

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: December 11, 2018

ATTACHEMENT D
PROCEDURES AND POLICIES
MERCER COUNTY DIRT, GRAVEL, AND LOW VOLUME ROAD
QUALITY ASSURANCE BOARD

Purpose - The purpose of the Quality Assurance Board (QAB) is to establish and recommend to the Mercer County Conservation District Board a PA Vehicle Code, Section 9106 Grant Program and assist the Conservation District in carrying out its administrative responsibilities. The QAB enables local officials to establish "*fiscal and environmental controls*" over the program at the local level. The QAB will establish funding categories, funding priorities, and project competition requirements for the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program. It will review grant applications and make funding recommendations to the Conservation District. It will provide site analysis with applicants to develop mutually agreeable objectives to correct pollution; and it will continue to provide guidance throughout the work period. It will also compose progress reports and completion reports.

Board Composition - The QAB Board shall be comprised of two members appointed by the Mercer Conservation District, one member representing the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and one member representing the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. **Current Members:** Jay Russell, Chairman, Dr. Fred Brenner, CD Director, NRCS, and PA Fish and Boat Commission. Members may nominate a substitute to attend meetings in their stead in the event of a scheduling conflict, etc. Substitutes should be knowledgeable about the program and their representative's role on the board.

Meeting – Meetings will be held the third Thursday of February, April, June, and August. The meetings will be held at the Mercer County Conservation District office at 1:00 P.M. The Chairman of the QAB may call special meetings at the request of the District Board.

Minutes - Minutes of the QAB meetings will be taken and will be kept in a record book available to the public upon request.

Rules of Conduct - The meetings of the QAB will be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order.

Conflict of Interest - "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, a member of his immediate family, or a business with which he is associated. This shall preclude the payment of normal salary and benefits to employees provided in their normal course of employment." 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.)

Equal Access to Funding - "All eligible public road owners ("eligible entities") shall have equal access to the funding provided through the Mercer County Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program. Decisions on funding allocation will be made on the basis of maximizing the reduction of pollution to county streams first. No discrimination will be made concerning race, religion, gender, economic status or political standing of citizens affected by the improvements achieved through this program. All municipalities are eligible to submit project proposals which will be judged solely by a published set of criteria approved at a public meeting of the QAB. The QAB will be bound by the policies established by the State Conservation Commission for the administration of this program statewide."

Criteria to Identify County Project Priorities - Written criteria will be drafted to prioritize funding proposals based on suggestions of the State Conservation Commission. Applications for new DSA

placements or additional drainage improvements on previously funded projects will be evaluated using the “Modified Worksite Assessment” score at the time of their original project. This criteria may be reviewed and amended annually.

Filing Applications for Funding - It is the intent of the legislature to keep the application process as simple as possible. Applications for funding will consist of the one page form entitled *Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Grant Application*, developed for state-wide use for this program. This form will be provided to all eligible entities by the Mercer Conservation District and/or QAB members. The front of the form will include information on the name, address, and location of the eligible entity and the affected road or roads and stream, as well as a projected list of costs and grant amount. The back of the form is blank and eligible entities should add a simple drawing and written description of the proposed project. A 7.5 minute topographic map with the project site identified on it must be attached to the application, and all required permits must be secured prior to project start. **A Mercer County Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Grant Application Checklist will be available to all potential applicants for use in ensuring that their applications contain the items required in order to be considered for funding. All applications submitted for funding must contain the above checklist. Applications not meeting all items outlined in the checklist will not be considered for funding in the current application period.** In addition, the project should be in compliance with all existing environmental laws, including those regarding the use of environmentally detrimental projects or practices, as a condition of acceptance. Each application should be for one grant and refer to one contiguous project location or one type of work through an area (e.g. bank seeding on a series of roads in a township.) The Conservation District will keep a copy of the completed application, project sketch, and location map on file during the project and for five years after its completion. Projects can be resubmitted in subsequent years if not initially accepted for funding. There is no restriction on the number of grants that can be submitted by one applicant at any time or over a period of time. **Applications must be received at least 30 days prior to the QAB meeting date. Applications for funding will be continually accepted, however applications received after the deadline established above will be retained for funding consideration at the next scheduled meeting.** The QAB will evaluate all applications based on the established funding criteria and make its recommendations to the Board of Directors of the Mercer Conservation District. The District Board will take action on those recommendations at their next regularly scheduled meeting. Applicants will be notified by letter of the acceptance or rejection of their proposals in the two weeks following the Conservation District meeting.

Funding Procedures - All contracts with eligible entities will be signed by the Chairman of the Mercer County Conservation District. The conservation district agrees to disburse funds under this project in the following manner:

1. The district will maintain separate accounts specifically for Dirt and Gravel Road AND Low Volume Road Program expenses.
2. Upon the full execution of the project agreement, the district will provide an advanced payment to the project participant in an amount of up to 50% of the grant to be applied towards payment of eligible expenses incurred by the project. The project participant is responsible for keeping receipts, weigh slips, etc. to document proper expenditure of advanced payments prior to receiving additional payments under the project agreement. No payments will be made for invoices dated prior to the official contract date.
3. The district shall process subsequent payments to the project participant on an actual cash expended basis.
4. The district shall withhold final payment of approved project expenses until the satisfactory completion of the project as determined by the QAB or the district.
5. All claims submitted by the program participant pursuant to the agreement shall be submitted to the District in accordance with this schedule and the terms and conditions contained in the approved project agreement. The payments shall be itemized and show that the utilization of funds are in accordance with the project cost summary contained in the application and work plan. Claims shall include receipts, weigh slips, and/or other appropriate supporting information to document actual expenditures by the project.

Funding Categories - The following funding categories have been established by the Mercer County QAB:

- a. Publicly owned roads open to public vehicle travel for a minimum of 2 consecutive weeks annually
- b. Road demonstration projects
- c. Training grants, restricted to 5% of the funding
- d. Administration costs, limited to actual documented costs and restricted to a maximum of 10% of the county's total allocation.

Training Incentives - In order to qualify for program funding, the eligible entity needs to have sent an official representative to a Dirt and Gravel Road ESM training within the previous five years. Any costs related to an official attending a training program may be covered by the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. One official representative per entity applying for the recertification by attending the annual meeting may be reimbursed for their expenses if they request reimbursement from the QAB at least one month in advance of the meeting date, budget permitting.

Non-Pollution Standards - Section 9106(f)(7) requires Quality Assurance Boards to adopt standards that prohibit the use of materials or practices that are environmentally harmful. The Statement of Policy 83.613(1)(b) formalizes this requirement. In response, the QAB has adopted standards prohibiting the use of materials or practices which are environmentally harmful or do not meet the program's "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. Bank protection guidelines and materials should conform to those identified under Chapter 105 in the BDWW-GP-3 for Bank Rehabilitation, Bank Protection and Gravel Bar Removal. Compliance with all existing environmental laws is a condition of purchase under the contracting agreement between the district and the eligible entity. The program will not pay for brine application. An environmentally suitable substitute for dust control would qualify for payment.

Project Performance – A pre-construction conference is required for all projects at least 10 working days prior to project commencement. Any changes to work in contract should be mutually agreeable and confirmed (prior to initiation) in writing by a letter from the eligible entity to the Conservation District or vice versa. The Conservation District will perform a final site inspection to verify completion of work prior to issuing final funding reimbursement. For the contract to be considered complete, all site work must have been accomplished as indicated in the contract in a manner considered satisfactory to achieve the purpose it was designed to, as determined by the QAB and the Conservation District. The work site shall be stabilized (i.e. final seeding done, etc.). **DSA placement on projects may commence on May 1st in consultation with the District and at their discretion and must be completed by September 30th.**

This document was reviewed and approved at a meeting of the Quality Assurance Board held on December 11, 2018 and approved at the January 7, 2019 Mercer County Conservation District Board of Directors.