



Heartland Backyard Conservation Program

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Heartland BCP Conservation Cost Share Policies

PURPOSE

The Heartland Backyard Conservation Cost-Share Program is an incentive program intended to defray some of the landowner costs for implementing conservation practices that benefit soil and water quality and wildlife habitat. 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 Heartland Backyard Conservation Cost-Share Program (hereinafter referred to as the Program) is that Participants in the Cost-Share Program are responsible for proper installation, long-term operation, and maintenance of conservation practices.

The Program is operated by the technical staff and supervisors of the Hamilton and Madison Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) under a Clean Water Indiana grant program.

COST-SHARE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All lands within Hamilton and Madison Counties, except land owned by employees of those SWCDs, are eligible for the Conservation Cost-Share Program. All cost-share applicants must sign a Participant Agreement between the Program 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 Program 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 Program reserves the right to reduce the percentage or amount of funding from the previously mentioned normal rate.

The maximum cost-share rate and maximum funding a Participant is eligible to receive is \$2000 per application at a 50% cost-share rate. This funding must be used within 14 months of cost-share approval with the possibility of an additional one-year extension if approved by Program 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 \$12.00 per hour. Labor performed by groups, organizations, or individuals younger than 17 years will be determined on an individual basis by the Program.

COST-SHARE APPROVAL PROCESS

Each Conservation Cost-Share application will be evaluated using the 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 participating SWCDs each spring and fall for cost-share award approval. Final approval will come from the Hamilton County SWCD Board of Supervisors, the lead county for the Clean Water Indiana Grant. Approval will be based on availability of funds, amount of cost-share requested by the Participant, and the degree of benefit for enhancing water quality in the watershed where the project will be located. Cost-share applicants are invited to attend the Hamilton County SWCD 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, Program 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 and/or fixed rates but may not exceed the amount approved in the cost-share application.**

Maintenance guides and information will be made available upon request.

OTHER PROCEDURES

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

Cost Share Eligible Practices, Criteria, and Requirements

Cost share awards cover 50% of actual cost of *approved* practice implementation and are based on the SWCD Conservationist’s cost estimate. Amounts listed below are the max match from the Program. The maximum amount of cost-share a Participant is eligible to receive is \$2000 per application or the amount approved by the SWCD board on the application.

Contents

Rain Gardens/Bioswales3

Constructed Wetlands for Wildlife & Water Quality3

Water Edge Enhancements or Filter/Buffer Strips3

Native/Prairie Plantings4

Porous Pavement/Pavers4

Native Tree/Shrub Plantings4

Critical Area Treatment.....5

Invasive Removal:5

Soil Testing5

Soil Improvement with Compost6

Top Soiling6

Rain Gardens/Bioswales

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$12/square foot and \$2000/garden

Purpose: Improve infiltration and water quality, reduce runoff, provide pollinator habitat

Requirements:

- Enough space for appropriately sized rain garden
- Located where water will flow (or intention to pipe or create swale)
- Soil that will allow water to infiltrate (or intention to amend soils)
- Native plants will comprise 100% of the planting

Restrictions:

- At least 10 feet from building, not over septic system, not where water naturally pools (if water is pooling, it is not infiltrating)
- Compacted or poorly drained soils (many urban areas) could require excavation, new soil, and/or underdrain.
- Bioswales within an easement or right-of-way must be permitted and/or approved by regulating authorities

Constructed Wetlands for Wildlife & Water Quality

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$15.00/square foot and \$2000/wetland

Purpose: Enhance wildlife habitat and improve water filtration

Requirements:

- Conducive site
- Improve stormwater filtration
- A buffer area is required to filter trash and sediments before entering wetland.
- Sufficient hydrology to maintain wetness.
- Soils that will hold water with a very slow infiltration rate.

Restrictions:

- Not within 10 feet of building, 100 feet of well, or 50 feet of septic
- Permitting may be required
- Impoundment may not impact adjoining properties
- Impoundment and water outlet structure may require engineering approval

Water Edge Enhancements or Filter/Buffer Strips

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$2000

Purpose: Filter stormwater, reduce nutrient and pesticide applications, remove nutrients from adjacent water body and prevent soil erosion.

Requirements:

- Provide stormwater filtration
- Reduce or prevent shoreline erosion
- Establish emergent plants to remove nutrients from water body
- Reduce maintenance/mowing costs
- Mitigate goose problem
- Provide additional wildlife habitat
- Native plants will comprise 100% of the planting
- Minimum width shall be five feet (5')

Restrictions:

- Need approval from HOA, Surveyor's Office, Planning Department or other controlling org.
- Goose fencing is required on case by case basis
- Existing erosion will be addressed and can be included in the project cost
- An operations and maintenance plan must be included in the project

Native/Prairie Plantings

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$2000 Funding will not exceed \$1,400 per acre

Purpose: Replace turf grass or cultivated land to increase water infiltration, reduce pesticide and nutrient applications and improve wildlife habitat.

Requirements:

- Lack of wildlife habitat (food sources, nesting areas)
- Reduce mowing or maintenance on site
- Planting will consist of 100% native plants
- Invasive plants will be removed prior to planting
- Seed must be free of noxious, invasive species and/or pigweed

Restrictions:

- Practice cannot be used on earthen dams or levees
- An operations and maintenance plan must be included in the project

Porous Pavement/Pavers

Maximum Cost –Share Funding: \$2000 Maximum/ \$10.00 sq. ft.

Purpose: To reduce stormwater runoff and encourage infiltration and improved water quality for existing hard surfaces

Requirements:

- Conducive site
- Need for stormwater filtration
- Retrofit previously impervious area
- Design/Installation requirements will be prepared according to manufacturer’s specifications or licensed engineer or architect

Native Tree/Shrub Plantings

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: total project to be determined by SWCD. Per tree- \$40, Per shrub- \$30, Bare root \$.80

Purpose: To filter and capture rainfall to reduce stormwater runoff, wildlife habitat.

Requirements:

- Lack of canopy cover
- Secondary benefits should include wildlife habitat, windbreak, screening or erosion control
- The planting plan will provide plant diversity
- Must select native plants
- Plantings that enter easements or right-of-ways must have required permits or permissions
- Removal of invasive plants can be included in the project costs
- All wrapping, burlap, wire, etc. must be removed prior to planting.
- Must be planted according to Purdue Hort. Guidelines: <https://ag.purdue.edu/hla/pubs/HO/HO-100.pdf>

Street tree plantings must also:

- Have adequate space in the tree lawn for mature growth
- Be properly chosen to avoid power lines and other threats
- Have necessary city/neighborhood street tree planting approvals

Restrictions:

- Do not plant in drainage and utility easements without required permits and/or permissions
- Foundation, decorative, ornamental and miniature plants will not be funded
- Funds will not be used for landscaping, water features and aesthetic enhancements
- Willow trees and River Birch will not be planted within 100 ft. of a closed drain

Critical Area Treatment

Maximum Cost Share Funding - \$2000

Purpose: Eliminate excessive soil erosion and improve water quality

Requirements:

- Practices should primarily involve vegetative stabilization
- Structural practices/improvements will be designed and approved by a licensed engineer or landscape architect
- Native vegetation will be used where possible
- The use of erosion control products like erosion control blankets, turf reinforcement mats, coir logs and similar products to enhance vegetative establishment and long term stability is encouraged
- If needed soil conditions will be improved for better growing conditions
- Invasive plant removal can be included with this practice

Restrictions:

- No streambank projects
- The project should identify the causes of erosion and include solutions that will prevent future erosion
- Work area must be owned or controlled by applicants

Invasive Removal:

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$2000

Purpose: To reduce invasive terrestrial plant species density and spread and increase native habitat.

Requirements:

- Invasive plant problem
- Lack of native or beneficial vegetation
- Replanting must consist of native species
- Debris disposal plan must be submitted.
- Minimum 3-year commitment
- Does not qualify for WHIP program

Restrictions:

- Highly erodible areas must be re-established with native planting and/or erosion control practices.
- Debris must be securely disposed of outside of a floodway.

Soil Testing

Maximum Cost –Share Funding: \$45 and 2 soil tests per person/location.

Purpose: To apply the correct amount of nutrients for lawn and/or garden needs.

Requirements:

- A laboratory soil test. Soil to be gathered by applicant and delivered to SWCD office. Applicants will pay 50% up front.
- Nutrients will be applied per Purdue Bulletin AY-22-W “Fertilizing Established Cool-season Lawn”
- Only eligible for soil test cost sharing every 3 years.
- Participant must sign agreement to not apply fertilizers/amendments above levels suggested by lab.

Application Criteria: Rolling application begins 3/21/19 on a rolling schedule until 50 applications have been approved.

Soil Improvement with Compost

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$300 not to exceed \$0.12/sq. ft. for lawn and \$0.40/sq. ft. for vegetable/produce/production gardens and farms only (excludes flower beds, wildflower planting beds/areas, and prairie planting areas).

Purpose: To improve soil that is compacted or has less than 2% organic material in soil sample.

Requirements:

- A laboratory soil test (\$35 or cost share eligible).
- A site visit and the recommendation of a SWCD conservationist.
- Application must follow guidelines provided by Conservationist, including potential additional soil amendments. For gardens, the compost may be required to be tilled in 6" deep
- For lawns the compost will be applied at a thickness of ½" to 1" (1.5 cu. yds. to 3 cu. yds./1000 sq. ft.) on areas where established vegetation (turf or otherwise).
- For lawns and gardens – must be applied to areas with vegetative cover or other erosion protection methods – to protect against sheet, rill, and wild erosion. In areas where there are no adequate measures for soil erosion, the Critical Area Treatment cost share practice can be considered.
- Include photo documentation that practice was completed by date outlined in award letter.

Restrictions:

- Compost not applied within one week of purchase must be protected from wind and water erosion.
- Compost is not allowed on stream banks.
- Bagged compost is not allowed (case by case exceptions allowed by conservationist).
- Excludes flower beds, wildflower planting beds/areas, and prairie planting areas.

Application Criteria:

- Rolling application begins 3/21/19 on a rolling schedule until \$1,000 in assistance is allocated.

Top Soiling

Maximum Cost-Share Funding: \$300

Purpose: To improve soil that is compacted or has less than 1% organic material in soil sample.

Requirements:

- A laboratory soil test (\$35, cost share eligible).
- A site visit by a SWCD conservationist to delineate the affected area.
- A minimum of 4" of topsoil should be applied to the affected area for areas with bare soil.
- Application must follow guidelines provided by Conservationist (ex. tilling in), including application timeline, potential additional soil amendments followed by erosion control practices as determined by conservationist.
- Priority will be given to projects that filter stormwater runoff.
- Include photo documentation that practice was completed by date outlined in award letter.

Restrictions:

- Bagged topsoil is not allowed (case by case exceptions allowed by conservationist).
- Include photo documentation that practice, including erosion control practices, was completed by date outlined in award letter.
- Top soil not applied within one week of purchase must be protected from wind and water erosion.

Application Criteria:

- Rolling application begins 3/21/19 on a rolling schedule until \$1,000 in assistance is allocated.