Introduction to Tax Ditches
Our Mission

TO SERVE SUSSEX COUNTY
BY PROVIDING TECHNICAL
GUIDANCE AND FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE TO ENHANCE,
MAINTAIN, PROTECT
AND IMPROVE LAND
AND WATER RESOURCES.
Sussex County Tax Ditches

- 137 organizations
- 1,213 miles of ditches
- 394 square miles
- 340,000 acres
- 60% of tax ditch miles in Delaware
- 42% is drained by tax ditches
- 1950s infrastructure

- 60% of tax ditch miles in Delaware
Tax Ditch Basics:

Established by state law in 1951 creating what is now DNREC Division of Watershed Stewardship and Conservation Districts to support administration, planning, construction, and maintenance of these ditch systems.

Law last updated in 2008

Purpose

Formation

Warrant Rates

Administration

https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/drainage/tax-ditches/
Tax Ditch Program

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Current Services
Current Services:

Assist DNREC in performing site visits, evaluations, and resolutions of tax ditch drainage concerns in Sussex County from either tax ditch officers or the public.
Current Services:

Administer cost-share program for tax ditches in Sussex County with 3921 Funds from DNREC & Sussex County.
Current Services:

Provide maintenance assistance including:

- dip-outs
- spoil spreading
- emergency repairs
- pipe installation
- pipe replacement
- invasive species management
Tax Ditch Organization Challenges:

- Funding
- Officer Recruitment
- Officer Retention
- Operation and Management
- Changing Land Use
- Aging Infrastructure
- Education
- Permitting Issues
Tax Ditch Pilot Program

Enhanced Services
Enhanced Services

Provide

Annual Assessment of Tax Ditch

Technical assistance to managers and constituents

Warrant Rate Recommendations
Enhanced Services

ASSIST

Funding Application Preparation (inc. Cost Share and others)

Permitting Process
Enhanced Services

DEVELOP

Annual Maintenance Plan

Multi-year Capital Improvement Plans
• Short-term: 1-2 year
• Long-term: 3-5 year
+ associated costs
Enhanced Services

OTHER

Attend tax ditch association meeting

Present annual assessment findings
Tax Ditch Pilot Program

**Management Fee**

$1,500 - $2,500*  
(per annum)

**Implementation Cost Share**

$6,000 - $10,000  
(per annum)

Implementation Cost Share Independent of other funding sources.

**Value of Management Services:**

$5,000+ Annually

*Based on size of the selected Tax Ditch organization*
Tax Ditch Pilot Program

**Tax Ditch Organization Selection**
In 2022, 10 Organizations of various sizes, land-use, financial and organizational level, and management history.

**Initial Goals**
Demonstrate this proposed model is successful and add more organizations each year based on lessons learned.

**Funding**
Leverage the programs model to bring more funding for use on tax ditch maintenance and management, including water quality funding.

**Value**
Utilize program to work better with partner agencies and tax ditch organizations to avoid further regulation while improving drainage and water quality in Sussex County.
Thank You

We appreciate your time and support

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