

Talking Points: Michael T. Scuse
FY24 Budget Hearing
Monday, November 14, 2022
1:00 p.m. at Haslet Armory, Room 133

- We have taken great care to submit a budget request that prioritizes support for Delaware farms and protects Delaware citizens while being fiscally responsible and sustainable.
- Our FY24 budget request includes a 1% General Funds increase along with one-time and ASF increases, including:
 - A new Senior Forester to coordinate our Wildland Fire program. Out-of-state assignments receive the most media attention, but this position will protect Delaware citizens by coordinating wildland fire preparedness in our communities threatened by forest and marsh fires. It will also coordinate the transfer of equipment to our volunteer fire companies through Federal surplus programs that we have not had the staff resources to participate in before.
 - Increased funding to promote Delaware farm products through the Delaware Grown brand.
 - Additional one-time funding for Delaware Forest Service tree plantings to support the Tree for Every Delawarean Initiative.
 - Spending authority increases to support the Delaware Forest Service's deployments to wildland fire assignments in other states. It is also important to note that these expenses are matched with increased revenue since all costs associated with wildland fire assignments are reimbursed by the agency requesting our resources.
 - Personnel spending authority increases to reflect the current salary policy
- On behalf of the Delaware Department of Agriculture and farmers across our state, I want to thank you for approving an additional 10 Million Dollars for Aglands Preservation in this year's budget.
- I believe it is important that not only the General Assembly but the citizens of our state see what we have accomplished because of this additional funding.
- To be eligible for this funding, new farms had to be enrolled in an agricultural district by October 31. Our staff developed an outreach campaign, "Preserving Farms from the Ground Up," to expand the reach of our program beyond those who have participated in the past, including:
 - Workshops about the Aglands program coordinated by the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension in Townsend and Georgetown
 - Outreach and staffing at the Delaware State Fair
 - A TV spot of Delmarva Life

Talking Points: Michael T. Scuse
FY24 Budget Hearing
Monday, November 14, 2022
1:00 p.m. at Haslet Armory, Room 133

- Mailings to all eligible landowners currently in a 10-year district
 - Letters and postcards to landowners of unpreserved farmland identified using GIS analysis and tax parcel records; and
 - Social media outreach
- Through this campaign, we received 102 new farm applications, covering 8,000 acres of land by the deadline.
 - This was double the number of farms and acres preserved in the last round of easement purchases
 - Twice the rate of applications that we received over the last three years
 - And we received four new Young Farmer Loan applications
 - We are currently appraising 350 farms, including 250 already in a 10-year district but have not sold their development rights yet.
 - We will continue our outreach this winter to encourage farmers to submit offers to preserve their farms.
 - Finally, we want to thank you for the additional funding for Cover Crops, and for funding our Tree for Every Delawarean tree planting.