

Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District 2024 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:

- 3 Staff with USDA NRCS Job Approval Authority under Ecological and/or Engineering Sciences
- 2 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, the Wright Soil and Water Conservation District, private consultants, local municipalities, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources or the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

District Cost Share Programs

- 2021 Sunrise River Phase II Lower St. Croix CWMP Implementation (C21-1088)
- 2021 Goose Creek Watershed TMDL Implementation (C21-6961)
- 2021 WBIF Lower St. Croix Watershed Partners (C21-4732)
- 2022 Lower St. Croix Soil Health Grant (C22-7318)
- 2023 WBIF Lower St. Croix Watershed Partners (C23-0735)
- 2023 Implementation of BMPs in the Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes Watershed (C23-4274)
- 2023 BMP Implementation Targeting Lawrence Creek, Dry Creek, and Direct Drainage to the St. Croix River Phase II (C23-4644)
- 2024 Goose Creek Watershed TMDL Implementation (C24-0064)
- 2025 Conservation Delivery (P25-0103)

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 and the lawns to legumes program), 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, or if the applicant fails to implement a nonstructural practice for the term of their contract 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 and rain garden).

- 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 \$75 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 \$100 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 issuance of final payment for the 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 along with a 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 requests 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.
- For percent of installation cost share payments, 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.
- For flat-rate contract payments, the applicant must certify, by signing the Flat Rate Voucher and Practice Certification form, that the practice was completed according to plans and specifications developed by the District.
- A cost share reimbursement payment will be authorized by the District Administrator after the project has been certified by the authorized technical representative for the project and a complete Voucher and Practice Certification Summary Form has been submitted. All projects will be certified by the District Board upon certification that the project has been installed and completed to specifications.
- All reimbursement payments for nonstructural land management practices will be issued according to the following schedule and after the practice has been certified and approved by the Districts technical representative:
 - Implemented year 1 of grant – annual payments.
 - Implemented year 2 of grant – annual payment year 1 and a single lump sum payment for year's 2 and 3 payments.
 - Implemented year 3 of grant – a single lump sum payment for all three years.

Program Specific Policies

Nonstructural Land Management Practices

- Nonstructural Ag BMPs (management BMPs) must be an enhancement of existing management practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve soil health from existing levels, and have a benefit for water quality. A practice must implement a higher level of conservation than what has been implemented on that field in the past 3 years.
- The following practices may be implemented on the same acres for the three-year period alternating practices per year: Cover Crops, Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till, and Residue and Tillage Management – Conservation Tillage.
- The following practices may be implemented on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively: Cover Crops, Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till, and Residue and Tillage Management – Conservation Tillage.
- The maximum payment to an applicant per contract (includes individual, entity, or corporation) for the implementation of a nonstructural Ag BMP practice will not exceed \$4,000 per year.
- An applicant cannot apply for both No-Till/Strip-Till (329) and Conservation Tillage (345).
- Eligible practices:
 - (1) **Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till**
 - (a) Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 329 for No-Till/Strip-Till
 - (b) Three-year contract
 - (c) \$20/acre/year
 - (2) **Residue and Tillage Management - Conservation Tillage**
 - (a) Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 345 for Conservation Till
 - (b) Three-year contract
 - (c) \$10/acre/year
 - (d) Residue cover following a corn crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 60% or greater.
 - (e) Residue cover following a soybean crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 30% or greater.
 - (f) Residue cover following a small grain crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 60% or greater.
 - (3) **Cover Crops**
 - (a) Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 340 (except for the seeding date which will follow the Midwest Cover Crop Council Seeding Guide recommendations, the latest date allowed to plant a cover crop is November 20th)
 - (b) Three-year contract
 - (c) Light fall tillage allowed to incorporate the seed, must be approved by Technician.
 - (d) Payment rates:
 - (i) \$50/acre/year with no spring tillage the following planting season
 - (ii) \$25/acre/year with spring tillage the following planting season
 - (e) Cover crop must be applied to an annual crop rotation, eligible crops include corn, soybeans, small grains or as approved by the SWCD board.
 - (f) Prevent plant acres are not eligible for this program.
 - (4) **Forage and Biomass Planting** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 512
 - (a) contract duration and practice lifespan is 10 years.
 - (b) payment rate = \$150/ac

- (c) Requires conversion from row crop.
- (d) Must be classified as Highly Erodible Land by the USDA, or directly draining to a DNR Public Water, or in a groundwater sensitive area, or has a surface- or ground- water benefit as determined by the SWCD Technical Representative.
- (e) Stand-alone practice
- (5) **Conservation Cover** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 327
 - (a) contract duration and practice lifespan is 10 years.
 - (b) Introduced species \$200/ac.
 - (c) Native species \$350/acre
 - (d) Pollinator species \$500/ac.
 - (e) Must be classified as Highly Erodible Land by the USDA, or directly draining to a DNR Public Water, or in a groundwater sensitive area, or has a surface- or ground- water benefit as determined by the SWCD Technical Representative.
 - (f) Stand-alone practice
- (6) **Conservation Crop Rotation** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 328
 - (a) contract duration 3 yrs., practice lifespan 1 yr.,
 - (b) payment rate = \$30/ac
 - (c) The additional crop added to the rotation must improve the USDA Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) of the full rotation to be eligible. Minimum of 3 crop types in the rotation and listed in the 328-practice standard Table 2: High Residue Producing Annual Crops. Participants must demonstrate the applied for acres have a history of continuous annual crop. Fall tillage will not be allowed in the 328 year and minimal disturbance required if applying manure. Light tillage allowed if broadcasting a cover crop after small grain harvest to lightly incorporate.
 - (d) Stand-alone practice
- Nonstructural Urban BMPs (management BMPs) must be an enhancement of existing management practices that will reduce sediment and phosphorus discharges from urban areas.
- Eligible practices:
 - 1) **Enhanced Street Sweeping**
 - (a) Must follow the Enhanced Street Sweeping Evaluation Plan developed by the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership
 - (b) Three-year contract
 - (c) Payment rates:
 - (i) Tier 1 \$100/curb-mile/year (complete the MPCA credit calculator based on curb miles swept and provide the report).
 - (ii) Tier 2 \$125/curb-mile/year (complete the MPCA credit calculator based on the tracking of weights, dates, and provide the report).
 - (d) Maximum payment not to exceed \$7,000/year.