

LAND ACQUISITION Projects

This section provides more detailed grant information and guidance for Land Acquisition projects. These projects involve the purchase, easement and/or donation of land for park and recreation areas, greenways, critical habitat areas and/or open space.

Ready-To-Go Checklist

This Checklist is to be used by the applicant to ensure the Land Acquisition Project is “Ready-To-Go”. The items below need to be addressed, included and/or uploaded in the application. It will be used by DCNR in the grant application evaluation process. Only projects that are Ready-To-Go will be given consideration for grant awards. If you have questions regarding this Checklist, please contact the [DCNR Regional Advisor](#) assigned to the region in which your project is located.

*** Ready-to-Go Status is worth 15 points. It is essential to provide high quality, well-defined and/or detailed information for these items.**

Yes	Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contacted Regional Advisor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eligible Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eligible project
<input type="checkbox"/>	Property has no known environmental hazards
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Match secured
	<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of match commitment from entities other than applicant uploaded
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Detailed list of eligible cash match and/or donated land value
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Realistic, accurate and detailed cost estimate/budget
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear, concise and detailed project scope of work included
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of negotiations your organization has had with the landowner
	<input type="checkbox"/> PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) Receipt uploaded
	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurate project site location map(s) and identification of parcel(s) being acquired, including acreage and boundaries, uploaded
	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Easements ONLY – If property has a mortgage, a Consent, Non-Disturbance, and Subordination Agreement will be required.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of current deed(s) for the property(ies) uploaded
	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft sales agreement uploaded
	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft easement agreement uploaded (if applicable)
	<input type="checkbox"/> County/Municipal Notification Letter(s) uploaded
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly describe the specific rights to be acquired and any rights severed from the property by past or proposed transactions
*	<input type="checkbox"/> Appraisal Report by a state certified General Real Estate Appraiser for the land defined in the project scope, including any donated parcels. Appraisal(s) must be ordered by and prepared for the applicant. Review the DCNR Requirements for Property Appraisals for more information.
	<input type="checkbox"/> When circumstances warrant a “Waiver for Retroactivity” - the applicant has submitted a formal written request to the DCNR Central Office
	<input type="checkbox"/> Properly completed Resolution Page uploaded
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed the Sample Land Acquisition Project Timeline and agree the project can be completed within 3 years from date of grant award.

General Information and Funding Conditions

All projects must serve a public purpose and help advance [DCNR Goals](#).

1. Land Acquisition grant applicants may submit more than one application per funding cycle. A separate application must be submitted for each land acquisition project unless the projects are substantially related.
2. Match is required for all projects and is usually equal to the grant funds awarded (\$1 for \$1 match requirement). The local match may be cash or donated land value.
3. Grants may be used for purchase of **fee simple title** to real property or a less than fee interest such as a **conservation easement**. Applicants need to clearly indicate the specific property rights proposed for acquisition.

If any rights have been or will be severed, the applicant must disclose this. *This information must be disclosed to the appraiser to address in the appraisal report.*

4. Appraisals must be performed by a **state certified General Real Estate Appraiser** and must comply with the [Acquisition Policy: Requirements for Property Appraisals](#). These guidelines should be provided to the appraiser preparing your report.
5. Deeds or easement agreements acquired with DCNR grant funding will be required to contain a clause restricting the transfer and change of use of the property as per the Grant Agreement. The DCNR required restriction should not be included in a deed or easement until a grant has been awarded and purchase of the property or easement has been approved by the Bureau.
6. Donated lands used as match for planning, land acquisition and/or development projects must show transfer of title within the same time period as the grant project to be an eligible match. Match is a one-time use per parcel and any excess value cannot be banked toward future projects. The document used to convey title must also include a non-conversion clause restricting the use and transfer of the property.
7. Sales agreements should be reviewed by the Bureau before being executed.
8. Deeds and easement agreements must be reviewed and approved by the Bureau before being executed. Easements must follow the [WeConservePA Model Easement](#) to be considered for funding.
9. Copies of all current existing leases shall be submitted with the grant application.
10. A Title Commitment Report and Title Insurance Policy will be required prior to project completion and closeout.
11. Land or an interest in land (i.e. an easement) acquired with grant assistance is restricted solely to those uses permitted by the statute under which the grant funding is awarded.
12. When assisting with the acquisition of an easement, DCNR is seeking as much public value as possible, while retaining flexibility to address special site conditions and respond to local needs.

- Public values include critical habitat protection, habitat connectivity, water quality benefits, and public recreational access for activities like walking, wildlife viewing, hiking, bird watching, fishing, hunting etc. These and other considerations help the Bureau determine if a project is consistent with the Department’s conservation and recreation goals and objectives and how the project rates against other potential acquisition projects.
 - Public access should be considered whenever possible, involving various portions of the property, for various activities at various times and levels.
 - The level of public value will be considered in rating and ranking individual grant applications.
 - Reasonable restrictions on the time and manner of public access, as well as temporary limitations on public access for protecting or restoring the land, are acceptable.
 - Municipal land acquisition projects **must be open to public** for uses consistent with purposes for which the land was acquired.
 - Public access is not required for land trust acquisition projects (as defined in the Keystone legislation) but it is encouraged.
 - The Department reserves the right to determine the level of acceptable public access in an easement application at its sole discretion.
13. Grants are awarded to assist with projects to be undertaken after the award of the grant, rather than to retroactively pay (reimburse) for projects already begun or completed before the award of the grant. In special situations, the Bureau may permit grant funds to be applied to project costs incurred before the date of the grant award. Refer to the [Bureau Policy- “Waiver for Retroactivity”](#).
14. Only pre-qualified Land Trusts are eligible to receive Keystone Land Trust funding. The Land Trust [Pre-qualification Form](#) is available on the DCNR website.
15. Grant applications from non-municipal applicants must include evidence that the municipality(ies) and county where the property is being acquired have had the opportunity to comment on the project proposal. *As a general policy, the Department **will not** approve grant funding in areas where local elected officials have expressed opposition to the proposed project.*

Land Acquisition Project Types

1. Community Recreation

Projects include acquisition of lands to serve neighborhood, community or regional public park and recreation needs. These projects include acquisition of lands that provide land and water-based recreational opportunities; provide for new or unique recreation opportunities; or connect to existing public lands to expand the recreation opportunities.

2. Critical Habitat/ Open Space

Areas of land or water that support habitat and migratory corridors for species. These include areas that help sustain endangered, threatened, rare or declining species, as well as areas that are of high ecological integrity and/or contain geological assets and other outstanding natural features. Projects that increase connectivity between other protected

lands reduces habitat fragmentation and provides expanded access for public recreation. Protection of forested watershed lands and headwaters that protect and help ensure highest quality of water for public and private use.

SAMPLE PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS:

Land Acquisition Project

Acquisition of approximately 17 acres located in Green Township, Pocono County, for an addition to the Evergreen Nature Preserve, providing wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreation opportunities connection to the existing County trail.

Conservation Easement Project

Acquisition of a conservation easement on approximately 200 acres in Wheatfield Township, Jackson County, along Frog Creek Road and close to the Frog Creek Road Bridge, to provide for open space and greenway protection.

The following documents may be helpful in developing your Grant Application:

Land Acquisition Policies:

Bureau Policies:

- Acquisition Grant Administrative Instructions and Process Policy
- Appraisal Policy
- Community Gardens Policy
- Acquisition Eligible and Ineligible Grant Project Activities/Costs Policy
- Ownership and Control Policy
- Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) Policy
- Prequalified Land Trust Policy
- Public Value and Use Policy
- Requirements for Boundary Surveys and Title Work
- Sign Policy
- Waiver for Retroactivity Policy

WeConservePA- Conservation Easement:

[Model Grant of Conservation Easement and Declaration of Covenants : ConservationTools](#)