



# Delaware Audubon

www.delawareaudubon.org

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## Delaware Audubon Urges Prime Hook NWR to Revise Its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)

*Needs Long-Range View Considering Sea Level Rise*

The Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) issued its required Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) during the summer of 2012, and the Delaware Audubon Society was one of many organizations in the state which provided comments and suggestions about the plan.

Prime Hook NWR was established in 1963 “for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” Current Refuge System policies direct refuge managers to assess the historic or natural conditions of refuge ecosystems to inform management decisions. These policies direct the Service to avoid additional degradation of environmental conditions and natural processes and to restore degraded environmental components, according to the official CCP document. The refuge is operated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Because of its location on the Delaware Bay near the ocean, Prime Hook NWR has been hit hard in the past few years by a combination of sea level rise and major storms, turning former fresh water impoundments into salt water marshes, and impacting roads and homes near the refuge.

The full CCP is available on the Prime Hook web site ([primehook.fws.gov](http://primehook.fws.gov)). The plan outlines three alternatives for the future, including the refuge's preferred plan, and invited public comment on the alternatives.

The alternatives are:

- **Alternative A: Current Management**—This alternative fulfills the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement for a no-action alternative, one that proposes no change in the current management of the refuge. Alternative A is to continue to manage the refuge as is done currently.
- **Alternative B: Preferred Alternative**—This alternative “will focus on focal species with proactive habitat management and expanded public use.” Alternative B is the Refuge's preferred alternative and the action that FWS recommends for final selection.
- **Alternative C: Historic Habitat Management**—This alternative proposes a return to habitat management programs which were conducted on the refuge for several decades, but had been stopped in recent years for various reasons. Re-establishment of such programs would require substantial refuge action. This alternative includes some modifications to public use programs.

Delaware Audubon opposes Alternative A, and urges the refuge to consider combining parts of B and C.



Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

More importantly, the Delaware Audubon position calls for working with inland farmers and land owners to acquire additional property for moving the refuge westward in the long term, including the possible creation of new freshwater impoundments that will strategically survive long enough to justify their creation, subject to projections for long term sea level rise.

Delaware Audubon is also deeply concerned about the possible use of dredge spoils to build a protective berm at the refuge. If the Fish and Wildlife Service elects to move forward with the service preferred Option B or any derivative thereof, Delaware Audubon believes that the “use of dredge spoils in the creation of berms [...] be done only with dredge materials consistent with soils necessary for horseshoe crab spawning and salt marsh creation. Any spoils used should not include materials from the Delaware River Deepening Main Channel Project or Maintenance Dredge unless these materials are screened and inspected independently by a non-governmental party.”

Read Delaware Audubon's complete position statement on our web site, [www.delawareaudubon.org](http://www.delawareaudubon.org) ■

# FROM THE PRESIDENT



As I compose this letter on October 27, Hurricane Sandy is making its way up the Atlantic seaboard and is taking aim at coastal Delaware. We at Audubon have been leading the charge to push for dramatic changes at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. It's a complex story, but the short version of it is that our opinion calls for a strategic retreat from the coastline for the refuge and the homeowners alike.

Delaware Audubon provided a thorough response (that's available on our web site) to the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. In that document we argue that the homes along Prime Hook Beach are in a precarious position as a result of global warming, sea level rise, and subsidence that is occurring along our coast. Dunes have historically been demolished and rebuilt at the refuge for years, and this is not a viable long-term solution for the man-made freshwater impoundments that have since been inundated by the bay, turning them into mostly salt water marshes.

Our governments, state and federal, continue to push for a solution that attempts to build berms or re-build dunes to manage an increasing open water situation behind the homes along Prime Hook. Audubon has pressured the US Fish and Wildlife Service for an answer to the ramifications of a repeat of a larger storm event, such as the Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962 that wreaked havoc along the Delaware coast.

Hurricane Sandy generated a similar pattern of storm surge along with tremendous amounts of rain. The point of my letter is simply to emphasize that, whatever the results of Hurricane Sandy, we need to take what is happening along our coastline seriously and make long-term investments in solutions, instead of the Band-Aid patchwork approaches of years past. Regardless of where one stands on the argument of global warming, the facts along our coast are measured and long term. The water is rising and the frequency of major storms is increasing over time.

Mark Martell, Delaware Audubon President ■

## Officers

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### Treasurer Needed:

We are looking for a member with basic accounting skills to join our Board as Treasurer. This requires very little time commitment. If you'd like to volunteer for this position, please contact us.

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### Delaware Audubon is now on Facebook:

Check in regularly for updates. "Like" us, and post your own comments and suggestions. Go to: [facebook.com/deaudubon](https://facebook.com/deaudubon)



Common Loon illustration by Steven D'Amato



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## Alan Muller to Receive Delaware Audubon's Conservation Award at Annual Meeting and Dinner on December 7

*Alan Muller will be honored with the Delaware Audubon Conservation Award at our Annual Meeting and Dinner, to be held Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Dr. John Grandy, a senior vice-president in charge of wildlife for the Humane Society of the United States, will give the evening's program.*

*The meeting will be held at the Film Brothers Co-op in downtown Wilmington (205 North Market Street). Admission is \$20 per person and includes a buffet dinner. Visit [www.delawareaudubon.org/meeting](http://www.delawareaudubon.org/meeting) for more information, including the dinner menu.*

*The following is an excerpt from a profile of Alan Muller, courtesy of Delaware Today magazine and writer Bob Yearick. A link to the full article is provided on our web site.*

For almost two decades, the executive director of Green Delaware held public officials' feet to the fire of his environmental zeal. At meetings, hearings and legislative sessions, Muller presented meticulously researched arguments and asked uncomfortable questions that offer no compromise.

His wrath spares few of those in power, and he laments the reluctance of people to say anything challenging or critical, including the local media and other environmental organizations. That may have made him the most prominent activist in the state's recent past.

The official response to Muller is often to ignore or avoid him. That's understandable, according to John Flaherty, another well-known Delaware activist. "Power hates and marginalizes people who are right, like Alan, because they reveal that the powerful use their positions for themselves and for the interests they serve. And once someone has been banished to the margins, the powerful can rely on the conditioned habits of the public. After all, don't we all know that anyone on the margins is, by definition, unacceptable?"

According to Muller and some of his supporters, he's been mistreated and harassed over the years. Calling it "death by a thousand cuts," Muller says "harassment in the past few years has been relentless."

Meanwhile, he laments the "plantation mentality" that pervades the state — "the reluctance of people to say anything challenging or critical," including the media and other environmental organizations. The latter, he says, have been bought off or bullied into submission by those in power.

Muller's advocacy started years ago. As a technical writer for DuPont's engineering department, he worked with people who were involved in environmental cleanup yet also lobbied against stricter regulations. "I began to see how it worked from the inside." So he went to work for the environment.

Casting about among the state's enviro groups, Muller chose the Sierra Club, where he became conservation chairman. Then, in 1995, he formed Green Delaware. It quickly became the state's most active group, and Muller quickly gained a reputation for fact-based arguments that often irked opponents.

Much of Green Delaware's support comes from an annual grant from the New Jersey Environmental Federation and Environmental Endowment for New Jersey. The grant recognizes Green Delaware's work to limit water pollution, particularly in the Delaware River. Jane Nogaki, founding chair of the endowment, says Muller "is at the top of Delaware environmental groups. He can be confrontational without being belligerent, his arguments are well-grounded, and he asks questions rather than making accusations."

Muller clearly has scored victories — a ban on industrial incinerators is probably his most significant. Watchdog John Flaherty calls Muller "an incredibly bright man who has made environmentalism mainstream in Delaware."

"Alan rarely declares victory," says Flaherty. "What I would consider victories in a lot of cases he considers defeats."

Bill Zak, of Citizens for Clean Power in Sussex County, understands Muller's attitude. "He knows that conciliation often means things getting dropped in a drawer and forgotten."

"Today, environmental groups are using social media to spread their message," Nogaki says, "but there's no substitute for local, grass-roots action. And that's what Alan always did, standing up against the giants of industry and holding politicians accountable." ■



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## Delaware Audubon Welcomes Two New Board Members

### Dave Carter, Conservation Chair

Dave Carter is a fourth generation Delawarean who was driven to an environmental career after growing up in New Castle—where he spent much of his time exploring degraded wetlands, watching abandoned industrial sites sit idle, and experiencing a number of industrial accidents with impacts upon his community and the environment.

Dave recently retired from state service with 26 years of environmental management experience. He directed a wide range of technical and scientific field studies, implemented large scale environmental projects, managed natural resource grants, and had extensive involvement with public policy development.

Throughout his professional career, Dave has worked with advocacy organizations.

Dave also has more than two decades of volunteer experience conducting civic advocacy. He currently serves as vice president of the Civic League of New Castle County, and as a board member for the Southern New Castle County Alliance. He has recently been appointed Conservation Chair for Delaware Audubon. In his volunteer citizen role he helps organize advocacy campaigns, testifies at hearings, and has been involved in numerous community litigation actions against developers and government agencies. Dave has also provided lectures and advocacy training to community groups, and often quietly gives advocacy advice to groups on specific issues.

Dave has a bachelor's degree in biological science and recently completed a master's degree in Urban Affairs and Public Policy. As part of his academic work, he built on his insider experience as part of an environmental agency and his passion for community and environmental advocacy by completing a thesis on environmental interest groups and their impact on environment policy. Dave now plans to apply much of his environmental experience and knowledge to advocacy efforts on environmental issues in Delaware.

### Mark Nardone

Mark Nardone is a lifelong Delawarean. Having grown up on a farm outside Newark and surrounded by the marshes of New Castle, Mark developed a deep interest in environmental issues early. As a professional journalist for nearly 25 years, he has written about and directed reporting on some of the state's most important issues, such as water quality and threats to the landmark Coastal Zone Act.

A member of the Delaware Audubon board since February 2012, Mark serves on our conservation committee. A devotee of outdoor recreation, he hopes to instill a passion for the natural world in his young son Emedio, who at 17 months old is already an avid hiker—even if his treks are short ones. ■