

RILEY PURGATORY BLUFF CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

Watershed Stewardship grants

Financial assistance, resources and tools to help you take action for healthy water resources in your neighborhood, city, watershed, and beyond. Join a community of stewards who are changing norms and 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 in the watershed district. Some examples include raingardens, native plant buffers, wetland restorations, rainwater reuse, erosion control or tree trenches.

The mission of the watershed district is to protect, manage, and restore the water resources in its boundaries. We can't do this work alone though. We need an informed and empowered community to help create meaningful change with real results for clean water. The Watershed Stewardship Grant program exists to help grow and support this 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: \$5000 max, up to 75% of the project cost
- Non-profits: \$20,000 max, up to 75% of the project cost
- Gov/school/busi: \$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.

What projects get funded?

The Stewardship Grants fund physical water resource improvement and protection projects (*best management practices - bmp*) that have quantifiable benefits to water quality, and habitat, and flooding. Examples of projects include:

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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, stormwater capture and reuse

Habitat restoration: native plant buffers, converting turfgrass to native plants, creek restoration, wetland 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 final approval.

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 stewardship grant program funds projects that:

- have quantifiable benefits to water quality, habitat, and 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.

Plants: 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 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.

You can find the evaluation sheet used by the committee, including a list of 10-Year Plan goals on the Watershed Stewardship Grants webpage. Use this to help design your project to address the project outcomes and increase your chance of receiving a grant.

What are the deadlines?

Applications are accepted monthly throughout the year, excluding December and January. Completed applications are due the second Wednesday of each month. Applicants will typically be notified of the committee's decision within two weeks. Applications that are brought to the Board of Managers will be reviewed at their next monthly meeting.

Tentative: 2019 Deadlines: April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, Aug 14, Sept 11, Oct 9, Nov 13

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. The CCSWCD technician is one of several people you will work with during this process, including the watershed Community Outreach Coordinator. 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 online project interest form
3. We will contact you to schedule a site visit with CCSWCD
4. Work with the technician or a private company to develop a project plan
5. If you work with a private company (or design it yourself), submit the plan to technician for preliminary review and calculation of water quality benefits (if applicable). Highly technical or complicated projects may be referred to the watershed district consulting engineer for review
6. Assemble all the grant materials and apply

To apply: fill out or provide

- Grant application form
- 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 the application is received prior to the due date, staff will notify the applicant and request the missing material. If the material is received by the due date, the application will be considered. If not, the applicant may reapply for a later deadline.

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

After you've completed it

1. Submit the project reimbursement form online
2. Send in copies of all your receipts, including from any contractors you worked with
3. After you submit the reimbursement form, the CCSWCD technician will schedule a project check-out visit
4. Financials are processed once a month at the watershed. Get your completed project report in by the 15th of the month in order to have a check issued the first Wednesday of the following month (example: submit report July 12th, financials processed July 15th, check issued August 7th and mailed out soon after)

Long-term

1. Take care of your project (visit the Stewardship Grant webpage for maintenance resources)*
2. Complete the online project report every year to let us know how things are going
3. At the end of year two, the CCSWCD technician will stop out for a progress visit
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.*

More details

These pieces are less exciting than everything above, but they are important to understand. 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 waved. 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. 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. Maintenance isn't covered.

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 \$10 per hour for unskilled labor and \$20 for skilled.

Maintenance: Maintenance costs including labor and materials are not reimbursable

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 on behalf of 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 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 of 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 submit a project summary report to RPBCWD 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.