

Volunteers needed to plant trees on March 17 and 18 at Blackbird State Forest, enhancing the Chesapeake Bay

TOWNSEND, Del. (March 1, 2018) – Volunteers of all ages are needed this month to help plant 8,800 hardwood seedlings along the Cypress Branch at Blackbird State Forest to provide scenic beauty, enhance wildlife habitat, fight invasive species, and improve water quality in the critical Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The planting will take place on Saturday, March 17, and Sunday, March 18, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day at Blackbird State Forest's [Naudain Tract, 2076 Harvey Straughn Road, Townsend, Delaware 19734](#).

The weekend tree planting is a “rain or shine” event. Equipment, including shovels, will be provided. Volunteers are encouraged to dress appropriately for the weather – wear boots or other work shoes, heavy-duty gloves and hats and bring insect repellent and sunscreen, if needed. Snacks will be provided and commemorative patches and T-shirts will be given to both youth and adult volunteers on a first-come, first-served basis.

The project is a cooperative partnership between the [Delaware Forest Service](#), the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) [Division of Watershed Stewardship](#), and the [Girl Scouts of the USA](#).



State Forester Michael Valenti said “Planting trees always helps improve our environment. Planting over 8,000 oak

seedlings next to the Cypress Branch gives an added bonus of water quality protection and acorn production for local wildlife such as wild turkeys. We need enthusiastic volunteers to help Caroline Dowd complete this tree planting project in her bid to earn the Girl Scout Gold Award.”

Caroline Dowd is a student at MOT Charter High School in Middletown. The planting will help fulfill requirements toward her Gold Award, representing “the highest achievement in Girl Scouting, recognizing girls who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through remarkable Take Action projects that have sustainable impact in their communities—and beyond.” The project also continues a proud partnership between local scout groups and state conservation agencies: in both 2012 and 2013, [Boy Scouts planted 4,000 trees each year at Blackbird State Forest.](#)



In 2013, local Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts planted 4,000 trees at Blackbird State Forest. Volunteers are needed to help plant more than 8,000 oak seedlings on the weekend of March 17-18.

“This tree planting is a unique opportunity for volunteers to create a positive and lasting change for Delaware’s forests,” said Marcia Fox of DNREC’s Division of Watershed Stewardship, “The new trees will restore wildlife habitat and advance the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative by promoting volunteer participation in habitat stewardship and preserving an ecologically-valuable area.”

The latest updates for the event are available at [Caroline Dowd’s Gold Award Reforestation and Riparian Buffer Facebook Page.](#)

Funding for the trees is provided by a [grant](#) to the Delaware

Forest Service from the [DNREC Division of Watershed Stewardship](#). The restoration of riparian forests is a key strategy for improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, recognized as a “national treasure” and the [largest estuary in North America](#), covering 64,000 square miles in six states and the District of Columbia. The Cypress Branch in southwestern New Castle County is one of the headwaters for the [Chester River](#), a major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay that begins where Cypress Branch and Andover Branch join together in Millington, MD.

[Blackbird State Forest](#) covers nearly 6,000 acres in southern New Castle County and is also a stop on the historic [Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway](#).

Directions to the Blackbird Forest Tree Planting Site

- From the **NORTH**:

Route 1 (TOLL): Take Rt. 1 South to Exit 136 toward Odessa (Rt. 299) and make a left at the light. At Rt. 299 (Main Street) in Odessa, turn right onto U.S. 13 South.

U.S. 13: Take U.S 13 South until you reach Rt. 299 (Main Street) in Odessa. Proceed through the light (continue on U.S. 13 South).

- **From Route 299 & U.S. 13:** Continue on U.S. 13 south for 6.2 miles and then turn right onto Blackbird Forest Road (flashing light at the top of the hill). After 3.5 miles, turn right onto Oak Hill School Road. Continue for 2.9 miles and then turn right onto Harvey Straughn Road. Proceed for .3 miles and the destination will be on the left.

- From the **SOUTH**:

Route 1 (TOLL): Take Rt. 1 North to Exit 119 (N. Smyrna). Make a right onto Route 13 South. Proceed .8

miles to Duck Creek Road and make a right at the light.

U.S. 13: Take U.S 13 North until you reach Duck Creek Road north of Smyrna (just past Visitor Center and Smokey Bear sign on the right). Turn left at light for Duck Creek Road.

- **From Duck Creek Road & U.S. 13:** Proceed west for .8 miles on Duck Creek Road and turn right onto Vandyke Greenspring Road. Continue on Vandyke Greenspring Road for 4.4 miles and turn left onto Harvey Straughn Road. In 2 miles, turn left to stay on Harvey Straughn Road. Proceed for .3 miles and the destination will be on the right.

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