

GUIDELINES

Lawn Conversion Sub-Grant for Conservation Districts

Application Deadline: *June 30, 2026.*

Pennsylvania's conservation districts are encouraged to apply for funding to convert mowed lawn to native upland forests or meadows in conjunction with landowners. This grant is first come first served. The grant round will stay open until funds are used up or June 30, 2026, whichever comes first.

Lawn Conversion Funding Summary:

Funding is to be used on shovel-ready projects converting presently maintained lawn to actively managed upland forest or perennial native meadow.

Meadow establishments are primarily implemented outside of the riparian area (300-ft or further away from a waterbody), but exceptions may allow meadow establishments within 300ft upon DCNR review if certain criteria are met, or due to specific site conditions prohibiting forest planting.

Upland forest plantings are always implemented outside of the riparian area; plantings 300-ft or closer to a waterbody are considered riparian forest buffers and must complete a different application.

Planting Plan:

A written planting plan is required and must be reviewed and signed by a DCNR Regional Watershed Forestry Specialist or Service Forester and submitted prior to using any sub-grant funds. Include a layout plan of the site including details on soils and site preparation; lawn conversion acreage; upland forest and meadow species, size, and spacing; specific materials and planting methods; seedling protection; and any other details, photos, or specifications necessary to adequately explain the project design. Before beginning a lawn conversion project, please review the following list of concerning invasive species. If these are in abundance, greater than 10% within a project area, the landowner should get them under control before starting a lawn conversion project. They are difficult to control once you start establishing a herbaceous plant community.

- Japanese Stiltgrass
- Arthraxon
- Wavy Leaf Basketgrass
- Oriental Bittersweet
- Canada Thistle
- Reed Canary Grass
- Japanese Knotweed
- Ailanthus
- Any woody invasive plant (bush honeysuckle, privet, multiflora rose, etc)

Maintenance Plan:

A written maintenance plan is required and must be reviewed and signed by a DCNR Regional Watershed Forestry Specialist or Service Forester and submitted prior to using any sub-grant funds. Details regarding post planting establishment activities (roughly 1-3 years) such as invasive species control and herbicide use; and long-term maintenance (roughly 3+years) to meet the grant requirement of ensuring the project's continuance for at least 5-10 years. Target survival rate should be at least 70%. The plan shall also include who will perform the activities and what is expected of the landowner. A maintenance plan template document will be provided by PACD.

Landowner Agreements:

- Properties owned by the Grantee require a Certification of Title form
- Properties controlled by the Grantee through a long-term lease or easement require a Certification of Title form and a copy of the lease or easement
- Properties that are not owned or controlled by the Grantee require an executed landowner agreement. Grantees are encouraged to use the DCNR Landowner Agreement template.

The DCNR Template Landowner agreements are required prior to using any sub-grant funds. Template agreements will be provided by PACD.

Eligible Expenses (not limited to):

- Contractor fees or other labor costs
- Site preparation and maintenance activities
- Herbicide applications
- Soil testing and appropriate soil amendments
- Tree and shrub stock (except ball-and-burlap/caliper trees)
- Tree protection materials (tubes or other shelters, stakes, etc.)
- Seed, carrier (rice hulls or clay kitty litter), and weed-free straw
- Equipment rental
- Supplemental or replacement plantings

Costs not covered include staff time for landowner outreach and education, legal or advertisement fees, site prioritization and design, and purchasing equipment. Staff time for actual installation of the project can be covered by this grant as well as herbicide application equipment.

Eligible Project Sites

Lawn Conversion projects must occur on presently maintained lawn. A lawn is an area of maintained exotic grasses making up a yard on a residential, commercial, school, or other property and is presently mowed at 8" high or shorter. Multiple contiguous properties may be combined into one project to meet the minimum acreage required by the program, but each property must have its own landowner agreement and establishment plan. Projects may be implemented on public or private lands. There is no minimum acreage limit as long as funding is available.

Ineligible Land Uses

Due to best management practice descriptions and PA Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan goals, only currently maintained lawn is eligible for DCNR Watershed Forestry funding. Ineligible land uses include, but are not limited to:

Pasture

Hay field

Cropland

Unmowed/"Let go" lawn

Abandoned mineland

Natural areas

Greater than 60% existing canopy, when planting forest

Project areas with high invasive plant pressure

Budget

A written budget estimating the cost of project materials, labor, and post planting establishment related to the site. The budget should include all cash and non-cash costs to be considered for grant funding.

Modifications:

Modifications to the project budget or project must be approved in writing by PACD to maintain funding eligibility. Submit requests for changes, indicating the reason for the change to Holly Miller, PACD Program Manager at hmillier@pacd.org.

Timeline

A written schedule for major project milestones such as outreach, site design, site preparation, planting, and post planting establishment.

Procuring Labor and Materials:

Grantees are reminded that labor and materials for all lawn conversion projects included in the grant agreement scope of work must be procured openly and competitively.

Match: A 50:50 match is required for this grant.

We strongly encourage conservation districts to contact the PSU Master Watershed Coordinator for your county to organize tree plantings with Master Watershed Steward volunteers. Follow this link to find your county coordinator

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/watershed-stewards/counties>

We also advise conservation districts to contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's 10 Million Trees Partnership to secure trees and other materials for projects. Please fill out the form to become a partner here

<http://www.tenmilliontrees.org/partners/internal/partner-application.html>

Orders can then be placed with Joe Hallinan at JHallinan@cbf.org

Payments:

The conservation district will receive 45% of grant funding upon approval of the application and receipt of all signed landowner agreements and signed planting & maintenance plans. 45% will be paid to the conservation district after submitting the mid-term report to PACD; and the final 10% after submitting the final report to PACD.

Refund:

Unused grant funds, cancelled grant projects, or funds used for ineligible expenses must be refunded to PACD within 60 days of the project end date.

Mid-Term Report:

A mid-term report is required at the estimated half-way point of your project. A report template will be provided by PACD.

Final Report:

A final report must be submitted within 60 days of the project end date. The final report must be submitted electronically. A report template will be provided by PACD.

We hope you will consider applying for a lawn conversion sub-grant. Please visit www.pacd.org for more information or to download an application. Applications will be reviewed/approved as they are received. Projects must be completed in enough time to have the final report submitted to PACD by October 31, 2026.

Contact Holly Miller, PACD Program Manager, at hmiller@pacd.org or 717-794-6105 with any questions.

By signing these Guidelines, you certify that the proposed projects are eligible, meet the requirements stated, and that the landowner(s) are committed to the project(s).

Signature of authorized person

Title

Date