



**DISTRICT ONE (CUYAHOGA COUNTY)
NATURAL RESOURCES
ASSISTANCE COUNCIL**

CLEAN OHIO CONSERVATION PROGRAM

**ROUND 6
APPLICANT MANUAL**

MAY 2009

OVERVIEW OF CLEAN OHIO PROGRAM

In 2000, the State of Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the state to sell bonds and other obligations for the Clean Ohio Program.

The Clean Ohio Program provides grants for brownfields, open space and watershed conservation, farmland preservation and recreational trails. Information on the other Clean Ohio Programs can be obtained at <http://clean.ohio.gov/>.

Clean Ohio funds are distributed through nineteen districts established by law. The Cuyahoga County Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC) is responsible for:

1. Promoting the development and improvement of Cuyahoga County's open space and the protection and enhancement of riparian corridors and watersheds; and
2. Evaluating and selecting applications from local jurisdictions within Cuyahoga County for financial assistance from the Clean Ohio Conservation Program.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY PRINCIPLES

The Cuyahoga County NRAC considers the Clean Ohio Conservation Program a unique opportunity for advancing environmental conservation and improving the quality of life in Cuyahoga County.

Cuyahoga is the largest and most urbanized of Ohio's eighty-eight counties with approximately 90% of the county's land developed and only 10% of this developed land is considered as designated open space. As such, the existing natural areas and watersheds in the county are fragmented with limited public accessibility. Furthermore, many open space areas and watersheds have been degraded and destroyed by pollution and mismanagement while multiple others lie abandoned because of outmigration and poor planning.

However, open space is an important and vital part of daily life in urban areas: by improving the social health of our communities, the environmental quality of our ecosystems, and the economic viability of our region. Protecting and restoring natural systems—their biodiversity, habitats, and aesthetics will result in a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable Cuyahoga County.

It is the NRAC's intent to ensure that the open space and riparian corridor projects that are selected to receive Clean Ohio funding are visible, accessible, and instructional to the general public.

The five principles listed below reflect the essential needs of Cuyahoga County. Successful applicants should ensure that their project accomplishes these essential elements:

1. **Preserve** natural areas or open space.
2. **Restore** landscapes that have been degraded or destroyed.
3. **Enhance** the quality of natural areas or open space.
4. **Link** natural areas to each other or to county cultural and civic heritage areas.
5. **Provide** public access to natural areas and/or county cultural and civic heritage areas.

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

Permanent protection of the open space acquired through the Clean Ohio Conservation Program is mandated. Therefore, requests for open space **must** include acquisition by land securement. Examples of types of land securements are listed below and defined in the Glossary. Applications for open space acquisition that do not include land securement will not be considered by the NRAC.

1. Fee Simple Purchase
2. Easement Purchase
3. Transfer of Conservation Value

It is critical to the NRAC that the open space provided through the Clean Ohio Program initiates or hastens the recovery of the ecosystem present on the land. Therefore, restoration activities that recover or maintain the ecological integrity should be a critical component of an open space acquisition project.

Restoration is both a process and a project. Restoration components such as those listed below should be included in the project:

- Return the open space to its prior state or to what it would have become without societal interference;
- Ensure the integrity and sustainability of the species (flora and fauna) introduced are both native and resilient (can resist disturbance);
- Integrate the community's cultural heritage;
- Provide opportunities for people to appreciate and understand cultural and ecological relationships; and
- Promote a common vision for greenspace for Cuyahoga County.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

Mr. David Beach, Chair

Director, GreenCityBlueLake Institute
Environmental Representative

Mr. Paul Alsenas

Director, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
Governmental Representative - Cuyahoga County

Ms. Virginia Aveni

Cuyahoga County Planning Commission Representative

Mr. Tim Donovan

Executive Director, Ohio Canal Corridor
Environmental Representative

Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells

Manager of Environmental Programs, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
Environmental Representative

Mr. Vern Hartenburg

Executive Director, Cleveland Metroparks
Parks Representative

Mayor Kathy Mulcahy

Mayor, Village of Orange
DOPWIC Representative

Ms. Carol Thaler, AICP

Western Reserve Resource, Conservation and Development District
Agricultural Representative

Ms. Antoinette Thompson

Assistant Director, Cleveland Department of Parks, Recreation & Properties
Parks Representative

Mr. James Weber

Associate Supervisor, Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District
Soil and Water Conservation Representative

Honorable Randall Westfall

Mayor, Village of Valley View
Governmental Representative – Municipal Corporations

ROUND SIX

The Round 6 allocation includes an additional \$3,123,179 in funding because not all of the Round 5 allocation was expended.

The funding available for Round 6 consists of:

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Round 5 remaining funds: | \$3,123,179 |
| Round 6 Allocation: | <u>\$3,685,540</u> |
| Total Available | \$6,808,719 |

APPLICATION DUE DATE

To be considered for financial assistance, applications must be submitted by:

4:30 p.m. Monday, August 31, 2009 to the
Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
323 Lakeside Avenue, Suite 400
Cleveland, OH 44113
(216) 443-3700
(216) 443-3737 - fax

APPLICATION MATERIALS

The following materials must be submitted for each project:

1. **OPWC Clean Ohio Conservation Fund Application.** The application is available from the OPWC website: http://www.pwc.state.oh.us/clean_ohio.htm.
2. **Cuyahoga County NRAC Round 6 Application Supplement** which relates directly to the NRAC Evaluation Methodology is available at the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission website: <http://planning.co.cuyahoga.oh.nrac.htm> or by contacting Ms. Meghan Chaney at (216) 443-3700 or at mchangey@cuyahogacounty.us.
3. Attachments such as maps, pictures, applicable pages or sections of master plans or other reports, any other backup documentation.

APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

The application must contain the following completed documents:

1. OPWC application
2. NRAC Application Supplement
3. Certified Appraisal of the property being acquired (the project will not be evaluated if the appraisal is not included).
4. Maps and other documents as needed.
5. Land Securement, if applying for open space acquisition.

The application materials can be submitted in one of two ways:

1. Hard copy - Submit one (1) original and twelve (12) copies of each document; or
2. Digitally - submit one (1) original and (1) copy as a hard copy and twelve (12) compact discs that contain the documents.

Additionally:

- All materials must be typed in 11 font or larger.
- The original copy must be single-sided; the copies can be double-sided.
- All copies should be stapled on the top left-hand side, do not bind the applications or the copies.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all of the documents are accurate, complete and in accordance with the requirements, terms, and conditions set down by the OPWC and the NRAC. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the disqualification of a project.

Each applicant will be given five (5) days to respond to a request for additional information. If the applicant does not respond, the project will be scored using the original information. **This does not apply to the certified appraisal.**

ROUND SIX SCHEDULE

The NRAC has established the following schedule for evaluating and selecting projects for Round Five.

| ACTIVITY | DATE |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Application Materials Available | Friday, May 22, 2009 |
| Applicant Workshop | Thursday, June 25, 2009 |
| Applications Due to NRAC | Monday, August 31, 2009 |
| Evaluation of Projects | September 1 – October 14, 2009 |
| Meeting with Applicants | Wednesday, September 30, 2009 |
| Ranking of Projects | Wednesday, October 14, 2009 |
| Recommendations Submitted to OPWC | October 23, 2009 |
| OPWC Approval of Projects | November, 2009 |

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

● ***Local Political Subdivisions***

- Counties
- Municipalities
- Villages
- Townships
- Conservancy Districts
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Joint Recreation Districts
- Park District/Authority

- ***Non-Profit Corporations*** - which are exempt from federal income taxation pursuant to 26 USC 501 (a) and one of its designated activities is directly related to the purposes for which Clean Ohio Conservation grants are issued.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

OPEN SPACE *

- Acquisition of open space.
- Acquisition of easements.
- Acquisition of land or rights in land for parks, forests, wetlands or natural areas that protect an endangered plant or animal population.
- Other natural areas.
- Connecting corridors for natural areas.
- Construction or enhancement of facilities to make open space accessible and useable by the general public.

* Projects which are eligible for Clean Ohio Trails Program funding are not eligible under the Clean Ohio Conservation Program; however, trails which provide access to, or public use of lands acquired through the Clean Ohio Conservation Program are eligible project elements.

X ***Not Eligible*** - Acquiring open space for “active recreation” such as baseball diamonds, tennis courts, etc.

OPEN SPACE PROJECTS SHOULD PROMOTE:

- Comprehensive open space planning.
- Aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
- Economic development that promotes local economic development and/or community development initiatives in high unemployment and/or low-income areas.
- Protection of rare, threatened and endangered species habitats.
- Protection of high quality, viable habitats for plant and animal species.
- Preservation of wetlands or other scarce natural resources.
- Pedestrian or bicycle linkages.
- Educational opportunities.
- Quality of life and the natural heritage of the state.

- Reduction or elimination of nonnative, invasive species of plants or animals.
- Balancing the natural ecosystem.

RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

- Reforestation of land or the planting of vegetation for filtration purposes.
- Fee simple acquisition of lands to provide access to riparian corridors or watersheds.
- Acquisition of easements for the purpose of protecting and enhancing riparian corridors or watersheds.

X ***Not Eligible*** -Riparian corridor projects that initiate or perpetuate hydromodification such as dams, ditch development or channelization.

RIPARIAN CORRIDORS PROJECTS SHOULD PROMOTE:

- Habitat protection.
- Stream corridor-wide or watershed planning.
- Recreational, economic and aesthetic preservation benefits.
- Floodplain and streamside forest functions.
- Headwater stream preservation.
- Restoration and preservation of aquatic biological communities.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

● **ACQUISITION – Required for Open Space Acquisition projects.**

- Fee Simple Purchase
- Easement Purchase
- Transfer of Conservation Easement

● **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

- Appraisal - **a certified appraisal must be included in the application.**
- Closing Costs
- Title Search
- Environmental Assessments
- Design
- Restoration

● **CONSTRUCTION OR ENHANCEMENT OF FACILITIES**

● **PERMIT, ADVERTISING AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

X ***Not Eligible*** - Administrative services incurred by the applicant.

FUNDING

- **Grants:** 75% of the estimated total project cost: a minimum 25% local match is required.

- **Eligible Local Match Sources:**
 - Contributions of money by any person, local political subdivision, or the federal government.
 - Contributions in-kind through the purchase or donation of equipment, land, easements, interest in land, labor and materials necessary to complete the project.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The NRAC has established a two-phase process to select the projects that will be recommended to the OPWC for final evaluation and approval.

Phase 1 - Preliminary Project Evaluation

Phase 2 - Final Project Scoring and Selection

PHASE 1 PRELIMINARY PROJECT EVALUATION

- 1.1 All of the submitted applications will be reviewed by the NRAC members for compliance with the Clean Ohio Conservation Program, OPWC and NRAC guidelines.
- 1.2 Using the Evaluation Criteria, the NRAC members will review each application and assign a preliminary score in each of the evaluation categories. Documents used by the NRAC are the OPWC Application, the NRAC Application Supplement and any other documentation supplied by the applicant.

PHASE 2 FINAL PROJECT SCORING AND SELECTION

- 2.1 The NRAC will meet with each applicant to discuss their project(s). These interviews are intended to give the NRAC and the applicant an opportunity to clarify issues and highlight aspects of the project that could not be conveyed through the application.
- 2.2 After the interviews, each NRAC member will refine their preliminary evaluation scores and submit their final scores to the NRAC administrative staff. The weight factors will be applied and the Final Project Ranking will be determined.
- 2.3 Minimum Score – A project must receive a minimum preliminary evaluation score of 150 points, 60% of the total points available, to be considered by the NRAC.
- 2.4 NRAC will meet to review and discuss the projects in the Final Project Ranking.
- 2.3 The NRAC will make a decision to adopt the Final Project Ranking or make changes to the scoring.
- 2.4 In the case of a tie between two or more projects, the NRAC through discussion will attempt to re-score the projects. If the discussions do not result in a tie breaker then the project with the highest percentage of local match will be selected.

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The NRAC evaluation process utilizes the evaluation criteria outlined in ORC Section 164.24. The NRAC has assigned points and weight factors to each of the evaluation criteria in order to determine which projects should be approved for Clean Ohio Conservation funding.

The following pages outline the Council's application requirements, project selection and evaluation methodologies.

SECTION ONE - PROJECT EMPHASIS (No points are awarded in this category.)

Check all factors that will be advanced through the project.

A. Open Space Projects

- Result of a comprehensive open space plan.
- Incorporates aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
- Promotes local economic development and/or community development initiatives in a high unemployment and low income areas.
- Protects habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species.
- Preserves high quality, viable habitats for plant and animal species.
- Preserves existing high quality wetlands or other scarce natural resources.
- Provides educational opportunities and provides physical links to schools and after-school centers.
- Preserves or restores natural areas that contribute to the quality of life and the county's natural heritage such as: water quality; natural stream channels; the Lakefront; floodplains; wetlands; and streamside forests.
- Reduces or eliminates nonnative, invasive species of plants or animals.
- Promotes the proper management of the ecosystem while allowing for safe fishing, hunting and trapping.
- Provides appropriate public access.

B. Riparian Corridor or Watershed Protection Projects:

- ___ Increases habitat protection.
- ___ Is a result of a stream corridor-wide or watershed-wide plan.
- ___ Provides multiple recreational, economic and aesthetic preservation benefits.
- ___ Preserves headwater streams or outfalls to Lake Erie.
- ___ Restores and preserves aquatic biological communities.
- ___ Provides appropriate public access.

SECTION TWO – PROJECT DESCRIPTION (No points are awarded in this category.)

A three-page description that includes a detailed but concise explanation of the project: including location, importance to the County, method of purchase and implementation.

SECTION THREE - COUNTY PRINCIPLES

Scoring: Up to 10 points per principle - maximum of 50 points.

The NRAC has developed five priorities or principles that reflect the types of projects that are needed in Cuyahoga County and should be awarded Clean Ohio Conservation funding. Each NRAC member will assess to what degree a principle is met.

- Principle 1: Preserve** natural areas or open space.
- Principle 2: Enhance** the quality of natural areas or open space.
- Principle 3: Restore** landscapes that have been degraded or destroyed.
- Principle 4: Link** natural areas to each other or to cultural and civic heritage areas within the county.
- Principle 5: Provide** public access to natural areas and/or cultural and civic heritage areas within the county.

SECTION FOUR - PROJECT BENEFITS

Scoring: Up to 10 points per benefit - maximum of 30 points.

Studies have shown that conservation projects can provide value beyond those associated with environmental benefits. Indeed, the existence of open space and watershed projects can provide economic and social benefits to all members of society.

Indicate and explain the applicable benefits that are anticipated as a result of this project:

A. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Supports a priority local economic and/or community development initiative.
- Catalyzes other improvements.
- Increases the value of adjacent or nearby land.
- Reduces annual municipal service costs (e.g., public safety, public service).
- Develops or redevelops vacant, underutilized parcels/acres.
- Other economic benefits.

B. SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Provides public access.
- Creates a gathering place.
- Provides educational opportunities.
- Provides bicycle and pedestrian linkages.
- Removes a blighted image.
- Improves public health and safety.
- Enhances the cultural and civic heritage of the area.
- Incorporates aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
- Other social benefits.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Balances the built environment with the natural environment.
- Enhances environmental health or reduce ecological risks.
- Converts brownfield parcels/acres to a natural area and/or open space.
- Creates new habitats or other natural areas and/or open space.
- Improve biodiversity.
- Protects a rare, threatened or endangered species classified as regionally endangered or included in the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) (See OPWC Glossary of Terms).
- Protects high quality or regionally significant biological communities.
- Reduces the quantity or improve the quality of stormwater runoff.
- Restores floodplain functions.
- Other environmental benefits.

SECTION FIVE - NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT

Scoring: Maximum of 30 points

Cuyahoga County needs an integrated system of key natural areas that will provide benefits to all residents, particularly those residents that reside in areas that lack greenspace and/or the ability to enjoy the benefits of these areas.

Explain how the project:

- A.** Is part of an adopted regional, county (including those shown on the Cuyahoga County Greenprint), and community or watershed plan. Provide project plan documentation.

- B. Is of regional or county significance.
- C. Provides a key linkage to an existing or proposed greenway.
- D. Preserves or restores an example of the county's natural heritage.
- E. Serves an underserved population.
- F. Serves a low-income and/or minority neighborhood.

SECTION SIX - OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS

6.1 Other Project Funding *Scoring: 0 - 10 points*

Projects will be awarded points in this category based on the local match provided. The higher the percent of local match, the higher the points that will be awarded. The OPWC Application, Page 3, will be used to determine the points in this category. (This category is scored by staff and points provided to the NRAC.)

| % of Local Match | Points |
|------------------|--------|
| 25 | 2 |
| 35 | 3 |
| 45 | 4 |
| 55 | 5 |
| 65 | 6 |
| 75 | 7 |
| 85 | 8 |
| 95 | 9 |
| More than 95 | 10 |

6.2 Level of Coordination *Scoring: 0 - 10 points*

Projects that involve more than one agency or organization will be extra given consideration. The level of coordination can be financial contributions, the donation of property, assistance in planning and implementing the project or responsibility for completing a part of the project.

If applicable, explain:

1. The agencies and organizations that have been involved in the planning and preparation of this project application.
2. The level of coordination that each agency or organization has provided.

6.3 Readiness to Proceed *Scoring: 0 - 10 points*

Projects that can demonstrate that acquisition or construction will take place within a year will be given higher consideration.

Based on the type of project (acquisition of property or acquisition with enhancement), check the timeframe that is applicable for the project.

Applicants that have a contract with the owner (signed purchase agreement) or evidence of a pending transaction (letter/memorandum of understanding) should provide a copy of the document(s), or submit the documents as soon as possible if they become available during the evaluation period.

If a successful applicant determines that the start dates as given will not be met, the applicant must notify the NRAC of the delay and provide the reason for the delay.

6.4 Immediacy *Scoring: Up to 10 bonus points.*

Applicants should indicate and explain if the project area is vulnerable to being developed as something other than open space (e.g. commercial development) and how this development would be detrimental to the community.

| NRAC EVALUATION POINTS | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| CRITERIA | MAXIMUM POINTS | WEIGHT FACTOR | MAXIMUM WEIGHTED POINTS | % |
| County Principles | | | | |
| Preserves | 10 | 3 | 30 | 12.0 |
| Restores | 10 | 2 | 20 | 8.0 |
| Enhances | 10 | 2 | 20 | 8.0 |
| Links areas | 10 | 3 | 30 | 12.0 |
| Provides | 10 | 2 | 20 | 8.0 |
| Subtotal | 50 | | 120 | 48.0 |
| Benefits | | | | |
| Economic | 10 | 1 | 10 | 4.0 |
| Social | 10 | 2 | 20 | 8.0 |
| Environmental | 10 | 3 | 30 | 12.0 |
| Subtotal | 30 | | 60 | 24.0 |
| Needs of the District | 10 | 3 | 30 | 12.0 |
| Other Relevant Factors | | | | |
| Other Project Funding | 10 | 1 | 10 | 4.0 |
| Level of Coordination | 10 | 1 | 10 | 4.0 |
| Readiness to Proceed | 10 | 1 | 10 | 4.0 |
| Immediacy (bonus) | 10 | 1 | 10 | 4.0 |
| Subtotal | 40 | | 40 | 16.0 |
| Total | 130 | | 250 | 100 |

A minimum score of 150 points, 60% of total points available, is required to be considered for funding.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NRAC APPLICATION SUPPLEMENT

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Project Name:

Name of the project. Please use the same name stated on the OPWC application.

Sponsoring Organization:

Indicate the name of the applicant. Projects involving multiple applicants must designate a lead agency.

Other Sponsoring Organization:

Indicate the name(s) of any other organizations that are participating in the project.

Contact Person:

Provide the name of the individual who can best answer or coordinate the response to questions about the project.

Phone, Fax and Email Address:

Enter the daytime telephone number, the fax number and the email address (if available) of the contact person.

SECTION ONE- PROJECT EMPHASIS

Depending upon the type of project submitted, open space or riparian corridor; check each factor that will be achieved by the project.

For example: If an open space project will **incorporate aesthetically-pleasing and ecologically-informed design, protect high quality viable habitats for plant and animal species** and will **provide educational opportunities**, then all four factors should be checked.

SECTION TWO - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Name: Enter the project name as listed on Page One - Applicant Information.

Type of Project for which funds are being requested: Check one of the three types of projects:

1. Acquisition of land and indicate the type of acquisition;
2. Acquisition of land and facilities enhancement; or
3. Riparian corridor project.

Appraisal or conservation value: Indicate the value of the land.

*** The District One NRAC requires that a certified appraisal be included in the application. If the certified appraisal is not attached, the project will not be reviewed by the NRAC.**

Project Description: Provide a project description that includes a map showing the project location(s) and the local setting(s) and explain if applicable:

- Whether the project is part of phased project. If so, briefly explain the larger project and the specific phase that is included in the application.
- The project's link, if any, with the Cuyahoga County Greenprint Map (available at planning@cuyahoga.oh.us)

SECTION THREE - COUNTY PRINCIPLES

The five principles are the foundation upon which the evaluation methodology was developed and it is the NRAC's intent to select projects that advance these principles.

Applicants should identify the principle(s) that will be advanced by their project. Provide a description in the appropriate section. All statements regarding a project's benefits must supported by documentation.

SECTION FOUR - PROJECT BENEFITS

In the area provided in the application, describe the economic, social and environmental benefits of the project. Provide supporting documentation, as necessary, to support the stated benefits. The supporting documentation may be in the form of specific citations to relevant studies or plans.

SECTION FIVE - NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT

Check all those that apply and explain how the area to be improved will enhance the conservation needs of Cuyahoga County.

SECTION SIX - OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS

Other Project Funding: Information provided in OPWC Clean Ohio Conservation Application is used for this category.

Level of Coordination: Indicate whether the project is a joint project with another governmental agency, organization, group or NRAC.

Readiness to Proceed:

Indicate when the project will be ready to start. Applicants must certify that project will start as stated. If a successful applicant determines that the start dates as given will not be met, the applicant must notify the NRAC of the delay and provide the reason for the delay.

Immediacy:

Explain any circumstances (e.g. development pressure) that may be occurring that requires immediate action.