



# DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

## Update

DECEMBER 15, 2008

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## ROMAN FISHER FARM

It has taken nearly four years to develop and initiate construction at our Great Cypress Swamp Fisher Farm. We have investigated the history of the site and had professional evaluation of all structures on this farm. In addition, we have defined our requirements for additional support facilities to enable our extensive management and habitat restoration activities to continue on our ten thousand acre plus Great Cypress Swamp property. We settled on a plan that would preserve the original historical look of the farm and provide us with the necessary facilities to enhance our activities in the Swamp.

The centerpiece of our initial reconstruction of the farm was the Sweet Potato House. This effort was generously funded by Board member Robert Edgell and his wife Lynn. Work began in late spring 2008 and we are pleased with the result. The building looks as it did when new in 1917 and remains true to its historical roots in both construction and materials used. We were able to utilize rough, full-cut lumber generated from our Cypress Swamp forestry operations.

Other buildings nearing completion include an all season shop of period design and construction and a larger barn for equipment and tractor storage. These structures fall within the original farm footprint and retain the original turn of the century subsistence farm look. We utilized our own lumber for construction of these buildings.

Our next project includes the construction of a small guest house of similar look and sited in the same footprint of an existing, but unsalvageable barn. This building will externally resemble the original barn, but provide us with a meeting place as well as limited overnight accommodations. We will then have the ability to accommodate technical advisors and scientists engaged in research conducted on the property. Up to this point, such activity was limited by our somewhat remote location.

This reconstruction of the farm will continue as funds are generated either by earmarked donations or revenues generated by our forestry operations. We have plans for rebuilding the farmhouse for use as the caretaker residence. Other structures on the farm include a log corn crib, chicken coops, and outhouse. In addition, we have photographs of the original smokehouse that was part of this farm. We could design these structures not only to preserve the historical nature of the farm, but continue as useful infrastructure for our conservation projects.

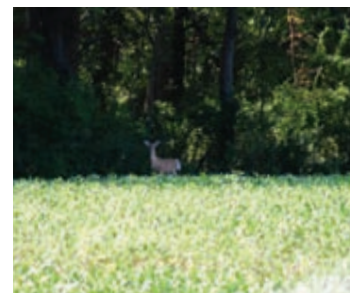
We regard this project as ambitious, but necessary for the future management of the Great Cypress Swamp. This property might very well be the largest contiguous single private-owner property on the Delmarva Peninsula. The ecological role of this property can only become more important as land use changes continue throughout the region.

## SHARP FARM RESTORATION PROJECT

Delaware Wild Lands has formalized plans with Orion Land Management to further develop the Sharp Farm near Odessa, Delaware into a top-notch waterfowl refuge and wildlife area. Several partners will be working with us on this project including Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program, Ducks Unlimited, New Castle Soil Conservation District, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Work began this fall to remove some 85 acres from crop production so that it can be placed in permanent wildlife cover and habitat. The remaining

acres will remain in agricultural production. Native warm season grasses along with trees, shrubs, wildflowers and forbs will be planted this spring and summer. The planting window is anticipated to be from February 2009 through July 2009. The restoration plan focuses on high quality edge browse and escape cover for small game and creating two shallow water field impoundments for waterfowl. It is expected to take two years for the plantings to become completely established.

In the meantime, a new 40' X 60' barn has been constructed to be used for both temporary and permanent storage



of our farm equipment, tractors and implements as well as feed for wildlife. The majority of the construction was paid for by a generous contribution from Board member and Treasurer William F. D'Alonzo.



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### GREAT CYPRESS SWAMP INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL

Our Great Cypress Swamp property has been relatively free of the usual alien invasive plants associated with the more developed areas of Delaware. This apparent immunity is coming to an end as the region around the Swamp experiences growth and development. Our perimeter and entrances to the Swamp have been increasingly subjected to invasive plants such as Japanese stilt grass, Japanese knotweed, Mile-a-Minute weed, and Canada thistle. Mile-a-Minute weed is of special concern due to its rapid spread and ability to smother other plants and quality habitat. This past summer we hired a seasonal helper, Andrew Martin, to aid in invasive plant control activities. Andrew came to us with two summers of experience working with the DNREC Parks and Recreation Invasive Plant Control Team. It became apparent that efforts such as this will become an increasingly important aspect not only of general property management, but also of any restoration projects.

### Great Cypress Swamp Forestry And Restoration Activities

We are nearing the end of our third year of our sustainable forestry plan and harvests. We have managed annual harvests of approximately 50 acres in a period of diminished local and regional timber marketing opportunity. Although prices are down from the first harvests, we have managed to produce enough cash flow to support our activities in the Great Cypress Swamp. Habitat restoration, as well as property and infrastructure maintenance, on this nearly 11,000-acre property requires financial outlay as well as staff labor. Our forestry operations have also funded the majority of reconstruction costs for the Roman Fisher Farm.

We are hopeful of moving forward with our certification of wood products under both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) programs. This certification process includes audits of all harvests, replanting and restoration activities and is reasonably costly. In the long term, we feel the process is worth the extra effort and expense in terms of support for the sustainable forestry industry as well as insuring that our wood products will have high market value. We want the public to know that our harvests are conducted with only the highest of ecological consideration.

Our restoration activities continue as part of our forestry operations. We have continued to release and expand existing stands of Atlantic white cedar and Bald cypress and have achieved some success in natural seedling regeneration of Atlantic white cedar. We expect to plant an additional 5,000 to 10,000 Atlantic white cedar in spring 2009 and at least that many during the 2010 planting season.



### WHERE IS MILFORD NECK?

*Updated reprint from 1993 newsletter*

Delaware Wild Lands manages over 19,000 acres in Delaware and nearby Maryland. Of those 19,000 acres, approximately 3,600 acres are nestled in the southeastern corner of Kent County, Delaware in an area known as Milford Neck. The first property was acquired in 1985 and consists of 550 acres of tillable land, 225 acres of woodland and 1,000 acres of marsh and beachfront. The property has 1-½ miles of frontage on the Delaware Bay and another 2-½ miles along Baucumbrig Gut for a total of four miles of waterfront. This acquisition was the first step of a major protection effort in the industrially-threatened Milford Neck area. In 1991 DWL purchased an additional 900 acres of woodland, marsh and beachfront adjoining the Delaware Bay property on the south side, which gave us a total of 2-½ additional miles of bay frontage.

In 1992 The Nature Conservancy, based in Washington, D.C. and working through their Delaware office, acquired 2,100 additional acres near DWL holdings. The State of Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife owns another 2,100 acres in the area. A joint effort followed between DWL, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Delaware's Division of Fish and Wildlife and Open Space Council and the federal government with the intent of purchasing and placing under permanent protection approximately 10,000 acres and nearly ten miles of shoreline along the Delaware Bay. Today, our mission to conserve and preserve natural areas continues to be ever-present at Milford Neck.