**DIRT, GRAVEL and LOW VOLUME ROAD PROGRAM** — “What you need to know”

**Program Overview** –

The Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road program (the “Program”) began in 1997 from an initiative by Trout Unlimited in conjunction with Penn State University’s Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads, the State Conservation Commission and local Conservation Districts. The goal of the Program is to reduce pollution to nearby streams while improving the rural road network. One of the qualification requirements of the Program is to direct funding to “worksites” where road runoff is affecting water quality of the nearby stream. As a result of Act 89 (PA Gas Tax), additional funding has been allocated to the Program which will now include Low Volume Roads (<500 vehicles per day). Technical Assistance is available and provided by the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road studies and the Berks County Conservation District (BCCD).

**District Allocations** –

Each Conservation District will receive funding from the State Conservation Commission through the PADEP. The BCCD has received almost $290,000 for the upcoming Program year (2015). Approximately $80,000 towards Dirt and Gravel roads and $210,000 for Low Volume roads

**Qualifying Projects** –

Projects that qualify must consist of components that improve the road and the environment. Low Volume Road (LVR) Program projects must contain benefits to both the road systems (i.e. - improved drainage, reduced surface, ditch & bank erosion, smoother surface, more durable surface, reduced maintenance costs, etc.) and the environmental systems (i.e. - water quality, stream quality, reduced storm water flows, increased infiltration).

The following are some components to a Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road improvement project:

- Road Rehabilitation w/ drainage concerns
- Stream crossings and pipe culverts
- High water by-pass
- Sub-surface drainage and under drain projects
- Bank / slope stabilization
- Vegetation
- Road resurfacing (sealing or paving) may be considered in association with larger ESM principals. To be considered the following ESM principals must be addressed:
  - Drainage issues must be properly addressed.
  - Base instability issues must be properly addressed.
  - Other necessary and appropriate issues such as bank stability, road entrenchment, vegetation, etc., must be properly addressed.
**Program Monetary Assistance** –

Applicants are to prepare and submit a grant application to the BCCD requesting the amount of funding required and any “in-kind” contributions to be allocated towards the project. Up to 50% of the contract amount may be advanced to grant recipients once a contract is signed. Projects greater than $25,000 are subject to provisions of Pennsylvania's Prevailing Wage Act (1961, August 15, P. L. 987, No. 442), 43 P. S. Section 165-1 et seq. A Contract Amendment must be completed and signed by both entities if project cost overruns totaling 20% or less of the initial contract amount.

**Grant Application Process** –

**Eligibility**

- Applicants (i.e. – townships, boroughs, or a gov’t agency like the PA Game Commission) must have a representative attend Environmental Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) training and acquire the certification. The ESM certification is good for 5 years.
- Projects must have an impact on improving water quality.

**“Pre-Application” Site Visit**

- It is recommended that BCCD and Municipal representatives meet to discuss the project Scope of Work prior to submitting the grant application.

**Application cycle**

The BCCD has an open application period and applicants may submit for a grant at any time during the calendar year.

Application forms are available at the BCCD office or on the website.

**Project Ranking**

The Conservation District’s Quality Assurance Board (QAB) has developed a written ranking criteria to determine project funding priorities.

**Notification**

The applicant must notify the Conservation District in advance as to when the project will start.

**Contact Information:**

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