

**VENANGO CONSERVATION DISTRICT
DIRT GRAVEL AND LOW VOLUME ROAD PROGRAM
QUALITY ASSURANCE BOARD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Updated November 11, 2021

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Board (QAB) in Venango County is to recommend to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors a grant program for Section 9106 of the PA Motor Vehicle Code. The QAB will assist the Venango Conservation District in carrying out the Administrative, Educational and Contractual responsibilities of the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The QAB will establish priorities and requirements for funding through the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program.

The QAB responsibilities will include:

1. Review of applications submitted for funding.
2. Conducting site visits (as necessary and determined by the QAB).
3. Recommending eligible applications to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors for funding that will address non-point source pollution in affected areas.

MEMBERS

The QAB in Venango County will be comprised of two members appointed by the Venango Conservation District Board, one member from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and one member from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC).

As of December 10, 2020, the following is a list of QAB members:

Non-voting Chairman	Lance Bowes, District Manager, VCD
VCD Nominated	Tom Young, Oil Creek Chapter Trout Unlimited
NRCS Nominated	Timothy Davis, Civil Engineering Technician, NRCS
PAFBC Nominated	WCO Mark Kerr, PAFBC

The Venango Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission have the option to appoint an alternate delegate to the QAB to serve in the absence of the appointed delegate due to illness, injury, or other personal hardship (i.e. death in the family).

VCD Nominated Alternate	Dan Rockwell, Oil Creek Chapter Trout Unlimited
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MEETINGS

The Established meeting schedule for QAB 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 QAB meeting will be taken by district staff, filed with the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road 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 QAB will be posted on the Venango Conservation District's website at www.venangocd.org. Written copies of these policies are available upon request. The QAB meetings will be conducted according to Robert Rules of Order.

FINANCE

Any interest accrued from the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program checking accounts will be transferred at least annually to the program's project construction allocation. Training and educational monies may be used to fund Special Educational Projects such as:

1. Purchase and use of traffic counters to be made available free of charge for municipal use.
2. Purchase carbide tipped rotating toothed grader blades, grade laser level, leaf blower and jumping jack to be lent out to qualified municipalities and agencies for Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program approved projects.
3. Purchase promotional items for educational/public awareness purposes.
4. In the use of any innovative ideas that will benefit the educational activities of the Venango Conservation District regarding the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program.
5. Costs associated with ESM workshops and the annual Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Conference.

QAB RULES OF CONDUCT AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

August 29, 2014 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following policy be adopted:

No District Director, QAB 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, as outlined in the most current version of the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program Administrative Manual.

In addition, any QAB member, Conservation District Board of Directors member, or District employee will be excluded from voting on actions that might benefit a road 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 QAB member should abstain from voting provided a quorum of the board remains to sufficiently carry or deny the motion. The Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program QAB may not conduct business unless a quorum of two thirds of voting board is present at the meeting. The non-voting chairperson of the QAB may vote in the event that two thirds of the board is in attendance and there is a tie vote. Additionally, the Venango Conservation District will not appoint any municipal official to the QAB.

DIRT GRAVEL AND LOW VOLUME ROAD EQUAL ACCESS TO FUNDS POLICY

The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following policy be adopted:

To encourage and promote equal access to funding, any and all municipalities within Venango County as well as PennDOT, PA Game Commission, the County of Venango, and PA Fish & Boat Commission are eligible for funding provided the municipality or agency has:

1. Inventoried their dirt and gravel roads with District staff, and
2. Evaluated their dirt gravel and low volume roads with District staff and assisted in the creation of worksites within their municipality or agency, and
3. Have at the minimum, one **current** elected/appointed or employed individual attend and complete the two-day Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance Workshop within the last 5 years.

District staff will notify by regular mail and electronic notification all municipalities and agencies annually of the availability of Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funds. District staff will also post a list the applicants that were awarded funds for ESM projects and the amount of those funds on the district website.

The Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program QAB, in order to keep all potential applicants eligible for participation in the program, will sponsor an Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance (ESM) workshop on a three to five-year rotational basis. District staff and QAB members will attend at least one of the semi-annual meetings of Municipal Officials to both explain and promote the Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program.

WRITTEN FUNDING CRITERIA FOR RANKING PROJECTS

August 29, 2014 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Water Quality - Watershed Classification
2. Trout Streams Classification
3. In-kind eligible -applicant contributions
4. The relative Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Site Assessment (computer score)
5. Project status

February 3, 2015 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt and Gravel Road Program funding:

1. Administrative application review
2. Effectiveness of the solution
3. Degree to which the project improves the road
4. Stormwater management
5. Multiple years of project application submission

February 3, 2015 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Water Quality - Watershed classification
2. Trout streams classification
3. In-kind municipal contributions
4. The relative LVR site Assessment Score
5. Project status
6. Administrative application review
7. Effectiveness of the solution
8. Degree to which the project improves the road
9. Stormwater management
10. Multiple years of project application submission
11. Average daily traffic count

December 15, 2016 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Combining funds with County Liquid Fuels funding.
2. Additional points for each successive year in which a project is applied for after the second year.

December 15, 2016 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining the Venango Dirt and Gravel Road Program funding:

1. Additional points to any fill projects if DSA is the chosen surface aggregate.

The relative Low Volume Road site assessment score will be conducted by a qualified Venango Conservation District staff person and a qualified representative of the eligible applicant applying for Venango Low Volume Road Program funds. The term qualified will pertain to eligible applicants and District staff that have successfully completed the Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance training within the past five years. Once the relative Low Volume Road site assessment score has been completed, the qualified eligible applicant representative will sign off on the score indicating that they agree that it is a fair assessment of the project worksite. The relative Low Volume Road site assessment score will be conducted prior to or at the pre-application site visit prior to submission of the Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding application.

A minimum ranking score of 100 is required for any application to be considered for funding. Any application not meeting the minimum ranking score of 100 will not be considered for funding during that application year, but the QAB may encourage the eligible applicant to work with the Venango Conservation District staff on how to improve the project for re-submission during subsequent application years or will fund at the QAB's discretion. The applicant's past history of involvement in the program may also be taken into consideration. The QAB may recommend the awarding of funds to an eligible applicant that has not previously participated in the program to encourage their present and

future participation. Lastly, an environmental benefit analysis will be conducted as the final part of both the Dirt and Gravel and the Low Volume Road ranking criteria.

December 15, 2016 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking guidance should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Fund up to four phased projects in one year.
2. Limit the number of phases in a project to two.

November 7, 2019 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria and guidance should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt and Gravel Road Program funding:

1. Limit auto-funding of phased projects to second-year DSA placement only.
2. Discontinue auto-funding all other types of phased projects.
3. Assign 10 additional points to a project that is a continuing phase of a previous project that is not DSA placement in the second-year.

October 1, 2020 - The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Qualifying Municipality or agency cooperation/assistance awarding 50 points to qualifying applications.
2. Add a Funding Value criteria to environmental/cost benefit porting of the ranking.
3. Revise trout stream criteria by adding “Class A Wild Trout Stream” and assigning a value of 35 points.

District staff will compile all applications for funding into a spreadsheet comprised of the specified data and make the spreadsheet, as well as a copy of each application, available to each QAB member prior to the annual QAB ranking meeting.

June 23, 2021 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Update the Cost Effectiveness ranking section dollar values per the following:
 - a. Very High Benefits - \$0-\$25
 - b. High Benefits - \$26-\$35
 - c. Moderate Benefits - \$36-50
 - d. Low Benefits - \$51 and above

June 23, 2021 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ranking criteria should be adopted to be used in determining Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program funding:

1. Eliminate the Liquid Fuels section of the ranking worksheets.

VENANGO ESM POLICIES

November 13, 2020 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following ESM practices be required:

1. Constructed head walls and end walls will be required when installing cross pipes and culverts on program projects.

DSA POLICY

The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following policy be adopted:

At a minimum, follow the DSA policies and specifications Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program Road Maintenance Program Manual, dated July 1, 2019. These policies can be found in Chapter 7 of the Administrative Manual and specifically 7.2 – 7.2.4. Additional policies may be recommended to the Venango Conservation District by the QAB.

November 6, 2018 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following policy be adopted:

1. DSA contractor may not provide their own nuclear testing, but an independent tester must be utilized instead.

November 11, 2019 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors that the following policy be adopted:

1. No DSA material should be placed on a project site before May 1st or past September 30th in any year of a current or extended contract.
2. If DSA cannot be placed during these dates, the municipality or agency should request a contract extension. The contract extension may be granted provided that it does not exceed the Program's two-year fiscal spending requirement of funds granted to the district.

LOW VOLUME ROADS

This section applies only to Low Volume funds, not Dirt and Gravel funds. For the purposes of the Low Volume Road Program, a “paved” road is defined to include any road surfaced with asphalt, tar and chip, chip seal, bitumen, concrete, or other asphalt-like coating.

LOW VOLUME ROAD GUIDING PRINCIPALS

PROJECT FOCUS

The focus of the road projects in Low Volume Road (LVR) portion of the Program should be on similar Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance principles that have been used in the Dirt and Gravel Road Program since its inception. Projects in the LVR Program must contain benefits to both the road systems (improved drainage, reduced surface, ditch & bank erosion, smoother surface, more durable surface, reduced maintenance costs, etc.) and the environmental systems (water quality, stream quality, reduced storm water flows, improved air quality, increased infiltration). The balance between road improvements and environment benefits should be considered in the local QAB/District project ranking criteria and funding decisions.

LONG TERM BENEFITS

Similar to Dirt and Gravel Road Program projects, the focus of Low Volume Road Program projects should be on long term road and environmental improvement projects.

1. Routine maintenance of Low Volume Road or storm water systems such as cleaning inlets, street sweeping, crack sealing etc. is not eligible for funding under this Program.
2. Program funds should not be used to pay for deferred or neglected maintenance on drainage/storm water systems without road improvements.
3. Program funds should not be used to fund any Low Volume Road issues that do not provide a long-term benefit to the road and to the environment.

MISTAKES/DESIGN ERRORS

Program funds should not be used to correct recent mistakes and or design errors on Low Volume Roads that are the responsibility of the original project engineer or construction firm. If recent (within its reasonable design lifespan) Low Volume Road construction projects contain design or construction flaws, correction of these problems should be the duty of the project's engineer or contractor of record, and Low Volume Road Program funds should not be allocated for these purposes.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for Low Volume Road Program funding, a road must have an existing paved (including chip sealed) surface and it must have a verified average daily traffic count of less than 500 vehicles per day (according to Commission guidance).

All projects must apply ESM principles and practices approved by the Program in order to address an environmental concern directly related to the road, make improvements to the road system, or to meet all other Program requirements (i.e., permits or approvals).

LOW VOLUME ROADS PROJECT GUIDELINES

PAYING FOR ASPHALT OR OTHER SURFACING

Resurfacing paved roads (sealing or paving) is not the primary focus of the Low Volume Road Program component. Resurfacing costs can be considered by a conservation district as a component part of a larger ESM project. It is at the discretion of individual conservation districts and QABs whether resurfacing costs (sealing or paving) will be funded through the Program, either on individual projects or as countywide policy. Before funding any resurfacing work on a project, the following ESM principles must be addressed:

1. Drainage issues must be properly addressed.
2. Base instability issues must be properly addressed.
3. Other necessary and appropriate issues such as bank stability, road entrenchment, vegetation etc. must be properly addressed.
4. The QAB will consider resurfacing portions of a project on Low Volume Roads as part of a larger project and only those areas of the roadway that have been disturbed to make improvement to the road base and/or drainage. Other areas may be considered on an as needed basis and are at the discretion of the QAB.

SURFACING UNPAVED ROADS

It is not the intent of the Program to encourage the sealing or paving of existing dirt or gravel roads and converting them to sealed or paved low volume roads. While eligible entities may choose to seal or pave a Dirt and Gravel Road project on their own at some future point in time, no Program funds should be utilized for the specific purpose of converting unpaved roads to paved or “tar and chip”.

RECLAIMING PAVED OR SEALED ROADS TO DIRT AND GRAVEL

The Program recognizes the value of converting a poorly constructed or poorly maintained low volume road into a high-quality dirt and gravel road through full depth reclamation or other similar processes. Conservation Districts may utilize either Low Volume Road Program or Dirt and Gravel Road Program component funds for these purposes.

LOW VOLUME ROADS IN URBAN AREAS

Many ESM principles and practices in use by the Dirt and Gravel Road Program can be readily adapted to paved low volume roads in a rural environment. Since the Low Volume Road Program is new, districts are strongly encouraged to work from what they know and understand (traditional Dirt and Gravel Program projects/concepts) towards Low Volume Road projects/concepts that they are less familiar with. Low Volume Road funding, however, is not limited to rural roads or rural environments. Low Volume Road projects in urban areas will require a new set of BMPs that will take some time to develop and disseminate through the Program. The level of focus in rural and urban environments will be at the discretion of local conservation districts and QABs.

In order to increase the knowledge base of potential urban LVR BMPs, Districts should contact the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads when planning to fund an urban LVR project that is outside of “traditional” ESM practices. This will give the Center opportunity to provide input to these urban projects prior to QAB approval, and will help the Center to increase the knowledge base of urban BMPs for statewide education purposes.

The LVR portion of the Program is not JUST a storm water program. Projects, especially in urban areas, need to strike a balance between environmental improvements and road improvements. It will be up to local districts and QABs to determine the proper balance for projects in their counties.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Commission recognizes the fact that many LVR component projects will have higher levels of daily traffic and higher levels of posted speed than projects on unpaved roads. Project applicants are required to follow the same safety protocols as with all other road work (flaggers, signs, etc). The funding of any traffic control and safety components of a Program project is at the discretion of the county conservation district.

TRAFFIC COUNTS FOR LOW VOLUME ROADS

Before application for a low volume road project can be considered for funding, the applicant is responsible for validating that the road has 500 vehicles per day or less consistent with Commission and any local QAB policy.

1. A traffic count is required in order to be considered for LVR funding, and must be completed before application submission.
2. The Conservation District is responsible for verifying that a count exists, and that the count meets the criteria established in state and local policy.
3. Traffic counts are considered valid for a period of 5 years, provided there are no new significant changes in traffic flow volumes or patterns.
4. Documentation of traffic counts using a signed "Traffic Count Validation Form" must be retained with project files according to the Commission's record retention policy. Districts may opt to include the completed traffic count validation form as an attachment to the project Contract.
5. Conservation Districts may, at their discretion, use administrative and education funding to facilitate or support traffic counts for applicants. Districts should ensure that all potential applicants have equal access to any traffic count facilitation measures they may employ.
6. Traffic counts only apply to a segment of road between intersections, not to an entire length of road. Application sites that include intersections may require multiple counts.
7. Traffic counts should be done on the proposed project location, or on a road that ensures that traffic on the project location can be determined.

OPTION A: VALIDATE WITH EXISTING TRAFFIC COUNT DATA OR EXTRAPOLATION

USE OF EXISTING DATA

Existing traffic counts can be used to verify road eligibility for LVR funding. Existing data must have been collected within the previous 5 years and conform to the Program's Level 2 count protocol at a minimum. "Estimated" traffic counts that exist for many municipal roads cannot be used.

EXTRAPOLATION OF EXISTING DATA

It is permissible to use existing data for roads with 500 vehicles per day or less to logically extrapolate to subsidiary roads. For example, a spur road between two State Roads where both State Roads have less than 500 vehicles per day must also have less than 500 vehicles per day. This extrapolation of data can be used to verify that a road has 500 vehicles per day or less without performing a count. This extrapolation of traffic counts must prove the Average Daily Traffic on the road is 500 or less to be eligible for LVR funding. Extrapolation of existing data must be verified by Conservation District staff prior to entering into a contract with the Conservation District. Potential sources of existing traffic count data include:

1. State Roads:
https://gis.penndot.gov/BPR_PDF_FILES/MAPS/Traffic/Traffic_Volume/County_Maps/Venango_tv.pdf
2. Local Roads: PennDOT regional offices or County Planning Commissions

OPTION B: VALIDATE WITH LEVEL 1 COUNT: 2 HOUR COUNT

An applicant may perform a Level 1 count to determine the traffic count on a potential project site. This involves counting traffic for a two-hour period, either by hand tally, video recording, or an automated traffic counter. A Level 1 traffic count of 500 vehicles per day or less will qualify the road for LVR funding. A Level 1 traffic count must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be conducted between March 1 and the week before Thanksgiving.
2. It cannot be conducted on a holiday, or the day before or after a holiday.
3. It must be conducted on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.
4. It must be conducted for a minimum of two consecutive hours between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm.
5. Only the number of vehicle passes is counted, regardless of direction or travel or type of vehicle.
6. All level 1 traffic counts must be conducted in conjunction with Conservation District staff prior to the submission of the LVR application and a Conservation District staff person must be present during the actual count unless the count is being conducted by the use of a video camera with a time display.
7. The traffic count for the time period will be adjusted to a 24-hour period by simply multiplying the 2-hour count volume times twelve (12).
8. All level 1 traffic counts that are close to 500 (475-525) vehicles a day should conduct a minimum of three traffic counts and utilize the average of those counts.
9. Applicants may skip the Level 1 count and go straight to a Level 2 count if desired.
10. Only licensed motor vehicles should be counted.

If a Level 1 traffic count produces a count of 500 vehicles per day or less, the project on the road is considered eligible without a Level 2 traffic count. If a Level 1 traffic count produces a count of more than 500 vehicles per day, it does not disqualify the road, but necessitates a Level 2 traffic count because of its increased accuracy. The purpose of a Level 1 count is to provide a reasonably accurate traffic count with minimal time investment.

LEVEL 1 COUNT EXAMPLES

Example 1: A traffic count for two consecutive hours between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm produces a count of 25 vehicles. $24 \text{ hours (per day)} / 2 \text{ hours (per study)} = 12$

$12 \times 25 = 300$ average daily count.

This worksite would be eligible (no Level 2 count need.)

Example 2: A traffic count for two consecutive hours between 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm produces a count of 53 vehicles. $24 \text{ hours (per day)} / 2 \text{ hours (per study)} = 12$

$12 \times 53 = 636$ average daily count.

This does not disqualify the road. It simply means that a more accurate Level 2 count is required if the applicant wants to continue to pursue Program funding.

OPTION C: VALIDATE WITH LEVEL 2 COUNT: 24 HOUR AUTOMATED COUNT

A Level 2 count involves the placement of an automated traffic counter on the road for a minimum period of 24 hours. Note that these are the minimum criteria for a count. More comprehensive or longer counts can be substituted as long as they meet the minimum requirements below for a Level 2 count. A Level 2 traffic count of 500 vehicles per day or less will qualify the road for LVR funding. Level 2 counts supersede Level 1 counts if there is a discrepancy. A Level 2 traffic count must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be conducted between March 1 and the week before Thanksgiving.

2. It cannot be conducted on a holiday, or the day before or after a holiday.
3. It must be conducted between 12:00 am Tuesday and 12:00 am Friday.
4. It must be conducted for a minimum of 24 consecutive hours.
5. Only the number of vehicle passes is counted, regardless of direction of travel or type of vehicle.
6. All Level 2 traffic counts must be conducted in conjunction with Conservation District Staff prior to the submission of the LVR application.

If a Level 2 traffic count produces a count of 500 vehicles per day or less, the project on the road is considered eligible. If a Level 2 traffic count produces a count of more than 500 vehicles per day, a project on that road is not eligible for LVR funding. 24-hour counts do not have to be broken up by hour or any smaller time unit.

The criteria described in the Level 2 traffic count represent a “minimum acceptable criteria”. Counties may use or adopt more stringent traffic count requirements as long as it meets or exceeds the requirements here. (A more stringent requirement is a count that provides more statistically accurate data. For example: requiring Level 2 counts for all roads; requiring 48-hour counts, or requiring hourly totals on counts to provide information to PennDOT.)

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A traffic count survey cannot be conducted in a timeframe or manner that intentionally causes artificially low average daily traffic counts on a particular road segment. This includes conducting a traffic count during summer recess for a school access road, or conducting a traffic count when access to a road segment is temporarily or partially restricted or reduced (i.e. detoured, weight, or size restricted, etc.) or conducting a traffic count in any other timeframe or manner that intentionally causes low average daily traffic counts.

APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING

The one-page Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program Grant Application, developed for statewide use, will be distributed to all eligible applicants. The front of the form requires all eligible applicant information, worksite ID, problems that need addressed on the site, grant amount requested and estimated in-kind contributions. The back of the form is reserved for a simple drawing and a short explanation of the project.

Each application will be for one or more previously verified worksites, or continuous project area. 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 years. Eligible applicants may also choose to revise existing submitted applications.

December 15, 2016 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors to approve the following policy:

1. Limit Low Volume Road applications to one per year per applicant and Dirt and Gravel Road applications to two per year per applicant.

It will also be the policy of the QAB to allow the inclusion of work outside of the municipality’s or agency’s road right of way provided the work is necessary for the successful completion and continued maintenance of non-point source pollution problems corrected on the site.

The QAB will have an annual sign-up period in which municipalities and agencies 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 municipal and agency officials will be notified of this deadline by mail no later than late September enabling interested municipalities and agencies to submit their grant applications by the given deadline. This information will be posted on the district website and sent via e-mail and the United States Postal Service to municipalities and agencies.

The annual QAB meeting will be held shortly after the given annual deadline. At that time, all submitted applications will be reviewed, ranked and recommended 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. If deemed necessary by the QAB Chairman, a second QAB meeting may be called to award any remaining funds not allocated during the annual meeting. Eligible applicants that have open contracts at the time of the QAB 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 District Manager of the Venango Conservation District. The funds will be distributed by the Conservation District in the following manner:

1. The Conservation District maintains a separate account specifically for the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program.
2. Upon execution of the project contract, the eligible applicant must request 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 entire grant amount (100%). The final 50% of funding for the "grant amount requested" will be reimbursed to the eligible applicant upon final inspection of the project by the Venango Conservation District staff and the completion of the Completion Report by the eligible applicant.
3. The eligible applicant has one year to complete the approved contract. If unable to complete in one year's time, the eligible applicant may request in writing a one-year extension of the project contract.
4. Signage for road safety will be an eligible expense under the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program and will be funded at the discretion of the Quality Assurance Board of up to 50% of the cost of the signage as long as the signage is part of a larger Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road project.
5. Guide rails and/or guardrails will be an eligible expense under the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Program and will be funded at the discretion of the Quality Assurance Board for up to 50% of the cost of the guide rails/guardrails as long as they are a part of a larger Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road project.
6. All projects that are funded for DSA placement must follow Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Roads Center guidelines for placement, including nuclear testing for moisture content and density (compaction) of the placed material. Municipalities and agencies may not use the DSA placement contractor to provide density and moisture content testing but must hire a qualified independent contractor.

The Conservation District will consider the project complete upon final inspection by the QAB and/or district personnel. 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 QAB and/or the 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.

The district makes funds available to participating eligible applicants from the Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Fund. Those applications are highly competitive and require that full and accurate cost estimates be developed by the eligible applicant prior to their submittal 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 municipality or agency in excess of the grant amount will count as an in-kind contribution by the eligible applicant.

STREAM CROSSINGS

STREAM CROSSING STRUCTURAL REPLACEMENT POLICY

This section applies to both Low Volume Road funds and Dirt and Gravel Road funds.

BACKGROUND

The goal of this policy is to allow the replacement of stream crossing structures that were negatively impacting the stream, while at the same time preventing the Program from simply becoming a “bridge replacement program”. The best quantification of stream impact is the size of the existing structure related to the bankfull width of the channel. A channel’s “bankfull width” is the width of flow at a “dominant channel forming flow stage” where sediment and bed material is moved most effectively through the stream system. Although it varies, bankfull is typically associated with a flow level between 1 and 2-year recurrence. Stream crossing structures that are significantly less than the channel’s bankfull width are typically associated with many problems including gravel deposition above the road and excessive stream scour and erosion below the road. In order to focus Program funding on the structures that are most likely to be causing stream instability, the policy drafted here limits paying for structural replacement to only those locations where the existing structure is less than 75% of the bankfull channel width. These structures are most likely to be causing negative stream impacts, and are most likely to be sources of perpetual maintenance and road impacts to local municipalities and agencies (gravel bar removal, erosion etc.). In addition, any new structures must have a width at least equal to the channel’s bankfull width.

REPLACEMENT OF ROAD/STREAM CROSSING STRUCTURES

The purpose of this policy is to determine eligibility of stream crossing structural replacement with Program funds. Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance practices applied to the surrounding bridge

area (road, stream banks, ditches, high water bypass etc.) are still eligible Program expenses around all stream crossings. Within the limits described below, the final decision on funding structure replacement, along with the type of structure used (pipe, box, etc.), is at the discretion of local Quality Assurance Boards. These qualifications do not exempt projects from any permitting or engineering requirements.

EXISTING stream crossing structures with an opening equal or less than 13 square feet (equivalent to a 48" diameter round pipe):

- 1. Are eligible to be replaced with Program funds.**
- 2. The NEW REPLACEMENT structure must (all four):**
 - a. Have a structure width at least equal to bankfull width (100% ratio).
 - b. Be properly aligned with the channel.
 - c. Consider additional floodplain connectivity when possible.
 - d. Be designed and constructed to accommodate the passage of aquatic organisms through the structure.

EXISTING stream crossing structures with an opening of more than 13 square feet (equivalent to a 48" diameter round pipe):

- 1. In order to be eligible for replacement, EXISTING structures must (all three):**
 - a. Have a structure to bankfull width ratio of 75% or less.
 - b. Show signs of streambank erosion.
 - c. Show signs of streambed erosion/aggradation.
- 2. The NEW REPLACEMENT structure must (all four):**
 - a. Have a structure width at least equal to bankfull width (100% ratio).
 - b. Be properly aligned with the channel.
 - c. Consider additional floodplain connectivity when possible.
 - d. Be designed and constructed to accommodate the passage of aquatic organisms through the structure.

November 13, 2020 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors to approve the following policies:

1. A site visit is required with the participation of Venango Conservation District staff, the project participant and the project participant's engineer to discuss program requirements prior to any engineering work on an application of a General Permit to DEP.
2. Project participant's engineer must submit a copy of the DEP General Permit application to the Venango Conservation District for review before submission to DEP.

June 23, 2021 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors to approve the following policies:

1. Adopt the Stream Crossing Notification Letter for use in Stream Crossing project planning with a policy that the Notification Letter should be received from the applying municipality no less than 4 weeks prior to submitting an application for funding.
2. Adopt the Stream Crossing Assessment Criteria for a one-year trial period, after which the QAB will re-evaluate the document to determine its effectiveness.
3. Adopt the Stream Crossing Ranking Worksheet for a one-year trial period after which the QAB will re-evaluate the document to determine its effectiveness.
4. Approve a policy which states that the Venango Conservation District will fund a maximum of one stream crossing project application per funding year for a one-year trial period, after which the QAB will re-evaluate the policy to determine its effectiveness.
5. Approve a policy which state that a successfully funded stream crossing project applicant will work with the district staff, technicians from the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads Studies and State Conservation Commission personnel to create a design, to review and approve of program permitting requirements and in project implementation to complete a successful stream crossing installation.

November 3, 2021 – The QAB recommended to the Venango Conservation District Board of Directors to approve the following policies:

1. Requirement that a representative from the culvert manufacturer be present to provide technical assistance throughout the structure assembly process.
2. Stream crossing project's in-stream work must be completed by September 30th of the contract year.

ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR PRODUTCS AND PRACTICES

Section 9106 (f)(7) of the PA Motor Vehicle Code requires Quality Assurance Boards to adopt standards that prohibit the use of materials or practices that are environmentally harmful. The Statement of Policy 83.613 (1)(b) formalizes that requirement. In response, the Venango Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Road Quality Assurance Board has adopted standards prohibiting the use of materials or practices which are environmentally harmful or do not meet the program's "non-pollution" standard. These materials include, but are not limited to: noxious weeds, fugitive emissions, and dust control 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 municipality or agency. An environmentally suitable substitute for dust control, as determined by the State Conservation Commission may qualify for payment.

(Revised December 10, 2020)