

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

Introduction

County Conservation Aids grant program is authorized under s. 23.09(12), Wis. Stats., and provides financial assistance to counties to enhance county fish and wildlife programs. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers this grant program with the assistance of s. NR 50.14, Wis. Adm. Code.

The program was established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1965 as an alternative to bounty payments on coyote, foxes, and bobcats. Every year since the bounty program ended, the Legislature has appropriated funding for the Program equal to the average annual bounty payment.

These funds are provided as cost-share to counties for fish and wildlife habitat projects. On an annual basis using moneys appropriated in the current Biennial Budget, funds are offered to each county in proportion to the ratio of the area of each county to the total area of the state.

Application Process & Annual Deadline

Counties have the option to accept their award, accept their award *and* request additional funds or decline their award. To accept the award amount or accept/request additional funds, the county authorized representatives must sign, date, and return the application/grant agreement form 8700-045A to the DNR grant manager via email no later than October 1. Failure to formally accept the award amount by the October 1 deadline is equivalent to the county declining their grant award.

By affixing a signature on the grant agreement, the county's authorized representative has entered the county into a binding legal agreement with the DNR. The county may begin its project any time after the signed grant agreement has been returned to the DNR grant manager.

Any grant amount not claimed by a county will become available for the DNR to award to any county that requests more funds than its prescribed share under Wis. Stats.

Counties have two years from the date they sign their grant agreement to complete their project and request reimbursement from the DNR.

Project costs incurred by a county or tribe prior to the date that a county or tribe signed the grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement by the DNR.

Eligible Applicants

Counties and tribal governing bodies are eligible to apply for County Conservation Aids for eligible projects.

Eligible Projects

Grant funds under this program can only be used for county fish and wildlife projects per s. 23.09 (12), Wis. Stats. See chart on next page.

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

| Category | Project Description Codes | | | |
|----------|--|---------------------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Development project -- The development of structures, utilities, facilities or landscaping necessary for outdoor recreation use of an area | | | |
| | 1A | new trails | 1E | gun range development |
| | 1B | new fish cribs | 1F | parking lot development |
| | 1C | stream crossing | 1G | constructing new fishing piers |
| | 1D | kayak and boat launches or dock | 1H | new boat launch ramp |
| | | | 1J | new accessibility upgrades |
| 2 | Habitat projects -- The implementation of a specific activity or set of activities to restore or enhance wildlife or fish habitat, natural communities or shorelines | | | |
| | 2A | burning | 2F | Site preparations, seed purchase, seedling planting |
| | 2B | prairie planting | 2G | Dredging |
| | 2C | food plots | 2H | prairie restoration |
| | 2D | stream restoration | 2J | Mowing |
| | 2E | streambank stabilization | 2K | invasive species removal |
| 3 | Stocking projects -- The placement of fish or wildlife into their natural environment to improve population numbers. | | | |
| | 3A | fish stocking | 3B | wildlife stocking |
| 4 | Maintenance projects -- Repair or refurbishment of structures, fixtures, or substrates to restore to functional condition in a routine, scheduled, or anticipated fashion | | | |
| | 4A | repairs to trails | 4E | gun range repairs |
| | 4B | repairs to culverts | 4F | repairs to boat docks/ boat launch ramps |
| | 4C | flowage maintenance | 4G | accessibility upgrades |
| | 4D | barrens maintenance | | |
| 5 | Miscellaneous projects -- Any project that does not fit in categories 1 through 4. | | | |

Eligible Project Expenses

Eligible project costs are unchanged from the current program structure. Below are examples of eligible items and ineligible items.

Grant funds may reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Materials, supplies, contractual services, labor
2. Salaries, fringe benefits, if directly related to the project
3. Rental or lease of equipment related to the project
4. Land restoration, if project adds to the permanent inventory or resources of the property.
5. Furnishings such as picnic tables, grills, and garbage receptacles.

Grant funds may **not** reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Administrative overhead
2. Purchases of computers, monitors, printers, peripheral devices, tools, and shop equipment
3. Educational materials such as brochures, videos, and books.

Calculating Sponsors Share (also called Sponsor Match)

This program is administered as a cost-sharing program. This means the grant only covers up to 50% of total project costs. The remaining portion of project costs must be paid by the county. Eligible sources of sponsor match include cash and non-cash donations.

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

There are three categories of non-cash donations:

1. **Donated general volunteer labor** – The maximum value of donated, non-professional labor shall be equal to the Wisconsin minimum wage. Currently, the Wisconsin minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. All donated hours must be documented, showing name of donor, hours worked, and date of donation.
2. **Donated materials, supplies, and professional labor** – This value is established by current market rates and must be established on an invoice provided by the donor.
3. **Donated equipment use** – Per s. NR 51.09(1)(c)4, Wis. Admin. Code, value is determined using Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) highway rates for equipment. You can find the rates on the Wisconsin DOT Equipment Rates web site at http://dnr.wi.gov/aid/documents/dotequiprates_standard.pdf .

How to Apply for County Conservation Aids Grant and Request Additional Grant Funding

Simply click on the County Conservation Aids (CCA) Application & Grant Agreement form #8700-045A Revision (07/18). <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/8700/8700-045A.pdf>

Complete the form on-line and contact your local DNR Fisheries, Wildlife, or Forestry Specialist to discuss your project and obtain project approval.

Submit the form by clicking the [Submit by Email](#) button at the top of the form on page 1. Your application will be received and reviewed for funding.

Submit a copy of the Authorizing Resolution with any attachments to DNR Grant Program Manager via email at Elizabeth.Norquist@Wisconsin.gov or postmarked no later than October 1.

The deadline for the CCA grants is October 1st.

A letter of final award notification will be sent out to all applicants by October 31st.

Process for Re-allocating Grant Funds not Claimed by a County

If a county fails to formally apply for its grant award amount by the October 1 deadline, then the DNR considers this to be the equivalent to the county declining this grant award. Under this program, the DNR may award funds not claimed by one county to another county. Process for re-allocation appears below.

- 1- Each county is located in one of 5 DNR regions. Click this link to see which counties are in each DNR region: <http://dnr.wi.gov/Contact/SSbyRegion.html>
- 2- Grant funds unclaimed by a county by the October 1st deadline will first be reallocated to other counties in the same DNR region that have requested additional project funds. All requests for additional funding within the region will be weighted equally. Any regional balance will be re-allocated among counties in the same DNR region until funds are exhausted.

EXAMPLE #1 – DNR Region 1 has 14 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in a \$6000 balance. Four counties accept their awarded amount and request additional funds. The \$6000 balance will be allocated within the region as follows:

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

| County | Additional Amount Requested | Additional Amount Allocated |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| AA | \$50 | \$50 |
| AB | \$200 | \$200 |
| AC | \$1450 | \$1450 |
| AD | \$18000 | \$4300 |
| Total | \$19700 | \$6000 |

- 3- If the amount of a regional balance is greater than the amount of additional project funds requested by counties in that region, then any residual funds will be re-allocated to counties in other DNR regions that have unmet project needs. All county requests for additional funding will be weighted equally. Residual funds will be re-allocated to counties in other DNR regions until funds are exhausted.

EXAMPLE #2 – DNR Region 5 has 10 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in an \$8000 balance. There are no requests for additional project funds from Region 5 counties. After all other regional re-allocations are complete; there are still counties with unmet project funding needs. The \$8000 balance from Region 5 will be allocated statewide as follows:

| Region | County | Unfunded Project Amount | Additional Amount Allocated |
|--------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | AD | \$13700 | \$2200 |
| 2 | BF | \$1400 | \$1400 |
| 3 | CH | \$2775 | \$2200 |
| 4 | DB | \$4300 | \$2200 |
| | Total | \$22175 | \$8000 |

- 4- If all regional reallocations and the statewide reallocation is completed and program funds still remain, those funds will carry forward into the next grant funding cycle and will be added to the next year's appropriation and be incorporated into the initial award notice that is sent to all 72 counties.
- 5- If a county accepts its grant award amount by the October 1 deadline, but later learns that it does not have the needed county match, then the county is encouraged to immediately notify the DNR that they wish to decline the offer of financial assistance. There is no penalty to the county for declining their share of CCA grant funds. Any grant amount declined by a county will be distributed to other counties using steps 2 and 3 above, in that order.

Reimbursement

The DNR administers this program on a reimbursement basis. This means all costs must be paid by the county or tribe, then the county or tribe may request reimbursement from the DNR. To request reimbursement, the county or tribe is required to submit completed DNR grant payment request form 8700-001 and detailed documentation (e.g., proof of purchase, proof of payment, force account details if local government staff are involved, volunteer labor worksheets showing hours worked, dates worked, and volunteer signatures, etc.).

County and tribal staff may find Form 8700-001 on the CCA Grant program webpage:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/CountyConservation.html>

Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Grant Program

Who to Call for Help

For general question about the County Conservation Aids Grant Program, acceptance of grant award or reimbursement questions, please contact the CCA Grant Program Manager, Beth Norquist, at 715-839-3751 or via email at Elizabeth.Norquist@Wisconsin.gov

The DNR has created a GovDelivery site for the CCA grant program that will make it possible for interested parties to receive email notices about program updates or changes. GovDelivery link will be available through the CCA grant web page:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/CountyConservation.html>