

## **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: June 8, 2018**

# Lehigh County Dirt and Gravel Road Quality Assurance Board Policies and Procedures

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

The QAB will establish priorities and requirements for funding through the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. The QAB responsibilities will include review of applications submitted for funding, conducting site visits (as necessary and determined by the QAB) and recommending eligible applications to the Lehigh Conservation District Board of Directors for funding that will address non-point source pollution in affected areas.

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

The established meeting schedule for QAB meetings will be on an annual basis, usually in September, and also on an as-needed basis as determined by the Chairman. Public notice of the meeting will be in the newspaper and posted on the Lehigh Conservation District website at [www.lehighconservation.org](http://www.lehighconservation.org).

Minutes of the QAB meeting will be taken by the District staff, filed with the Dirt and Gravel Road files, and will be kept on record and available to the public pursuant to the Open Records Policy.

The QAB meetings will be conducted according to Robert Rules of Order.

Any and all policies adopted by the Lehigh QAB will be posted on the District website at [www.lehighconservation.org](http://www.lehighconservation.org). Written copies of these policies are available upon request.

## **Finance**

Any interest accrued from the Dirt and Gravel Road savings account will be transferred at least annually to the construction allocation.

Training and educational monies not utilized in the funding year they are received may be carried over or used to fund Special Educational Projects such as:

- Purchase and use of plate tampers to be made available free of charge for Municipal use.
- Awarding of cost share monies to assist in the purchase of carbide tipped rotating toothed grader blade systems.
- To purchase promotional items for educational/public awareness purposes.
- To use for any innovative ideas that will benefit the educational activities of the Lehigh Conservation District regarding the Dirt and Gravel Road Program.
- Training and educational funding will be used to pay for costs associated with ESM workshops and the annual Dirt and Gravel Road conference.

### **QAB Rules of Conduct & Conflict of Interest**

The QAB recommended at their November 13, 2014 meeting to the District Board that the current policy of "No District Director, QAB member or District employee shall, as a result of this program, be permitted to obtain financial benefits for him/herself, a member of his/her immediate family or a business with which he/she is associated". Understanding that, this shall not preclude the payment of normal salary and benefits to employees provided in their normal course of employment, as outlined in the most current version of the Dirt and Gravel Road Administrative Manual.

In addition, any QAB member, Conservation District Board Member, or staff member, will be excluded from voting on actions that might benefit a road or stream adjacent to his or her property or the property of relatives or businesses in which he or she has an interest. In the event of such a conflict, the QAB member will temporarily assume the role of the non-voting Chairman, and the Chairman will vote in his or her stead (or simply be barred from voting, as determined at the meeting).

### **Dirt and Gravel Road Equal Access to Funds Policy**

To encourage and promote equal access to funding, the QAB recommended to the District Board that any and all municipalities within Lehigh County are eligible for funding provided the municipality has:

- a) inventoried their dirt and gravel roads with District Staff, and

- b) evaluated their dirt and gravel roads with District Staff and assisted in the creation of worksites within their municipality, and
- c) have at the minimum, one **current** elected/appointed or employed individual attend and complete the two-day Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance Workshop within the last 5 years.
- d) District Staff will notify by regular mail all Municipalities annually of the availability of Dirt and Gravel Road funds.
- e) District staff will also post the municipalities that were awarded funds for ESM projects and the amount of those funds on the District website.

The Lehigh County QAB, in order to keep Municipalities eligible for participation in the program, will sponsor an Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance (ESM) Workshop on a bi-annual basis at no charge to any Lehigh County Municipality. Surrounding County municipalities wishing to attend may be asked to seek funding from their respective Conservation District for the training costs. District Staff and QAB members will attend at least one of the semi-annual meeting of Municipal Officials to both explain and promote the dirt and Gravel Road Program.

### **Written Funding Criteria for Ranking Projects**

At the April 14, 2011 Quality Assurance Board meeting, the QAB recommended to the District Board the following criteria should be used for application funding: High Quality Watershed, stocked trout streams, In-kind municipal contributions, 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 municipalities' past history of involvement in the program may also be taken into consideration. The QAB may recommend the awarding of funds to a Municipality that has not previously participated in the program to encourage their present and future participation.

District staff will compile all applications for funding into a spread sheet comprised of the specified data and make the spreadsheet, as well as a copy of each application available to each QAB member prior to the annual QAB meeting.

### **Applications for Funding**

The one-page Dirt and Gravel Roads Grant Application, developed for statewide use, will be distributed to all municipalities. The front of the form requires all municipality information, worksite ID, problems that need addressed on the site, grant amount requested and estimated in-kind contributions. The back of the form is reserved for a simple drawing and a short explanation of the project.

Each application will be for one or more previously verified worksites, or continuous project area. The Conservation District will keep all non-funded projects on file for future funding

allocations. Therefore, resubmittal is not necessary. Municipalities may also choose to revise existing submitted applications. There is no restriction to the number of applications that can be submitted by one municipality.

It will also be the policy of the QAB to allow the inclusion of work outside of the municipality's road right of way provided the work is necessary for the successful completion and continued maintenance of non point source pollution problem corrected on the site.

The QAB will have an open sign up period year round. There will be a given deadline (usually September 1) that all municipal officials will be notified of by early July to enable interested municipalities to submit their grant applications by the given deadline. This information will be posted on the District website.

The annual QAB meeting will be held shortly after the given annual deadline. At that time, all submitted applications will be reviewed, ranked and recommended for funding. Municipalities that have open contracts at the time of the QAB annual meeting will not be considered for further funding until the existing contract is completed. These recommendations will be given to the District Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting for final approval. The municipalities will be notified by letter and proposed contract in conformity with their grant application. If deemed necessary by the QAB Chairman, a second QAB meeting may be called to award any remaining funds not allocated during the annual meeting.

### **Funding Procedures**

All approved contracts with municipalities will be signed by the District Manager of the Lehigh Conservation District. The funds will be distributed by the Conservation District in the following manner:

- The Conservation District maintains a separate savings account specifically for the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. Funds awarded will be transferred from the savings account and be allocated through the Conservation District General Fund.
- Upon execution of the project contract, the District will forward 50% of the grant amount requested to the participating municipality. The municipality is responsible for retaining receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, etc. to document expenditure of entire grant amount (100%).
- The municipality has roughly one year to complete the approved contract. If unable to complete in one year's time, the municipality may request in writing for a one year extension on the project.

The Conservation District will withhold the remaining 50% of the approved grant amount requested until project is complete and has been final inspected 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 to, as determined by the QAB and/or the Conservation District.

All receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, etc. must also meet or exceed the total grant amount requested prior to final 50% of funds being released. If totals equal less than the remaining 50%, only the lesser amount will be forwarded to the municipality. Grant monies that are unspent by the municipality at the end of two (2) years from the date of the executed contract must be returned in full to the Conservation District unless the District finds that extenuating circumstances prevented the full utilization of those funds.

The District makes funds available to participating Municipalities from the Dirt and Gravel Road Fund. Those applications are highly competitive and require that full and accurate cost estimates be developed by the Municipality prior to their submittal for potential funding. Once the District enters into a contract with a Municipality, the District expects the Municipality to complete the contract within the proposed budget. The District will not provide additional funds should the project costs exceed those proposed by the Municipality in the grant application. Funds spent by the municipality in excess of the grant amount will count as an in-kind contribution by the Municipality.

### **Environmental Standards for Products and Practices**

Section 9106 (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 Armstrong County 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 Conservation District and the municipality. An environmentally suitable substitute for dust control, as determined by the State Conservation Commission, may qualify for payment.

*(Revised Jan 19, 2011)*