

Important Information Regarding the Contents of this Document

Please note that the policies and information presented in this document are current through the date given below. The documents made available within the [Center's Conservation Districts web pages](#) are intended to serve as a guide for the policies set by each Conservation District. While these policies may in fact be current at the time of your viewing, it is strongly recommended to contact the relevant Conservation District for the most current version.

Document Current Date: January 9, 2017

**Forest County Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Roads Program
Quality Assurance Board – Policies and Procedures**

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Board (QAB) in Forest County is to recommend to the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board a grant program for Section 9106 of the PA Motor Vehicle Code. The QAB will assist the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board in carrying out the Administrative, Educational and Contractual responsibilities of the Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program.

The QAB will establish priorities and requirements for funding through the Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program. The QAB responsibilities to promote the use of Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) will include review of applications for funding, conducting site visits (as necessary and determined by the QAB) and recommending sensitive road maintenance practices to address road runoff and sediment to local streams, dust control and items which may cause negative impacts to the streams.

The QAB in Forest County will be comprised of a non-voting chairperson and a voting member appointed by the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board, one voting member or appointed designee from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and one voting member or appointed designee from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC).

The established meeting schedule will be published at the beginning of each year along with the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board meeting schedule. Public notice of meetings will be advertised in the Forest Press and posted on the door of the building in which the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board meetings are held.

The QAB meetings will be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order. There must be a quorum (at least 2 of the 3 voting QAB members), to vote on any recommendations to the district board. The QAB chairman may vote to decide a tie.

Written copies of any and all policies adopted by the Forest County QAB are available upon request.

Conflict of Interest Statement

No District Director, Quality Assurance Board Member, or District Employee, shall, as a result of this program, be permitted to obtain financial benefits for himself/herself, a member of his/her family, or a business with which he/she is associated. This shall preclude the payment of normal salary and benefits to employees provided in their normal course of employment.

Approval Date:

FCCD&P Board Meeting Date **July 28, 2016**

Criteria For Equal Access

1. Correspondence on program updates shall be sent to all eligible municipalities and agencies.
2. Applications with a specific deadline shall be sent to all eligible municipalities and agencies.
3. Special efforts shall be made to enlist the cooperation of participants through a telephone conversation or site visit.
4. Information, including any application deadline, shall be publicized in the Forest Press and the Forest County Conservation District website. (once the website is updated)
5. QAB meetings having formal actions shall be open to the public and follow the requirements of the Sunshine Law.
6. Shall prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and martial or family status.

Approval Date:

FCCD&P Board Meeting Date July 28, 2016

Non Pollution Standards

Section 9102(f) (7) of the PA Motor Vehicle Code requires Quality Assurance Boards to adopt standards that prohibit use of materials or practices that are environmentally harmful. The Statement of Policy 83.613 (1) (b) formalizes that requirement. In response, the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department QAB has adopted standards prohibiting the use of materials or practices which are environmentally harmful or do not meet the programs “non-pollution” standard. These materials include, but are not limited to: noxious weeds, fugitive emissions, and dust control products which may pose a problem if they enter a waterway. Compliance with all existing environmental laws is a condition of purchase under the contracting agreement between the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department and the municipality. An environmentally suitable substitute for dust control, as determined by the State Conservation Commission, may qualify for payment.

Approval Date:

FCCD&P Board Meeting Date July 28, 2016

Private Road Owners (Individuals and Entities)

Privately owned roads, even those open to public use, are not eligible to apply for funds. This applies to roads owned by private individuals, but also includes roads owned by associations, private conservancies, Non-profit companies and other non-public entities. Only public roads owned by an eligible applicant may be considered for funding. A road must be open to the public motor vehicle traffic for a minimum of two (2) consecutive weeks annually in order to be eligible for funding.

Written Funding Criteria for Ranking Projects

At the December 1, 2016 Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department Board Meeting, the Board approved and adopted the following criteria that should be used for application funding: High Quality Watershed, stocked trout streams, In-kind contributions of the applicant, and the relative (computer) score. At that same meeting, the QAB also decided that all criteria will receive equal weight in the decision making process. The road owning entities past history of involvement in the program may also be taken into consideration. Past history of involvement includes all aspects of the DGLVR Program such as timeliness of completing a project, following of the submitted work plan, proper installation of ESM techniques, maintenance of previous projects, use of ESM techniques when performing maintenance on other non-project roads, proper administration of paperwork, communicating with the District and attendance to educational trainings conducted by the District. The QAB may recommend the awarding of funds to a road owning entity that has not previously participated in the program to encourage their present and future participation.

Applications for Funding

The one-page DGLVR Grant Application, developed for state-wide use, will be made available to all eligible road owning entities. The front of the form requires all the organization's information, worksite ID, problems which need addressed on the site, and the grant amount requested and the estimated in-kind contributions. The application is designed to be used for either the Dirt & Gravel Roads or Low Volume Roads applications by marking the appropriate box (shaded gray) in the upper right hand corner of the application. The remaining items in the gray box will be filled in by the District. The SCC now also requires an additional location map must be submitted with the application. (The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department will help the applicant print out this map for their project.) An attachment to the application is provided to list the Grant Request Items and In Kind Contributions. The QAB requires the applicant to use the attachments and the QAB may use this form for scoring purposes. The back of the application is reserved for a simple drawing and a short explanation for the project which is also considered as the work plan of the project. The QAB requires a written explanation/work plan for the project. (A sample will be provided upon request.) Instructions and application forms can also be obtained from the Penn State Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads website at <http://www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu/index.html> .

Each application will be for one previously verified worksite, or continuous project area. The Conservation District will keep all eligible non-funded projects of the current funding year on file for the remainder of that funding year should additional monies become available. If multiple applications are submitted by a road owning entity, the applicant must mark each application in the order they want the QAB to consider the projects for funding. The unfunded applications will not be considered in the next funding round. The application must be resubmitted each funding year so the road owning entity can review and or revise the application if necessary.

The Conservation District will keep all non-funded applications on file for a period of five (5) years from the date of submission to create a pool of “Shovel Ready” projects to draw from, should additional source funds become available or any current year funding remains available. Applicants will be given an opportunity to review and revise these applications before any funds are awarded, but the worksite must remain the same. Applicants who do not have an awarded project for the current year will be given highest priority. If an applicant duplicates an application, the most current year application will replace the duplicate.

It will also be the policy of the QAB to allow the inclusion of work outside of the entities’ road right of way provided the work is necessary for the successful completion and continued maintenance of the environmentally sensitive road maintenance practices to address road runoff and sediment to local streams, dust control and items which may cause negative impacts to the streams. Funds can be spent only if the issue cannot be addressed within the ROW. The scope of work and area is limited to ESM practices which directly reduce the impact to the public road. Or, the District has determined it is directly necessary to the successful completion of the project on the public road portion. The grant recipient is required to obtain written permission from the landowner before starting work and submit a copy of the agreement for the District files. A sample SCC approved landowner agreement is available for use from the Penn State Dirt & Gravel Roads Center website. An applicant may use their own agreement as long as it is in a form or manner similar to the SCC approved document.

Funding Procedures

All approved contracts with road owning entities will be signed by the District Manager of the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department. The funds will be distributed by the Conservation District in the following manner:

- Upon execution of the project contract, the District will forward 50% of the grant amount requested to the participating entity. The road owning entity is responsible for retaining receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, etc. to document the expenditures of the entire grant amount (100%). (Including In-Kind)
- The SCC statewide policy requires all participants to notify their conservation district prior to beginning work on a project. The QAB has established that the Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department will be notified within five (5) working days of the start of the project.
- The Conservation District will withhold the remaining 50% of the approved grant amount requested until the project is complete and the final inspection has been completed by the QAB and/or District personnel. For the project to be considered complete, all site work must be accomplished and stabilized as indicated in the contract in a manner to be considered satisfactory to achieve the purpose it was designed for, as determined by the QAB and/or the Conservation District.
- All receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, etc. must also meet the total grant amount requested prior to the final 50% of funds being released. If totals equal less than the remaining 50%, only the lesser amount will be forwarded to the road owning entity.

Grant monies that are unspent by the applicant at the end of two (2) years from the date of the executed contract must be returned in full to the Conservation District.

- The District makes funds available to participating road owning entities from the DGLVR Fund. Those applications are highly competitive and requires full and accurate cost estimates be developed by the applicant prior to their submittal for potential funding. Once the District enters into a contract with a road owning entity, the District expects the entity to complete the contract within the proposed budget. A contract amendment of not more than 20% of the initial contract amount may be awarded by the Conservation District Board if the funding is available.

Driving Surface Aggregate (DSA)

Driving Surface Aggregate (DSA) meeting PennDOT DSA specifications is the only SCC approved road surface material which may be purchased with DGLVR funds. Placement of DSA should follow the Penn State Dirt & Gravel Roads Center specifications and guidelines. The guidelines can be obtained from the District or the Penn State Dirt & Gravel Roads Center website.

Turn Back Roads

It is acceptable to use either Dirt & Gravel or Low Volume Roads grant funds to turn a road back to dirt and gravel. Applications can be made in either grant round to turn a road back. The turned back road will be placed into the Dirt & Gravel Road Inventory and future projects applied for on the turned back road must be done through the Dirt & Gravel Roads funding portion of the DGLVR Program only. The turned back road must remain a dirt & gravel road for a period of five (5) years, or the grant funds must be returned to the Conservation District.

Low Volume Roads

Act 89 of 2013 included appropriations for Low Volume Roads (LVR) to Section 9106 of the PA Vehicle Code Dirt and Gravel Roads Program. The purpose of expanding the Program is to perform Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance to sections of paved or tar and chipped roads and provide funding for environmentally sensitive road maintenance practices to address road runoff and erosion to local streams along with items which may cause negative impacts to the streams.

A Low Volume Road (LVR) is a sealed (tar & chip) or paved road with an average daily traffic count of 500 vehicles or less. A "Traffic Count Validation Form" (TCVF) signed by the applying road entity must be submitted with the application for funding. The road owning entity is responsible for obtaining valid LVR traffic counts. Only traffic count methods approved by the QAB will be accepted with the application. The TCVF document will be retained along with the project files according to the District's record retention policy. The TCVF document can be obtained from the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads website.

Three methods of traffic counts are accepted by the QAB which are Extrapolation using PennDot traffic count maps, Two Hour and 24 Hour traffic count methods. The applicant must follow proper procedures of each method when performing a traffic count. Failure to follow procedure may result in denial of funding project applications. Instructions for performing a valid traffic count can be obtained from the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads website.

Traffic counts should be conducted only on the proposed project area between intersecting roads. Sites which include intersections may require multiple traffic counts for the project area. Traffic counts only apply to the segment of road between intersections, not the entire road. Future projects outside of the counted area require separate traffic counts. Traffic counts are valid for a period of five years providing no significant change in traffic flows or patterns have taken place during the five year period.

The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department will not pay to have traffic counts done. However, the cost of doing a traffic count can be used by the road owning entity to count towards in-kind funds. The Conservation District has two traffic counters available for township use, free of charge.

The ranking of Low Volume Roads applications will follow the same standards as dirt and gravel roads where permissible. Adjustments to the same dirt & gravel roads standards will be made to apply to low volume roads such as road surface type. Additional criteria which may be considered are the cost effectiveness of a project to the environmental benefit received and any special policies which may apply such as stream crossing replacement policy. The balance between the environmental benefit, road improvement reduced long term maintenance and improved air quality may be considered during the ranking process.

The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department will **NOT** use Low Volume Roads funds to pave an entire project. However funds may be used to repave specific spots where pavement was ruined doing environmental work.

Stream Crossing Structural Replacement Policy

To maximize the purpose of the DGLVR Program, in 2014 the State Conservation Commission (SCC) implemented new policy and procedures to address stream crossing structure replacements. These guidelines focus on replacing undersized and inadequate structures which cause significant environmental degradation.

Undersized and inadequate stream crossings increase sedimentation, aggradation, scouring and affect aquatic organism passage which cause negative effects both up and downstream of the structure. Proper sizing of stream crossing structures maximize the benefit and minimize life cycle costs of the structure. The stream bank, bed and flow are stabilized, aquatic organism travel is improved and stream diversion is reduced. Long term maintenance costs are reduced through less overtopping and debris plugging during high water events which reduce failures and increase the life of the structure. The following policies have been adopted to be eligible for funding the replacement of a stream crossing structure.

- Existing structure opening equal to or less than 7 square feet (equivalent to 36” pipe or less): All are eligible to be replaced with DGLVR Program funds. The replacement structure must meet the following criteria.
- Structure width equal to or greater than bank full width.
- Structure must be properly aligned with the stream channel.
- Consider additional floodplain connectivity when possible.
- Structure must be designed and constructed to accommodate the passage of aquatic organisms through the structure.

Existing structure with an opening of more than 7 square feet (equivalent to greater than 36” pipe): In order to be eligible for DGLVR Program funding for replacement, the existing structure must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have a structure to bank full ratio of 50% or less.
- Show signs of stream bank erosion.
- Show signs of stream bed erosion/aggradation.

The Replacement structure MUST meet ALL of the following specifications:

- Have a structure width equal to or greater to bank full width. (100% ratio.)
- The structure must be properly aligned with the channel.
- Consider additional floodplain connectivity when possible.
- Structure must be designed and constructed to accommodate the passage of aquatic organisms through the structure.

Stream crossing structure replacement projects require District staff to complete a “Stream Structure Evaluation” Form to determine eligibility. This procedure MUST be performed before an application can be submitted for funding. It is the responsibility of the road owning entity to schedule the evaluation prior to submitting an application for funding. Failure to do so may deem the application ineligible for funding. A qualified engineer may assist the road owning entity in completing the “Stream Structure Evaluation”. The “Stream Structure Evaluation” form must still meet the approval of the District.

Permits and Other Requirements

All DGLVR Program projects must comply with all federal, state and local regulations. It is solely the responsibility of the road owning entity to ensure all regulations are adhered to and met. This includes federal, state and local permitting requirements. Other items included but not limited to can be Municipal Code regulations such as bidding and prevailing wage, Erosion and Sedimentation Control regulations, PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) regulations, PA One Call, local ordinances and PennDOT standards for road work and safety. The QAB or District Staff are not able to provide these requirements and the road owning entity is responsible to seek advice from their solicitor and the regulating agency. The QAB maintains the right to sanction a road owning entity ineligible for future Program funding for failure to follow or comply with other regulating agencies which may be associated with a project.

Any Engineering assistance to the road owning entity must be via contract with the road owning entity. The contract must include a detailed scope of work. This contract and scope of work must be included with the DGLVR application.