

Conewago Creek Initiative Stormwater Incentives Program Program Guidance

Summary of Program

The Conewago Creek Initiative is a locally-led, multi-partner, collaborative effort to improve water quality in the Conewago Creek watershed in Dauphin, Lancaster, and Lebanon Counties. The work of the Initiative is funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), additional funding from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, and the support and contributions of the many Initiative partners. To learn more about the Initiative, visit www.conewagoinitiative.net.

Through NFWF funding, the Initiative seeks to provide incentives for landowner participation in programs to implement priority land management practices that will improve water quality in the Conewago Creek watershed. Among those priority practices are best management practices (BMPs) to manage stormwater runoff from residential and commercial lands. This program provides interested landowners with technical assistance and financial cost share to plan, design, and implement stormwater BMPs. Examples of BMPs that may be funded through this program include but are not limited to rain gardens, bioswales, riparian buffers, reforestation, native meadows, and rain barrels.

The Dauphin County Conservation District (DCCD) will serve as the administrative and fiscal agent for the program on behalf of the Initiative. Review and approval of plans, designs, and implemented projects will be conducted by the Initiative's Non-Ag Team, which is comprised of Initiative partners with interest and expertise in addressing stormwater runoff from non-agricultural lands. The mechanisms for program eligibility, review, approval and payment are described in more detail below.

Program Objectives

Through its Stormwater Incentives Program, the partners of the Conewago Creek Initiative seek to meet the following objectives:

- Improve the water quality of the Conewago Creek and its tributaries by implementing stormwater best management practices that improve water quality and mimic natural hydrology.
- Increase native plant diversity and habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife in the watershed.
- Promote an ethic of stewardship among the Conewago watershed community.
- Provide public showcases that can serve as demonstration sites for neighbors and watershed community members.

Step 1: Developing Stormwater Assessments and Plans

The Conewago Initiative will work with interested property owners to provide them with professional Stormwater runoff assessments and plans. LandStudies, Inc., a design/build environmental restoration company from Lititz, PA, has been selected to provide these services as the technical service provider (TSP) through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. LandStudies has experience in site-specific stormwater management assessment and planning.

LandStudies will work with the Initiative to offer free Stormwater Assessments and Plans for interested property owners in the watershed. Stormwater Assessments and Plans consist of:

1. A site visit to assess stormwater flow on the property and offer proposed solutions to managing stormwater and improving water quality.
2. A written "Green Masterplan" consisting of a narrative, site and soil map(s) showing existing conditions and location of proposed BMPs, brief descriptions of proposed BMPs, and an estimated scope and cost of proposed BMPs.
3. Recommended priorities for implementation of proposed BMPs. BMPs will be placed in priority categories of "high," "medium," and "low." BMPs with the highest water quality benefits (as determined by water quality efficiencies provided in PA Stormwater BMP Manual or other reliable technical standards) will be given "high" priority.
4. A brochure on healthy lawn care will also be given to the landowner to encourage them to take other measures that will improve water quality.

BMPs recommended in a Stormwater Assessment and Plan prepared under this section may be eligible for funding, provided other eligibility criteria are met (see details under Step 2 below).

BMPs recommended in the following assessments and plans may also be eligible for funding:

- Assessments and Plans developed under the "Stormwater Solutions for Property Owners" Penn State student project (conducted fall semester 2011).
- Assessments and Plans developed by Tetra Tech, Inc. resulting from site visits conducted in December 2011 as part of its "Urban Lands Site Identification and Prioritization for BMPs to Improve Stormwater Runoff" (ongoing).
- Assessments and Plans developed by other qualified professionals, as reviewed and approved by the Non-Ag Team.

Step 2: Design and Implementation of Stormwater Best Management Practices

The Conewago Initiative, using its NFWF funds, will offer financial assistance to landowners interested in implementing stormwater BMPs identified and recommended in a qualified Stormwater Assessment and Plan (see Step 1 above).

Eligible Projects.

Landowners in the Conewago watershed are eligible for this cost share program if the following criteria are met:

1. BMPs must be identified in a qualified Stormwater Assessment and Plan.
2. BMPs must mimic runoff characteristics of the site in its natural state. These characteristics include infiltration, evapotranspiration, filtration, and moderation of runoff peak velocities. Capture and reuse BMPs (i.e., rain barrels) may also qualify.
3. BMPs that include vegetation must use Pennsylvania native plant species.
4. BMPs must be installed on lands in the watershed.
5. BMPs identified in the Stormwater Assessment and Plan as “high” priority must be implemented before BMPs identified as “medium” or “low” priority.

Application Process.

Landowners interested in submitting a project for funding will fill out an application and submit it to the Non-Ag Team for review.

Review of Applications.

The Non-Ag Team will review, rank, and fund eligible applications on a quarterly basis. Projects will be funded in order of ranking as funds continue to be available. Each application will be ranked based on the following criteria:

Ranking Criteria	Points
Landowner is willing to have project serve as a public demonstration/education site.	5
BMP type has not been previously funded by Initiative within the watershed.	2
Property includes or borders a stream.	3
Property located in subwatershed of a first or second order stream.	2
Project funds multiple types of BMPs.	1
Project funds BMPs identified as high priority for water quality improvement in assessment plan.	5
BMPs are proposed on an underrepresented land use type.	3
BMPs are proposed in an underrepresented county.	4
Landowner is willing to implement healthy lawn care practices	3
Total possible points	28

“Underrepresented land use type” is the land use type (residential, commercial, farmstead, public) on which the fewest number of projects have been funded at the time the proposed project is ranked.

“Underrepresented county” is the county in which the fewest number of projects have been funded at the time the proposed project is ranked.

Working with an Approved TSP Partner.

Landowners must work with an “Approved TSP Partner” to design and install BMPs. “Approved TSP Partners” are those firms that have executed a Partnership Agreement with DCCD.

In order to develop a list of Approved TSP Partners, DCCD, on behalf of the Initiative, will issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking TSPs within an interest and experience in designing and implementing stormwater BMPs. DCCD together with the Non-Ag Team will review responses to the RFQ and develop a list of qualified professionals. The list will be shared with landowners, who may choose the Approved TSP Partner(s) with whom they wish to work.

Approved TSP Partners must have the professional expertise and licensing to design and implement the proposed BMPs. For example, structural BMPs must be designed by a professional engineer or registered landscape architect, as applicable.

Cost Share Amounts.

Landowners are eligible for cost share of 80% of design and installation costs of the BMPs, except that forest riparian buffers are cost shared at 100% of design and installation costs.

Landowners may qualify for additional cost share if riparian buffers are restored/installed. Landowner receives a dollar “credit” which must be applied toward the costs of other eligible BMPs on the property. This credit amount is \$1500/acre for grass buffers and \$3000/acre for forest buffers.

In their application, landowners must include estimated costs of each BMP they are seeking to implement. While there is no cost cap for funding BMPs, in order to ensure that funding exists for multiple projects under this program, DCCD, upon review and recommendation of the Non-Ag Team, retains the right to decline funding of BMP implementation if the total estimated cost share for the project exceeds \$5000.

All BMPs must be designed and installed by April 30, 2013 in order to receive funding.

Landowner Responsibilities.

The landowner will execute a Landowner Agreement with DCCD that sets forth all of the landowner’s responsibilities. Landowner agrees to implement the BMP by working with an Approved TSP Partner and conduct maintenance of the BMP for a minimum of two years (as specified in a maintenance plan developed by the Approved TSP Partner).

Verification and Payment Procedures.

DCCD agrees to provide cost share upon verification that the BMP is installed.

Approved TSP Partners will submit designs, “as built” certification, and an invoice to the Non-Ag Team for review and approval. The Non-Ag Team will review the design and certification, and conduct a site inspection to verify that the BMP is installed.

Upon verification, the Non-Ag Team will recommend payment. Upon recommendation, DCCD will make payment directly to the Approved TSP Partner for the eligible cost share amount. Any additional costs of the project are the responsibility of the landowner.