

DCNR Guidelines for Community & Watershed Forestry Program

Section I – Statement of Purpose

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) provides a single point of contact for communities and non-profit entities seeking state assistance to support local recreation and conservation efforts. The DCNR Community & Watershed Forestry Program will provide financial assistance to identify locations in need of riparian forest buffers, lawn conversion, and urban tree-planting and to design, implement, and establish those practices. This program will support projects that produce conventional buffers and multifunctional buffers--a buffer type that provides an opportunity to harvest products such as nuts, berries, woody florals, forbs and potentially woody biomass in addition to the conventional buffer of riparian tree and shrub species. Eligible applicants requesting TreeVitalize funding should apply under this program.

Section II – Eligibility

A. Eligible Applicants

- **Municipality** – Any county, city, borough, incorporated town, township or home rule municipality.
- **Municipal Agency** – Any official agency created by a municipal government under the laws of the Commonwealth such as municipal authorities, Council of Governments and intergovernmental commissions.
- **Authorized Organization**: An entity involved in research, restoration, rehabilitation, planning, acquisition, development, education or other activities, which furthers the protection, enhancement, conservation, preservation or enjoyment of this Commonwealth's environmental, conservation, recreation or similar resources. The organization must be a tax-exempt institution under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (Public Law 99-514, 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)) and registered with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations or an educational institution involved in these authorized activities or a municipal authority.
- **Institute of Higher Education**

B. Eligible Activities

Eligible projects and project activities for the Community & Watershed Forestry Program are those that involve landowner outreach, design, site preparation and planting of buffers, meadows, upland forest, urban trees; plant materials and tree shelters; and post-planting establishment on plantings installed within the past 5 years. Projects can propose conventional or multifunctional riparian forest buffers, lawn conversion, or TreeVitalize related outreach and implementation.

Section III – Program Requirements

- A. The minimum grant amount awarded is \$50,000.
- B. All projects require a minimum of 20% match. Match may be cash or non-cash and must be directly related to the approved scope of work. DCNR reserves the right to negotiate with applicants on the final award amount, acreage and scope of work.
- C. To be eligible for reimbursement, project costs must be incurred within the time frame established by the grant agreement and must be approved by the Department.
- D. Eligible costs include those directly related to the scope of work as approved by the Department and include:
- Contracted professional services to perform all or part of the approved scope of work
 - Construction contracts to perform the approved scope of work.
 - Expenses related to the completion of the approved scope of work such as public meeting advertisements, meeting room rental, printing, etc.
 - Organization’s personnel costs to perform all or part of the approved scope of work.
 - Costs related to an independent audit if required.
 - Costs associated with advertising and bidding of a project.
 - Administrative costs, limited to a maximum of 5% of the grant amount
 - Post-planting establishment of community & watershed forestry practices that were planted within the last 5 years, limited to a maximum of 20% of the grant amount.
- E. Ineligible costs include:
- Costs not consistent with the approved scope of work and budget
 - Costs for preparation of the grant application
 - Costs for fundraising
 - Costs for public relations, outreach not directly related to project implementation, communications, lobbying or litigation.
- F. Control of Property: The property on which the community & watershed forestry practice will be installed must be owned by the applicant or the applicant must have the permission of the landowner to install and maintain the proposed planting(s). Permission can be given through: (1) a landowner agreement between the property owner and the applicant that allows for the installation and long term monitoring and maintenance of the practice; (2) an easement over the property for a term of at least 25 years; or (3) a property lease for a term of at least 25 years.

Applicants who undertake a riparian forest buffer or lawn conversion project must be willing to enter into a landowner agreement with each participating landowner for a minimum of 25 years. The agreement will address maintenance requirements and other considerations. TreeVitalize applicants must be willing to manage a tree-tenders education and stewardship program to ensure survivability of community tree plantings.

- G. All construction must be completed in accordance with all the applicable federal, state and local laws, including but not limited to the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- H. Grantees will be required to demonstrate that the project has secured all necessary planning and permit approvals for the project from the federal, state, and local governments and that the project is in compliance with local regulations.
- I. Where public access is provided, the grantee shall insure that no person will be denied access to or use of the site on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, income, national origin, age or sex.
- J. Recipients of grants, as well as landowners of the project sites, may not remove or destroy the community & watershed forestry practices installed as part of the grant-funded project without the prior written approval of DCNR.

Section IV – Application Procedures

Applications will be accepted via the online grant application portal:

<https://apps.dcnr.pa.gov/grants/>. The annual application period will begin in January and end in mid-April. All grant applications received by the grant period deadline will be inventoried and assigned to DCNR staff for review and funding recommendations.

Applicants should contact Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Regional Advisors for assistance with funding for projects related to, Parks, Recreation, and Conservation. They can provide guidance related to the DCNR grant application process. DCNR Watershed Forestry Staff will be available to provide project-specific technical assistance for Community and Watershed Forestry proposals. They can provide advice on communications and outreach efforts, site design and species selection, and post-planting establishment practices. They can also participate in partnerships and watershed-level projects. Bureau of Forestry staff time related to projects cannot be used as match to the grant.

Section V – Application Evaluation

All applications for financial assistance will be reviewed by DCNR staff to determine eligibility of the proposed project as well as the competitiveness of the proposal. Applications are evaluated on a competitive basis using the following criteria:

- Project Scope
- Applicant Qualifications
- Project Methodology & Outreach
- Project Establishment & Stewardship
- Project Outputs
- Project Budget

Section VII – Procedures for Accessing Funds

Following approval of an application by the Department, a commitment letter will be issued to the applicant explaining the terms and conditions of the grant. A grant agreement will be sent to the grantee shortly after the award is announced. Upon receipt of an executed grant agreement, the grantee may be eligible to access 50% of awarded funds by requesting a grant payment via the DCNR grants portal. Additional funding will be disbursed to the grantee throughout the project as specific project milestones are met and required paperwork is submitted.

Section VIII – Program Inquiries

Program inquiries should be directed to:

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Recreation and Conservation
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101-2301
Telephone: (717) 772-3319
Fax (717) 787-9577