

Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District 2021 Cost Share Policies

The Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District (District) offers grants for projects that provide benefits to water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat. The following are local guidelines for the use of grant funds and are specific to the District.

Staff Credentials

The District will ensure staff has the necessary skills and training to install and maintain projects according to standards and specifications. Building credentials and maintaining or seeking certifications to retain knowledgeable staff is a high priority of the District. Budget allocations for training purposes have been approved for the calendar year and staff time will be dedicated to building skill sets to the extent practical.

Technical expertise of the District includes:

- 5 Staff with USDA NRCS Job Approval Authority under Ecological and/or Engineering Sciences
- 3 Certified Conservation Planners – USDA NRCS

When professional engineering is required or specific conservation practices require expertise above current District technical capacity, the District will utilize professional engineers or staff from the Washington Conservation District, private consultants, local municipalities, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources or the USDA NRCS.

2021 District Cost Share Programs

- State Cost Share Funds – Countywide
- State SWCD Local Capacity Grant Funds – Countywide
- State St. Croix River Gully Stabilization Funds – St. Croix Escarpment
- State Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes Grant Funds – Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes watershed
- State Direct Drainage to St. Croix and Lawrence and Dry Creek
- State Goose and Rush Creek Watersheds TMDL Implementation
- State City of North Branch/North Branch of the Sunrise River BMP Implementation
- State Lawns to Legumes Grant Funds – Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes and Taylors Falls area
- Local Chisago Lakes Lake Improvement District Funds – Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes watershed
- Local Rush Lake Improvement Association Funds – Rush Lake watershed
- Local SWCD Cost Share Funds – Countywide

General Policies Applied to all Funding Programs.

- All funding program contracts and requests for payment for projects under contract require the approval of the District Board of Supervisors (Board).
- All funding programs are subject to fund availability and may be discontinued or subject to program policy revisions by the District Board as it deems appropriate.
- The number of contracts approved may be limited by the amount of funding and staff time available. The District Board reserves the right to limit funding at their discretion.
- Other than USDA Programs, the District does not provide technical or administrative assistance to other organizations that implement their own financial incentive programs unless specifically identified in a work plan or contractual agreement.
- At its sole discretion, the District Board may consider compliance to the terms of a previous or existing District or USDA Cost Share Contract as a prerequisite to entering into a subsequent Cost Share Contract with an applicant.

- It is the District's goal to fund voluntary conservation projects. Projects that are completed to meet regulatory requirements are not eligible for funding. However, portions of a project may be eligible for funding if that portion is voluntary and exceeds regulatory requirements. Verification that the project is voluntary may be required from the applicant or applicable regulatory agency.
- The applicant is responsible for the operation and maintenance of structural practices applied under this program to ensure the conservation objective of the practice is achieved for a minimum of 10 years. For non-structural practices (e.g. cover crops), the applicant is responsible for the operations and maintenance for the term specified in their contract.
- It is the District's goal to support and leverage federal USDA program funding through District technical assistance and funding.
- If USDA project funds or technical assistance are being used on a joint project, the applicant must sign an Information Release Authorization form that allows the District access to applicable information within the applicant's project case file in order to be eligible for District funds.
- If the practice has failed prior to the 10-year term due to improper maintenance, the applicant will be responsible for the necessary repairs. If the landowner decides not to repair the practice to the original specifications, they shall be obligated to reimburse funding in accordance with the approved cost share contract.
- If the title to the land where the practice is installed is transferred to another party before the expiration of the life of cost share contract, it shall be the responsibility of the landowner who signed the contract to advise the new owner that the contract is in force.
- Project inspections will be conducted to meet minimum State requirements, with additional inspections for projects of emphasis. Current inspection schedule includes:
 - Compliance inspections at years 1, 3, 6, and 9 for typical projects under a 10-year contract.
 - Annual compliance inspections for non-structural land management practices.
- For projects using state funds, additional specific requirements may apply, including but not limited to Minnesota prevailing wage, BWSR Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, and project signage requirements.

Project Development

- The landowner and applicant shall allow District staff access to property for which the installed conservation practice is located during the life of the contract. The installed practice will be subject to periodic inspections by District staff.
- District Technical Standards include, but are not limited to, the most current: USDA Field Office Technical Guide, MPCA Stormwater Manual, NPDES General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activity, and applicable local, state and federal regulations.
- The District will consider funding tile installation only for the following purposes:
 - If it is necessary to establish vegetation for an approved practice (i.e. grass waterway).
 - If it is necessary to ensure project success for a minimum of ten years.
 - If it is a support practice or part of an approved practice. (I.e. water and sediment control basins or stormwater runoff controls).
- Funding will not be provided for tile installation if the activity will impact a wetland or for the sole purpose of drainage.
- Funding will not be provided to increase tile capacity or size beyond design capacity for the purpose of agricultural drainage. The applicant is solely responsible for costs associated with

increased tile capacity. All modifications or connections must have prior approval to ensure that the changes do not negatively affect the success of the approved practice.

- Landowner/Applicant may be requested to obtain two quotes for the proposed conservation work prior to cost share contract approval by the District Board.
- Unless specified otherwise by Minnesota prevailing wage statutes, the value of labor, equipment, materials and/or services that are proposed to be provided by the applicant to complete the project, shall be estimated at:
 - General Labor rate of \$25 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
 - Labor rate of \$50 per cubic yard for concrete work.
 - Heavy equipment operation such as skid steers, tractors, backhoes, and scrapers (including labor) at \$60 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
 - Other equipment rates as listed on the most recent Iowa State University – Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey – Average Charge rate.
 - Materials: \$8 per ton for gravel, \$5 per yard for both sand and compacted earth fill.
- Professional or semi-professional services, such as engineering, labor rate at \$75 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
- Other items: Fair market value with prior approval by the District Board.

Application/Contract

- Applicants are responsible to submit application forms, project plans and cost estimates as requested by the District in sufficient detail for the District to complete its review.
- For projects where construction will occur on adjacent properties or the project will impound or outlet water on adjacent properties not owned by the applicant, a group addendum must be signed by all affected landowners. A division of payment schedule, agreed to by all landowners, must be attached to the addendum.
- District Staff will prioritize applications based on local and state priorities and the potential to provide water quality benefits.
- District staff shall provide a funding recommendation for each application submitted to the District Board. The district reserves the right to review projects by committee if deemed appropriate.
- The funding amount will not exceed the amount specified on the original cost share contract, unless the applicant, prior to completion of the project, obtains a District Board approved contract amendment to increase funding amounts. Contract amendments shall not be awarded solely due to increased project costs and shall be evaluated by the District Board on a case by case basis.
- Upon approval by the District Board, the applicant will receive a letter with copy of executed cost share contract stating details of the practice that has been approved, the funding amount, and time schedule to start and complete the project, and a copy of the Operations and Maintenance Plan.

Project Implementation

- District staff will be available to the applicant during construction to answer questions, document installations and provide general construction observation to inform the applicant of non-compliant project components or conditions.
- Unless otherwise approved by the District Board, a portion of a project becomes ineligible for funding if construction begins on that portion before a cost share contract has been approved.

- The project must be completed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Cost Share Program Contract and maintained in compliance with the Operation and Maintenance Plan.
- The applicant is responsible for full installation of the project before the project installation deadline listed on the cost share contract. If a deadline extension is required to complete the project, the applicant must make the request no less than 30 days prior to the project installation deadline. All contract deadline extension request require approval by the District Board.
- The entire practice shall be installed according to project design requirements, including seeding, mulching, erosion control blanket, or other erosion control devices. Any changes from the approved design requirements shall be agreed to in writing prior to practice certification.

Reimbursement

- The technician with the proper Job Approval Authority shall verify if the practice is complete and meets standards and specifications before final payment is issued.
- The Landowner/Applicant is responsible to pay, in full, all receipts and invoices directly to the contractor or vendor.
- The applicant must submit invoices or receipts of actual costs in sufficient detail for the District's review. Requests for reimbursement shall include an applicant signed Voucher and Practice Certification Summary Form.
- A cost share reimbursement payment will be approved by the District Administrator and certified by the District Board upon certification that the project has been installed and completed to specifications.

Program Specific Policies

Nonstructural Land Management Practices

- Cover Crops – one-year contract
 - Contract expires December 31, 2021.
 - 5 ac. minimum, 80 ac. maximum per person, entity, or corporation.
 - A flat rate payment of \$15/acre with a maximum total payment of \$1,200 (80acres).
 - Cover crop must be applied to an annual crop, eligible crops include corn, soybeans, or small grains.
 - Prevent plant acres are not eligible for this program.
 - The field to be planted with a cover crop must be planted to an annual row crop in 2022.
 - No eligibility requirements except the land cannot be in any form of non-compliance status and cannot be enrolled in another local, state, or federal cover crop program.
 - SWCD/NRCS staff will assist in the development of a seeding plan prior to entering a contract with the Chisago SWCD.
 - Cover crop cannot be terminated until after January 1, 2022.
 - Seeding dates will follow the NRCS MN Agronomy Technical Note #33, Cover Crop Seeding Guide (the latest date allowed to plant a cover crop is October 15th).
 - The SWCD Board must approve all Cover Crop Incentives Program contracts prior to planting the cover crop.
 - Incentive payments will be issued in December of 2021 after the cover crop has been planted and certified by SWCD staff.
- Cover Crops – three-year contract
 - The District will provide a flat rate of \$25/acre/year for a three-year contract. There will be no requirement on number of species seeded but higher diversity will be encouraged. There will be a maximum of 100 acres per applicant.

- Residue and Tillage Management No-Till/Strip-Till
 - The District will provide a flat rate of \$20/acre/year for a three-year contract. There will be a maximum of 100 acres per applicant.
- Enhanced Street Sweeping
 - The District will provide a flat rate of \$100/curb mile/year for a three-year contract. There will be a maximum of 25 curb miles per applicant.