



Conservation Cost-Share Policy

PURPOSE

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's Conservation Cost-Share Program is an incentive program intended to defray landowner costs for implementing conservation practices that benefit soil and water quality and wildlife habitat on private land. Preference will be given to projects on lands that are not eligible for other state and federal cost-share programs. The goal of this program is to help landowners practice better environmental stewardship by providing financial assistance for the implementation of conservation practices that would not otherwise be implemented without financial assistance.

The expectation of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors (hereinafter referred to as the District) is that Participants in the Conservation Cost-Share Program are responsible for proper installation, long-term operation, and maintenance of conservation practices.

COST-SHARE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All private lands within Hamilton County, except land owned by employees of the District, are eligible for the Conservation Cost-Share Program. All cost-share applicants must sign a Participant Agreement between the District and Landowner in order to be considered for cost-sharing. Conservation practices installed with cost-share funds must be in place for a minimum of three years.

INELIGIBLE PRACTICES

The following are not eligible for cost-sharing:

- Practices required as a result of a court order;
- Practices required for compliance with local building permits;
- Practices associated with mitigation.

COST-SHARE RATES AND LIMITS

The District maintains and annually reviews a document detailing each Conservation Practice and its cost-share rate and maximum funding limit. Depending on the number of applications received and other circumstances at the time of application review, the District reserves the right to reduce the percentage or amount of funding from the previously mentioned normal rate.

The maximum amount of cost-share a Participant is eligible to receive is \$500 per application. This funding must be used within one year of cost-share approval with the possibility of an additional one-year extension if approved by District staff.

PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTIONS

Participant contributions can be in the form of purchased materials and services, equipment rental or donated equipment use, materials, and labor. The value of donated materials, equipment use, and skilled labor will be equal to local retail prices for comparable materials, equipment, and labor. The value of unskilled labor, such as removing invasive plants or mulching, performed by individuals 17 years old and older is fixed at \$10.00 per hour. Labor performed by groups, organizations, or individuals younger than 17 years old will be determined on an individual basis by the Participant and the District.

COST-SHARE APPROVAL PROCESS

Each Conservation Cost-Share application will be evaluated using the Conservation Cost-Share Program's Criteria and Requirements for Cost-Sharing. The program staff will prepare conservation plans, conservation practice design, and assist in application preparation. Applications shall be signed by the Participant and submitted to the District's Board of Supervisors each February and August for cost-share award decisions. Cost-share applicants are invited to attend the Board meeting in which their applications are being reviewed.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the status of their application. If awarded cost-share funds, such written notification shall also serve as authorization for the Participant to begin practice implementation. **Any costs incurred or contracts signed prior to written approval are not eligible for reimbursement.**

It is the responsibility of the cost-share recipient to submit appropriate documentation of expenses. Such expenses may include purchased or contributed materials, contracted or donated equipment, and labor costs. Original receipts are required. Once the conservation practice(s) is/are installed, District staff will perform a site check to verify proper installation and collect documentation of expenses and will then file the proper forms to reimburse the Participant. Practice reimbursement rates are based on actual costs, but may not exceed the amount approved in the cost-share application.

OTHER PROCEDURES

Efforts will be made to publicize the availability of cost-share funds in *Town and Country*, the quarterly newsletter of the District, and in local newspapers.

No consideration of race gender, religion, political affiliation, or working or volunteer positions will be made during the application process.