Advancing Delaware's tree and climate goals

Findings from the 2025 Delaware Tree and Climate Workshop

On April 3, 2025, the **Delaware Tree and Climate Workshop** convened a cross-section of partners to focus on Delaware's priorities relating to climate resilience, forestry, urban trees and natural and working lands. Hosted by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy (DNREC CCE), this event aimed to build alignment and coordination around these issues. Workshop participants engaged in discussions and interactive exercises to pinpoint strategies and actions that have strong potential to move Delaware toward its forestry and climate resilience goals. These strategies are presented below; see the full report for more detail and discussion.

GOAL PATHWAYS

Priority strategies are organized into three goal pathways:

Community greening

Enhancing tree canopy and greenspaces in urban and suburban areas, to maximize carbon sequestration and storage, improve public health and quality of life, mitigate heat island effects, protect water quality, and achieve other social, economic and environmental benefits.

Forest preservation and conservation

Protecting and managing forests to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, carbon sequestration, and storage and resilience.

Forests as a commodity

Improving forest health, productivity, and benefits to promote vibrant, sustainable forest product markets, keep forest land forested, and maximize carbon sequestration and storage.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

Workshop participants identified the following strategies and actions as high priorities to guide the work of Delaware's tree and climate community. See the full report for more detail, including key partners to support implementation, existing resources that can be leveraged to ensure success, important first steps, as well as obstacles and proposed solutions.

COMMUNITY GREENING

Greening Strategy 1: Protect existing urban tree canopy, forest buffers, and greenspaces

Greening 1.1. Assemble and share local code ordinance models and examples (for street trees, development, etc)to protect trees and greenspace, with an emphasis on policies that protectlarge/heritage trees and established canopy. Include maintenance and invasives management provisions. Provide for penalties and enforcement.

Greening 1.2. Amend street tree / development codes to protect trees and greenspace, with an emphasis on policies that protect large or heritage trees and established canopy. Include maintenance and invasives management provisions. Provide for penalties and enforcement.

Greening 1.3. Establish statewide minimum standards for protecting urban trees, greenspace, wetlands, and riparian forest buffers.

Greening Strategy 2: Increase the volume and quality of urban tree and buffer plantings

Greening 2.1. Amend local ordinances to incentivize/require planting and maintaining trees (right species, right place).

Greening 2.2. Provide planting and maintenance training for citizen foresters, private landscapers, and public staff. Consider apps, YouTube videos, clinics, and other creative delivery methods.

Greening 2.3. Extend cost-share programs for urban tree buffers (with match waivers as needed).

Greening 2.4. Increase funding for planting, technical assistance and maintenance. Include invasives removal; change funding programs to be upfront rather than reimbursement-based and multi-year versus one-time.

Greening 2.5. Establish statewide minimum standards for planting and maintaining trees/buffers.

Greening Strategy 3: Increase education, outreach, and technical assistance for urban greenspaces

Greening 3.1. Create a series of trainings / presentation toolkit for multiple users, delivered in multiple venues on high-priority topics, including need for and benefit of planting and protecting trees.

Greening 3.2. Promote associates or trades degrees in specialized areas like forestry and urban restoration, to grow the pipeline of professionals entering forestry and related fields.

FOREST PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

Preservation Strategy 1: Protect forests through legislation, regulation, and incentives

Preservation 1.1. Adopt statewide forest preservation policy.

Preservation 1.2. Integrate forest, tree, and buffer goals into land use codes and ordinances.

Preservation 1.3. Look at incentives for smarter development and forest preservation.

Preservation Strategy 2: Maintain and restore forests for water quality, wildlife, and climate resilience

Preservation 2.1. Ensure state funded forestry projects are monitored and adequately maintained for forest health and productivity, including climate benefits.

Preservation 2.2. Implement training and certification for tree care professionals and landscapers.

Preservation 2.3. Monitor and implement forest management activities to ensure they protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and native species.

Preservation Strategy 3: Increase education, outreach and technical assistance to landowners and state/local leaders

Preservation 3.1. Market and promote existing funding and technical assistance programs available to support forest preservation and management, especially to private landowners and homeowners associations.

Preservation 3.2. Increase accessibility of technical assistance for municipal staff and homeowners associations.

FORESTS AS A COMMODITY

Commodities Strategy 1: Improve forest inventories and data/metrics tracking and reporting

Commodity 1.1. Leverage technology to improve accuracy of forest inventories and baseline data.

Commodity 1.2. Establish metrics to quantify and track greenhouse gas emission benefits of forests and forest management practices – as well as consistent tracking and reporting systems.

Commodity 1.3. Publicly share data on a regular basis, to inform decision-making, improve transparency, and guide future investments.

Commodities Strategy 2: Promote the importance of Delaware forests and forest industries

Commodity 2.1. Expand and diversify markets (e.g., timber, biofuels, pulp, agroforestry, ecotourism).

Commodity 2.2. Influence public perception and energy policy (e.g. wood energy).

Commodity 2.3. Invest in workforce development to fill needs: sawmill operators, tree planters, arborists, foresters, and specialists in genetic materials.

Commodity 2.4. Fill gaps in supply chains for native stock.

Commodities Strategy 3: Maintain and improve forest health and resilience

Commodity 3.1. Improve emergency response for disease and climate-related events.

Commodity 3.2. Address impacts of rising temperatures, increasing pests and disease, and other climate impacts.

Commodity 3.3. Ensure long-term forest resilience and environmental services (e.g., water quality, sequestration) through sustainable forest management on public and private land.