

# Program Guidance: County Conservation Aids Program

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## Overview

County Conservation Aids program is authorized under s. 23.09(12), Wis. Stats., and provides financial assistance to counties and tribal governing bodies to enhance county fish and wildlife programs. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers this grant program with the assistance of s. NR 50.14, Wis. Adm. Code.

The program was established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1965 as an alternative to bounty payments on coyote, foxes, and bobcats. Every year since the bounty program ended, the Legislature has appropriated funding for the program equal to the average annual bounty payment.

These funds are provided as a cost share grant program to counties and tribal governing bodies for fish and wildlife habitat projects. Funds appropriated in the current Biennial Budget, are offered on an annual basis in proportion to the ratio of the area of each county (less reservation lands) or area of reservation lands, to the total area of the state.

## Eligible Applicants

Counties and tribal governing bodies ("county") are eligible to apply for County Conservation Aids for eligible projects.

## Application Deadline

Applications must be received by the DNR grant program manager by 11:59 p.m. on October 1.\*

\*NOTE: Per s. 990.001(4)(c), Wis. Stats., if any application deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state holiday, the deadline is moved to the next state working day.

## Funding Process

Counties have the option to: 1) accept their award; 2) accept their award and request additional funds; or 3) decline their award. To accept the award amount or accept and request additional funds, the county's authorized representative must sign, date, and return the application form 8700-045A (which is also considered the **grant agreement**), to the DNR grant program manager via email no later than October 1 (see Application and Request for Additional Funding Section on page 3). Failure to formally accept the award amount by the October 1 deadline is equivalent to the county declining their grant award.

By affixing a signature on the grant agreement, the county's authorized representative has entered into a binding legal agreement with the DNR. The DNR grant program manager will send a final award notification letter to the grantee.

Any grant amount not claimed by a county will become available for the DNR to award to other counties that have requested additional funding above what is their prescribed share under Wis. Stats.

Counties have two years from the date they receive their final award notification letter from the DNR grant program manager to complete their project and request reimbursement from the DNR. ***Project costs incurred by a county prior to this date are not eligible for reimbursement by the DNR.***

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## Eligible Projects

Grant funds under this program can only be used for county fish and wildlife projects per s. 23.09 (12), Wis. Stats.

Category	Project Description Codes			
1	<b>Development project</b> -- The development of structures, utilities, facilities or landscaping necessary for outdoor recreation use of an area			
	1A	new trails	1E	gun range development
	1B	new fish cribs	1F	parking lot development
	1C	stream crossing	1G	constructing new fishing piers
	1D	kayak and boat launches or dock	1H	new boat launch ramp
			1J	new accessibility upgrades
2	<b>Habitat projects</b> -- The implementation of a specific activity or set of activities to restore or enhance wildlife or fish habitat, natural communities or shorelines			
	2A	burning	2F	Site preparations, seed purchase, seedling planting
	2B	prairie planting	2G	Dredging
	2C	food plots	2H	prairie restoration
	2D	stream restoration	2J	Mowing
	2E	streambank stabilization	2K	invasive species removal
3	<b>Stocking projects</b> -- The placement of fish or wildlife into their natural environment to improve population numbers.			
	3A	fish stocking	3B	wildlife stocking
4	<b>Maintenance projects</b> -- Repair or refurbishment of structures, fixtures, or substrates to restore to functional condition in a routine, scheduled, or anticipated fashion			
	4A	repairs to trails	4E	gun range repairs
	4B	repairs to culverts	4F	repairs to boat docks/ boat launch ramps
	4C	flowage maintenance	4G	accessibility upgrades
	4D	barrens maintenance		
5	<b>Miscellaneous projects</b> -- Any project that does not fit in categories 1 through 4. Must manually fill in the description of the project.			

## Project Expenses - Eligible and Ineligible

Grant funds may reimburse the following costs as long as they are directly related to the project:

- Materials, supplies, contractual services, and labor
- Salaries and fringe benefits
- Rental or lease of equipment
- Land restoration, if project adds to the permanent inventory or resources of the property
- Furnishings such as picnic tables, grills, and garbage receptacles

**Ineligible Project costs include:**

- **Administrative overhead**
- **Purchases of computers, monitors, printers, peripheral devices, tools, and shop equipment**
- **Educational materials such as brochures, videos, and books.**
- **Anything not directly related to the project.**

## Calculating Grantee's Share (also called Grantee Match)

This program is administered as a reimbursement cost share program. This means the grant will cover up to 50% of the total project costs and grantee must incur and pay for all of the costs before submitting for reimbursement. The remaining portion of project costs is considered the grantee's match. Eligible sources of grantee match include cash and non-cash donations.

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There are three categories of non-cash donations:

1. **Donated general volunteer labor** – The maximum value of donated, non-professional labor shall be equal to the Wisconsin minimum wage. Currently, the Wisconsin minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. All donated hours must be documented, showing name of donor, hours worked, and date of donation. Forms 8700-349A and 8700-349C may be used to document these volunteer hours and submitted with reimbursement request.
2. **Donated materials, supplies, and professional labor** – This value is established by current market rates and must be established on an invoice provided by the donor. Form 8700-350 may be submitted along with the invoice provided by the donor for the professional services.
3. **Donated equipment use** – Per s. NR 51.09(1)(c)4, Wis. Admin. Code, value is determined using Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) highway rates for equipment. You can find the rates on the County Conservation Aids website at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/CountyConservation.html> under the Reimbursement Tab. Form 8700-362 may be used for submitting this information.

## Completing Application and Requesting Additional Funding

**Simply click** on the County Conservation Aids (CCA) Application & Grant Agreement Form 8700-045A: <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/8700/8700-045A.pdf>. Form should be completed online because there are a number of dynamic features incorporated into this form.

**If your project involves development or renovation activities, please contact DNR Endangered Resources, Fisheries, Forestry, Parks, Wildlife, and/or Permitting staff to discuss your project to determine if there are any conflicts or if any permits are needed for your proposed project before submitting your application.** If project is occurring on DNR owned land, then you will need to contact the appropriate DNR property manager to discuss your project and get their written approval which will need to be submitted with the completed application. You may select more than one project category by using the "Add" button. Click on the drop-down arrow in the blue box to select the type of project. Please submit map(s) of project area(s) with the completed application.

Submit the form by clicking the *Submit by Email* button at the top of the form on page 1. Your application will be received and reviewed for funding. If *Submit by Email* button doesn't work, attach all documents to an email and send to [DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov).

Submit a copy of the Authorizing Resolution along with any attachments to DNR Grant Program Manager via email at [DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov) or via mail, postmarked no later than October 1. Authorizing Resolutions are good for up to 5 years as long as it covers the project being applied for.

A letter of final award notification will be sent out to all applicants by October 31<sup>st</sup>.

## Reallocating Unclaimed Grant Funds

If a county fails to formally apply for its grant award amount by the October 1 deadline, then the DNR considers this to be equivalent to the county declining this grant award. Under this program, the DNR may then award unclaimed funds, to other counties. Reallocation process and examples are as follows:

1. Each county is located in one of 5 DNR regions:

Region	Counties w/in Region
Northeast	Brown, Calumet Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago
Northern	Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas and Washburn

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South Central	Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock and Sauk
Southeast	Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha
West Central	Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon and Wood

- Grant funds unclaimed by a county by the October 1<sup>st</sup> deadline will first be reallocated to other counties in the same DNR region that have requested additional project funds. All requests for additional funding within the region will be weighted equally.

**EXAMPLE #1** – DNR Region 1 has 14 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in a \$6,000 balance. Four counties accept their awarded amount and request additional funds. The \$6,000 balance will be allocated within the region as follows:

County	Additional Amount Requested	Additional Amount Allocated
AA	\$50	\$50
AB	\$200	\$200
AC	\$1,450	\$1,450
AD	\$18,000	\$4,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$19,700</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>

- If the amount of a regional balance is greater than the amount of additional project funds requested by counties in that region, then any residual funds will be reallocated to counties in other DNR regions that have unmet project needs. All county requests for additional funding will be weighted equally and will be reallocated until funds are exhausted.

**EXAMPLE #2** – DNR Region 5 has 10 counties. Five counties accept only their awarded amount. Five counties do not reply by the October 1 deadline, resulting in an \$8000 balance. There are no requests for additional project funds from Region 5 counties. After all other regional reallocations are completed and there are still counties with unmet project funding needs. The \$8,000 balance from Region 5 will be reallocated statewide as follows:

Region	County	Unfunded Project Amount	Additional Amount Allocated
1	AD	\$13,700	\$2,200
2	BF	\$1,400	\$1,400
3	CH	\$2,775	\$2,200
4	DB	\$4,300	\$2,200
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$22,175</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>

- If program funds still remain after all regional and statewide reallocations have been completed, those funds will carry forward and will be added to the next year's appropriation. They will be incorporated into the initial award notice that is sent to all eligible applicants.
- If at any time a county determines that they can no longer do the project or does not have the required match, the county should notify the DNR that they wish to decline the offer of financial assistance. There is no penalty to the county for declining their share of County Conservation Aids

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funds. Any grant amount declined by a county will be distributed to other counties using steps 2 and 3 above, consecutively.

### Reimbursement

The DNR administers this program on a reimbursement basis. This means all incurred costs must be paid by the county before seeking reimbursement. To request reimbursement, the county is required to submit a completed DNR grant payment request form 8700-001 and detailed documentation (e.g., proof of purchase (invoice, receipt, etc.), proof of payment (both sides of cancelled check(s), bank statement showing check(s) has cleared, credit card statement, etc.), force account details (if local government staff are involved), and volunteer labor worksheets (showing hours worked, dates worked, and volunteer signatures, etc.).

County equipment rates may be used for the year of the project activities. The WisDOT equipment rates may be used if you do not have a locally established rate. Equipment rental should not exceed the WisDOT equipment rate.

Submit photos of completed project with your reimbursement submittal.

Reimbursement forms may be found on the County Conservation Aids program webpage under the reimbursement tab: <http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/CountyConservation.html>. Reimbursements may be emailed to [DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov).

### Contact Information

For questions about the County Conservation Aids Program, please email your questions to [DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRCountyConservationAids@wisconsin.gov).