

News Release

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New land donation expands the Great Cypress Swamp ***Protection will help sustain water quality in Chesapeake Bay***

FRANKFORD, Del. — Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) is pleased to announce their newest land acquisition: a donation of 15 acres in Worcester County, MD, just south of the Delaware border. The permanent protection of this parcel expands DWL's conservation of the Great Cypress Swamp.

This 15-acre tract of wooded wetlands was generously donated to DWL by Dr. Peter Whaley and Mrs. Mary Hitch, two siblings of the Whaley family. It is located within the headwaters of the Pocomoke River, a tributary to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Whaley family has deep roots in the Delmarva Peninsula. Their ancestors first settled in Whaleyville, MD and have owned property in the Great Cypress Swamp since the 1700s. In the 1800s, timber from this newly-donated parcel was used in Pennsylvania for constructing underground supports during the coal mining boom.

Historically, the Swamp once covered nearly 60,000 acres. Ditching and draining for agriculture diverted much of the water drainage from the Pocomoke River to Delaware's Inland Bays. This process significantly reduced the size of the Swamp and its ability to filter clean water.

For more than 50 years, DWL has been strategically protecting the Great Cypress Swamp in Delaware and adjacent areas of Maryland. DWL's restoration projects are gradually bringing water back into the Swamp. As the Delmarva Peninsula's largest contiguous forest and largest freshwater wetland, this delicate ecosystem is home to many rare plants and animals.

Today, Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) owns and manages more than 10,500 acres of the Great Cypress Swamp. Healthy forest diversity is a key goal and they have planted 168,000 trees. Many wildlife species are resurging and water quality is improving. What used to be intermittent sightings of river otter, waterfowl, amphibians, migratory birds, and eagles are now common occurrences in the Swamp.

High resolution photographs are available upon request.

Delaware Wild Lands (DWL) is a nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1961. We are the largest not-for-profit, non-governmental landowner in Delaware, with significant holdings in all three counties.

We protect and restore Delaware's important natural areas by purchasing strategic parcels of land. Traditional uses of land, such as hunting, farming, and forestry are integral to our management regime and maintained as important aspects of Delaware's economy and cultural heritage.

Our organization has played a pivotal role in the permanent protection of more than 31,000 acres of land throughout Delmarva. Today we own more than 21,000 acres of wetlands, farms, and forests that are actively managed for improved wildlife habitat, clean air, and pure water. www.dewildlands.org

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