DOVER – The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve (DNERR) is seeking volunteers to assist with the annual bay-wide horseshoe crab spawning survey in May and June on Kent County’s Ted Harvey Wildlife Area and Kitts Hummock and North Bowers beaches.

For those who are interested in assisting with this year’s survey, DNERR staff will host volunteer training sessions at the St. Jones Reserve, 818 Kitts Hummock Road, Dover, DE 19901. Volunteers can choose from one of the three trainings scheduled for:

- Saturday, April 1 from 9 to 11 a.m.
- Saturday, April 1 from 2 to 4 p.m.
- Thursday, April 6 from 6 to 8 p.m.

New participants are required to attend one of the trainings, while past participants in the annual survey must attend a training once every three years.

Volunteers are asked to register online before the day of the training by visiting https://2017dnerrhscsurveytraining.eventbrite.com. For more information on horseshoe crab monitoring, visit http://de.gov/dnerrhscsurvey, or contact Drexel Siok or Maggie Pletta at 302-739-6377 or email them at DNERRhsc@gmail.com.

Horseshoe crab spawning surveys have been conducted since 1990 in Delaware Bay. Despite the horseshoe crab’s importance to the ecology of the bay, little is known about its population status. Now, every spring on several peak spawning days, volunteers donate their time to count crabs on beaches in
Delaware and New Jersey. Data collected during these surveys is key for scientists to monitor changes in the number of spawning crabs in the bay. Delaware’s well-trained and enthusiastic volunteers have made this program one of the most successful volunteer-based wildlife surveys in the country.

At the training offered by DNREC, volunteers will learn how to conduct a survey, properly record data and distinguish between male and female horseshoe crabs. The training will also highlight past results of horseshoe crab survey data and how it is being used.

In addition, volunteers will be instructed on how to request their preferred dates for survey nights. Participants who are interested in other Delaware Bay beaches not coordinated by DNERR are welcome to attend the training and will be referred to the appropriate beach survey leader for further information. Volunteers must be older than 13 to participate in the training and survey, and all volunteers between the ages of 13 and 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Information on registering to participate in the survey will be sent to volunteers who have completed the training and to those who participated in the training and survey over the past three years. To participate in the survey, preregistration will be required.

For information on horseshoe crab monitoring, volunteer information and more, please visit http://de.gov/dnerr or on Facebook – Delaware_NERR.

The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve is a partnership between the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. DNERR is administered through the Delaware Coastal Programs Section of DNREC’s Office of the Secretary.

This project is part of DNREC’s Bayshore Initiative, a
landscape approach to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat, increase volunteer participation in habitat stewardship projects, enhance low-impact outdoor recreation and ecotourism opportunities, and promote associated environmentally compatible economic development. For more information, click Delaware Bayshore.

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