

Wild Resource Conservation Program

Grant Application Manual

Grant Round: June 25- August 23, 2019, 4:00 pm



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Tom Wolf, Governor

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources

Wild Resource Conservation Program

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WILD RESOURCE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Grant Application Instructions

The Wild Resources Conservation Act was created in 1982 to among other things, aid in the conservation of the Commonwealth's flora and non-game fauna. It set up the ability for citizens to support the management of wild resources by creating a contribution opportunity through a tax check-off and license plate program, furthering management and conservation. Each year, these funds support the survey, research, management and conservation of wild resources through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR's) Wild Resource Conservation Program (WRCP).

WRCP is charged with administering grants through funding from the Wild Resource Conservation Fund (WRCF) and a portion of the Environmental Stewardship Fund (ESF). WRCF funds include money from the Pennsylvania state income tax check-off, voluntary donations, and purchase of WRCF specialty license plates. ESF funds are generated from fees collected from landfill tipping fees—a fee when garbage is deposited in landfills.

Eligible Applicants

Eligibility of applicants is dependent on the funding source. WRCP funding sources include both WRCF and ESF, with most the funds available through this solicitation from ESF. Therefore, applicants are strongly advised to seek a sponsoring organization that is eligible for ESF funding. The following applicant eligibility applies:

- Counties, municipalities, educational institutions, and tax-exempt 501(3) (c) organizations registered with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations are eligible to receive grants from ESF for projects intended to protect and conserve biological diversity.
- Conservation Districts and municipal authorities are also eligible for some types of projects funded by ESF.
- Individuals, state government agencies and for-profit businesses, in addition to the categories above, are eligible for WRCF funds but not ESF funds.

Note that the full legal name of the sponsoring organization must be used on the application form and for 501(3) (c) organizations must be the same name as is registered with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations and with the Internal Revenue Service.

2019 Targeted Grant Priorities

WRCP is soliciting grant applications for priorities in the following categories—climate change, surveys, and conservation & management. Detailed priorities within each of these categories are outlined below.

It is recommended that projects/grant applications address one of the priorities listed below. However, applications may be accepted that address priorities outlined in the Pennsylvania State Wildlife Action Plan and/or address the needs of plant species or plant communities of concern within the Commonwealth. The applicant should contact the WRCP Agency Coordinator to discuss the project, how it may fit into flora or fauna priorities and potential for funding. Please refer to the "Application Submission Information" section below for further information.

Climate Change

Climate Refugia

Climate change impacts are expected to vary across the landscape according to topography, elevation, aspect, slope, and other variables. Most areas will see significant impacts, but some may be more resistant to change. Conservation of these climate refugia, which may harbor relict populations of rare species, will become increasingly more important as climate change progresses. This project will identify and provide data and spatial information (GIS shapefiles) on potential climate refugia across the commonwealth. The successful applicant will work closely with the PA Natural Heritage Program to ensure compatibility and continuity with their habitat connectivity analyses.

Climate Change Vulnerability Analyses

Use NatureServe's Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI) to evaluate plant species potentially at risk from climate change, including state listed, proposed, and common species that may be impacted in the future. This information will be used to help inform status change justifications for species of concern or those that are proposed for listing.

- a. Assign climate vulnerability ranks for approximately 25-50 species of concern and provide detailed accounts for each species. The reports must follow the same format as currently used on the PA Natural Heritage Program CCVI web page.
- b. The grantee will work with the Bureau of Forestry to determine which species to evaluate. The list will likely include edge-of-range species that may be positively or negatively affected by climate change.
- c. Also include recommendations for mitigation such as assisted migration, suggestions for additional surveys in targeted areas, or seed saving.

Surveys

Desmodium Identification and Distribution

Tick-trefoils (*Desmodium* spp.) can be a difficult group to identify. They also are under threat from habitat conversion and invasive species. Many *Desmodium* species are either currently listed by DCNR or have been proposed for listing in the past, however there are questions about the taxonomy of this group. DCNR requests an investigation into this group to determine correct identification of the species and extent of the populations to help determine the correct status of these species. Field work, taxonomic, herbarium work and potentially genetic work is anticipated. The species for which we seek investigations are: *Desmodium glabellum*, *D. humifusum* (potentially), *D. laevigatum*, *D. nuttallii*, *D. obtusum*, and *D. viridiflorum*.

Spiny Cheek Crayfish Assessment

The Spiny Cheek crayfish was designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the 2015 PA Wildlife Action Plan, mainly due to its extirpation from much of the Susquehanna and Potomac River Basins of Pennsylvania. These losses were likely the result of exotic crayfish invasions. Additional surveys, particularly above barriers that may prevent crayfish invasions and protect populations of Spiny Cheek Crayfish, are needed to determine if the species is a candidate for listing (threatened, endangered) in Pennsylvania. Proposed sites for sampling are throughout the Susquehanna, Potomac, and Delaware drainages of Pennsylvania, including areas last surveyed in the early 2000s, as well as additional areas that have never been sampled for crayfishes.

Secretive Marsh Bird Survey

This project, which will be a part of a statewide assessment of endangered and threatened marsh bird populations in 2020, will focus on the inventory of the state's largest wetlands in Crawford and Erie counties, including intensive surveys in Conneaut Marsh, Hartstown, and the Pymatuning complex. The surveys will provide updated population assessments of some of the largest populations of several priority species (Virginia rail, king rail, sora, least bittern, American coot, and common gallinule). Survey effort will be in collaboration with local Pennsylvania Game Commission Land Management staff and game bird biologists and may be augmented with concurrent efforts throughout the state. Habitat mapping and management recommendations will be developed as part of a comprehensive effort. The outcome will be to help advise wetland management practices in the area to enhance benefits and reduce risks to marsh birds at the state's larger wetland complexes.

Conservation & Management

Effects of Non-native Darters on the Chesapeake Logperch

The threats posed by fishes introduced across drainage divides to those native fishes of the receiving drainage have been poorly studied. This is concerning to managers of native fishes given the potential of the species with the extralimital distribution to interact invasively with the native fauna. Such interactions have not been investigated for the PA Endangered Chesapeake logperch and the non-native Greenside and Banded darters in the lower Susquehanna River drainage. This project would assess such issues as the potential effects of non-native darters on the substrate choice of

the Chesapeake Logperch, assess the potential for a habitat shift for the Chesapeake Logperch, and the occurrence of aggressive interactions initiated by non-native darters.

Assessing Western Pennsylvania Stream Readiness for Mussel Recovery/Restoration

Using mussel silos (small, concrete structures designed with PVC pipes to hold juvenile mussels), estimate juvenile mussel survival and growth rate at potential restoration sites (e.g., Tionesta Creek, Mahoning Creek, Sandy Creek, Tenmile Creek, Beaver River, Kiskiminetas River watershed, Allegheny River pool 6, etc.). Compare these results to reference sites in French Creek, Little Mahoning Creek, and the free-flowing Allegheny River.

Response of Wildlife to Fire Management

Increased use of fire as a management tool on State Game Lands, State Forest lands and other conservation properties calls for an adaptive management framework to evaluate species' response. There is a need to better understand the effects of fire management on Allegheny Woodrats and herpetofauna. This project should develop the monitoring framework and test that framework at three locations. The outcome will be used to advise future applications of fire management to enhance benefits and reduce risks.

Locating Indiana Bat Hibernacula

Preliminary work in 2018 indicated that an Indiana bat hibernaculum exists in southeastern Pennsylvania. This project will help identify the location of that site. The best approach to finding the site will be to tag bats at known maternity locations using nanotags and track their movements using the MOTUS infrastructure. Several temporary receiver stations could be erected at potential hibernacula to evaluate specific sites. The outcome will be protection and potential enhancement of these hibernacula.

Measurable Results & Selection Criteria

WRCP grants contribute to valuable wild resource surveys, research and conservation management. It is important that the application shows a clear indication of wild resources benefits, when they are expected and how the benefit will be measured or applied. Accomplishments directly beneficial to wild resources will be given a higher rating.

Project selection will be based on a combination of technical evaluation and programmatic relevance. Evaluation will be by a combination of agency staff and external technical reviewers. Applicants are advised to read the criteria carefully and design the project and write the application in a way that is responsive to both criteria and priorities in the next section. The reviewers will use the following criteria in judging the merits of proposals:

- Importance of the conservation issue being addressed and relevance to WRCP priorities
- Importance of the knowledge to be gained and potential to improve or advance current conservation practices
- Statewide significance and/or potential for statewide application
- Technical soundness of the approach and potential for project success
- Innovativeness/creativity of approach
- Qualifications of the organization, principal investigator, technical staff, and sub-contractors
- Use of appropriate protocols and producing useful data
- Cost effectiveness, value of expected results compared to project cost
- Extent of matching funds, including in-kind services

Budget

To maximize the conservation impact of WRCP grant dollars and the number of grants provided, applicants must prepare accurate budgets that honestly reflect the level of effort necessary to complete the proposed work. Overestimated budgets reduce the chances that other worthy projects will be funded. Additionally, successful applicants that leave grant money unspent at the end of the grant agreement jeopardize their chances for receiving future grants as well as WRCP's ability to secure adequate funding for future grant rounds.

Matching funds

WRCP grants require a 25% match (i.e. WRCP will fund no more than 75% of a project's total cost). Cash match and non-cash match will count equally toward the matching requirement. Cash match must be a source of funds other than ESF or WRCF. Non-cash match is the performance, at no cost to the grantee, of a portion of the approved scope of work. The performance of this work must be documented and be in lieu of work otherwise charged to the grant. The two types of non-cash match are: (i) Donated service [professional service] (claimed at the firm's or individual's normal billing rate times the number of hours worked) and (ii) Volunteer service [non-specialized labor] (claimed at the normal hourly labor rate for the type of work performed times the number of hours worked).

Grant Size and Project Duration

While grant size varies, the average award size is \$30,000, and the term of the grant is 18 months.

Fiscal Guidance & Eligible and Ineligible Costs

The general principle for allowable costs under Commonwealth grants is that the costs are reasonable and are directly attributable to the project being performed. For a listing of eligible and ineligible costs, as well as a description of budget categories, please refer to the *Fiscal Guidance document* on the WRCP web site.

PNDI Review, Collection Permits & Research Approvals

Copies of all necessary clearances, permits, approvals and PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) reviews must be provided prior to the issuance of a final grant agreement. For more information on PNDI, which permits may be required for work on state lands or to collect specimens, consult the following:

- PA Conservation Explorer: for access to Conservation Planning & PNDI Environmental Review info
<https://conservationexplorer.dcnr.pa.gov/>
- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
 - State Forest Lands: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/business/research/index.htm>
 - State Park Lands: contact the manager for the park(s) you will be working in
 - Wild Plant Management Permit:
<http://www.gis.dcnr.state.pa.us/PNDI/2016%20DCNR%20Wild%20Plant%20Management%20Permit%20Renewal%20Form.pdf>
- PA Game Commission
 - Bird and Mammal surveys: Bureau of Wildlife Protection, Special Permit Enforcement Division, 717-783-8164

- State Game Lands: Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management, Habitat Planning and Development Division
717-787-9613
- PA Fish and Boat Commission
 - Survey and Collection: <http://fishandboat.com/environ.htm>

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Application Submission Information

WRCP’s director or the appropriate agency coordinator (see information below) should be contacted prior to submitting a grant application. They can give valuable advice about the program’s priorities, how to improve your project design and application content, and the probability of success for your application.

WRCP Director

Greg Czarnecki
Department of
Conservation and
Natural Resources
(717) 783-1337
gczarnecki@pa.gov

Native wild plants

Rebecca Bowen
DCNR-Bureau of
Forestry
(717) 772-0258
rebbowen@pa.gov

Non-game birds and mammals

Dan Brauning
PA Game Commission
717-787-5529
dbrauning@pa.gov

Non-game fish, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic organisms

Chris Urban
PA Fish & Boat Commission
(814) 359-5113
curban@pa.gov

Grant Application Submission Instructions Deadline: Friday August 23, 2019, 4:00 pm

All applications must be submitted electronically through DCNR’s electronic grant application system, DCNR Grants, which standardizes the application process and provides an environmentally friendly way to submit a grant application through a secure internet connection. To access the online application, go to <https://www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/>. The Department also has a Grants Customer Service Center that can provide help on the DCNR Grants system and direct callers with technical grant questions to the appropriate area for help. You can reach the customer service center by phone at 1-800-326-7734, by e-mail at DCNR-grants@pa.gov, or by clicking on the Get Help link in DCNR Grants.

The deadline for submitting your applications will be 4:00 pm, Friday August 23, 2019. Note that a Commonwealth SAP number is required on the application. It can take up to two weeks to get an SAP number, so plan accordingly. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Central Vendor Management Unit can be reached at 1-877-435-7363 for help with obtaining or verifying an SAP number.

We strongly encourage you to start your application early. After creating your electronic application in DCNR Grants, click on the Download Forms link to see all the requirements for the application package.

Selection Process and Post-Selection Actions

Selection Process

Applications will be evaluated by external technical experts prior to evaluation by the agency coordinators and WRCP staff. The WRCP Board of Directors will recommend allocation of funds based on these evaluations at its Annual Meeting

in the fall, and final selection will be made by the Secretary of DCNR shortly thereafter. Funded applicants will be notified after that time.

Data Submission

All grantees are required to submit grant results in a final report. Grantees doing research on rare or endangered species will also be expected to follow protocols acceptable to the PA Natural Heritage Program and submit data using a standard data submission format.

Specimen Collections

Specimens collected during any project supported by WRCP must be deposited in an institution that will curate the material in perpetuity per the archival standards for that group of organisms and make them available for study by scientists, conservationists, and other individuals with a legitimate interest. Preference must be given to (i) institutions within Pennsylvania, (ii) the nearest appropriate institution for the taxa involved or (iii) an institution that has an established collection of material from Pennsylvania. The grantee should include in the budget any curatorial fees to be charged to the grant.

Records

For certifying final project costs and for auditing purposes, grantees must retain records for three years from date of final payment or three years from the date of an audit, whichever is later, including: detailed and auditable payroll, personnel fringe benefits, and organization operating cost records for costs charged to the grant and for match (such as time and attendance records for volunteer services), grant agreement documents, invoices and cancelled checks for all property, services, and materials purchased as part of the project.