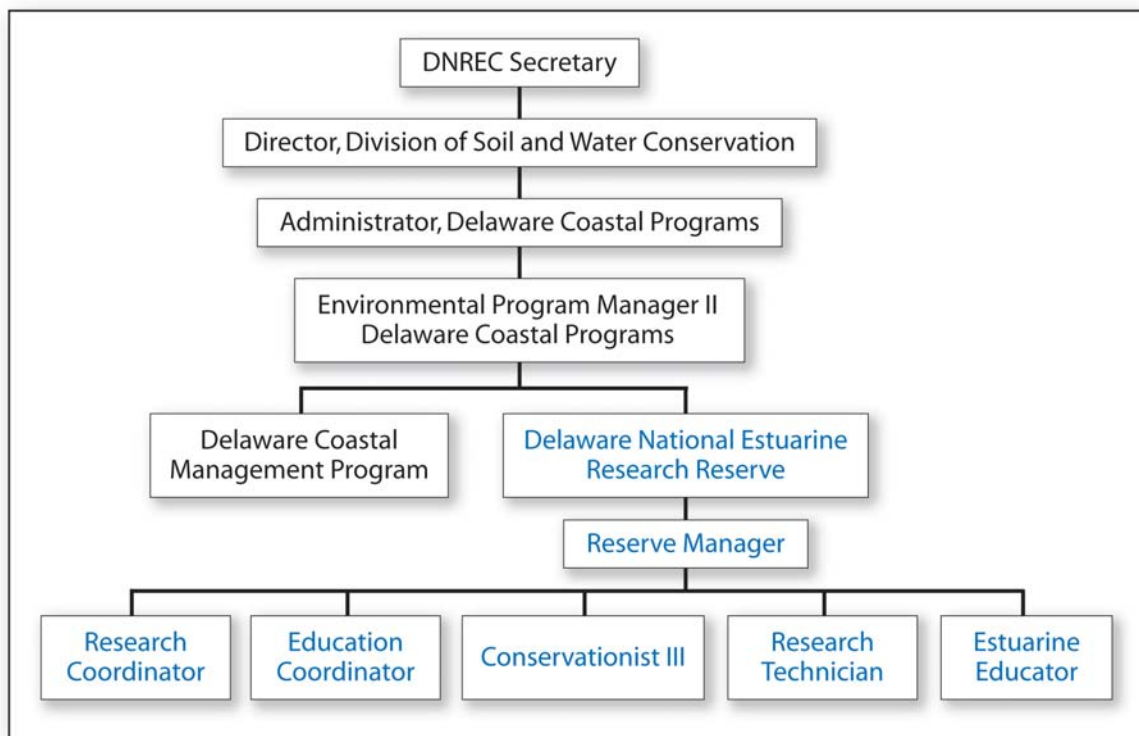


Figure V-2. Administrative structure of the DNERR.

2. St. Jones Center Operations and Maintenance

The Reserve Manager bears overall responsibility for the operations and maintenance of the Center. The DNERR Conservationist maintains the grounds and facilities of the Center and both Reserve sites as needed. The Conservationist position is supported through Federal monies.

3. Research and Monitoring

Research is one of the fundamental charges of the NERRS. Information must be collected and made available to increase understanding of the processes of estuarine ecosystems and the effects of human activity on these processes. This understanding is essential for the best management of these important ecosystems. The underlying mission of the DNERR at its most basic level is to improve Delaware's and the Mid-Atlantic region's estuarine environment. By coordinating and integrating research projects, resources, and manpower, Reserve influence can be brought to bear on the most pressing areas of concern and to direct research for environmental management.

The Research Coordinator is responsible for the Reserve's research and monitoring activities. At this time, the Research Coordinator position is Federally (NOAA) funded: 50% through CZMA Section 315 and 50% through Section 306. The Research Coordinator works for both DNERR and DCMP, and thus conducts Statewide research and monitoring studies for DCMP as well. The relatively small size of the state of Delaware and the Federal designation of the entire State as lying within the coastal zone provides an opportunity for Reserve programs to have statewide influence. Through the combined direction of both DNERR and DCP research efforts, issues affecting Delaware's entire coastal zone can be addressed.

A Research Technician was hired in 2002. This is a contractual position averaging 37.5 hours per week. The Research Technician is responsible for performing a majority of the SWMP monitoring at the Reserve, conducting lab analysis, and submitting data to the Central Data Management Office (CDMO) at NOAA. As other research projects are developed, the DNERR may find that it needs to augment the research staff temporarily. If projects warrant extra staffing, positions will be added with specific project duties.

4. Education, Interpretation, and Outreach

Education and outreach functions are among the highest priorities of the DNERR program initiatives. An important element is the dissemination of research and monitoring results, and their management implications, to local, state, regional, and national decision-makers. Teaching children and adults about the value of estuarine ecosystems and what roles they can play individually and collectively is a major undertaking of the DNERR and is very timely with the needs of environmental education throughout the state of Delaware.

The Education Coordinator is responsible for coordinating educational and interpretive activities for the DNERR Program. This full-time position is funded through Federal grant monies. The Education Coordinator is the primary translator of research and monitoring results to resource professionals, decision-makers, estuary users, and the public. The Education Coordinator provides overall direction and goals for the education program.

The Education Coordinator also relies on the Estuarine Educator to assist with this task. This is a Federal-grant funded, seasonal staff position averaging 30–40 hours per week. The Estuarine Educator's primary responsibilities are coordination of the elementary education programs and facilitating the decision-maker workshops.

As the education program evolves from the Coastal Decision Maker Workshop model to the Coastal Training Program (CTP), a CTP coordinator will be required. The CTP coordinator will handle all aspects of planning and coordinating all coastal training for the DNERR. The position will be funded through the dedicated CTP line item. The DNERR is currently exploring all potential options to fill this position. When the planning processes for CTP implementation are concluded the DNERR will seek to fill the CTP Coordinator position. The CTP position will be federally funded from the 315 award.

5. Resource Protection

The original management plan addressed “resource protection issues” in detail. That topic has become too broad and is here broken into two sections: Enforcement and Stewardship. Enforcement is defined as the Reserve’s efforts to legally protect its components and surrounding watershed through the efforts of many different agencies. Stewardship encompasses the broad areas of land management, acquisition, restoration practices, and outreach.

The stewardship function has become a priority of the NERRS. The DNERR Stewardship Program combines research and education to assist in developing a proactive, preventative approach to resource protection. The amount of land owned and actively managed by the DNERR is relatively small but will increase in acreage over time. The Stewardship Program will attempt to improve land-use decision-making at a watershed level through outreach and research projects.

Enforcement

Surveillance and enforcement actions at both Reserve components are ongoing responsibilities. The majority of surveillance occurs through the Center; the St. Jones site is monitored daily. Due to limited access, the Blackbird Creek site is monitored during hunting season, during staff visits, or when a complaint is received.

The Reserve Manager provides additional surveillance to, and relies on the coordination among, State, Federal, and local agencies’ regulations and authorities, to be enforced by the applicable agency for on-site and surrounding areas at least to the extent of the Reserve’s contributing watersheds. On-site DNERR staff, capital police of the Department of Administrative Services, Division of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Section officers, and environmental protection officers (EPOs) are responsible for surveillance, and enforce access and activity control according to the extent authorized.

The core areas are monitored with the greatest surveillance efforts and maximum enforcement allowable under the rights that the DNREC has as owner. DNERR staff work to limit activities in the buffer areas that impact the designated core areas in order to maintain the integrity of a naturally influenced estuarine system. This responsibility falls upon the Reserve Manager, Research Coordinator, and Conservationist.

The DNERR works with the DCMP in order to improve the effectiveness of addressing cumulative impacts of various land-use activities. The DCMP’s policies and supporting authorities are important in the enforcement of the DNERR management plan.

Stewardship

The primary objectives of the Stewardship Program are to ensure the protection of Reserve property, return any disturbed areas within the Reserve to a properly functioning natural system when possible, and provide educational assistance to decision-makers regarding the proper care and maintenance of other natural areas within the State. Ideally, these tasks will be the responsibility of a Stewardship

Coordinator. During the next 5 years, the DNERR will consider the establishment of a Stewardship Coordinator position, but will also consider whether these needs can be better met by other programs that already manage open space in Delaware. Currently, the Reserve Manager and Conservationist will continue to pursue these stewardship functions jointly.

E. Volunteers

The operation of many DNERR programs has the potential to be enhanced by a well-structured volunteer effort. Development of a volunteer program began in earnest in the year 2000. It was determined that “volunteers” generally fall into one of two categories: one-time task-oriented groups (usually scouts or community service organizations), or individuals making a longer-term commitment, who would receive larger amounts of responsibility. Task-oriented volunteers are utilized when they express interest. There has been successful participation by scouting groups, day schools, and juvenile rehabilitation programs. Projects and responsibilities for long-term volunteers are being developed.

Volunteer activities have included:

- Conducting horseshoe crab spawning surveys at four beaches on each of 12 nights during the months of May and June
- Guiding field trips for school children
- Conducting school outreach programs
- Adopting and cleaning a 2-mile stretch of road along the Blackbird Creek Reserve component
- Maintaining trails
- Landscaping around the Visitors Center
- Landscaping the entrance-way to the St. Jones Reserve component
- Installing a butterfly garden at the St. Jones Reserve component
- Replacing the handrails along the ¼ mile boardwalk trail of the St. Jones Reserve component
- Assisting with community open space projects in the region



Figure V-3. AmeriCorps volunteers at work.

Due to the limited number of staff at the DNERR, individual volunteers will become an increasingly important component of the Public Access Program. Leading nature walks, serving as trail guides, and providing office assistance are envisioned as primary responsibilities for this group. Aggressive efforts at recruitment are being made, but as with any volunteer effort, success depends on the commitment of individuals. Current recruiting efforts occur at community outreach events, through solicitation in Reserve publications, and through press contacts. When the size of the volunteer program becomes sufficient, a Volunteer Coordinator will be an important addition to the Reserve staff. This position is contingent upon State and Federal funding allocations.

In the late spring of 2002, the DNERR sought a Volunteer Coordinator position through Public Allies, a

branch of Americorps. This arrangement allowed an Americorps employee to be stationed at the Reserve for a period of 10 months (September through June) for which he would receive a living allowance and education award, at a total cost to the DNERR of approximately \$14,000. The task description for this Ally position included the following:

- The Ally will develop a volunteer program for the Reserve. The program will increase the general public exposure to the Reserve and the work conducted there. The result of the Ally's efforts will be measured in volunteer hours accumulated. The target goal is 1,000 hours of service to the Reserve.
- The Ally will develop activities that will help the Reserve fulfill its research and education agenda. This will allow Reserve core staff more time to plan and conduct a wider array of programs. Results will be measured as the number of activities conducted. Two programs per quarter is the target goal.
- The Ally will assist the Friends of the DNERR in attaining nonprofit status.



Figure V-4. The completed butterfly garden at the St. Jones Reserve.

F. Interns

As part of the effort to foster a more informed populace, the DNERR offers a small internship program to University students who are majoring in an environmental discipline or who express an interest in the field. These internships fall into two main tracks: research and education. Generally, one or two seasonal intern positions are available per year, due to supervisory and funding constraints. The Reserve Manager is responsible for this program.

G. Cooperative Efforts

The DNREC recognizes the need for cooperation and coordination in order to achieve the objectives of the DNERR's management plan. The Reserve Manager ensures that the functions required to implement this plan—education and research activities, land acquisition, facilities development, and resource protection—are coordinated with the agencies, organizations, and landowners presently active within the Reserve's components. The Reserve Manager acts as the liaison between outside entities and the Reserve, calling upon the Education and Research Coordinators as appropriate. In coordinating with other regional institutions, authorities, and groups, the Reserve looks at those that can enhance the Reserve's values while meeting and expanding their own environmental goals and objectives.

At the State level, the Reserve Manager meets semimonthly with other program managers in the DNREC's Division of Soil and Water Conservation to keep abreast of State issues and concerns and

to share Reserve and national issues in return. Open communication with the DCP ensures effective coordination of DNERR operations. Both Kent and New Castle County governments have coordinated with the DNERR in land-use zoning, building codes, recreation programs, and in dealing with other pertinent local authorities on environmental/coastal issues. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Kent County Conservation District (KCD), New Castle County Conservation District (NCCD), and National Conservation District programs have provided technical services regarding soil conservation. The Delaware Department of Agriculture has provided technical services regarding invasive species.

Given Delaware's relatively small size, it is necessary for the DNERR to identify programs that can work cooperatively to more soundly address environmental issues within the Reserve and the State, making the most of limited time and resources. Wesley College and the University of Delaware have provided the DNERR with environmental intern candidates who have been well prepared for assisting with both research and education programs. DSU cooperates with the DNERR for implementation of the Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC) Program and has provided technical expertise in best management practices (BMPs). Numerous departments at the University of Delaware (UD) have coordinated various cooperative research and education programs. The DNERR regularly partners with UD's Sea Grant and Cooperative Extension programs. Coast Day, held annually by UD's College of Marine Studies (CMS) and the Sea Grant Program, is one of the Reserve's major annual partner outreach events. Cooperative Extension has assisted with Coastal Decision-Maker Workshops regarding the agricultural community. In addition, various environmental and cultural organizations including the Friends of the Dickinson Mansion, the Friends of the DNERR, the Delaware Native Plant Society, and DNS all work cooperatively with the Reserve to increase environmental and estuarine awareness in the State.

H. Advisory Committee – Structure and Responsibilities

1. Management Subcommittee

The DNERR Advisory Committee is structured to represent many of the Federal, State, county, and local agencies, commissions, societies, and organizations that may have an interest in, impact, or be impacted by the development and management of the Reserve.

The DNERR Management Subcommittee meets at least annually, and more frequently as required, to represent the cooperating and affected groups of the DNERR. The role of this subcommittee is to provide assistance to the DNERR staff in the decisions required to implement the management plan. Assistance is especially valuable in the operations of the Reserve's programs. The Management Subcommittee ensures that Reserve goals are realistic and keep pace with relevant issues.

2. Research Subcommittee

The DNERR Research Subcommittee includes representatives from the DNREC and the academic and scientific communities (see Acknowledgements, page v). Committee members provide advice on research and technical matters relevant to achievement of the DNERR Research and Monitoring Program goals and objectives. This subcommittee meets on an annual basis, or more frequently at the call of the Research Coordinator, to review research proposals, needs, and results for the DNERR.

3. Education Subcommittee

The DNERR Education Subcommittee is composed of at least six members, including the Education Coordinator, who meet annually or more frequently as needed. These members are selected from

various educational and environmental interests in the State. These interests include:

- Nature education organization/center
- Elementary-level education
- Secondary-level education
- University-level education
- Adult education
- Cultural education
- Applied environmental education
- Teacher training

The Education Subcommittee is responsible for providing guidance for the implementation of a comprehensive estuarine education program, which is a long-outstanding need in Delaware.

I. Federal Review and Regulation

1. Roles and Responsibilities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The NERRS is intended to operate as a Federal/state partnership. Although the management of a National Estuarine Research Reserve is a state's responsibility, NOAA cooperates with and assists the states on a periodic basis, and reviews state programs regularly. The purpose of the NOAA review is to ensure that a state is complying with NERRS goals, approved work plans, and reserve management plans. Several primary mechanisms used by NOAA to review state programs, as well as NOAA responsibilities pertaining to reviews, include the following.

NOAA staff, particularly the program specialist for a state's reserve, communicates directly and regularly with the state reserve staff. Communication builds a level of trust between Federal and state staff, and familiarizes both NOAA and state personnel with reserve management procedures and policies. This cooperative approach is needed for a reserve to be successful. Both oral and written communication are necessary, and site visits are advisable.

Another mechanism available to NOAA is its reserve-funding program. NOAA provides different categories of grant funding to a reserve, and quarterly progress reports and a final report are required for each grant or cooperative agreement. NOAA personnel carefully review the progress reports and semi-annual reports to ensure compliance with program policies and specific award conditions.

Pursuant to the CZMA (Sections 312 and 315), NOAA must conduct performance evaluations of the operation and management of each reserve while Federal financial assistance continues. If deficiencies in the operation or types of research at a reserve are found, NOAA may redirect financial assistance to the reserve to remedy deficiencies. National Estuarine Research Reserve designation can be withdrawn by NOAA when a reserve is found to be deficient and fails to correct deficiencies within a reasonable time.

2. National Historic Preservation Act

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Federal agencies are required to take into account the effects of agency undertakings on historic properties, and to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. An undertaking is any project, activity, or program that can result in changes in the

character or use of historic properties. Historic properties are any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places. Any undertaking that is under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a Federal agency or licensed or assisted by a Federal agency is subject to the provisions of Section 106.

Because NOAA is a Federal agency, any project, activity, or program affiliated in any way with DNERR programs is subject to the provisions of Section 106. The DNREC agrees to comply with all of the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and all regulations and guidelines issued thereunder. In Delaware, Section 106 is administered by the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The DNREC Cultural Heritage Program serves as the DNERR Liaison to the SHPO.

J. Action Plan for Administration

As with the expansion and growth of any program, increased resources and staff are necessary to ensure effective administration. The DNERR aims to do the following:

- **Action 1: Formally establish and promote a volunteer program at the Reserve.**
The DNERR will explore the feasibility of funding and filling a Volunteer Coordinator position, as a prerequisite for development of a volunteer program that can contribute effectively to all of the Reserve's programs. This administrative framework will facilitate the recruitment of volunteers from scout groups, environmental action groups, and interested individuals through open solicitation at Reserve events and in Reserve publications. To assist in recruiting, the DNERR will develop a brochure about the volunteering opportunities available at the Reserve.
- **Action 2: Pursue additional matching funds for staff positions at the Reserve.**
The DNERR will explore the feasibility of funding Reserve core staff positions through State and outside funding sources. A priority will be to identify non-federal funds for current federally funded positions, e.g. Education Coordinator. In particular, the DNERR will explore the feasibility of funding and filling the Stewardship Coordinator position, to enhance resource protection efforts at the Reserve and possibly statewide (see Chapter X, the Stewardship Plan). The DNERR will also explore funding and hiring of a full-time Coastal Training Program Coordinator (see Chapter IX, the Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Plan). Finally, the Research Coordinator will explore funding opportunities to support research projects as the needs arise.
- **Action 3: Continue documentation of administrative activities.**
The DNERR will keep accurate records of performance to evaluate the Reserve's administrative success and to facilitate NOAA Section 312 review.