



NEWS FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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For more information, contact Jennifer Wheatley, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, 302-739-9921; or Melanie Rapp, Public Affairs, 302-739-9902.

Volunteers needed for Beach Grass Planting event March 20

Beach grass will help stabilize dunes hit hard by coastal storms; Sign up by March 12

Environmental enthusiasts, families and students are encouraged to volunteer for Delaware's annual beach grass planting event 9 a.m. - noon, Saturday, March 20 at beach locations along the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean. The event, now in its 21st year, helps protect Delaware shorelines by planting Cape American beach grass on sand dunes damaged by coastal storms.

Last year approximately 900 people planted more than 150,000 stems of beach grass along four miles of coastline between Delaware Seashore State Park and Kitts Hummock Beach.

According to Jennifer Wheatley, environmental scientist with DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section and coordinator of the event, volunteers are especially needed this year to help stabilize dunes.

"Delaware's coastline was ravaged by three northeasters last fall that not only eroded sand from beaches and dunes, but also broke through and destroyed dunes in some areas. We were pleased that our protective dunes prevented wave damage to streets, boardwalks, and private property. But, our dunes were hit especially hard, and we need hundreds of volunteers to help us plant beach grass that was lost."

Sand dunes are essential for protection against damaging coastal storms. When sand dunes are destroyed, storm waves can rush inland, flood properties and put lives at risk. Stabilized dunes absorb wave energy and act as major sand storage areas which replenish sand to eroded beaches during a storm.

Beach grass helps to build and stabilize dunes by trapping windblown sand. As the grass traps the sand, it builds the dunes higher and wider, which makes it more protective of the structures behind it. Since the program was introduced in 1989, more than 5 million stems of beach grass have been planted by dedicated volunteers.

Volunteers are encouraged to sign up online at <http://www.swc.dnrec.delaware.gov/Shoreline/Pages/BeachGrassPlanting.aspx>, by email: Marcia.Cagle@state.de.us , by calling 302-739-9921. All registrations must be made by March 12.

DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section coordinates the annual beach grass planting event. The section also implements beach replenishment and erosion control projects along Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay communities to enhance, preserve and protect private and public beaches.