

## **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 11, 2024

**Blair County Conservation District**  
**Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program**  
**Statement of Policy**

(Adopted by QAB 11/13/06, Conservation District Board 11/20/06)  
(Amended by QAB 05/22/2024, Conservation District Board 06/11/2024)

**Purpose:** This document is intended to describe the administration of the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program (Program) by the Blair County Conservation District (BCCD) and the Blair County Quality Assurance Board (QAB). Authorization for the program was given originally by Act 3 of April 17, 1997 (P.L. 6, No. 3) amending the Vehicle Code to add the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program at 75 P.S. §9106. Act 89 of 2013 provided for the inclusion of the Low Volume Road Component. Policies and procedures set forth by the District Board of Directors are intended to enable the District, with guidance from the QAB to responsibly manage funds specific to the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program for the community's environmental benefit.

**Definitions:**

**Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM)** - a term used to describe a suite of principles and practices that are designed to create a more environmentally and financially sustainable public road system. They are long term practices designed to reduce erosion and maintenance within the road area.

**Dirt and Gravel Road** – A public road with an unbound surface layer.

**Low Volume Road** – A public sealed or paved road with an average daily traffic count of 500 vehicles or less.

**Paved or Sealed Road** - For the purposes of the low volume road program, a “paved” road is defined to include any road surfaced with asphalt, “tar and chip,” “chip seal,” bitumen, concrete, or other asphalt-like coating.

**Quality Assurance Board (QAB)** - The 4-member administrative board impaneled by each district to administer the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program locally, pursuant to 75 P.S. §9106(e).

**Stream Crossing Structures** – for the purposes of the Blair County Program, shall be defined as a structure with an opening equal to or less than 13 square feet (*equivalent to a 48” diameter round pipe*). Structures with a larger opening than 13 square feet/48” diameter round pipe may be considered upon outside funding sources secured for implementation and at the discretion of the QAB.

**General:**

Administration of the Blair County Program will be consistent with the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program Administrative Manual dated July 2022 or by with subsequent amendments.

**Administrative Expenses:**

The (BCCD) will allow the following expenses to be paid from the Program's administrative funds; BCCD staff salaries, mileage, travel expenses, photocopying, computer equipment, conference registration, office rent, utilities, and technical journal subscriptions provided those expenses can be justified as pertaining to the Program.

**Education & Training Expenses:**

The BCCD will allow the following expenses to be paid from Education & Training funds of the Program; hosting ESM Training, personnel attending ESM training including overnight room and board, BCCD staff salaries, mileage and materials related to educational outreach to schools, civic groups and municipalities, and tailgate training sessions.

The QAB may authorize an incentive payment of up to \$50 per day, per attendee for expenses incurred by road managers, equipment operators, municipal supervisors, municipal secretaries, land managers, etc. attending the ESM training or other Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road training events. Payment will be made upon receipt of invoices documenting expenses and proof of attendance at the event. Priority will be given to eligible road entities/owners who currently do not have trained personnel.

**Conflict of Interest:**

No BCCD Director, QAB board member, or BCCD 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.

**Meeting Schedule & Procedures:**

The QAB will meet once per year. Specific dates and times will be determined by the members. Additional meetings may be held, or meetings may be cancelled at the discretion of the QAB. The QAB will consist of one representative or their assigned alternate from each the PA Fish & Boat Commission, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), BCCD, and a non-voting chairman from the BCCD.

Minutes of the QAB meeting will be available to the public. All recommendations of the QAB must be presented to the BCCD Board for final approval.

**Applications:**

Eligible entities will have equal access to all Program funds. This will be accomplished through:

- Written notification to all eligible entities 60 days prior to the deadline of submission of project applications.
- The QAB will evaluate all applications according to the Blair County Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Program Evaluation and Ranking Worksheet. Applications

that do not receive a minimum score of 50 points may be considered for funding at the discretion of the QAB.

A pre-application meeting with a District QAB representative is required prior to submittal of an application.

The BCCD will not retain any applications on file when Program funds for a grant year have been exhausted. Applicants will be required to re-submit applications in the next funding cycle.

The BCCD will allow an eligible entity to submit as many applications for Program funding as they wish during any grant year.

Priority may be given to applications for an Emergency Project on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the QAB and the BCCD.

No application will be considered for the same ESM practice on the same section of roadway for a minimum of ten (10) years after the date of original payment.

Stream crossing structural replacement will be permitted but limited to structures with an opening equal to or less than 13 square feet (*equivalent to a 48" diameter round pipe*) and follow the Stream Crossing Structural Replacement Policy as found in the Manual. Structures with a larger opening than 13 square feet/48" diameter round pipe may be considered upon outside funding sources secured for implementation and at the discretion of the QAB.

A signed Traffic Count Validation form must be submitted at the time of application for all Low Volume Road proposals.

### **Contracts:**

All contracts will be for a period of one year. One contract extension for up to one additional year may be initiated by a written request of the participant, followed by consultation with the QAB, may be approved by Conservation District Staff and with a signed Amendment to the Contract.

Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road projects must comply with all federal, state, and local permit requirements. Projects requiring permits and engineered designs are required to hold a pre-design meeting with the Conservation District, a district QAB Representative, grant recipient, and project engineer. Additionally, any required project permits, or plan approvals must be obtained by the grant recipient before funding can be advanced or work can begin.

Projects may not exceed the contract amount unless there is prior approval from the QAB, the Conservation District Board and an Amendment to the contract is signed by both entities. Amendment(s) shall not total more than 40% of the initial contract amount, contingent upon available funds.

Funds in the amount of 50% of the contract amount will be advanced to grant recipients once a contract is signed. Additional funding (up to 70% of the project funds) after the project is underway may be considered and only made on a cash expended basis once the initial advanced funds have been expended.

Limited paving for Low Volume Roads may be considered an eligible expense, as long as it meets the goals of the program as specified in the Manual and at the discretion of the QAB.

Costs associated with engineering, permitting, or consulting expenses, directly related to the project, are eligible for reimbursement up to 10% of the grant allocation not to exceed \$2,500.00.

**Construction:**

Projects are required to follow the current bidding thresholds for Pennsylvania municipal authorities and municipalities. If a project is required to be bid out for construction, the grant recipient or engineer must provide all draft bid packages to a district QAB Representative for review and comment to ensure compliance with the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Policies and standards. Bid packages cannot be provided to potential bidders until confirmation from the district QAB Representative is obtained.

A district QAB Representative is required to attend a bid site showing (if held).

The BCCD will not fund the use of any materials that are not approved by the Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads nor any practices that may be harmful to the environment. The QAB has adopted standards prohibiting the use of materials or practices which are environmentally harmful or do not meet the program's "no-pollution" standard. These materials include, but are not limited to: noxious weeds, fugitive emissions, dust control products which may pose a problem if they enter a waterway, and bags or containers of concrete mix stacked for pipe headwalls or end walls or used in any way other than the manufacturer recommendations. Compliance with all existing environmental laws is a condition of purchase under the contracting agreement between the Conservation District and the project participant. An environmentally suitable substitute for dust control as determined by the State Conservation Commission may qualify for payment. The use of unapproved materials or practices on a trial basis must be approved by the Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads prior to use.

All Driving Surface Aggregates (DSA) must meet the specifications and criteria set forth by the State Conservation Commission. DSA projects exceeding 500 tons must be placed with a motor-paver. DSA must be compacted with a 10-ton vibrate roller and placed at an 8" depth/compacted to 6" or at a 6" depth/compacted at 4.5". At the discretion of the Quality Assurance Board density testing may be required for any DSA projects.

The project participant will contact the Blair County Conservation District at least thirty (30) business days prior to placement of DSA to allow for the DSA to be sampled and tested prior to delivery to project site. DSA Certification must be obtained prior to DSA Placement.

The project participant will contact the Blair County Conservation District at least seven (7) business days prior to the start of a project or prior to any changes to the contract.

A pre-construction meeting with a district QAB representative is required prior to the initiation of construction.

The Blair County Conservation District will develop, design, and conduct demonstration projects only when no projects are applied for or when the Conservation District Board of Directors determine that there is a need for a project that is unique to a particular situation.

**Project Completion:**

Receipts for all program funded materials and services must be compiled by the participant and submitted to the Blair County Conservation District upon completion of the project.

A qualified QAB representative will certify the completion of the project based on a final inspection. Final payment will be withheld until a satisfactory final inspection has been conducted.

BCCD will process final payments within 30 days of a project's satisfactory final inspection and submittal of supporting documentation. In the event that the BCCD Program Accounts have not received replenishment funds, payment will be made within 30 days of the BCCD receipt of funds from the State Conservation Commission.

Municipalities with contract(s) exceeding their expiration date, which have not submitted for final payments may not be considered for future grant funding until finalization of contract occurs.