

History of the Delaware Native Plant Society (DNPS) Involvement with the Creation of a Wildlife Pond at Dover Park, Dover, Delaware

Over the years, many people have contributed to this project, and many hours have been spent in the creation of this great little pond. This report is a summary of all efforts.

Historical Activities

Historical information about this site can be found online at the following websites (just click on, or copy and paste the links):

<https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/dover-park-dover-de/>

<https://evogov.s3.amazonaws.com/media/27/media/127846.pdf>

[https://www.cityofdover.com/media/Parks%20and%20Recreation/Dover%20Park%20info/Dover%20Park%20Master%20Plan%20\(final%20draft\)](https://www.cityofdover.com/media/Parks%20and%20Recreation/Dover%20Park%20info/Dover%20Park%20Master%20Plan%20(final%20draft))

In 1992, the Laurels apartment community on Rockford Crossing road was constructed. At the time, the stormwater feature for this development was supposed to have been just a mid-size swale, but it is believed the DE Dept. of Transportation built the full-size pond instead sometime shortly thereafter.

In approximately the late summer of 2019, all the vegetation around the perimeter of the pond was cut down, then herbicide was sprayed on the remaining vegetation for three summers in a row after that, making it barren and unappealing.

Present Day Involvement

On **16 January 2023**, Eric Zuelke (DNPS Treasurer, and Projects Manager) wrote a letter of interest to David Hugg (City Manager of the City of Dover at the time) and Robin Eaton (Director of the City of Dover Department of Parks and Recreation at the time) expressing interest in a partnership between the City of Dover and the DNPS to restore the stormwater retention pond located at the northwest corner of the park, next to White Oak Rd. They responded soon after and were on-board with the proposal.

The first planning meeting took place on **10 February 2023** between Eric Zuelke, Robin Eaton, and Bryn Wambaugh (Environmental Scientist for the City of Dover at the time). We discussed the property boundary of the pond, performing a water quality analysis, determining the fish species present in the pond, and preparation of the site for planting. Eric showed them a rough draft of a planting design on top of an aerial photo, and we discussed funding sources and preparing an MOA later on.

The first on-site meeting at the pond was on **24 February 2023** between Eric Zuelke, Robin, Bryn, and Katherine Owens (Stormwater Engineer with the Kent Conservation District), and Sean Miller (Urban Conservationist/Stormwater Engineer, also with KCD). We discussed many

topics including the decision to not remove the left behind stumps from the 2019 clearcut, maintenance that the pond needed, water quality issues, and how we can move rocks around to be habitat features for aquatic invertebrates.

On **1 March 2023**, Edna Stetzar, Fisheries Biologist with the DE Division of Fish & Wildlife did a consultation for us to collect samples of the algae that is growing in the pond. She identified two genera, *Spirogyra*, and *Rhizoclonium*. These algae growths will be a real challenge in this habitat and we will be controlling them with algaecides when appropriate, but it has also been seen that nature takes care of the algae on her own with rainstorms washing much of it over the weir wall and onto rocks where it becomes trapped and dries out.

The first day of field work began on **14 April 2023**. Water samples were taken for quality analysis, a fish survey was performed, and with the help of three Dept. of Parks and Rec employees, a small excavator was used to move rocks from around the pond outlet area to create two hardscape features, stumps were cut down to soil level, and most of the trash, litter, and debris was removed. We also installed some small educational signs, and established a no mow zone that will be the edge of the wildlife habitat.

An on-going record of the wildlife seen in the pond since 14 April 2023 to present day:

A species in Corixidae (water boatman)

Gambusia affinis (mosquitofish)

Lepomis macrochirus (bluegill)

A native freshwater crayfish

Rana clamitans (green frog)

A turtle

Chelydra serpentina (snapping turtle)

Thamnophis sirtalis (eastern garter snake)

Ardea herodias (great blue heron)

Branta canadensis (Canada goose)