

VENANGO CONSERVATION DISTRICT

PARTNERSHIPS FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT (PRISM) PILOT PROGRAM

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2024-04-11

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Venango Conservation District (VCD) Partnerships for Regional Invasives Species Management (PRISM) Pilot Program Advisory Committee in Venango County is to recommend to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors a grant application program to the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). The VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee will assist the Venango Conservation District by managing invasive species that threaten Pennsylvania's economy, environment and human and animal health by developing strong, diverse stakeholder partnerships; and by carrying out the Administrative, Educational and Contractual responsibilities of the Venango PRISM Pilot Program.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee will establish priorities and requirements for funding through the PRISM Pilot Program.

The VCD PRISM Pilot Advisory Committee responsibilities will include:

1. Review of applications submitted for funding.
2. Conducting site visits (as necessary and determined by the Committee).
3. Recommending eligible applications to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors to approve submission to the PACD for funding that will build regional partnerships and address a critical need to manage invasive species that threaten Pennsylvania's economy, environment and human/animal health.

MEMBERS

The VCD PRISM Pilot Advisory Committee in Venango County will be comprised of no greater than six members appointed by the Venango Conservation District Board.

As of July 13, 2023 the following is a list of VCD ACAP Advisory Committee members:

Non-voting Chairman	Lisette Lane, District Manager, VCD
NRCS	Dale Kriner, District Conservationist
DCNR BoF	Ty Ryen, Service Forester
VCD	Bailey Kozalla, Watershed Specialist

The Venango Conservation District has the option to appoint an alternate delegate to the VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee to serve in the absence of the appointed delegate due to illness, injury, or other personal hardship (i.e. death in the family).

MEETINGS

The Established meeting schedule for VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee meetings will be on an annual basis, usually in November or December, and also on an as-needed basis as determined by the Chairman. Public notice of the meeting will be published in the local newspaper and posted on the Venango Conservation District website at www.venangocd.org.

Minutes of the VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee meeting will be taken by district staff, filed with VCD PRISM Pilot Program files and will be kept on record and available to the public pursuant to the Venango Conservation District's Open Records Policy. Any and all policies adopted by the Committee will be posted on the Venango Conservation District's website at www.venangocd.org. Written copies of these policies are available upon request. The VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

FINANCE

Successfully funded applicants will receive reimbursement for project expenses following execution of final certification and completion reporting. **A 50:50 match is required to be eligible for funds in this program.**

VCD PRISM PILOT PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE RULES OF CONDUCT AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No District Director, VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee member or District employee shall, as a result of this program, be permitted to obtain financial benefits for himself/herself, a member of his/her immediate family or a business with which he/she is associated. Understanding that, this shall not preclude the payment of normal salary and benefits to employees provided in their normal course of employment.

In addition, any VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee member, Conservation District Board of Directors member, or District employee will be excluded from voting on actions that might benefit a parcel or stream adjacent to his or her property or the property of relatives or businesses in which he or she has an interest. In the event of such a conflict, the member should abstain from voting provided a quorum of the board remains to sufficiently carry or deny the motion. The Venango VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee may not conduct business unless a quorum of two thirds of the voting board is present at the meeting. The non-voting chairperson of the Committee may vote in the event that two thirds of the Committee is in attendance and there is a tie vote.

VCD PRISM PILOT PROGRAM EQUAL ACCESS TO FUNDS POLICY

To encourage and promote equal access to funding, any and all land owners (including municipalities, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions) within Venango County are eligible for funding. To qualify for funding, applications must:

1. Meet the goals of any applicable watershed implementation plan or county action plan.
2. Priority is given to projects that implement best management practices for control of invasive species that are listed in a conservation management plan. Examples of a conservation management plan include a forest management plan, invasive control plan, tree farm plan, etc. If there is not a current (no more than 10 years old) conservation management plan for the property where the project will be conducted, the landowner must obtain one prior to receiving any program funds.
3. Demonstrate the commitment to the required minimum 50:50 match whether by in-kind or cash sources.
4. Submit a completed application package in its entirety including project description, site photos, location map, PNDI receipt, landowner access agreement (if applicable), etc.
5. Any other criteria considered by the Venango Conservation District, as applicable.

The Venango Conservation District reserves the right to deny an application due to active compliance and/or enforcement actions, or a court order issued by or on behalf of the Commonwealth or cooperating agency.

District staff will notify Venango County landowners by local newspaper announcements and electronic outreach sources, when funding is available, of the availability of Venango PRISM Pilot Program funds.

Funding Limitations

1. The Venango Conservation District may choose to reimburse grant recipients based on eligible actual project costs. Eligible project costs are described as costs associated with direct control and restoration efforts with regard to aquatic and/or terrestrial flora and/or fauna (including insects). This may include, but may not be limited to the purchase of materials or other supplies as well as labor and/or contractual expenses to be used towards invasive species control efforts. The Venango Conservation District reserves the right to review for approval or denial of proposed equipment costs.
2. Projects located on federal lands are not eligible for funding through this program.
3. A single grant application cannot request funding in excess of \$7,000.

WRITTEN FUNDING CRITERIA FOR RANKING PROJECTS

The VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining VCD PRISM Pilot Program funding priorities:

1. Project Part of a Conservation Plan: Are the goals of this project outlined in an already existing conservation plan (forest management plan, invasive control plan, tree farm plan, etc) that is no more than 10 years old?
2. Early Detection/Rapid Response Species: Is the species discussed in the application a new or emerging invasive species in Pennsylvania? ED/RR Species are listed on the PA iMapInvasives website [here](#).
3. Ecological Importance: Is the project located within or near (within 2 miles) of a Natural Heritage Area of Venango County? Natural Heritage Areas of Venango County can be viewed on the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Area Program's website [here](#).
4. Noxious Weed List: Is the species discussed in the application currently listed as a Noxious Weed in Pennsylvania? Weeds classified as "noxious" are listed on the PA Department of Agriculture's website [here](#).
5. Acres Treated: What is the size (in acres) of this invasive species control project? ***
6. Partnerships: Does the applicant demonstrate cooperative efforts with other landowners, municipalities, and/or organizations?
7. Green Space: Is the project located on public lands and normally accessible by the public?
8. Continuation of a previous or nearby project: Have there been or is there currently project(s) similar to the proposed project nearby? (within 1 mile)
9. Underserved Populations: Is this project located within an Environmental Justice area? Applicants should consult the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Justice mapping and screening tool [here](#).

District staff will compile all applications for funding into a spreadsheet composed of the specified data and make the spreadsheet, as well as a copy of each application, available to each VCD PRISM Pilot Advisory Committee member prior to the ranking meeting.

VENANGO PRISM PILOT PROGRAM POLICIES

APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING

The one-page VCD PRISM Pilot Program Grant Application, will be distributed to eligible applicants.

The Venango Conservation District will not keep all non-funded project applications on file for future funding allocations. Therefore, resubmittal of project applications will be necessary during subsequent application rounds. Eligible applicants may also choose to revise existing submitted applications.

The PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Board will open a sign-up period, when funding is available, in which land owners can conduct pre-application site visits with district staff and complete and submit applications. There will be a given deadline usually in the month of November and all land owners will be notified of this deadline by mid to late September enabling interested land owners to submit their grant applications by the given deadline. This information will be posted on the district website and sent via email to interested land owners.

VCD PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee meetings will be held shortly after the given application deadline. At that time, all submitted applications will be reviewed, ranked and recommended for

submission to the PACD for funding. These recommendations will be given to the Venango Conservation District Board at their next regularly scheduled board meeting for final approval. The eligible applicants will be notified by letter and proposed contract in conformity with their grant application. Eligible applicants that have open contracts at the time of the Venango PRISM Pilot Program Advisory Committee annual meeting **will not** be considered for further funding until the existing contract is completed.

FUNDING PROCEDURES

All approved contracts with eligible applicants will be signed by the Board Chairman of the Venango Conservation District. The funds will be distributed by the Conservation District in the following manner:

1. Upon execution of the project contract, the eligible applicant may request up to 50% of the “grant amount requested” for working capital. The eligible applicant is responsible for retaining receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, equipment use, and in-kind documentation etc. to fully document expenditure of the entire grant amount (100%). The final amount of funding for the “grant amount requested” will be reimbursed to the eligible applicant upon execution of final certification and completion reporting.
2. The eligible applicant has one-year from the contract execution date to complete the approved contract.

The Conservation District will consider the project complete upon final inspection and verification of completion. For the project to be considered complete, all site work must be accomplished and stabilized as indicated in the contract in a manner to be considered satisfactory to achieve the purpose it was designed for, as determined by the Venango Conservation District.

All receipts, weigh slips, labor accounting, etc. must also meet or exceed the total grant amount requested prior to funds being released. If totals equal less than the awarded contract, only the lesser amount will be funded to the eligible applicant. Grant monies that are unspent by the eligible applicant at the end date of the executed contract will not be distributed by the Conservation District.

Applications are highly competitive and require that full and accurate cost estimates be developed by the eligible applicant prior to their submission for potential funding. Once the District enters into a contract with an eligible applicant, the district expects the eligible applicant to complete the contract within the proposed budget and contract time frame. The district will not provide additional funds should the project costs exceed those proposed by the eligible applicant in the grant application and awarded contract unless a contract amendment and/or extension has been requested and approved. Funds spent by the applicant in excess of the grant amount will count as an in-kind contribution by the eligible applicant.

ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR PRODUCTS AND PRACTICES

Successfully funded projects must prohibit the use of materials or practices that are environmentally harmful. These materials include, but are not limited to: noxious weeds, fugitive emissions, and other products which may pose a problem if they enter a waterway. Compliance with all existing

environmental laws is a condition of purchase under the contracting agreement between the Conservation District and the applicant.