



Invasive Species Cost Share Program



PURPOSE

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's Invasive Species Cost-Share Program is an incentive program intended to defray landowner costs for invasive species removal and restoration of ecosystems with native species. 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 ecosystem management 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 Invasive Species Cost-Share Program are responsible for removal of agreed invasives via approved techniques and ongoing maintenance of conservation practices.

COST-SHARE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

All lands within Hamilton County, except land owned by employees or supervisors of the District, are eligible for the Invasive Species Cost-Share Program. Private land is prioritized for this program. All cost-share applicants must sign a Participant Agreement between the District and Landowner in order to be considered for cost-sharing. Eligible invasive species include those listed on the [Indiana Invasive Species Council Invasive Plant List](#) for Indiana and additional species outlined in the management plan

INELIGIBLE PRACTICES

The following are not eligible for cost-sharing:

- Practices required as a result of a court order;
- Practices required for compliance with permits, ordinances, statues or legislation;
- Projects where noxious weeds are 50% of the species cover or greater;
- Practices associated with mitigation;
- Removal of mature individual invasive trees planted in a landscape setting

PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTIONS

The Invasive Species Cost-Share Program is a matching grant; the Participant is required to contribute half of the project costs either financially or in-kind (contributions of goods or services/time). Participant contributions can be in the form of purchased materials and services (contractor 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. Landowner/volunteer contributions of working time are valued at \$25 per person per hour and can include administrative, travel, and prep work for the project as well as hours spent physically working on the project.

COST-SHARE APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Interested landowners are encouraged to contact the SWCD to schedule a free site visit and invasive species assessment. The program staff will prepare an invasive species management and restoration plans and assist in application preparation. Applications shall be signed by the Participant and/or landowner and submitted by the quarterly deadline for consideration. Applications will be ranked via the project matrix and evaluated by the cost share committee comprised of SWCD staff and HIP volunteers. Applicants are welcome to provide a statement outlining financial need or any extenuating factors that affect their application. The committee will provide a list of recommended projects for approval to the SWCD board for review and approval at their monthly board meeting. Applications that are not approved are welcome to resubmit for subsequent funding rounds. Approved applicants are welcome to submit additional applications after the successful completion of their initial project, however, first time applicants will be prioritized.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the status of their application within 30 days of the application deadline. If awarded cost-share funds, such written notification shall also serve as authorization for the Participant to begin practice implementation. **Any costs incurred prior to approval of the grant are not eligible for reimbursement.** The program provides reimbursement funds upon the completion of the project according to the outlined management plan and timeline. Up front payments of funds are available in extenuating circumstances and with board approval.

PAYMENT PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the cost-share recipient to submit appropriate documentation of expenses upon project completion. Such expenses may include purchased or contributed materials, rented or donated equipment, and labor costs. Original receipts are required. A work log is required to track in-kind contributions of labor hours by the property owner and/or volunteers. Once the work is completed District staff will perform a site check to verify the work has followed the management plan and collect documentation of expenses. Staff will then file the proper forms to reimburse the Participant. Reimbursements will be distributed via check after the SWCD board's next board meeting. Cost share funds are considered taxable income and Participants will receive a 1099. **Practice reimbursement rates are based on actual costs but may not exceed the amount approved in the cost-share application.** If you are unsure if a project cost qualifies as an approved expense, please contact your conservationist.

Cost share awards cover 50% of actual cost of *approved* practice implementation and are based on the SWCD conservationist's cost estimate and/or contractor's written invoice. The maximum amount of cost-share a Participant is eligible to receive is \$4,000 per application.

PROJECT TIMELINES

Participants will have one year from the application approval date to complete their project and submit the required documentation. Each project must be meet the 3- and 6-month goals outlined in their application package. **The SWCD reserves the right to cancel the cost share agreement if the project is not progressing and meeting the defined timeline.**

The cost share committee and SWCD reserve the right to adjust policies, cost share rates, deadlines, and program structure at any time.

This program is grant funded and will run until all grant funds are utilized.

Appendix

Ranking Matrix

The ranking matrix will be filled out by the conservationist but is provided here to give you insight into the program priorities. Each project will be assigned a total point value and projects will be ranked by their point total. The review committee will consider the points ranking but reserves the right to consider financial need (expressed via optional statement) and other factors in funding decisions.

- Long term commitment/resources available (financial and/or volunteer)
 - 1- one year effort, no defined long-term plans or money dedicated to eradication/restoration
 - 3 – interest in ongoing maintenance but no concrete plans
 - 5 – robust plans/dedication via events, financial resources for ongoing maintenance
- Adjacent to high quality areas or parks
 - 5- Share border
 - 3- Within .5 mile
 - 2- Within 1 mile
- Private land preferred
 - 3 – private land
- First time participants/initial effort
 - 3 – New participant/first time effort
- Early Detection & Rapid Response (EDRR)
 - 5- EDRR species on property
 - 3- within .25 mile
- Highly visible/accessible project
 - 3 – agreed to and able to post signage

Additional considerations:

- Financial need/applicant statement
- Is project eligible for other state or federal cost share programs?

Payment examples:

Example 1:

- Project estimate from contractor: \$10,000. You apply for and are approved for the maximum award, \$4,000. After project completion and submission of receipt showing payment to vendor, you receive a check for \$4,000.

Example 2:

- You are doing the work on your property yourself. The estimate developed with the technician is \$3,000 including the value of your 'in kind' labor. You apply for and are approved for \$1,500 (50% of the project cost).
- You complete your project and submit receipts totaling \$500 in related expenses (herbicide, safety glasses, etc.) and a work log showing 50 hours (at \$25/hr) valued at \$1,250. Your total expenses are therefore \$1,750. Your cost share payment would be \$875 - half your actual expenses.