



Wm. Donald Clifton II
Secretary of Agriculture

PUBLIC HEARING PRESENTATION

FISCAL YEAR 2027



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE



WE WORK FOR YOU EVERY DAY



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 76,243 direct jobs and more than \$31 billion in total economic activity to the state, including \$3.8 billion in direct wages.





DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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.



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF
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DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OPERATING BUDGET AND STAFFING

**\$13.030
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 FTE and casual/seasonal employees in 13 sections
- Position Updates:
 - In collaborating with DHR we have reclassified some positions, allowing us to hire high performers and adapt to the changes in agriculture, including the new Deputy Attorney General assigned to DDA and two positions in Nutrient Management to enforce our newly adopted turf regulations.





WEIGHTS & MEASURES EV REQUEST – 1% INCREASE

ASK: \$16,820 (GF)

BACKGROUND

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

REQUESTED FUNDS WILL ...

- Increase in contractual funding to cover the additional cost of a Fleet vehicle and annual maintenance on the Electric Vehicle testing equipment.





AGRICULTURE CONCEPT REQUEST – 1% INCREASE

ASK: \$110,500 (GF)

Background

DDA has identified four primary areas requiring additional funding and programmatic support to enhance the viability of the farming community. These four areas are:

- Alternative Energy – DDA wants to collaborate with 13 other states through NASDA to organize a regional initiative determine how alternative sources of energy, such as biofuels and solar can benefit local farmers
- Facilitating land access – DDA intends to analyze vacant or underutilized land parcels to assess their suitability for young farmers



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AGRICULTURE CONCEPT REQUEST – 1% INCREASE

ASK: \$110,500 (GF)

Background Cont.

- Aquaculture Education and Outreach – Establish an education and outreach program in partnership with UD and DSU to raise awareness of the opportunities in aquaculture.
- Increase Value-added Agriculture – Collaborate with Food Export Northeast to research and develop new market opportunities for Delaware farmers



Requested Funds Will:

- Increase contractual funds to provide programmatic support to the farming industry



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COVER CROP INVESTMENT

\$10,000,000 BOND BILL REQUEST

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.





FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

REQUEST: \$200,000 (MCI) & \$250,000 (CRITICAL EQUIPMENT)

MINOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

Requested to continue renovations within our main building, laboratories, state forests, and replace infrastructure at the end of its useful life. This funding is managed by the Division of Facilities Management.

CRITICAL EQUIPMENT FOR OPERATIONS

Will fund acquisition, replacement and repair of equipment for our agricultural and consumer protection operations. This equipment protects livestock and crop health, guards against fraudulent sales, protects water quality, provides laboratory services, and supports 21,000 acres of Delaware State Forests.



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DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **\$ of gross receipts for Delaware farmers markets (millions)**
 - **\$4.522 million:** For the fourth year in a row, Delaware farmers markets have set a record in sales, indicating 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**
 - **20,295:** 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 timber harvests that follow a management plan (acres)**
 - **41 percent:** Through active forest management of state-owned and private lands, we increase the chance of optimal forest health and contribute to the dynamics of a sustainable forest market. In addition, this benefits all Delawareans by providing improved air quality, water quality, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and forest vigor to reduce wildfire risk.





DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **Weights and Measures – By The Numbers**
 - **12,485:** Petroleum meters inspected
 - **4,507:** Small/large scales tested
 - **2,721:** Petroleum meters rejected
 - **705:** Licensed weighmasters
 - **372:** Price verifications performed
 - **370:** Technicians registered
 - **250:** Vehicle tank meters tested
 - **70:** Truck scales tested
 - **42:** Delaware State Police enforcement scales tested





DDA PERFORMANCE MEASURES/HIGHLIGHTS

- **# of avian influenza (AI) tests & # of positive AI tests**
 - **6,769 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 had extraordinary cooperation last winter as we dealt with a handful of positive AI tests.
- **Tons of poultry litter/manure relocated for land application**
 - **7,094 tons:** Our farms are finding a use for a valuable soil amendment, which, when applied in accordance with a landowner's nutrient management plan, decreases the need for chemical fertilizers and protects waterways.
- **# of saved acres in Aglands Preservation Foundation Rd. 29 easements**
 - **2,883 acres:** The 29th round of easement purchases, announced in October, included 36 new easements (out of 101 total offers) across all three counties, covering more than 2,800 acres at a cost of \$14.9 million. Since the **Aglands Preservation Foundation's** inception almost three decades ago, more than 1,250 First State farms and almost 160,000 acres have been preserved. In 2020, the **American Farmland Trust** ranked Delaware's Aglands Preservation Program as the best example of its kind in the nation.





AGLANDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM

UPDATE

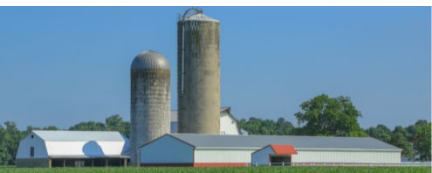
Round 30

- **350** farms undergoing appraisal, including **90-plus** new applications.
- **Demand remains high:** This is the second highest number of applications received by DDA since the late 1990s.
- **Popular program throughout the state:** A portion of this year's easements were boosted by contributions from each county:
 - **Sussex County: \$1,917,156** for eight easements
 - **New Castle County: \$225,769** for one easement
 - **Kent County: \$100,000** for seven easements
- **Anticipated announcement:** Late summer/early fall 2026.



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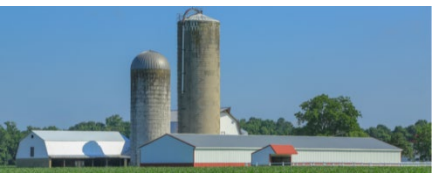
DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

STATE FORESTS UPDATE

Provided Services:

- The Delaware Forest Service offers primitive campsites, hunting/fishing, hiking, biking and horseback riding on more than 21,000 acres of agency-owned land.
- All forest tracts have individual Forest Management plans with forest types designated.
- Open for research and education.
- Training grounds for National Guard and State Police.
- Home to the highest populations of the endangered Tiger Salamanders and Delmarva Fox Squirrel.
- Several national historic structures dating back to the late 1800s.
- Tick research areas based on forest types.





DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE

URBAN/COMMUNITY FORESTRY (3 DELCODE 10 § 1033)

With an increase in housing demand, the urban forestry program plays a key role in establishing and maintaining street trees, parks, open spaces, and community forests.

Provided Services:

- More than \$3.75 million in grants for planting, management and planning has been awarded to municipalities/counties/HOAs.
- Insect/disease identification-treatment.
- Site inspections (Planting locations and site constraint identification).
- No-cost tree inspections (dead/dying trees; nursery stock).
- Ordinance development for local and county governments.
- Planning services for tree commissions at the local level.



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DELAWARE FOREST SERVICE OUTLOOK

STATE FORESTS

- Forest markets are down, resulting in less available funding for operations.
- Operating costs are higher while demand for services is increasing.
- Increases in general fund lines will likely be needed.

URBAN/COMMUNITY FORESTRY

- High demand due to rapid growth and forest fragmentation.
- State funding will help leverage federal dollars and increase professional programming for communities by Forest Service arborists/foresters.





AG PRODUCTION INSURANCE ASSISTANCE UPDATE

- First year complete after HB 87 was signed into law in July 2024 to assist producers with acquiring adequate coverage of crop insurance to ensure the viability of Delaware's agriculture production.
- This program has been well received and beneficial to many First State farmers. Federal shutdown has delayed full implementation, but we anticipate using full \$2 million allocation.
- MOU review with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) was completed.

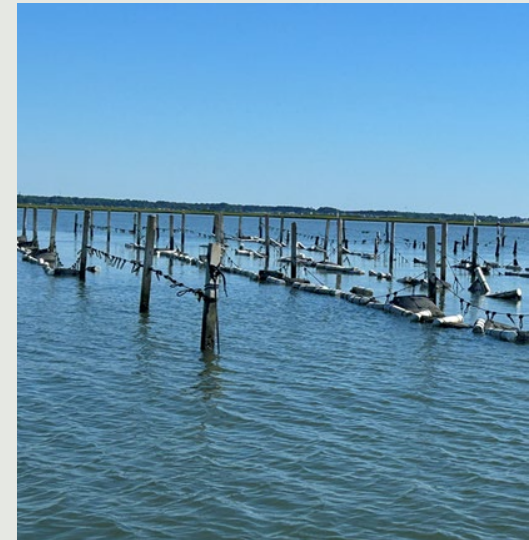




POSSIBLE BUDGET REDUCTIONS

1 PERCENT DECREASE OPTIONS

- **SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE, \$67,000:** Could delay University of Delaware's hatchery completion and/or cause university to engage with other partners to make up the reduction.
- **AG DEVELOPMENT, \$30,000:** Would reduce the amount of sponsorships and memberships DDA could offer. May cause DDA to use more funds from our ASF contractual line to make sure we cover any critical sponsorships/memberships.
- **UD CARVEL CENTER/IRRIGATION, \$30,000:** This would significantly reduce the amount of field research provided by UD via Carvel Field Crop Research (\$15,000) and the Warrington Irrigation Research Farm (\$15,000).





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