

RILEY PURGATORY BLUFF CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

Watershed Stewardship Grant Guidelines

Grants provide financial assistance, resources and tools to help you take action for healthy water in your neighborhood, city, watershed, and beyond. Join a community of stewards who are building the future of clean water.

Program summary

The Watershed Stewardship Grant program offers financial support and resources for clean water projects to residents and organizations within the Watershed District. Some examples include raingardens, native plant buffers, wetland restorations, rainwater reuse systems, erosion control, or tree trenches.

The mission of the Watershed District is to protect, manage, and restore the water resources in its boundaries. However, we can't do this work alone. We need an informed and empowered community to help create meaningful change. The Watershed Stewardship Grant Program exists to help grow and support that community.

Who can apply?

- Individual homeowners
- Non-profits (*including home, townhome and lake associations*)
- Schools
- Businesses
- Local government

Homeowners must live in the watershed district. Projects must take place on property owned by the individuals or organization, and within the watershed. [Check your location at rpbcwd.org](http://rpbcwd.org)

How much are the grants?

These are cost-share grants. That means that the watershed district covers part of the project cost, and the award recipient covers part. There are three different grant amounts depending on the applicant:

- Homeowners: \$5,000 max*, up to 75% of the project cost
- Non-profits: \$20,000 max*, up to 75% of the project cost
- Gov/school/business: \$50,000 max, up to 50% of the project cost

The applicant is eligible for up to the max award per year. This means one application may include more than one practice (ex: a raingarden and a cistern), or the applicant may apply for two separate projects in one year, but the total amount they are awarded may not exceed the maximum listed above. *More funds may be allotted for those projects with a professional maintenance plan. See section on "Reimbursable Costs" for more information.

Which projects get funded?

The Watershed Stewardship Grants fund physical water resource improvement and protection projects that have quantifiable benefits to water quality, habitat, and/or flooding. These projects are known as best management practices (BMPs). Examples of projects include:

- *Stormwater infiltration & filtration:* turfgrass alternatives, raingardens, vegetated swales, tree trenches, pervious pavers, underground storage, pretreatment
- *Pollution reduction:* road salt pretreatment equipment or retrofit, alternatives to lawn grass that minimize/avoid the use of fertilizer and herbicide
- *Rainwater harvesting:* cisterns, rain barrels, stormwater capture and reuse
- *Habitat restoration:* native plant buffers, converting turfgrass to native plants or bee lawn, creek restoration, wetland restoration, woodland restoration (priority is given to restoration of aquatic habitats)

How are grants awarded?

Applications are reviewed by a committee of watershed district staff and technical advisors, including a sub-committee of two members of the Citizen Advisory Committee. Projects are evaluated for how well they address the program outcomes below. Highly technical or complicated projects may be referred to the watershed district consulting engineer for review and recommendation.

Homeowner applications, and non-profit applications with a request below \$10,000 that are recommended for funding by the committee are sent to the District Administrator for consideration.

Local government and business applications, and non-profit requests of \$10,000 or more that are recommended for funding are brought to the District Board of Managers for consideration and approval.

Program outcomes:

The Watershed Stewardship Grant program funds projects that:

- have quantifiable benefits to water quality, habitat, and/ or flood reduction
- support the watershed district's 10-Year-Plan goals

Projects are also evaluated on whether they:

- are examples that the district can share with others
- increase awareness of water resource issues
- increase visibility and general knowledge of clean water projects
- build community connected by shared actions for clean water

The grant does not fund projects that have a primary goal of drinking water conservation, for example high efficiency washers, low-flow toilets, or smart irrigation controllers/sensors. For help with these projects, check with your city and/or county.

Projects must demonstrate an improvement over existing conditions for water quality, habitat, and/or flood reduction. Projects that minimize impacts rather than improve existing conditions may receive funding up to the difference between the cost of the bmp and the traditional approach.

Restoration projects must use only native plants. Stormwater BMPs like raingardens can include select native cultivars and non-natives that are included in the watershed's bmp plant list. (Available on the grant website). However, native plants are highly encouraged.

The cost of invasive species removal is covered only if it is a part of a restoration or other BMP project.

Responsibility to our community

As a local government organization, funded by taxpayer dollars, it is the responsibility of the Watershed District to ensure program funds are used effectively. Therefore, applications will also be closely evaluated for whether they use cost-effective methods and materials.

Evaluation sheets used by the review committee are available upon request.

What are the deadlines?

Applications are accepted May - October. The grant review committee meets once a month. Applications that are brought to the Board of Managers will be reviewed at their next monthly meeting. Thus, depending on when you submit your application, it could be up to a month and a half before you hear whether your project was approved or denied.

What is the process?

The watershed district works in partnership with the Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) to offer guidance on projects ideas and designs. Throughout this process, you will work with the CCSWCD technician as well as Watershed District Staff. Contact information is included below. Please reach out with questions to either of them along the way.

Before you apply

1. Visit the Watershed Stewardship Grant webpage for resources and ideas
2. Once you have your idea, fill out the [Site Visit Request form](#)
3. We will contact you to schedule a site visit with the CCSWCD or Watershed District technician
4. Develop a project plan
5. Assemble all the grant materials and apply

To apply, fill out and provide:

- Online grant application form (rpbcd.org/grants/watershed-stewardship-grants-1)
- Documentation of eligibility and project specific materials (see page 9 for more information)
- Project designs including location map (*and plant list if applicable*)
- Contractor bids (for work involving a third-party)
- Project cost estimate

Incomplete applications will not be considered. You must have a site visit prior to applying.

If your project is approved

1. We will send you a contract. Once this is signed, you can get started!
2. Keep track of your expenses including all receipts
3. Issues come up. If you think you need to make a change to your plan, contact us for approval
4. Take photos! Before, during, and after. You'll need these for submitting your project report
5. You've got one year from approval to finish your project and submit your report

After you've completed your project

1. Send in copies of all your receipts, including from any contractors you worked with (electronic copies or scans are acceptable).

2. After you submit the reimbursement form, the CCSWCD technician will conduct a project check-out visit
3. Financials are processed once a month at the watershed. Once your reimbursement request is submitted, it may take one to two months for you to receive your check.

Long-term

1. Take care of your project*
2. Submit a brief annual update for the first 3-5 years.
3. After the second year of installation, your project may be inspected by CCSWCD or RPBCWD technician
4. Stay in contact! The watershed district often offers continuing education on topics like maintenance, and other opportunities to learn and get involved

**Applicants are required to maintain their projects for the number of years specified in the "Maintenance" section of your grant agreement.*

More details

Please read through carefully. Make note of anything you have questions about and contact us.

Permits

Key point: You might need to apply for a permit, but the fee will be waived.

- If a project triggers a watershed district rule, the applicant will need to apply for a permit. However, the permit fee will be waived. District staff will work with the applicant on the permit process.

Key point: Grant money can't be used for a project that you already have to do.

- Grants cannot be used for work that is required as a part of a permit from the watershed district or any other organization. One exception is a vegetated shoreline stabilization. However, grants can be used for projects, or parts of projects that go above and beyond permit requirements (ex: a permit requires you to put in a 15-foot buffer, but you decide you would like to do a 25-foot buffer. You may apply for funding for the extra 10 feet, but not for the initial 15 feet).

Reimbursable costs

Key points: Don't spend money until your project is approved. Things that are pretty, but not functional, are not covered. You can count the work you do.

- Expenses incurred prior to project approval are not reimbursable (do not get started until you have signed a contract). The exception is design costs. If you pay a designer to create a plan for you, you can include that in your application estimate and reimbursement request. If the

final cost is less than the approved estimate, the reimbursement will be the applicable percentage of the actual cost.

- Reimbursements cannot be more than the original approved amount, even if you actually spent more. Purely aesthetic elements (like a bird bath, or fountain) are not reimbursable.
- In-kind labor and materials: Labor and other in-kind contributions can be used for the required 25% match at a rate of \$14.25 per hour for unskilled labor and \$25 for skilled. MN Water Stewards, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists using Watershed Stewardship Grant funds to complete projects for which they will record volunteer hours are not eligible for in-kind labor contribution.
- The costs associated with professional maintenance are eligible for reimbursement. Homeowners and non-profits are eligible for up to a 30% increase to the maximum funding limit (meaning the total grant awarded could be up to \$6,500 for homeowners and up to \$26,000 for non-profits) with the presentation of a professional maintenance contract spanning three years or greater at the time of application.

Funding agreement

Key point: You need to sign a grant agreement, and stick to it.

- Program participants enter into a binding agreement with RPBCWD providing the terms under which cost-share funding is provided. After approval of the project, the agreement is signed by both the participant and RPBCWD, and a copy given to the participant. Amendment of any of the terms of the agreement will be by mutual agreement signed by all parties to the original contract.
- The agreement includes, but is not limited to, promoting and acknowledging RPBCWD sponsorship, reporting, payment schedule, terms of agreement and use of funds, cost overruns, and cancellation. The agreement also allows RPBCWD access to the project area for evaluation and promotion.

Maintenance requirements

Key point: You need to take care of your project. If you don't, we can ask for the grant money back.

- Maintenance of the project is the responsibility of the grant recipient. Local government and businesses are required to maintain their projects for 10 years. Nonprofits and homeowners are expected to maintain their projects for 5 years. Homeowners and local government sign a maintenance schedule as a part of the funding agreement. Businesses and non-profits must

also record a maintenance declaration on the deed to their property. RPBCWD reserves the right to request repayment of a grant if the project is not adequately maintained.

Public hearing

Key point: If you are asking for a lot of money, the public gets to review the project.

- Projects requesting \$20,000 or greater will go to a public hearing prior to final approval. At the hearing, members of the public, including the applicant, may express opinion on whether the project should receive funding. The information and opinions expressed at the meeting will be considered by the Board of Managers in their final funding decision.

Schedule

- Project installation must be completed within one year of the agreement being signed. If unforeseen circumstances delay a project, the participant can request an extension in writing.

Payment

- Reimbursement is made after completion of the project. The participant must document completion and have it confirmed by RPBCWD or CCSWCD staff via inspection. Applicants must provide copies of paid invoices and receipts for all costs and reasonable documentation of labor hours contributed. Claimed expenses will be verified by RPBCWD as reasonable.

Conformance to plans

Key point: You need to build what you agreed to build in order to be reimbursed.

- RPBCWD will not reimburse costs expended for construction of the project that does not substantially conform to the approved plans, designs, and/or specifications. RPBCWD will not reimburse costs expended for partial completion of the project. However, RPBCWD staff will work in earnest with participants to address unexpected conditions, changes in conditions or other eventualities that affect the construction or implementation of a project and will present a modification of the cost-share agreement to the Administrator or Board of Managers when necessary.

Submitted information

Key point: Your application is public data.

- All information, including but not limited to applications, conceptual designs, contractor bids, cost estimates, final decisions and specifications, copies of permits and proof of expenditures is subject to disclosure to the public when submitted to RPBCWD, except where specifically protected as non- public by state law.

Reporting

The applicant will RPBCWD submit a project summary report to within 30 days of completing the project. Update reports will be submitted annually for 5 years. Additional reporting will be required after year 9 for projects receiving more than \$10,000.

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Project specific eligibility and additional materials

Types of projects differ greatly, and as such we use different criteria to grade different types of projects. Below you will find sections for each of our most common project types outlining specific requirements to keep in mind and additional application materials needed. If you would like to see the worksheets the application review committee will use to grade your project, feel free to request them from the Grant Program Coordinator. If your project does not fit into one of the categories below, please contact the Grant Program Coordinator.

Habitat Restoration

As you are designing your project, keep these requirements in mind:

- Plants must be 100% native*
- Plants must be located in a place where they will thrive
- Plants cannot be irrigated after the establishment period (not to exceed two years)
- No insecticides or fungicides shall be used
- Herbicides must be used sparingly and only where appropriate. Herbicide application must be outlined in detail in the project proposal.
- All soil in the areas you intend to plant in should be decompacted (no more than 200 PSI to a depth of 12 inches)
- Soils must be tested for organic matter content, composition, nutrient content (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium), and pH. Soil information should be submitted with application. Nutrient deficient soil should be amended according to soil test results.
- You must provide the square footage of your project area in your application

Shoreline or Wetland Buffer

As you are designing your project, keep these requirements in mind:

- Plants must be 100% native*
- Plants must be located in a place where they will thrive
- Plants cannot be irrigated after the establishment period (not to exceed two years)
- You must submit an aerial map showing the area of work (including square footage) and any relevant landmarks on your property.
- Insecticides or fungicides shall be used

*The District defines native plants as native to the region between central Minnesota and central Iowa. Cultivars of native plants are not permitted.

Rain Gardens and Infiltration Basins

As you are designing your project, keep these requirements in mind:

- You must provide the following design specification:
 - Detailed planting plan and schedule
 - Infiltration capacity of the soils (how well are the soils able to absorb water)
 - Dimensions of contributing watershed (what is the area of the space where the water is coming from)
 - The area (in square feet) of the bottom of the rain garden or infiltration basin
 - Depth of rain garden or infiltration basin
 - Where the water will go if your rain garden or infiltration basin overflows and at what depth (relative to the bottom of the basin) the basin will overflow. This is known as an Emergency Overflow Evaluation (EOF).
 - Depth of underdrains, if any
- The Rain Garden or Infiltration Basin must:
 - Be appropriately sized (to be able to handle water from the contributing watershed and based on soil conditions and infiltration rates)
 - Be placed in a location that captures runoff/ stormwater
 - Have a flat bottom
 - Be designed to drain in 48 hours
 - Be designed to capture a minimum of a 0.5 inch rainfall event
 - Have side slopes that are as shallow as possible (not to exceed a 3:1 ratio unless impossible based on space restrictions)
 - Use shredded mulch, if mulch is needed
- Plants cannot be irrigated after the establishment period (not to exceed two years)
- All soil in the areas you intend to plant in should be decompacted (no more than 200 PSI to a depth of 12 inches)