

FAQs: PENNVEST-Funded Multifunctional Riparian Forest Buffer Grant Program

FUNDING, MATCH AND ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

What is the total amount of funding available for this program?

The total amount of funding available is \$3 million. Funding will be awarded in the amount of \$1 million per year for 3 years (2017, 2018, 2019).

Is there a minimum or maximum grant amount?

There is no minimum or maximum grant request amount.

What is the match requirement?

There is no match required.

What are eligible expenses?

Grant funds can be used for materials and/or services related to the site preparation, buffer installation, and buffer establishment. Project planning costs such as staff time dedicated to landowner outreach and education, legal or advertisement fees, or site prioritization and design, are considered to be “administrative” costs. Up to 5% of the grant amount can be allocated to administrative costs. Any administrative costs over the value of 5% of the grant amount will be the sole responsibility of the grantee.

Are both conventional and [multifunctional](#) buffers eligible?

NO. Only multifunctional buffers are eligible. The DCNR and PENNVEST partnership is built on a mutual interest in learning more about the performance of multifunctional buffers, and therefore, multifunctional buffers are the target result for this grant program.

Can the funding be used to add acreage to current buffers or is this program only for establishing buffers where they do not currently exist?

YES. Adding acreage to current buffers is an eligible expense, however, new buffer acreage is preferred. Furthermore, the proposed additional acreage must be multifunctional acreage, not conventional buffer acres.

Would a project still be eligible if there is an existing trail within the buffer?

YES. DCNR would consider a project including a trail nestled into the buffer area. However, we would be interested in additional details about the trail use, materials and maintenance plan to ensure that water quality benefits could still be effectively realized and there would not be significant impacts to the operation of the buffer as a result of the trail.

Is there funding for maintenance / staff time after the planting?

Expenses related to establishment of the buffer(s) are eligible expenses for reimbursement. Because the grant contract extends for 4 years, the number of years that post-planting establishment (PPE) will be covered depends on when the buffer was planted. For example, if the buffer was planted in year one of the grant contract, the grantee would have 3 years of potential PPE but if the buffer was planted in year 3 of the grant period then the grantee would only have one year of potential PPE costs covered. Make sure you consider the estimated maintenance costs in your budget and funding request.

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Can we use this funding for materials other than tree/ shrub species such as deer protection, mulching, weed mat etc?

Grant funds can be used for any materials or services required for the actual buffer as well as for the buffers' survival/establishment. Items such as those listed in the question would be eligible, within reason, since they are necessary for the buffers' survival. DCNR may have concerns about surrounding an entire property with a deer fence but if a grantee proposes to add fencing to the buffer area only, that would be an eligible expense. In short, if the expense is a buffer material or a commonly accepted material at a reasonable scale used to establish the buffer, the cost is eligible. Please feel free to ask about specific items if you are not sure about their eligibility.

Would the purchase of equipment (e.g. DR field, brush mower etc) for site preparation and long-term management to maintain the buffer be considered a "material" and therefore an eligible expense?

NO. For this program, equipment purchases are not eligible expenses.

Can grant funds be used to purchase herbicide material to address noxious weeds that may be present and/or problematic in a riparian buffer that would impact long term establishment?

YES. The cost of herbicides and their application, when used sparingly and strategically to assist in buffer establishment, is an expense eligible for these funds.

Can grant funds be used to purchase hand tools, herbicide application equipment and other minor project items that may be used on multiple project sites rather than affixed to one site?

Yes. Tools and supplies necessary for the installation and establishment of the buffer are eligible for reimbursement.

Could we request funding for educational signs to go with schools/community park type project sites?

Considering that education about buffers and their proper maintenance provides an opportunity to build a stewardship ethic among citizens, educational signs would be considered an eligible expense for this grant program. However, the primary goal of this program is to add buffer acreage, so the portion of the budget dedicated to signage should be minimal to ensure that it is a competitive application.

Can this funding be used for education and outreach or training events/programs/materials?

The vast majority of the project scope and budget should directly relate to the planting and establishment of multifunctional riparian forest buffer acres. If targeted landowner and community outreach, education, and engagement is necessary to achieve the goal of acres in the ground, and those costs are a minor portion budget, then YES, those tasks would be eligible for funding. Please note that such outreach and education is considered an "administrative" cost of the project and, as discussed in an earlier question, can only be reimbursed at a value up to 5% of the grant amount.

Grant applications proposing general buffer education, workshops etc. would not be competitive because they would not significantly directly contribute to the primary focus of this program --adding riparian forest buffer acres to the landscape.

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APPLICATION SELECTION AND CONTRACTING

Who is an eligible applicant?

Nearly any individual, organization (for-profit or non-profit), or government entity is eligible to apply for this funding. However, due to restrictions associated with the funding source, all applicants need to undergo financial review to determine if they qualify for a grant. Those that qualify for a grant may apply for this funding opportunity. For this reason, **prequalification** is required.

How do I prequalify?

To prequalify for grant funding offered through this DCNR and PENNVEST partnership, potential applicants must submit the information detailed below, based on their organization type, for review prior to applying for the grant.

Non-profit / Governmental Applicants (*local governments, municipal authorities, county conservation districts, or other not for profit entities*):

- The last three years complete financial statements prepared by an independent CPA, if available (Audited, Reviewed, or Compiled)
- If CPA prepared statements are not available:
 - The last three years of Federal Income Tax returns for the applicant (Form 990, 1120H)
 - or
 - (for municipalities) three years of Annual Financial Reports submitted to DCED

Private / For Profit Applicants (*Corporations, Partnerships, Sole Proprietorships*):

- The last three years complete financial statements prepared by an independent CPA, if available (Audited, Reviewed, or Compiled)
- If CPA prepared statements are not available:
 - The last three years of Federal Income Tax returns for the applicant (Form 1120, 1120 S; Form 1065, or Personal Form 1040)
- Breakdown of all long-term debts, with outstanding balances, maturity dates and current monthly principal and interest payment requirements.
- ***Sole Proprietorships***: personal 1040's for the last three years and a current personal balance sheet of the proprietor.

Email submissions or mailed hard copies will be accepted. Due to email size limitations, using a document transfer service like WeTransfer or Drop Box will likely be the most efficient method to transmit files electronically. All information should be submitted to:

Kelly Rossiter, AICP
DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation
400 Market Street, 5th floor
Harrisburg PA 17101
krossiter@pa.gov

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When do I prequalify?

The 2018 prequalification period is June 18, 2018 to August 31, 2018. All interested applicants must submit their information, as detailed in the previous question, by August 31st. Results of these inquiries are typically returned within 2 weeks of submittal. These results are only valid for the upcoming application round (8/1/2018 to 9/28/2018). If you prequalified in the past, you will need to resubmit the requested, updated, information again to potentially prequalify for the 2018 application round.

Is an applicant as either Lead or Team member, precluded from pursuing or receiving funding assistance from multiple grant awards through this program?

NO. There is no restriction on the number of applications an entity can submit nor the number of grants a particularly entity can receive. However, each individual project can only be undertaken by one grantee—there cannot be funding from multiple grantees supporting a single project. To simplify grant management costs and time, DCNR would encourage applicants to put together ONE application identifying their total funding need to support all of their proposed projects.

Does DCNR have priority watersheds and/or watershed setting conditions established for this Program?

NO. This program is a statewide program with all watersheds eligible.

Approximately when do you anticipate announcing grant awards?

It is anticipated that grant reviews will take place in the fall of 2018 with award announcements made in late 2018 or early 2019.

How long is the grant contract? When could grant-sponsored actions commence?

The grant contract is for a 4-year term with a likely start date of January 1, 2019. All eligible project costs that will be paid for by this funding must be incurred during the 4-year grant period (January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022).

Is this Program expected to be offered in the future?

DCNR and PENNVEST have committed to offering this program for at least 3 years, beginning in 2017.

LANDOWNER AGREEMENTS

Can the funding be used on public and private property?

Multifunctional buffers can be placed on land owned by both public and private entities. If the grantee does not own the land themselves, they need proper landowner agreements between themselves and the landowner to ensure the grantee's ability to install and maintain the buffer AND obtain the landowner's agreement that the buffer will remain on the property for at least 25 years. A sample landowner agreement is available [here](#). Grantees can also use their own landowner agreement but would need to send a copy to DCNR for approval prior to executing the agreement.

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Does the grantee need to have all landowner agreements signed and submitted with the application?

NO. Specific project locations can be identified after the grant is awarded. The applicant should provide as much detail as possible related to the target location of the buffer acreage (watershed, county, land use zone etc.) in the application, but the exact properties can be finalized at any point during the 4-year grant period. Prior to approving the use of these funds for a buffer, the grantee will need to submit an executed landowner agreement to DCNR for approval. A sample landowner agreement is available [here](#) or a grantee can use their own agreement template upon approval by DCNR.

Applications including partnership commitments from specific landowners will be more competitive than applications without identified properties for the proposed buffer acres.

Would it be smoother if the landowner agreement was submitted with the grant application like fee simple grants?

YES. It would be easier for DCNR grant managers to assess and track projects if landowner agreements were submitted with the application. Where that is possible, DCNR welcomes applicants to submit such documentation, however, it is not an eligibility requirement. Applications including landowner agreements will be more competitive than applications that do not include committed landowner documentation.

Why require a landowner agreement for 25 years and not a recorded easement?

A recorded easement would be acceptable, and preferred. However, to allow for maximum flexibility, DCNR is accepting a simpler landowner agreement, at this time.

Could the landowner agreement be revised to provide more clear maintenance responsibilities and enforcement?

YES. The landowner agreement template provided is a sample that can be adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of the grantee and landowner. DCNR requires that grantees submit a copy of the final agreement to their DCNR grant project manager prior to executing the agreement for DCNR review and approval.

What are the maintenance and other requirements that will be placed on the landowner?

DCNR grantees will be required to execute a landowner agreement between themselves and the landowner that allows for the installation, monitoring, and maintenance of the buffer for at least 25 years. It is up to the grantee and landowner how those duties and roles are distributed, but that plan should be detailed in the landowner agreement, and provided to DCNR for review and approval. In some instances, the landowner may not be responsible to DO anything but will be required to allow the grantee on their property to install the buffer, monitor it at agreed upon intervals, and provide basic maintenance duties on a regular basis—the timing and extent of which will be detailed in the agreement. In other instances, the grantee might ask for permission to install the buffer and then require the landowner to complete basic and regular maintenance which will be detailed in the agreement. The final arrangement is up to the two parties, but DCNR aims to ensure the long-term existence of the buffer via whatever terms are laid out in the landowner agreement. A sample agreement is available [here](#), but can be altered to fit your needs.

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Since the term of maintenance/monitoring is 25 years could it be structured to leave a reserve in the grant for the grantee?

NO. Legislation requires that funds are expended within the 4-year grant period. Any post planting establishment that will be paid for by these funds must be completed during the 4-year grant contract period.

PROJECT DESIGN

Do you anticipate most grantees using consultants for design, installation, and post planting establishment?

We anticipate that each grantee will complete their buffer projects differently. Some will use consultants for some or all elements of the project and some will rely solely on their own staff and/or volunteers. We hope to learn more about the most efficient methods of buffer design, installation, and maintenance from our grantees through the early years of this program.

Does DCNR have an approved list of species for the buffers?

DCNR does not have an official species list for this program. The [DCNR forest buffers webpage](#) includes links to common tree and plant species for use in multifunctional buffers. DEP also provides information about riparian buffer species, methodology, maintenance etc. in its [guidance manual](#). For additional technical assistance, please contact your local [DCNR service forester](#).

Is there a requirement for native plants?

NO. Grantees are encouraged to use plant species native to Pennsylvania as much as possible, however, several non-native species will also be accepted. Grantees should plan to review their plant species selection with DCNR prior to purchasing materials.

Is fertilizer use permitted in any zone of the buffer?

As a rule-of-thumb fertilizer should not be used in any of the 3 zones. In limited cases it could be permitted in zone 2 and/or 3 if it is determined to not compromise the efficacy of the buffer; fertilization in zone 1 is not permitted.

For example:

- If soil testing determines that fertilizer is needed for seedling establishment--a one-time application would be permitted.
- If soil testing determines that fertilizer is needed to support growth in zones 2 or 3 on a very limited basis, and considers upland loading to not compromise the efficacy of the buffer—limited applications would be permitted.
- If soil testing determines that annual fertilization is needed in zones 2 or 3--this is not permitted and alternative species should be considered.

Will flash grazing be allowed in zones 2 and/or 3?

YES. Flash grazing could be permitted if the operator is committed to intensive rotational grazing. The applicant/grantee would have to submit to DCNR a written plan for how this would be accomplished, including details on tree species and size to ensure damage to trees is avoided.

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Are orchard species allowed in zones 2 and/or 3?

YES. Assuming no fertilizer is used and limited disturbance from harvesting equipment.

Is the growing of nursery stock in zones 2 and/or 3 allowed?

Possibly, in zone 3 only. The applicant/grantee would need to submit to DCNR a plan for how this would be designed and managed. Two significant parameters include the amount of soil disturbance and the amount of canopy cover retained over time. Perhaps a pot-in-pot system could be used to limit disturbance. Large gaps in canopy cover should be avoided.

NOTE: For more information about buffer zones, please reference the [DCNR Forest Buffer Fact Sheet](#).