

# DELAWARE CENTER for the INLAND BAYS

Annual Report 2021



To PRESERVE, PROTECT,  
and RESTORE Delaware's Inland Bays  
and their watershed

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## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



## HISTORIC WATER WINS AND A PATH FORWARD

As I am writing this letter, I am aware of the great opportunity and the great uncertainty that lie ahead. A wave of concern for the health of our water has swelled for years, and in 2021 it finally crested with historic allocations of resources for water at the national and local levels.

Locally, the State of Delaware made a historic \$50 million investment in clean water and flood control to jump start a newly created Clean Water Trust. The Center, in partnership with the Delaware Nature Society and the University of Delaware, played an important role in this achievement by educating communities and legislators about the need for funding.

Nationally, a more than \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill was passed in November. It marked the largest-ever federal investment in water infrastructure, with billions of dollars allocated to wastewater projects, coastal infrastructure, and climate change mitigation. The National Estuary Program was included in this bill, and so the Center will receive additional resources to implement the Inland Bays Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan that we finished revising in 2021.

Here in the Inland Bays, 2021 brought a record 15 fish kills—a hallmark of persistently lethal water quality in the Bays and an indicator that progress on pollution control is stalling. Flooding of farms and developments continued in jaw-dropping fashion, scrubbing bare our ignorance about its effects on water pollution. Likewise, development and deforestation continued at a breathtaking pace in the nearshore areas known to be the most important for influencing Bay water quality.

The financial commitments of 2021 can scale up the wonderful accomplishments that you will read about in this report. Reigniting progress on protecting our waters, wildlife, and way of life is in the cards. But to be successful, we need your continued support. Whether you are a partner, an elected official, a volunteer, or a donor, we all must ensure that these funds both maximize pollution control and fish and wildlife habitat protection and restoration. Key to this is protecting and restoring natural ecosystems on the highest quality lands of the watershed before they are gone forever. With your support, we'll work to make this the focus of 2022!

Chris Bason  
Executive Director



DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE  
**INLAND BAYS**  
Research. Educate. Restore.

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# We believe **CLEAN WATER** is a **RIGHT**



*“All Delawareans deserve clean water,” said Governor John Carney.  
“The Clean Water for Delaware Act and our new Clean Water Trust will  
help us deliver on that promise.”*

## CENTER'S EDUCATION SUPPORTS HISTORIC CLEAN WATER BILL

Ever since advocates joined together for the Clean Water: Delaware's Clear Choice campaign in 2014, an alliance of Delawareans has called for meaningful legislation to bring clean, safe water to communities and habitats statewide. Led by the Center, the Delaware Nature Society, and the University of Delaware's Water Resources Center, the Clean Water Alliance brought together businesses, individuals, and organizations across the state. In 2021, we celebrated the outcome of that effort with the successful passage of the Clean Water for Delaware Act, or House Bill 200.

The \$50 million now invested in the Clean Water Trust created by the new law will support:

- 💧 A new Clean Water Initiative for Underserved Communities
- 💧 Upgrades to water and wastewater infrastructure
- 💧 Investment in green solutions and enhancing natural systems
- 💧 Drainage, waterway management, and beach preservation



Governor John Carney signs the Clean Water for Delaware Act in 2021.  
Photo courtesy of Governor John Carney's office.

We'll still need Water Warriors to help us educate about the need for **sustained funding**. Without additional influxes of investment, that initial \$50 million will fund only a handful of projects, and we will not be able to meet our goal of bringing clean water to every Delawarean.

**Join the Clean Water Alliance, become a Water Warrior, or learn more about how to get involved at [cleanwaterdelaware.org](http://cleanwaterdelaware.org).**

*Thank you to everyone who supported our clean water efforts in 2021!*

## REFORESTING THE INLAND BAYS WATERSHED

Reforestation isn't just about putting more trees in the ground. It's about choosing the right places, the right species, and the right techniques to foster a diverse, thriving wooded habitat.



Joining Center Project Manager, Nivette Pérez-Pérez (second from left), to plant tree seedlings are her mother, husband, and brother (left to right) Nivia Pérez-Torres, Johnny Moore, and Rafael Pérez-Pérez.

The Center and its partners continued planting trees where they're most needed to expand forest areas, create buffers along waterways, provide valuable habitat, and enhance nutrient pollution reduction. Those efforts recently included a volunteer-driven planting event with Delaware Wild Lands. Forty-four volunteers planted 1,000 cypress saplings in one day over an 80-acre area of Great Cypress Swamp near Frankford.

This reforestation project, which was part of a larger effort to plant about 10,000 native trees and shrubs on the property, will stop an estimated 600 pounds of nutrient pollution from entering local waterways every year!

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CULMINATES IN CLEANER WATER

In 2021, the Center celebrated the culmination of a series of projects to restore water quality in Little Assawoman Bay. Half of the 125 acres along



Dr. Marianne Walch (left) and Shanté Hastings, DelDOT Deputy Secretary (right).

Coastal Highway that drain to South Bethany's Anchorage Canal are covered by impervious surface. Runoff from that land severely polluted the canal and Bay. In 2010, the Center worked with the Delaware Department of Transportation and local communities to develop a multi-project stormwater retrofit plan that led to dozens of small stormwater treatment areas being created throughout the drainage area. The effort was finalized in 2021 with the construction of the capstone stormwater pond and pedestrian enhancement.

### FROM PHASE 1 TO COMPLETION:

**Total amount of nutrients stopped from reaching waterways each year:**

167.8 pounds of total nitrogen and 30.6 pounds of total phosphorus.

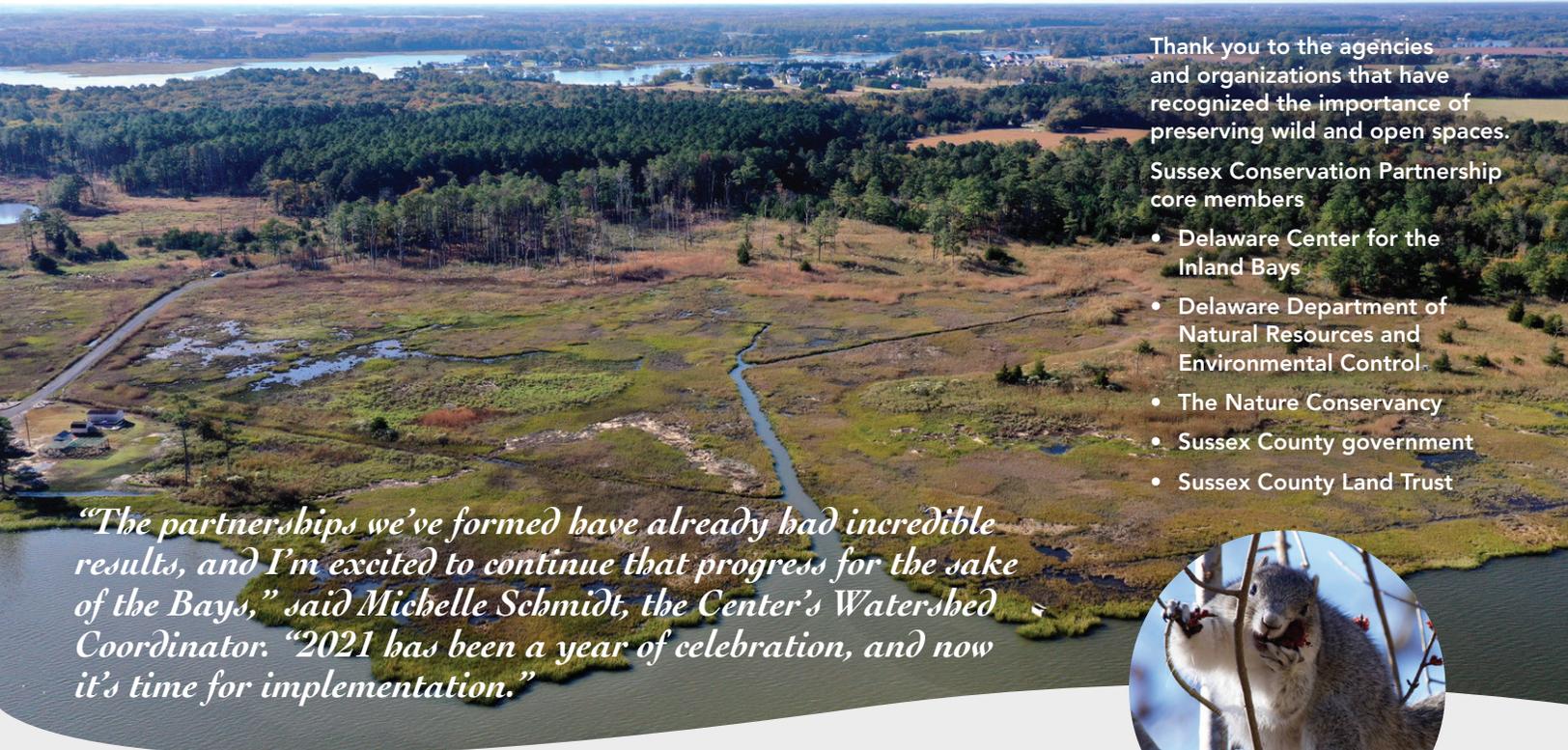
**Total amount spent:**

\$1.5 million.

**Outcome:** Since the project began, flooding has been reduced and baygrasses have appeared in South Bethany Canals, indicating improved water quality.



# WORKING ACROSS THE WATERSHED



Thank you to the agencies and organizations that have recognized the importance of preserving wild and open spaces.

Sussex Conservation Partnership core members

- Delaware Center for the Inland Bays
- Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- The Nature Conservancy
- Sussex County government
- Sussex County Land Trust

*“The partnerships we’ve formed have already had incredible results, and I’m excited to continue that progress for the sake of the Bays,” said Michelle Schmidt, the Center’s Watershed Coordinator. “2021 has been a year of celebration, and now it’s time for implementation.”*



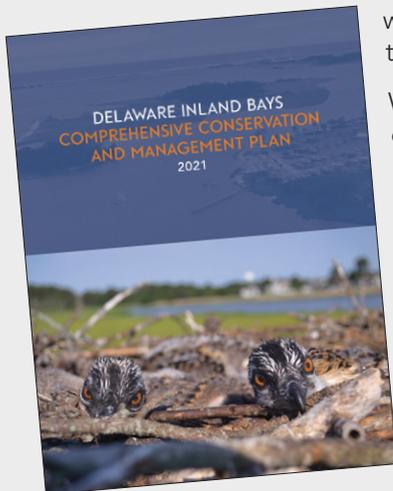
*Delmarva fox squirrel. Photo from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Digital Library.*

In 2021 we learned that a rare species, the Delmarva fox squirrel, appears to be thriving in the lush, wooded habitat found along Little Assawoman Bay in the Assawoman Wildlife Area where they were released the year before.

With biodiversity rapidly declining around the world, driven in large part by

overdevelopment, pollution, and climate change, rebound stories like this offer us a beacon of hope that collaborative conservation

can make a meaningful impact. That’s exactly why the Center has prioritized open space conservation efforts, which led to the **protection of another 87 acres** of high-quality conservation lands on Piney Neck in 2021 through the Sussex Conservation Partnership!



## Release of an updated Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

The CCMP signifies a renewed commitment of our local, county, state, and federal partners to preserve, protect, and restore the Bays. This updated plan will guide the Center’s scientific, research, and outreach efforts over the next decade.

## NEW DELAWARE LAND PROTECTION COALITION

After successfully launching the Sussex Conservation Partnership and coordinating the acquisition of numerous parcels, it became clear to the Center and partners that there is an additional need in order to successfully increase land protection: adequate funding.

In 2021, the Center launched the Delaware Land Protection Coalition, a new group of conservation-focused organizations that believe increasing funding for land protection and Delaware’s Open Space Program is critical to maintaining and enhancing the state’s green infrastructure. The Delaware Open Space Program aims to protect land by purchasing parcels that will expand state parks and preserves, fish and wildlife areas, state forests and cultural resource sites, but has historically been underfunded—missing out on an estimated \$68 million over the last two decades, and receiving no funding at all from 2016-2018.

With land prices rising and development pressure increasing, it’s imperative to preserve open spaces not only for residents, visitors, and wildlife, but also as a way to locally address the climate crisis. The Coalition is calling for the state to increase open space funding by \$15 million, to \$25 million in fiscal year 2023.

## SCIENCE-DRIVEN SUCCESSES

The Center relies on sound science to save the Bays. In 2021, we expanded our efforts to look at what's really going on under the surface. Here's a glance at what we achieved:

### On Water

Center scientists continued and expanded long-term water quality monitoring efforts. A new station in Guinea Creek adds to three sites where data is collected every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week from April through October. Data from these stations has been shared with state environmental regulators to show that waters are actually far more impacted by pollution than once believed and, therefore, in need of more action to clean them up.

### On Land

We began a new living shoreline project in fall 2021 at Angola by the Bay. For the first time in a living shoreline project, our experts added biochar to the soil to expand the project's ability to remove harmful pollutants such as excess nitrogen and phosphorus.

### Aquatic Habitat

Three pilot reefs installed by the Center have provided valuable information about how best to restore wild populations of native oysters. Surveys show that they are teeming with life, from sponges to fish to shellfish. Only one reef has recruited large numbers of new oysters. This is due to its proximity to the Indian River Inlet, which acts as a source of baby oysters each summer. Parts of the Bay farther from the Inlet do not receive these new oysters each year, and therefore long-term reef success is a challenge in those places.

## CROWD-SOURCING SCIENCE

The Center would not be able to do as much impactful work were it not for our volunteers. Hundreds of people help collect vital information about habitats and species in the Inland Bays, which our scientists and statewide experts use to make decisions about restoration and conservation projects.

### OSPREY SURVEY



Finding this many nests means that ospreys have made a very successful comeback since pesticides like DDT decimated their numbers in the 1970s.

**72** VOLUNTEERS  
**279** ACTIVE NESTS

### HORSESHOE CRAB SURVEY



This year volunteers found a horseshoe crab with both male and female reproductive anatomy at the James Farm Ecological Preserve!

**128** VOLUNTEERS  
**25,934** HORSESHOE CRABS  
**6** SITES

### SHOREZONE FISH & BLUE CRAB SURVEY



2021 marked the 10th year of this survey, which means data can now be shared with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to use during decision making about sustainable harvest limits.

**71** VOLUNTEERS  
**45** DIFFERENT SPECIES  
**28,915** FISH  
**3,968** CRABS

### DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN SURVEY



Volunteers observed higher number of terrapins near salt marshes and natural shorelines, indicating the importance of natural habitats!

**32** VOLUNTEERS  
**1,627** TERRAPINS  
**10** WATER-BASED SITES  
**12** LAND-BASED SITES

# EDUCATION IS EVERYTHING



The outdoors has provided respite to many during these troubling times, and the Center's educators and volunteers were thrilled to be back in action in 2021. This year we began reaching out to old and new partners in an effort to diversify our impact among all ages!

Learn more at [inlandbays.org/publicprograms](http://inlandbays.org/publicprograms).

## Creating New Connections

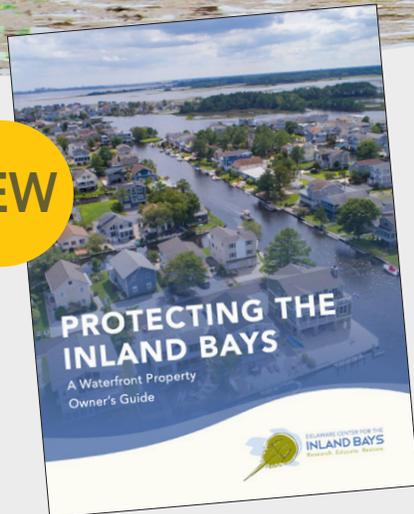
- Sussex Academy of Arts & Sciences Elementary School
- Homeschool groups
- Lighthouse Christian School
- Local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops
- Cozy Critters
- Little Lambs Learning Center

**1,200** YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

NEARLY **600** ALL-AGES PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



**NEW**



## Bringing It All Home: Property Guidebook Available

About 4,000 copies of this free, user-friendly guidebook for waterfront property owners, which was completed in 2021, will be distributed in order to offer helpful guidance on how to protect and enhance their properties while promoting healthy shorelines and nearshore areas, water quality, and habitat for wildlife. Learn more at [inlandbays.org/property-guidebook](http://inlandbays.org/property-guidebook).

## GRANTORS

Organizations listed here reflect funds received during the 2021 Fiscal Year 10/2020 – 9/2021. A special thank you to these funders for their generous support of the Center and its projects and programs.

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In Honor of James Wilson  
Wilgrin Realty Corporation

In Memory of Leila Young  
Claire and Michael Simmers

## Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balances

September 30, 2021 and September 30, 2020

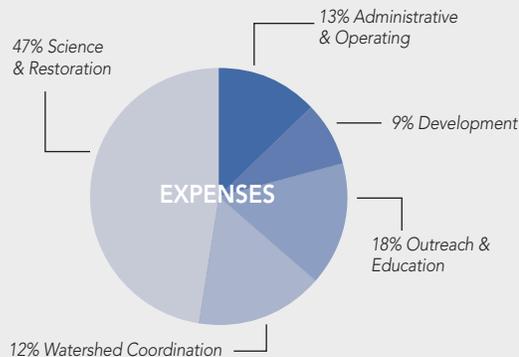
### ASSETS

Current Assets	2021	2020
Cash	\$ 1,129,866	\$ 526,759
Grants Receivable	268,751	227,786
Prepaid Expenses	36,074	15,054
Accounts Receivable	48,986	37,900
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>1,483,677</b>	<b>807,499</b>
<b>Property, Plant and Equipment (at cost)</b>		
Land	125,000	125,000
Building	907,257	907,257
Furniture and Equipment	345,603	325,733
	1,377,860	1,357,990
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(634,231)	(613,507)
<b>Net Property, Plant and Equipment</b>	<b>743,629</b>	<b>744,483</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>		
Endowment Fund	200,176	155,391
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,427,482</b>	<b>\$1,707,373</b>

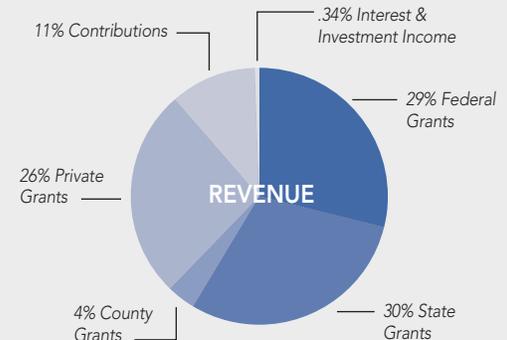
### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	2021	2020
Accounts Payable	\$ 16,068	\$ 12,238
Accrued Salaries and Benefits	34,618	31,206
Accrued Payroll Taxes	994	9,568
PPP Loan	163,265	132,437
<b>Total Current Liabilities (all current)</b>	<b>214,945</b>	<b>185,449</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted		
Board Designated*	200,1761	155,391
Invested in Property and Equipment	618,629	619,483
Undesignated	269,950	231,489
<b>Total Unrestricted</b>	<b>1,088,755</b>	<b>1,006,363</b>
Temporarily Restricted	1,123,782	515,561
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>2,212,537</b>	<b>1,521,924</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$2,427,482</b>	<b>\$ 1,707,373</b>

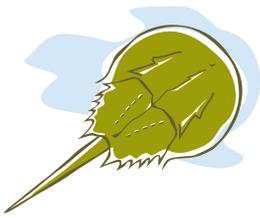
\* Endowment Fund



**Total Expenses \$1,516,820**



**Total Revenue \$2,032,335**



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Ocean View, Delaware



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