



# DELAWARE WILD LANDS NEWS

NOVEMBER 01, 2010

## RUSTY HARVEY

Since 1961 DWL has tirelessly and quietly led the conservation movement forward in Delaware the old fashioned way: Buy it, manage it and preserve it.

Ted Harvey began the organization in 1961 and, in 1978, Rusty Harvey carried on the legacy as Executive Director after the death of his father. Each had a unique style and personality but together they shared a passion like no other. Pure and simple: They loved nature: the land, the trees, marshes, swamps, and all its creatures. They saw the beauty and dedicated their life's work to protecting it for future generations to enjoy.

As we reflect on the past 50 years and the passing of Rusty Harvey in May of this year, we are blessed to have known him, thankful for his service and dedication to DWL and to the State of Delaware and proud of his accomplishments in securing thousands of acres of unspoiled land.

There are persons who can slide into a room unnoticed, but Rusty was not one of them. It was not just his physical presence; it was also his heart, which matched his dimensions and proportions in all ways.


Rusty was a true inspiration to all who knew him. His spirit and legacy are reflected in the lands we have preserved and it is our aspiration to continue this legacy in the years ahead.



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## DWL: A CONSERVATION VISIONARY

On April 20, 2010 the largest oil spill in U.S. history took place in the Gulf of Mexico. It is still unknown the exact amount of oil spilled and everyday we learn more and more on the impact of this disaster on this diverse and important coastal region. Animal, waterfowl and shorebird habitat, breeding islands, and marine life all depend on a healthy ecosystem to support them.

The ramifications of this environmental and economic catastrophe may well last a lifetime. These fragile ecosystems can only withstand so much and an assault of this magnitude may alter this area forever.

In 1961, DWL felt the environment was far too important and began to acquire land in the Blackbird/Appoquinimink area just as Shell Oil was buying land to build a major oil refinery. In an effort to protect and preserve unspoiled coastal salt marshes and Delaware's shoreline, DWL further sought protection by the passage of The Coastal Zone Act in 1971 under former Gov. Russell Peterson. The act prohibited heavy industry in the coastal zone.

The proposed act was not lacking in opponents, and the assault was brutal. "Who would want to protect a mosquito infested, swampy, muddy no-mans land? "Ducks be damned. "Who's going to let some insignificantly small group of Delawareans, however sincere they may be, threaten our economic security."

By 1984, Shell Oil had given up its plans to build a refinery and decided to sell its holdings in Delaware. DWL partnered with the State of Delaware to acquire key shoreline properties that would permanently protect 2,700 acres in the area from the threat of industrial development.

In 1985, DWL purchased 1,775 acres in Milford Neck with about one and one-half miles of shoreline on the Delaware Bay eliminating another major threat to our coastline. An oil tank

farm associated with the tanker anchorage off of Big Stone Beach had been planned for the site. The salt marshes are valuable ecosystems that provide fish nursery grounds, protection from flood and storm damage, and feeding grounds for birds, animals and shellfish. They are a filter-system for our streams and rivers. We are visual creatures but what we don't see well below the surface is vital to the balance of nature and worth preserving and protecting.

The Great Cypress Swamp in Sussex County is our largest land holding consisting of nearly 11,000 acres. It closely resembles The Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina in character. It is estimated that the Swamp extended from just south of Georgetown southward to the upper reaches of the Pocomoke River in Maryland and contained 60,000 plus acres. Even in its present diminished state, the Swamp is the largest freshwater wetland in the State of Delaware and remains an ecological treasure in terms of unusual plant and animal communities. More than any of our other properties, the Swamp represents a unique merging of natural and cultural history. The large size of this property makes it a natural for advanced scientific research and discovery, educational opportunity and an excellent site for habitat restoration activities. The Swamp's complexity and strange beauty make this one of our most captivating properties.

We have come a long way since 1961, but the mission is the same today as in the beginning: acquire unspoiled tracts of land in Delaware and preserve and properly manage these lands for future generations. Part of that mission has always been education.

In 2011, our 50th anniversary, we can look back and admire the vision of Ted Harvey and our founding Board of Directors and their realization that immediate action needed to be taken in order to preserve some of our most precious natural places. Our vision remains undiminished and we look forward to more challenges and accomplishments during our next 50 years.

### Edward "Ned" Cooch, Jr

As we go to print we are saddened to report the passing of Edward "Ned" Cooch, Jr. on September 23rd. Ned was a true conservationist who served as president of DWL for 6 years and on our Board of Directors for 39 years. His thoughtful and kind wisdom guided our organization through many productive years. His dedication to DWL and all of Delaware is reflected in the many unspoiled lands he helped preserve.

## NAWCA Grant Awarded for Great Cypress Swamp Restoration Project

DWL has once again partnered with Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays for major restoration activities in the Great Cypress Swamp. The project will be funded by a small NAWCA grant awarded in March 2010. We will build upon the previous restoration activities that included the installation of six water level control structures to restore some of the historical wetland hydrology of the area. This new project consists of scrub vegetation removal in preparation to reestablish historical wetland vegetation and a redirection of water flow from the ditch system into the restoration area. Ducks Unlimited has provided the engineering and survey work and developed construction plans for retention of the water within the project area. Work started in August and continues on schedule. If dry conditions persist, we are hopeful to complete construction this year. Vegetation removal and planting could take several years.

## ROMAN FISHER FARM CONSTRUCTION RESUMES



An extremely wet weather condition combined with the inability to conduct a significant timber harvest has delayed the construction of the guest house at our Roman Fisher Farm by over a year. Conditions improved early this summer and we were finally able to start construction in late August. The structure will resemble a stable once located at the same site, but will now provide us with the ability to hold meetings and house guests involved with research or restoration activities in the Swamp. The timber was cut in June and milled at the Paul Jones Lumber Mill in Snow Hill, Maryland and is of extremely high quality. We hope to have the structure fully enclosed by late fall and completed sometime in the spring of 2011.

## Once Upon A Time There Was A Farm...

From the 1930s through the mid-1960s the Keegan Farm conducted onsite farming operations that included dairy, chicken and hog farming. The farm consisted of a house, two barns and a large chicken coop building. Many locals remember walking to the farm daily to purchase milk, eggs, produce, chicken, pork and other goods.

The Keegan Farm is a 430 acre tract of land located just north of Odessa and is bordered by the Appoquinimink River, Drawyers Creek, public roadways and residential areas. It is a mix of farmland, wooded land and freshwater marsh and is a major component in preservation in the Appoquinimink River Watershed. In 1959 the property was purchased by H. Rodney Sharp. Agricultural operations continued but onsite farming ceased.

The property remained in the hands of the Sharp family until 2006. At that time DWL purchased the property more commonly known as the Sharp Farm with the intention of preserving and conserving the natural characteristics of the property with the hope of developing a portion of the property as a waterfowl refuge. Agricultural operations still exist on the farm and work has been completed on two shallow waterfowl field impoundments. These impoundments will compliment our waterfowl refuge efforts on the site.

While the Keegan's likely never envisioned their farm being anything but a farm, it is important to preserve natural areas whenever possible. Thanks to the stewardship of H. Rodney Sharp and his ancestors, and now DWL, this pristine piece of Delaware will remain one of the most unusual and beautiful natural areas in the state.



## DNREC Honors DWL Ecologist

DWL Ecologist Peter S. Martin was named the recipient of the Delaware 2010 Wetland Warrior Award. The award is presented each year to a citizen, organization, business or other group in Delaware that have exhibited exemplary efforts to protect wetlands and what those wetlands provide to us.

Governor Jack Markell and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Secretary Collin O'Mara made the presentation at a special ceremony at the Delaware State Fair on July 29th. The award read as follows:

"In recognition of exemplary efforts that benefit wetlands in Delaware through education and outreach, monitoring and assessment, and restoration and protection. Pete Martin has worked tirelessly in the pursuit of restoring the largest freshwater wetland that remains in Delaware, the Great Cypress Swamp. Pete has spent his career working to consolidate ownership of the Swamp by DWL along with restoring the hydrology and plant communities that historically occupied the habitat. These projects will enhance the condition of the Swamp and the services that it is providing to the citizens and visitors of Delaware. Pete and DWL are also integrating restoration practices with efforts to support the local economy and educate local children, adults, and professionals."

At the DWL-owned Roman Fisher Farm, adjacent to the Swamp, restoration efforts are underway that will ultimately provide education and research facilities.

The Great Cypress Swamp has incorporated the use of certified sustainable forestry operations with wetland restorations to create a long-term forestry project that creates income while protecting the sensitive ecosystems.

Many of these efforts have been in concert with the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, the Center for the Inland Bays and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

We are truly honored to have DNREC professionals recognize our efforts as a private non-profit organization.