



Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Citizen's Cafe —*Drafted Notes*

DATE & TIME

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm

LOCATION

Option 1: In-person

Delaware Center for the Inland Bays office
39375 Inlet Road
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

Option 2: Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83174379002>

Meeting ID: 831 7437 9002

One tap mobile

+16469313860,,83174379002# US

+19292056099,,83174379002# US (New York)

Dial by your location

Meeting ID: 831 7437 9002

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcEQnCJBLu>

ATTENDEES

- Meeting called to order by: Claire Simmers
- Attendees Total 28 (15 in-person and 13 virtual)
- CAC members (9):
 - Attending (9): in-person (3); virtual (6)
Jay Headman, Claire Simmers, Cheryl Winston; Lee Bunting, Mary Kunst, Frank Piorko, Ken Sigvardson, Ken Silverstein, Richard Watson
 - Absent (5): Dennis Bartow, Gail Dubowe, Tianyin (Tia) Ouyang, Irene Legiec Cheryl Rehrig
- Prospective CAC member (1): John Fehrenbach
- Public (13): (6) in person; (7) virtual
- Center staff (5): (5) in person; (0) virtual

AGENDA

Topic: *Resilience in the Inland Bays Watershed: Adapting, Protecting, and Thriving*

Executive Summary

The quarterly Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting focused on resilience in the Inland Bays Watershed from the organizational and community level, highlighting some programs, partnerships, and opportunities that support stewardship and resilience across Inland Bays communities and beyond with two main presentations. Deanna Benner, a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner at Christiana Care, shared her work on environmental sustainability initiatives in healthcare, including waste reduction programs and medical supply donation efforts. Lisa Swanger, Director of Outreach & Education, Delaware Center for the Inland Bays presented the new Bays to Backyards Community Engagement Program, which provides expert guidance and resources to residential communities to implement solutions addressing stormwater management, sustainable landscaping, wildlife habitat enhancement, and more.. Public comments were solicited from in-person and virtual attendees. CAC business was conducted, including approval of February 12, 2026, notes, discussion and vote on prospective CAC member application and a date change for the October CAC quarterly meeting from October 22 to October 8, 2026. The meeting also included updates on upcoming events, including a Green Screen film night and the Water Family Fest & Native Plant Sale and concluded with a discussion of wetlands legislation being considered by the Delaware Senate, which received unanimous support during a recent committee hearing.

6:00-6:10 pm — Welcome & Overview

The meeting began with informal conversation before transitioning to the formal agenda. Lisa Swanger, Director of Outreach and Education at the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays, welcomed attendees and Claire Simmers, CAC chair, introduced the quarterly Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting theme of "Resilience in the Inland Bays Watershed." The meeting then shifted to a moment of intention-setting.

6:10-6:45 pm — Guest Speaker

Deanna Benner - Women's Health Nurse Practitioner, Co-Chair of Christiana Care's Environmental Sustainability Caregiver Committee, and Steering Committee Member of the Mid-Atlantic Alliance for Climate and Health

Summary

Our health is closely connected to the world around us—from the air we breathe to the safety of our homes during extreme weather. Drawing on her experience as a Nurse Practitioner and Co-Chair of Christiana Care's Environmental Sustainability Caregiver Committee, Deanna shared practical insights on how healthcare organizations can support healthier communities and help families thrive in a changing world.

Healthcare and Climate Change Connection

Deanna presented the connection between healthcare and climate change. She highlighted that healthcare represents 8.5% of total US greenhouse gas emissions and produces significant waste, much of which ends up in landfills. Deanna discussed the challenge of climate action paralysis among health professionals, attributing it to insufficient

knowledge and the belief that individual actions won't make a difference. She outlined a three-part plan to address this, including continued education on climate and health connections and modeling sustainability initiatives to demonstrate the impact of individual efforts.

Christiana Care Sustainability Initiatives Presentation

Deanna presented sustainability initiatives at Christiana Care, highlighting how a small team of nurses successfully implemented waste reduction programs including medical supply donation, recycling improvements, and landfill diversion projects. The team's efforts included diverting over \$800,000 worth of expired medical supplies and saving items from the landfill every two weeks through repurposing programs. Deanna emphasized how these ground-up initiatives led to leadership support and the potential for broader system-wide impact if all employees participated.

Hospital Sustainability Initiatives Progress

Deanna discussed her work on sustainability initiatives at a hospital, focusing on recycling challenges and waste reduction. She noted that while progress has been made, particularly in addressing Scope 3 emissions in healthcare, the pace has slowed under the current administration. Deanna shared her recent promotion to environmental health and sustainability manager and mentioned a tour by Gore Medical's sustainability team, which showed interest in redesigning products to be less wasteful. The discussion also covered the impact of COVID-19 on glove usage in healthcare settings and the potential for reducing waste while maintaining patient care standards.

Healthcare Waste Reduction Strategies

Deanna discussed strategies for reducing waste in healthcare settings, particularly focusing on managing expiration dates of medical supplies and implementing donation programs. She explained that while Joint Commission requirements drive the use of disposables, there are opportunities to extend the useful life of supplies and reduce waste. Deanna also noted that European healthcare systems tend to use fewer disposables compared to the US, partly due to different regulatory environments and lower medical malpractice concerns.

6:45-7:10 pm — Center Speaker

Lisa Swanger - Director of Outreach & Education, Delaware Center for the Inland Bays

Summary

A key element to healthy, resilient environments is active, empowered, and connected communities. In her talk, Lisa introduced the Bays to Backyards Community Engagement Program, a collaborative initiative helping neighborhood communities across the Inland Bays watershed steward shared open spaces and strengthen resilience where they live. Lisa shared how communities can turn local pride into meaningful action that benefits water quality, wildlife habitat, and neighborhood well-being.

Bays to Backyards Community Program

Lisa presented the Bays to Backyards Community Engagement Program; Delaware's first

community recognition and mentorship program focused on empowering residential communities to address watershed challenges. The program provides expert guidance and resources through a five-step framework covering topics like stormwater management, sustainable landscaping, wildlife habitat, and waste reduction, with participating communities earning points toward “Bay-Friendly Community” status. Since its public launch in October 2025, a total of six communities are participating.

In her talk, Lisa discussed the program resources and benefits, and ongoing projects, including a micro-meadow installation at Independence, stormwater pond enhancements at Bishop's Landing, and meadow enhancements at Tidewater Landing funded by various grants and donations. Lisa emphasized the program's focus on showcasing successful case studies to inspire residents and HOAs before expanding engagement with other stakeholders such as landscaping businesses, property managers, and possibly developers.

Members of CAC conducted research on the economic benefits of nature-based solutions, presenting value propositions from different perspectives including individual landowners, HOA communities, developers, and government officials, noting a lack of recent data on the relationship between nature-based solutions and property values. They highlighted the need for new data collection

7:10-7:20 pm — Public Comment

Two community members attending the CAC meeting expressed interest in the Bays to Backyards Program.

7:20-7:45 pm — CAC Discussions

- Unanimous approval of CAC meeting minutes - February 12, 2026 as circulated
- CAC Business
 - Vote on prospective CAC member
 - John Fehrenbach, prospective CAC member was introduced. He briefly reviewed his extensive legal background and expressed his interest in getting more involved with the Center.
 - John was excused from the room, and the CAC members discussed his qualifications. The CAC members unanimously approved John’s application for CAC membership. The application will now proceed to the Center’s executive committee and board for final consideration at the June 26th board meeting.
 - CAC members agreed to a date change for October 2026 meeting from October 22 to October 8. This fourth quarterly CAC meeting will be a panel discussion, a format which has been successful for the last two years.

7:45-8:00 pm — Center Updates

Events

- April 22 - Bryan Ochs announced an upcoming green screen film night on Earth Day at Signatures at Bayside, focusing on forestry topics with a film screening, food, and panel discussion. [Tickets available.](#)

- May 2 – Lisa Swanger discussed the 2026 Water Family Fest & Native Plant Sale



Wetlands Protection Legislation Progress Update — Christophe Tulou, Executive Director, Center for the Inland Bays

Christophe reviewed recent legislative progress on wetlands protection legislation. After years of collaboration with agricultural, business, environmental, and government stakeholders, Sen. Stephanie Hansen and Rep. Debra Heffernan introduced The Wetlands Stewardship Act on Tuesday to ensure the long-term preservation of Delaware’s wetlands. [Senate Bill 9](#) would create Delaware’s first combined tidal and nontidal wetlands program, establishing state-level protections for wetlands that currently lack adequate federal regulation. This program expansion is vital to maintain the health of Delaware’s wetlands, which play a crucial role in reducing the negative impacts of climate change.

Every person who testified supported this legislation and SB 9 received unanimous support during a committee hearing earlier today. Christophe explained that the Center for the Inland Bays will serve on the new Regulatory Advisory Council, created by the legislation; this Wetlands Regulatory Advisory Committee will assist in adopting initial regulations and evaluating permitting procedures. The body, composed of 25 members representing the environmental, business, and agricultural sectors, will be assisted by DNREC in developing the initial regulations and then continue to review the implementation of the regulations and provide input to DNREC regarding legislative or regulatory improvements.

CAC will be able to advocate for SB 9, so we will work on getting helpful materials and coordinating to send messages to the DE legislators.

Sussex County Forest Preservation Ordinance Update—Christophe Tulou, Executive Director, Center for the Inland Bays

An [ordinance aimed at protecting forest land](#) will be introduced in Sussex County, as

county leaders consider new rules requiring developers to preserve significant portions of wooded areas.

The ordinance under consideration would not stop tree removal entirely but would mandate the preservation of existing forests, particularly in rural parts of the county. The proposal stems from recommendations by the Sussex County Land Use Reform Working Group, which identified forest preservation as a key priority. According to the Delaware State Forest Service, Sussex County has lost approximately 21,000 acres of forest over the past 15 years. County council members will meet to continue discussions on the proposed ordinance, which is designed to slow that rate of loss. The measure would require developers to preserve 30 percent of forested land in designated growth areas and 50 percent in rural areas. Under the proposal, a professional forester would determine which portions of land are considered most valuable for preservation.

8:00 pm: Meeting was adjourned.

2026 CAC Meeting Schedule

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 (formerly April 16, 2026)

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Thursday, October 8, 2026 (*formerly October 22, 2026*)