

# Annual Report

Delaware Nutrient Management Commission



# 2025



# NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

The Nutrient Management Program has been in operation since the passage of the Nutrient Management Law in 1999. The Law was enacted to address agriculture's influence on water quality in Delaware. The mission of the Nutrient Management Program, as laid out in the Law, is "to manage those activities involving the generation and application of nutrients in order to help improve and protect the quality of Delaware's ground and surface waters, sustain and promote a profitable agricultural community, and to help meet or exceed federally mandated water quality standards, in the interest of the overall public welfare." The Nutrient Management Law established a 19-member Commission of stakeholders from various backgrounds. They are charged with developing, reviewing, approving, and enforcing regulations governing the land application of nutrients. This Annual Report to the Governor highlights the program's activities during 2025.

In 2025, the Nutrient Management Program experienced staffing constraints due to multiple vacant positions and staff time diverted to support



the High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) response. The program operates with six full-time positions, including the Program Administrator which was vacated in January 2025 and filled internally in March. The first two quarters were the most challenging, with only 2 staff members to carry out all program activities due to three vacancies and one staff member dedicated to HPAI response. This staff member serves as the compost subject matter expert (SME) within the incident command structure and was the sole compost SME supporting the joint Maryland-Delaware HPAI response through the first half of 2025. In June, two vacancies were filled, allowing the program to focus on training and increasing productivity. The final vacancy is expected to be filled by June 2026.

A program highlight in 2025 was the increased collaboration between the Nutrient Management Program and partners, such as University of Delaware and DNREC. This collaboration includes regularly scheduled meetings to ensure the optimization of overlapping work relating to educating the agricultural community and Delaware water quality. The new Program Administrator has worked with the Nutrient Management Program for 9 years, and is committed to deepening relationships with the Commission to continue positive impacts to agricultural and programmatic issues. This included involvement in Department response to HB210 which originally included Title 3 in changes to fines levied for chronic polluters. These fine increases had the potential to have a detrimental financial impact to agricultural operations. As a result, HB222 was proposed as a separate bill to address Title 3 only. This bill contains amended language from HB210 and proposes less drastic fine increases. Historically, the Commission has worked with the regulated community to educate and correct instances of non-compliance. This has resulted in limited use of punitive fines and no operations considered to be chronic polluters.

# EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

The University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Nutrient Management Program offered the initial Delaware Nutrient Management Session three times in 2025 to individuals who applied nutrients to ten or more acres of Delaware land or have livestock operations. Sessions were offered for agricultural and horticultural professionals, twice for each track in 2025. Each certification session contains four separate modules, as well as an exam module. The certification sessions provide the latest information and tools to encourage the adoption of best management practices to reduce the risk of nutrient loss to water.

Since the inception of the program in 2001, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension has provided state-mandated certification training to over 4,125 individuals and certified more than 3,679 individuals. In 2025, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension certified 77 new individuals consisting of 9 Nutrient Consultants, 28 Commercial Nutrient Handlers, 17 Private Nutrient Handlers, and 23 Nutrient Generators.

In 2025, there were 110 in-person programs offered to 1,854 participants to earn continuing education credits, totaling 3,331 credits earned. There were also 40 online continuing education modules available that were completed 798 times for a total of 499 total credits earned.

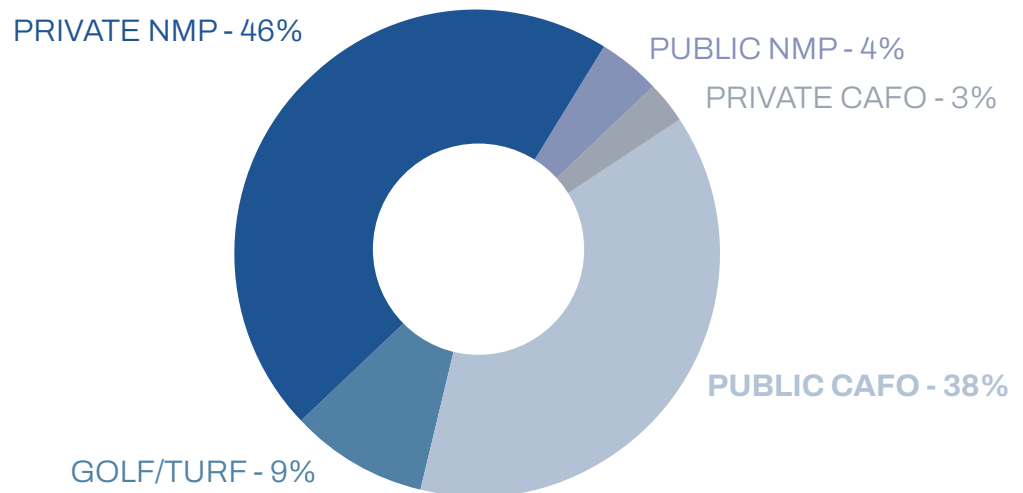


# NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

A nutrient management plan is a farmer's 'business plan' for nutrients. The more efficiently fertilizers are used on the farm, the fewer nutrients escape into waterways. A certified nutrient consultant develops a plan that includes maps, soil analysis, manure analysis, crop yield goals, and recommended nutrient application rates for up to 3 years of cropping. Consultants can be public or private and are depended on to develop nutrient management plans for farms, golf courses, and other urban turf operations. In 2025, operations representing 233,021 acres were provided cost share at a capped rate. The Kent and Sussex Conservation Districts assisted Delaware farmers by writing nutrient management plans totaling 3,653 acres.



## TYPES OF NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANS



## PLAN AUDITS

Each year, program staff audits facilities that are required to operate with a nutrient management plan to help ensure that plans meet the intent of the nutrient management laws and regulations. In 2025, due to extreme staff shortages, program staff audited nutrient management plans for 33 family farms and other agricultural operations. Of the 33 total inspections, 29 of them were CAFO. The compliance rate for the year was 85% pass.

# NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORTS

The Nutrient Management Law requires anyone operating under a nutrient or animal waste management plan to submit an annual implementation report for each calendar year. These reports detail all organic and inorganic nutrient-handling activities from January 1 through December 31 of the previous year. In 2025, more than 1,350 annual reports were mailed to Delaware's agricultural, golf course, and lawn care operations to collect data on activities in 2024. Additional mailings went to farmers living in neighboring states who till ground and raise livestock or poultry on farms located in Delaware.

By submitting the nutrient management annual report, farmers and other regulated operations ensure an accurate representation of nutrient-handling best management practices within Delaware. These reports also provide data quantifying nutrient applications made to land within Delaware and verify all farmers and hired applicators follow the recommendations outlined in the nutrient management plans. All the information collected from the annual report aids the Nutrient Management Program to advocate on behalf of Delaware nutrient handling operations.

## CAFO GENERAL PERMIT



In 2016, the first Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) General Permit covering medium and large poultry farms was approved by a joint Secretarial Order from the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). The permits' focus is on limiting discharges of pollutants and allowing for enforcement actions if these limitations are exceeded. General Permits allow for a more streamlined regulation of farms of similar size and type. The Nutrient Management Program continues to work with farmers to keep applications and nutrient management reporting up to date, so that DNREC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can monitor and report on progress.

General Permit 1 (Poultry CAFOs with no land) and General Permit 3 (All other CAFOs) were

effective September 1, 2023. Throughout 2025, staff from DDA and DNREC collected documents and authorized coverage for farms under General Permit 1 and General Permit 3. These efforts are ongoing and will be continued into 2026. General Permit 2 (CAFOs with land) has been reviewed by EPA and is undergoing the public hearing process through DNREC. It is possible the authorization will be completed in 2026.

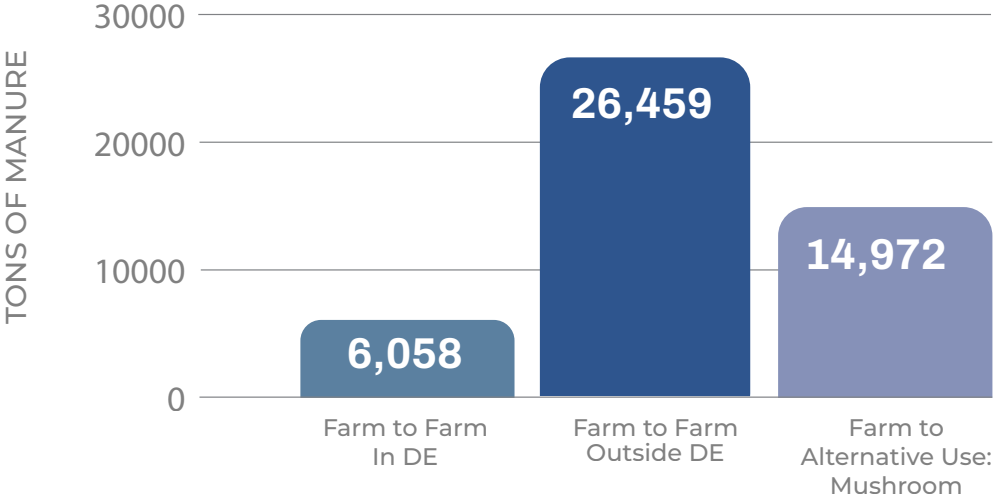
In 2025, DDA, DNREC, and EPA co-inspected two Delaware poultry farms with no violations. EPA has expressed intention to return in 2026 to conduct additional inspections. With biosecurity a top priority in the poultry community, DNREC and EPA have been very understanding in policies and procedures during farm visits to protect farms from disease transmission.

# MANURE RELOCATION PROGRAM

The Manure Relocation Program provides financial reimbursement to farmers, brokers, and trucking businesses for the transportation cost of relocating primarily poultry manure from Delaware farms to alternative use projects or other farms with low phosphorus levels allowing for land applications. The Manure Relocation Program allows farmers to move manure themselves or hire a broker. The application process authorizes eligible senders, receivers, truckers, and alternative-use projects.

Manure continues to be transported for land application throughout Delaware and to adjacent states, including Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Pennsylvania mushroom farmers operate alternative use projects essential for managing poultry manure produced in excess of farmer needs in Sussex and Kent counties. In 2025, 47,489 tons of poultry manure were relocated for a five-year total of 270,777 tons. During 2025, 87% of the poultry manure went to alternative-use projects or was relocated to out-of-state locations for land application.

## MANURE RELOCATION



# TURF REGULATION UPDATE

Title 3, Chapter 22 (Nutrient Management Law) was passed in 1999 and called for farmers and turf applicators to comply with certification requirements and follow a nutrient management plan. Just like farmers, any turf applicator applying nitrogen or phosphorus for a fee to 10 acres or more was required to gain and maintain a Commercial Nutrient Handler (CNH) certification. While gaining certification was attainable, working under a nutrient management plan was a challenge for members of the turf industry. This led the Commission to initiate the replacement of the Nutrient Management Plan requirement for turf applicators through the amendment of the law and creation of regulation.

The amended law reduces the threshold from 10 acres to 0.25 acres for turf applications only and limits annual nitrogen application to 4.8lbs per

1,000 square feet, unless specified in a nutrient management plan. The amended law also allows for phosphorus application only when soil tests prove a deficiency or when turf is getting established. All new parameters were backed by scientific evidence and still allow turf applicators to grow a productive turf crop while protecting water quality.

Following the updates to the Nutrient Management Law to include turf, regulations were created and went into effect in May 2025. These regulations are set to be enforced beginning January 1, 2027. During this ramp up period, University of Delaware is providing training and education through certification sessions to certify individuals who are now regulated. The Department intends to add 2 new full-time employees to the NMP specifically addressing the new turf law and regulations.

Per the Nutrient Management Program mission, action can only be taken on complaints within purview of the program, but staff work diligently to meet the expectations of our constituents to investigate any complaint related to the Law. Complaints related to manure management and general nutrient handling practices are investigated and resolved by program staff. If the violation is deemed serious enough, the complaint can be upgraded from informal to formal. In such a case, action is taken by the Commission in the form of an administrative hearing.

During 2025, program staff received and resolved 18 informal complaints relating to manure management, livestock management, and odor. This year there was an increase in complaints related to crop management, specifically corn fodder blowing off crop land to residential land. There was also an increase in fly complaints. Most fly complaints are unable to be tied to issues identified on neighboring regulated farms. Fortunately, the poultry integrators are very responsive to help correct any fly issues that are directly related to routine poultry farm practices. The categories of complaints and operation types are as follows:

## COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

COMPLAINT CATEGORY		OPERATION TYPE	
Fly	39%	Poultry	78%
Odor	22%	Crops	17%
Mortality Management	17%	Horse	5%
Manure Management	11%		
Crop Management	11%		

# BUDGET SUMMARY



FY2025	AVAILABLE	SPENT
<b>GENERAL FUNDS</b>		
Personnel	\$407,787.08	\$407,787.08
Travel	\$5,700.00	\$4,213.71
Contractual	\$24,900.00	\$24,900.00
Supplies	\$8,500.00	\$7,105.89
Cost Share (planning, manure)	\$823,300	\$822,879.07
Cover Crop Cost Share*	\$5,190,000	\$4,896,000
<b>STATE ANNUAL TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,460,187.08</b>	<b>\$6,162,885.70</b>
<b>POULTRY COMPANY FUNDING MATCH (MULTI-YEAR)</b>		
Manure Relocation	\$752,106.65	\$314,267.73
<b>FEDERAL FUNDS (MULTI-YEAR)</b>		
Federal Relocation and Coordinator (2020-2025)	\$271,302.81	\$232,333.55
Chesapeake Bay Regulatory (2023-2028)	\$155,885.06	\$38,586.87
Chesapeake Bay Implementation (2021-2026)	\$191,205.62	\$191,205.62
<b>Grant Totals</b>	<b>\$618,393.49</b>	<b>\$462,126.04</b>
<b>ALL BUDGET SOURCES</b>	<b>\$7,830,687.22</b>	<b>\$6,939,279.47</b>

\* The Commission previously approved retaining \$400,000 annually for three years (\$1.2 million total) to explore implementing advanced cover crop funding. As this initiative was not implemented, FY25 is the final year the funds were retained. In FY25, the Commission approved allocating a large portion of the retained funds to the conservation districts to address their annual funding deficit. The remaining funds will be distributed to the conservation districts by the end of FY27. No cover crop funds will be utilized directly by the Program.

# ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

For over 20 years, the Delaware Nutrient Management Commission had partnered with Delaware's poultry integrators to sponsor the Environmental Stewardship Awards to recognize poultry farms that excelled in environmental practices. In 2024, the Commission decided to expand the categories of the award to include all constituents covered by the Nutrient Management Law so that recognition could be given to all forms of Delaware agriculture.

Categories rotate annually and include poultry, grain crops, vegetable crops, livestock operations, equine operations, and golf course or commercial turf operations. The selection of the four semi-finalists is based on best management practices, excellence in water quality stewardship, and enhanced environmental quality practices. Each semi-finalist receives a lane sign, a plaque, and a monetary gift.

The 2025 award category focused on vegetable row crop farms. After applications were submitted, four semi-finalists were chosen for a visit to see their farm. A judging panel visited each of the four farms and the winner along with the other 3 semi-finalists were recognized at an awards presentation prior to the November 4, 2025, regular Commission meeting.



## THIS YEAR'S SEMI-FINALISTS WERE:

### Fifer Orchards

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Fifer Orchards is a fourth-generation Delaware Century Farm based in Wyoming growing an array of crops including grain, fruits, and vegetables. Their fruit and vegetable production focuses on supplying wholesale markets both locally and nationwide to certain grocery chains. Aside from crop production, they operate two retail stores and offer U-pick for a selection of seasonal crops. Fifer Orchards uses a host of Best Management

Practices and is always interested in integrating new strategies, most recently benefiting from bio fumigant mustard. They carefully arrange their crop rotation to keep fallow periods to a minimum, and utilize cover crops, reduced tillage, and grassed waterways. The Fifer family's willingness to learn and desire to collaborate with other local farmers is a true example of leadership in the agricultural community.

## Ramsey Farm, Inc.

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Ramsey Farm, Inc., along the Delaware-Pennsylvania border, dates its founding back to 1860 as a dairy farm that now focuses on hay production and agritourism. Due to their location and terrain, they have uniquely shaped their operation to serve the local livestock industries as well as provide food and education to their local community. They are uniquely situated on national park land where conservation is at the top of their mind. Ramsey

Farms implements a host of Best Management Practices, including cover crops, precision nutrient applications, and utilizing a no-till subsoiler to reduce commercial nitrogen use. They also plant their U-pick pumpkins into a rolled cover crop, creating a blanket of cover under the pumpkins to aid in weed and disease management. Ramsey Farms is a truly unique example of Delaware agriculture.

## Woodenhawk Farms, Inc.

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Woodenhawk Farms, Inc. is a diversified grain and vegetable crop farm in Greenwood. They grow an assortment of vegetable crops including sweet corn, peas, lima beans, watermelon and mixed vegetables for both processing and fresh market. The mix of processing and fresh market crops brings diversity to their operation, with a goal of stocking their retail farm stand, Little Wagon Produce. Through the

years they have implemented crop rotation, no till practices, precision nutrient application and timing, and high tunnels within their vegetable crops. Woodenhawk Farms is an example of excellence in the agricultural community as they continue to care for their land and water resources, so they are available and productive for future generations.

## 2025 Environmental Stewardship Award Winner GLENVILLE HOLLOW FARMS

Glenville Hollow Farms of Bridgeville, owned by Steven and Cynthia Yingling since its formation in 1980, is recognized for their work with vegetable row crops. They farm approximately 2,000 acres of grain and vegetable crops across Delaware and Pennsylvania. Their focus for their vegetable crops is to serve consumers through tailgate markets, mainly in the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., metro areas. Cindy's management of fresh market vegetables is impressive as she considers

the desires of her clientele to navigate her management practices. She intensively hand-manages the weeds in her mixed vegetables acres to minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides. Glenville Hollow Farms also integrates cover crops, irrigation water use efficiency, and biological control measures to maintain a natural balance in the environment. Their work and dedication to their land and community is admirable and we are happy to honor them as the winner.



# MEMBERS

## of the Nutrient Management Commission

The Nutrient Management Law established a 19-member Commission of stakeholders charged to develop, review, approve and enforce regulations governing the land application of nutrients. Commission members are appointed by the Governor and other legislative officials.

**F. Kenneth Blessing, Jr., Commission Chairman**, represents Kent County farmers and grows vegetables, beef, and grain in Milford. He can be reached at (302) 242-4541.

**Laura Hill, Vice Chair of the Commission**, represents Sussex County farmers and grows grain and vegetables in Lewes. She can be reached at (302) 236-0846.

**Lisa Porter** represents New Castle County farmers and grows grain crops in Townsend. She can be reached at (302) 236-8987.

**D. Mark Adkins** represents Sussex County poultry farmers. He also grows grain and pigs in Dagsboro. He can be reached at (302) 245-3835.

**Scott Webb** represents Kent County poultry farmers. He also grows grain crops in Bridgeville. He can be reached at (302) 381-0402.

**Alan Bailey** represents the dairy industry in Sussex County. Alan's dairy farm is in Bridgeville and stretches across the Maryland border. He can be reached at (302) 245-3150.

**Ken Horeis** represents the equine industry in Kent County. He heads a stable in Harrington. He can be reached at (302) 270-2648.

**Bud O'Neill** represents the golf course/lawn care industry. He operates a full-service turf consulting business based in Smyrna and can be reached at (302) 363-1353.

**Jon C. Nichols Jr.** represents the commercial nursery industry. His lawn and landscape business is in Woodside. He can be reached at (302) 270-7000.

**Todd "TAK" A. Keen** represents certification holders as a Nutrient Consultant. TAK operates a consulting firm based in Lewes and may be reached at (302) 236-3722.

**Wayne Hudson** represents certification holders as a Commercial Nutrient Applicator in Sussex County. He can be reached at (410) 430-6699.

**Robert C. Collins** is one of the representatives for an environmental advocacy group, as Manager of Programs and Facilities of the Center for Inland Bays based in Rehoboth Beach. He can be reached at (302) 448-6864.

**Anna Fagan** is one of the representatives for an environmental advocacy group, as an active proponent of environmental activities in the state. She can be reached at (240) 409-0794.

**Garry Killmon** represents public citizens. He lives in Bridgeville and is recently retired from Sharp Energy. Garry can be reached at (302) 236-3742.

**Tyler Brown** is the Conservation Programs Section Administrator. He is the designee of the Division Director of the Division of Watershed Stewardship at Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. He can be reached at (302) 855-1931.

### EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:

**Wm. Donald Clifton II**, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Agriculture. He can be reached at (302) 698-4500.

**Gregory Patterson**, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. Proxy is Stephen Williams, the Director of the Division of Watershed Stewardship. He can be reached at (302) 739-9000.

**Sandi Spiegel**, Public Health Administrator in the Division of Public Health at the Department of Health and Social Services. She can be reached at (302) 744-4842.

**Brooke Walls**, Program Administrator of Delaware Nutrient Management Program at the Delaware Department of Agriculture. She can be reached at (302) 698-4627.

### LEGAL COUNSEL:

**Jennifer Singh**, Deputy Attorney General, Delaware Department of Justice. She can be reached at (302) 739-7641.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Nutrient Management Program Staff

**Brooke Walls, Program Administrator.** Responsible for program and staff oversight and coordination with Delaware Nutrient Management Commission. She can be reached at 302-698-4627.

**Jessica Munski, Environmental Program Manager.** Responsible for inspection staff supervision and processing cost share claims. She can be reached at 302-698-4628.

**Spencer Giddings, Environmental Scientist.** Responsible for activities related to Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) including inspections and general permit coverage. He can be reached at 302-698-4580.

**Vacant, Environmental Scientist.** Responsible for conducting on-farm inspections of Nutrient Management Plans.

**Clint Gill, Environmental Scientist.** Responsible for coordination of activities related to the Chesapeake Bay Program. He is also tasked with HPAI incident response as the state compost SME. He can be reached at 302-698-4557.

**Julia Moore, Administrative Specialist.** Responsible for program and Delaware Nutrient Management Commission support. She can be reached at 302-698-4885.

## UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Specialists from University of Delaware Extension provide certification training for the Nutrient Management Program, provide technical recommendations, and conduct research on nutrient management practices. Specialists are located in each county to assist Delaware farmers.

**New Castle County** (302) 831-2667

**Kent County** (302) 730-4000

**Sussex County** (302) 856-7303

## COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The Conservation Districts provide technical agricultural professionals who can assist in nutrient management strategies and recommendations. The Districts are also responsible for administering the Cover Crop Cost Share Program.

**New Castle County** (302) 832-3100

**Kent County** (302) 741-2600

**Sussex County** (302) 856-3990



**Brooke Walls, Program Administrator**

Delaware Department of Agriculture

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**Web:** nutrient.management@delaware.gov



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF

**AGRICULTURE**