

Vilas County Conservation Cost Share Program 2013

Purpose

To assist landowners to restore and protect lands and waters affected by soil erosion and non-point source pollution and to promote sound stewardship of land and water by the public. The objectives are to protect water quality, to maintain and improve native plant communities for wildlife, and to correct soil erosion problems. In Vilas County, given the large amount of surface water and its economic importance, this program is open to all landowners.

Background

The Vilas County Conservation Cost Share Program provides assistance to Vilas County property owners in restoring shoreland and other areas of the landscape that pose a threat to water quality. The program provides financial incentive for participating landowners to ease the cost in paying for erosion control measures, plants, materials, and labor directly related to their restoration projects. As a participant of the program, the county will reimburse a landowner up to 50, 60 or 70% of the cost to implement a project on their land. The percentage of reimbursement depends entirely on the type of practice being implemented (refer to Tier Level Practice Policy for more information). To be considered for project reimbursement, the practice must be installed according to the county's plan written in accordance to NRCS and ATCP 50 standards.

To Apply

Contact the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department at (715)-479-3747 to fill out an initial application. The fee to apply for the program is \$25, plus \$40 for the first hour of technical services received by the Land and Water Conservation Department. Technical service fees are then \$40 per hour thereafter. Once the application is reviewed, a member of our staff will visit your project site to discuss concerns about the project and to talk through restoration possibilities. We also take pictures of the site at that time.

Project Selection

Project selection is based on availability of funds for the current year and criteria for meeting the county land and water plan implementation goals. If your project is selected, Land and Water Conservation Department staff work with you to develop project plans, prepare cost estimates, and assist you with any questions.

Cost Share Contract / Reimbursement

Participating landowners sign a cost share contract with the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department. There is a Contract Processing Fee of \$100. Participating landowners are responsible for payment of all project implementation costs up front. **The cost share amount is reimbursed to the landowner after verification that eligible expenses were incurred and the project was completed according to the restoration plan.** Reimbursement takes approximately 4-8 weeks, when the county will issue a check to the landowner.

Eligible Expenses

- Plants, materials, and labor used according to the project plan are eligible (up to the total listed on the cost share contract).
- If you choose to implement the project yourself, your labor time is reimbursed at a rate of \$15 per hour.
- Landscape company labor time accrued while implementing the planned project is eligible (must be listed on an invoice).

Non-Eligible Expenses

- Expenses and labor time accrued while shopping for plants and materials for the planned restoration.
- Site maintenance expenses, including expenses for watering the site after planting.
- Project costs incurred before the cost share contract is signed.
- Fees for Application, Contract Processing, Technical Service Fees, and any Project Permit preparation.

Economic Hardship

If the landowner qualifies for economic hardship status as determined by the county, the county's share of the cost share grant for each of the tier levels will increase by 20%, and the hourly rate technical service fees associated with normal cost share projects will be waived. The landowner will still be responsible for paying the application fee of \$25, the contract processing fee of \$50, and the optional project permit fee of \$100 (if applicable). Tier I cost share rate will increase to 70%; Tier II cost share rate will increase to 80%; and Tier III cost share rate will not exceed 90% of the total cost of an installed practice.

Contractor Services

If the landowner does not want to install the entire project themselves, they are welcome to work with a landscape contractor. We suggest you request bids from at least 3 landscaping companies and we can assist you to prepare a bid request. Please understand that professional services could exceed the contract amount.

Tracking Expenses

Participating landowners keep track of all material expenses and labor performed for the project on a form provided to them by the Vilas County Land and Water Department. Original receipts and itemized invoices of all expenses incurred are provided to the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department. Invoices must be marked paid in full, or a copy of the invoice and a cancelled check must be provided to the department.

Questions?

Please call Quita Sheehan or Carolyn Scholl at the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department at (715)-479-3747.