

Discussion Summary — DNREC Drainage Discussions Regarding Flood-Mitigation Concepts and Funding Constraints (April–May 2025)

This summary reflects contemporaneous notes, correspondence, and recollections from discussions regarding drainage conditions, flood-mitigation concepts, and potential funding pathways related to Mallard Lakes Community Association. It is provided for historical context and should not be interpreted as an official statement, commitment, engineering recommendation, or policy position of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) or any participating official.

During discussions in April and May 2025 with DNREC Drainage representatives Tyler Brown and Jesse Baird, participants reviewed several potential concepts that might warrant further engineering evaluation as part of a broader flood-mitigation and drainage study for Mallard Lakes. Topics discussed included possible tidal barriers or inflatable dam concepts near the Route 54 culvert connection, the potential influence of nearby mosquito ditches and tidal connections associated with Treasure Beach, shoreline and wetland constraints, and the broader hydrologic complexity of the community. DNREC representatives emphasized that any viable solution would require detailed engineering analysis, survey work, drainage studies, and permitting review before feasibility could be determined.

The discussions also addressed the RC&D (Resource Conservation & Development) funding program and the limitations associated with currently available drainage funding. DNREC representatives explained that while existing RC&D allocations could potentially help supplement portions of a study or targeted infrastructure work, the available funding would likely be insufficient to fully finance a comprehensive community-wide mitigation solution. Participants also discussed the changing political and fiscal environment surrounding resilience and infrastructure funding, including the observation that federal and state funding opportunities for these types of projects had become more limited than in previous years.

Additional discussion focused on community awareness, intergovernmental coordination, and the importance of engaging Sussex County and state legislators regarding future mitigation planning. DNREC representatives noted that only a small number of formal drainage complaints had been received from Mallard Lakes despite the community's known flooding concerns. The conversations also acknowledged that portions of the tidal lake area would likely remain regulated wetlands even if future mitigation efforts reduced daily tidal inundation, meaning that environmental and permitting constraints would remain an important consideration in any future project design.

In follow-up correspondence, Simone Reba asked whether dredging near the tidal connection might help reduce water inundation levels after a DelDOT engineer informally suggested it as a possible option. DNREC representatives responded that dredging could potentially be one component of a broader mitigation strategy depending on location and engineering analysis, but emphasized that it would not likely represent a complete or standalone solution and would face

many of the same permitting, environmental, and cost challenges associated with other flood-mitigation alternatives.