

# **DCNR Guidelines for Riparian Forest Buffer Program (PILOT)**

## **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 Riparian Forest Buffer Program is a PILOT program that will provide financial assistance to identify locations in need of riparian forest buffers and to design, establish, monitor, and provide short-term maintenance for those buffers. This program will also support projects that produce 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.

## **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 Riparian Forest Buffer Program are those which involve landowner outreach, buffer design, site preparation and buffer installation, plant materials and tree shelters, and short term maintenance of riparian buffers.

## **Section III – Program Requirements**

- A. The minimum grant amount awarded is \$50,000.

- B. All projects require a 50% match. Match may be cash or non-cash and must be directly related to the approved 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.
- 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 riparian buffer 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 riparian forest buffer(s). Permission can be given through: (1) a legal landowner agreement between the property owner and the applicant that allows for the installation and long term monitoring and maintenance of the buffer; (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.
- 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 riparian buffers installed as part of the grant-funded project without the prior written approval of the agency awarding the grant.

## **Section IV – Application Procedures**

Applications will be accepted beginning on August 1, 2016 via the online grant application portal: <https://www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/>. The application period will end on September 15, 2016 at 4pm est, at which time all grant applications received will be inventoried and assigned to DCNR staff for review and funding decisions.

## **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:

- G. Project Scope
- H. Applicant Qualifications
- I. Project Methodology & Outreach
- J. Project Maintenance & Management
- K. Project Acreage

## **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 can access 50% of awarded funds by submitting a completed Advanced Payment Form or Partial Payment form to the Department. 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, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-2301  
Telephone: (717) 772-3319  
Fax (717) 787-9577

These guidelines can also be accessed online at

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/yourwoods/streambuffers/riparianbuffergrant/index.htm>