

1. New Project: No

2. Beginning Date: March 16, 2024 Completion Date: March 16, 2024

3. Summary and objectives of project

This project involves planting Cape American beach grass on the dunes of a Delaware beach in early spring. The goal is to help prevent the erosion of the sand dunes. The project is initiated and organized by Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). Volunteers have planted more than 5 million stems of this beach grass along ocean and bay beaches since 1990, according to DNREC.

In Delaware, climate change primarily takes the form of sea level rise, increasing temperatures and more frequent intense storms, including heavy precipitation and flooding, according to DNREC. Sand dunes provide protection against these increasingly damaging coastal storms by absorbing wave energy and acting as major sand storage areas which replenish eroded beaches during storm events. Without sand dunes, storm waves rush inland and cause damage to wildlife habitats, land, and properties. Beach grass is planted because it helps trap sand in the dunes, so as winds blow across the beach and into inland areas the beach grass will actually slow down the wind to the point where the sand will cause the dunes to grow. In addition to these qualities, the grass also provides habitat for many migratory and overwintering birds along the Mid-Atlantic coast.

Protecting the sand dunes aligns with the Coastal Gardeners Club mission statement which emphasizes a goal to protect and conserve wildlife and our natural resources.

4. Involvement of club members and other organizations

The Coastal Gardeners Club has participated in this important project for several years, and our members were excited that we were able to help again for the 34th Annual Beach Grass Planting. Seven members and friends of the Coastal Gardeners Club participated.

Our club was part of more than 800 volunteers from local groups who planted grass at Delaware Beaches on Saturday, March 16, 2024. Our assigned area was once again the dunes on Towers Beach, at 38964 Coastal Highway, Rehoboth, DE. Coastal Gardeners also maintains a native plants garden established by the club at this location.

The DNREC staff instructed participants on how to plant the beach grass in an assigned area of the dunes. Using a long pointed stick, volunteers made a hole in the ground about 6 inches deep. Groups were provided with bundles of the grass, which the volunteers separated into smaller stalks to plant in the holes about 18 inches apart, two stalks per hole. The rows were staggered to provide maximum wind erosion control. The planting continued in rows till the assigned area was planted. Around 160,000 stems were planted at various beaches on March 16 by DNREC staff and volunteers.

4. Project expenses and means of funding

DNREC and the State of Delaware cover all expenses, providing planting tools and the grass itself.

5. Continuing involvement, follow-up, maintenance

Coastal Gardeners will plan to volunteer at this yearly event in order to assist in replenishing the beach grass. The grass requires no particular maintenance, other than possibly applying fertilizer 30 days after planting, which is done by DNREC.



(Above) Coastal Gardeners and friends prepare to plant the beach grass at Towers Beach.



(Above) Volunteers dig the holes for the stalks, using a pointed stick.



(Above) Volunteers separate the bundles of stalks to plant.



(Above)The area planted by the Coastal Gardeners as it appeared in May 2024



(Above) The same area in July 2024

