



# CLEAN OHIO GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

## District 17 Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC)

### Program Year FY 26 POLICY MANUAL & APPLICATION GUIDELINES

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*This document provides the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) and District 17 NRAC policies. Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program Funding Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements, terms, and conditions set down by the OPWC and the NRAC.*

*Questions? Contact Edwina Teye, Ph.D, District 17 Liaison at 614-233-4233 or [eteye@morpc.org](mailto:eteye@morpc.org)*

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# PART I POLICY MANUAL

For more information, please see the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) Advisories page via the link below. The information provided in this manual is for guidance purposes only. Should a discrepancy arise, the advisories provided on the OPWC website shall supersede.

## CLEAN OHIO GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program (COGSP) provides funds to preserve open spaces, sensitive ecological areas, and stream corridors. The Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) is responsible for administering the COGSP through the NRACs.

The District 17 Natural Resource Assistance Council (NRAC) is responsible for administering the COGSP for Delaware, Knox, Fairfield, Pickaway, Morrow, and Licking Counties and is responsible for:

1. Promoting the development and improvement of open spaces and the protection and enhancement of riparian corridors and watersheds; and
2. Evaluating and selecting applications for recommendation to OPWC from local jurisdictions within Delaware, Knox, Fairfield, Pickaway, Morrow, and Licking Counties for financial assistance from the Clean Ohio Conservation Program.

## District 17 GREEN SPACE CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

The District 17 NRAC considers the Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program a unique opportunity for advancing environmental conservation and improving the quality of life in Delaware, Knox, Fairfield, Pickaway, Morrow, and Licking Counties. The five principles listed below reflect the essential needs of these counties. Successful applicants should ensure that their project(s) accomplishes one or more of these essential elements:

1. **Preserve** natural areas or open space.
2. **Restore** landscapes that have been degraded or destroyed.
3. **Enhance** the quality of natural areas or open space.
4. **Link** natural areas to each other or to county cultural and civic heritage areas.
5. **Provide** public access to natural areas and/or county cultural and civic heritage areas.

Open space is an important and vital part of daily life – it can improve the social health of our communities, the environmental quality of our ecosystems, and the economic viability of our region. Protecting and restoring natural systems—their biodiversity, habitats, and aesthetics will result in cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

## DISTRICT 17 NATURAL RESOURCES ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

The District 17 Public Works Integrating Committee (D17PWIC), as directed in the Ohio Revised Code Section 164.21 appoints the members of the District 17 Natural Resources Assistance Council (NRAC). The NRAC consists of eleven (11) members, with one (1) member from the appointing integrating committee (D17PWIC) and one (1) member from a soil and water conservation district.

The other nine (9) members are appointed from categories of organizations, units of government or agencies as prescribed in ORC 164.21(A)(1), there must be at least one representative from each group:

**Group 1:** County, municipal corporation, township, conservancy district, regional or joint district or unit of government, or regional or joint political subdivision located in the geographical jurisdiction of the D17PWIC.

**Group 2:** Conservation or environmental advocacy organization, an organization with a primary interest in watershed protection and restoration, the Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, or the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Group 3:** A city park system or metropolitan park system or a board of park commissioners located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee, a statewide parks and recreation organization, or the U.S. National Park Service.

**Group 4:** A statewide organization representing agriculture, an organization representing forestry interests, the Department of Agriculture, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Group 5:** An organization representing business, local realtors, or a planning agency, including a port authority, located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee.

### District 17 NRAC Members

**Mr. Brian Ball, Vice Chair**

District 17 Integrating Committee

Term End: 6/15/2024

Phone: 740-393-9528

Email: [engineer@mountvernonohio.org](mailto:engineer@mountvernonohio.org)

**Mr. David Heithaus, Chair**

Representing Group 3: Knox County Park District

Term End: 11/9/2026

Phone: 740-427-5051

Email: [davidheithaus@co.knox.oh.us](mailto:davidheithaus@co.knox.oh.us)

**Ms. Kristy Hawthorne**

Representing: Soil & Water Conservation District

Term End: 11/18/2025

Phone: 740-670-5331

Email: [KristyHawthorne@LickingSWCD.com](mailto:KristyHawthorne@LickingSWCD.com)

**Mr. Steve Goodwin**

Representing Group 2: Appalachia Ohio Alliance

Term End: 6/14/2025

Phone: 740-817-1759

Email: [swgoodwin@earthlink.net](mailto:swgoodwin@earthlink.net)

**Mr. Tim Colburn**

Representing Group 5: Pickaway County Port Authority  
Term End: 11/9/2026  
Phone: 740-420-6498  
Email: [tcolburn@pickawayprogress.com](mailto:tcolburn@pickawayprogress.com)

**Mr. Nicholas Eippert**

Representing Group 1: SWLCWSD  
Term End: 11/9/2026  
Phone: 419-310-1126  
Email: [neippert@swlcws.com](mailto:neippert@swlcws.com)

**Mr. Vince Utterback**

Representing: Violet Township (Fairfield County)  
Term End: 11/13/2024  
Phone: 614-575-5556  
Email: [vince.utterback@violet.oh.us](mailto:vince.utterback@violet.oh.us)

**Ms. Susan Kuba**

Representing: Delaware SWCD  
Term Ends: 11/18/2025  
Phone: 740-368-1921  
Email: [skuba@co.delaware.oh.us](mailto:skuba@co.delaware.oh.us)

**Mr. Tony DiNovo**

Representing Group 4: Morrow C./DNO Produce  
Term End: 11/13/2024  
Phone: 614-374-4737  
Email: [tdinovo@dnoproduce.com](mailto:tdinovo@dnoproduce.com)

**Ms. Arista Hartzler**

Representing Group 3: Pickaway County Park District  
Term End: 11/9/2026  
Phone: 740-420-5451  
Email: [ahartzler@pickawaycountyohio.gov](mailto:ahartzler@pickawaycountyohio.gov)

**Mr. Richard Niccum**

Representing Group 3: Preservation Parks of Delaware County  
Term End: 11/9/2026  
Phone: 740-953-8981  
Email: [rniccum@preservationparks.com](mailto:rniccum@preservationparks.com)

## NRAC Nominations

A Natural Resource Assistance Council is established in each of the nineteen districts. Each NRAC consists of 11 members of which one must be a member of the appointing integrating committee and one must represent a soil and water conservation district located within the geographical jurisdiction of the NRAC. Members' terms of office are three years, with each term ending on the same day of the same month as did the term before it, except that the term may not extend beyond their terms as an elected or appointed official.

Members may be reappointed and must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. Any member filling a vacancy holds the position for the remainder of that term. A member continues in office subsequent to the expiration date of the term until the member's successor takes office or until 60 days has elapsed, whichever is first. Appointments and reappointments must be approved by the district integrating committee. District committees are responsible for coordinating the appointment process in their respective districts and informing the Commission

of appointments. Appointing authorities are encouraged to make their appointments prior to the expiration of the term of the incumbent appointee(s).

For the appointment of each new member the district must provide a letter from the appointing authority, a nomination form, and a resume or summary of qualifications. For a reappointment only the letter from the appointing authority is required. For the district integrating committee appointment only meeting minutes are required, however, meeting minutes are also required to confirm all other appointments and reappointments.

*Reference:* [ORC 164.21](#)

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

## **Meeting Attendance**

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page.

## **Ethics**

OPWC NRAC members are subject to Ohio's Ethics Laws. It is advisable that members make a practice of recusing themselves when their project application or an application by which they are associated is on the table. OPWC suggests having someone else from the organization be present at site visits and meetings to address any questions by the NRAC members.

## **Administrative Expenses**

NRAC District 17 has set an amount not to exceed \$15,000.00. Administrative expenses will be disbursed from District 17's funding allocations. The committee will approve an Administrative Work Plan for each program year.

## **NRAC Methodologies**

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

## **Open Meeting Requirements**

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

## **Public Records**

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

## **Records Retention**

For information on this topic, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

## DISTRICT 17 NRAC POLICIES

In accordance with OPWC policies, the District 17 NRAC has established the following policies for the evaluation and scoring methodology of project applications.

### Agricultural Easements

Agricultural easements are not eligible because they fail to satisfy ORC 164.22 (A) or (B) because they are provided for by the Clean Ohio Easement Purchase Program managed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

### Appraisal Required

Certified appraisals are required and must be done by an ODOT Prequalified Appraiser. Applications for open space acquisition that do not include a minimum of a restricted use appraisal report by an ODOT prequalified appraiser will not be considered by the District 17 NRAC. The list of ODOT appraisers and the OPWC appraisal standards can be found on the OPWC website.

**A purchase price greater than 5% of appraised value are not eligible to apply.**

- Projects with Purchase Contracts exceeding the appraised value will be returned to the Natural Resources Assistance Councils for validation. These projects will not be issued a Notice to Proceed until this validation has occurred.
- Projects that consist of leveraging the difference between the appraised value and purchase contract will also be required to have an appraisal review performed by an ODOT Prequalified Appraisal Reviewer to ensure that the purchase price history, comparables, adjustments, and disclaimers are accurate.
- Applicants that have an appraisal review rejected will not be issued a Notice to Proceed until these discrepancies are resolved.
- Properties above appraised value are eligible, but it is important for the NRAC to be cognitive of this difference and must validate the value of properties that are using the difference between the Purchase Contract and appraised value as scored.
- Appraisal expenses are considered an eligible expense under planning and implementation and an Applicant will be reimbursed based on the project's participation ratio.

More Information on Standards & Procedures for Appraisal Reporting please visit the OPWC website.

### Land Acquisition

Projects not scheduled for acquisition within twelve (12) months from the date of the Project Agreement will be rejected by OPWC and are not eligible. The District 17 NRAC requires documentation of impending land transactions be included in the application, in one of the following forms:

- A Fully executed contract with the owner (signed purchase agreement); or
- A signed letter of intent or a letter/memorandum of understanding;



Any application that utilizes confidentiality agreements in lieu of purchase agreements will not be evaluated.

### Minimum Score Requirement

District 17 NRAC requires a minimum score of 40% of total points available, to be recommended for funding. Proposed projects that do not obtain a mean minimal score from Council members of at least forty percent (40%) of the total possible maximum points that could be awarded by District 17 NRAC members will only be funded in full or in part upon a majority vote of Council members and be contingent upon funding availability.

### Permanent Protection

Requests for open space acquisition must include acquisition by land securement. Follow OPWC declaration of restrictions for fee simple or easement purchase.

Open Space improvement projects include construction, restoration or enhancement of site or facilities that are necessary to make the acquired open space area accessible and useable by the general public on properties previously acquired through Clean Ohio. Applications for Open Space improvement projects should include one of the following forms of documentation from the Clean Ohio Award: the executed settlement statement, recorded deed and deed restrictions or conservation easements.

Riparian Corridor projects (ORC Sec. 164.22B) must protect or enhance riparian corridors or watersheds including the protection and enhancement of streams, rivers and other waters of the state. Applications for riparian corridor projects that do not include land acquisition must include a draft of OPWC restrictions and the recorded deed or conservation easement in order to be recommended for funding.

### Restoration

It is critical to District 17 NRAC that the open space projects selected for funding initiate or hasten the recovery of the ecosystem present on the land. Additional points will be added for projects that include restoration work as a portion of the project scope, budget, or local match and supporting documentation must be included. Restoration projects should be designed to provide the following benefits:

- Enhancing or rehabilitating an open space to an appropriate ecological state or to what it would have become without societal interference;
- Ensuring the integrity and sustainability of the species (flora and fauna) introduced are both native and resilient (can resist disturbance);
- Integrating a community's cultural heritage;
- Providing opportunities for people to appreciate and understand cultural and ecological relationships; and
- Promoting a common vision for greenspace.

## **Site Improvements**

District 17 NRAC projects using Clean Ohio funds for restoration or site improvements must include an itemized estimate of probable costs for all improvements by an architect, landscape architect, or other qualified professional.

## **Existing Structures**

NRAC District 17 will not approve the purchase or demolition of existing structures. Matching funds for the project shall not include any permanent structures, anything pre-existing or anything that the Clean Ohio grant wouldn't purchase.

# Part II APPLICATION GUIDELINES

## APPLICATION DUE DATE

To be considered for financial assistance, applications must be submitted by:

**Friday, September 19, 2025**

on the OPWC WorksWise portal on the OPWC website.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to request login information from OPWC as soon as possible in order to ensure that it is received in a timely manner, before the submittal deadline.

For more information please visit the OPWC website.

**INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING BY THE NRAC.**

**“Incomplete applications” are missing required application materials.**

## REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS

The Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Program evaluation process utilizes the OPWC Application (now on WorksWise) in conjunction with the NRAC Application Supplement and supporting documentation. Please provide supporting documentation in the appropriate attachments separated by a cover page. The application materials must be submitted as follows:

1. WorksWise requires the following items to be uploaded in addition to the complete application:
  - Appraisals
  - Authorizing Legislation
  - CFO Certification
  - Declaration of Restrictions
  - Engineer's Estimate (If Needed)
  - Funding Commitment Letters (If Needed)
  - NRAC Supplement
  - Photographs
  - Project Map
  - Purchase Contract / Letter of Intent
  - Resolution of Support (If Needed)
2. OPWC Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Application (now on WorksWise) which must include the following “NRAC Supplements”:
  - Response to NRAC Methodology

- Letters of Support
- **One (1) single PDF containing all required material and required signatures must be uploaded to WorksWise as “NRAC Supplement.”**

\*\*\*Please note: If a required document on WorksWise is not applicable to your project, you must upload a document stating the item is not applicable

The required application materials must be submitted as follows:

1. All required material must be uploaded to the OPWC WorksWise portal. **No paper copies will be accepted.**
2. **One (1) single PDF containing all required material and required signatures must be uploaded to WorksWise as “NRAC Supplement.”**

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that all the documents are accurate, complete, and in accordance with the requirements, terms, and conditions set down by the OPWC and the NRAC. Failure to meet these conditions will result in the disqualification of a project. Due to the competitive nature of this grant program, **Resolutions of Support are due with the application materials.**

PDF copies of prior successful applications may be obtained from the liaison upon request 30 days prior to the deadline.

## Additional Resources

Consider the following tools to aid in methodology items that must be documented:

[https://development.ohio.gov/reports/reports\\_countytrends\\_map.htm](https://development.ohio.gov/reports/reports_countytrends_map.htm)

<https://odsa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=25906f5b3de14660824b8056c5a9ec30>

<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=9bd5463db1dd4a0bb0ef428368ea75b3>

## FY 26 SCHEDULE

The NRAC has established the following schedule for evaluating and selecting projects for FY 26:

DATE	ACTIVITY
January 17 Friday, 10am – 12:00pm	Working Session (Methodology, Policies & Criteria)
September 19 Friday, 5:00pm	Final Applications Due
September 26 Friday, 5:00pm	Applicants Notified of Missing Required Information
October 2 Thursday, 5:00pm	Submittal of Missing Information
October 7 Tuesday, 5:00pm	PDFs of Applications sent to NRAC members
October 10 Friday, 9am – 5:00pm	Site Visits & Applicant Presentations (Confirm by Oct. 8 <sup>th</sup> )
October 17 (if necessary) Friday, 9am – 5:00pm	Site Visits
October 28 Friday, 5:00p.m.	Application Scores Due
November 13 Thursday, 10:00am – 11:30a.m.	Scoring & Voting (*Project Updates)

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

### Local Political Subdivisions

- Counties
- Municipalities
- Villages
- Townships
- Conservancy Districts
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts

- Joint Recreation Districts
- Park District/Authority

**Non-Profit Corporations** – The Commission uses a unique code to identify applicants, determine their eligibility as it complies with the Law, and to manage and track project information. The OPWC uses the codes created by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) which were developed to ensure uniform identification of geographic entities. Subdivision codes must be secured prior to applying for financial assistance, and are needed for access to Public WorksWise, the Commission’s online portal, which is the platform used for submission of applications.

The OPWC adapted the ANSI system for legally eligible applicants for OPWC funds not covered by the ANSI such as conservation nonprofit organizations and park districts. The Law, ORC 164.20, defines a nonprofit organization as "an environmental and conservation organization that is exempt from federal income taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 501(a) and described in 26 U.S.C. 501(c) and formed to protect the natural environment." Subcodes are assigned by the Commission at the written request of the applicant on the entity’s letterhead, signed by the subdivision’s chief executive officer (CEO), and addressed to the OPWC director sent via email. Subdivisions must include documented evidence pertaining to the creation of the subdivision.

## PROJECT TYPES

### OPEN SPACE

**Open Space projects should promote the following:**

- Comprehensive open space planning.
- Aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
- Economic development and/or community development initiatives in high unemployment and/or low-income areas.
- Protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species habitats.
- Protection of high quality, viable habitats for plant and animal species.
- Preservation of wetlands or other scarce natural resources.
- Pedestrian or bicycle linkages.
- Educational opportunities.
- Quality of life and the natural heritage of the state.
- Reduction or elimination of nonnative, invasive species of plants or animals.
- Balancing the natural ecosystem.

**Eligible Open Space projects include:**

- Acquisition of open space.
- Acquisition of easements.

- Acquisition of land or rights in land for parks, forests, wetlands, or natural areas that protect an endangered plant or animal population.
- Connecting corridors for natural areas.
- Construction or enhancement of facilities (parking, trails, etc.), on properties purchased with Clean Ohio funds, to make open space accessible and usable by the general public.

**Not Eligible** – Acquisition of open space for “active recreation” like baseball diamonds, tennis courts, or other similar facilities.

## RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

**Riparian Corridor projects should promote:**

- Habitat protection.
- Stream corridor-wide or watershed planning.
- Recreational, economic, and aesthetic preservation benefits.
- Floodplain and streamside forest functions.
- Headwater stream preservation.
- Restoration and preservation of aquatic biological communities.

**Eligible Riparian Corridor projects include:**

- Reforestation of land or the planting of vegetation for filtration purposes.
- Fee simple acquisition of lands to provide access to riparian corridors or watersheds.
- Acquisition of easements for the purpose of protecting and enhancing riparian corridors or watersheds.

The following activities are eligible for both Open Space and Riparian Corridor projects:

## ACQUISITION

- Fee Simple Purchase
- Easement Purchase

## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Certified Appraisal – which must be ***performed by an ODOT Prequalified Appraiser credentialed in value analysis***

- Closing Costs
- Title Search
- Environmental Assessments
- Design
- Restoration

- Archeological Survey

## CONSTRUCTION OR ENHANCEMENT OF FACILITIES

Access improvements to make open space accessible and useable by the general public that promote passive recreation and educational opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Trails
- Pedestrian Bridges
- Observation Decks
- Kiosks/Signs
- Benches
- Trash Receptacles
- Invasive Species Removal and Plantings for Restoration for the first time.
- Parking Lots
- Fencing

For additional eligible/ineligible items please visit the OPWC website.

## PERMIT, ADVERTISING, AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS

**Not Eligible** - Administrative services incurred by the applicant.

# FUNDING

The funding available for FY 25 (as of February 2024):

FY 25 Allocation	\$2,526,128.20
Minus Administrative Costs	\$17,500
<b>Total Available (approximate)</b>	<b>\$2,508,628.2</b>

**GRANTS:** 75% of the estimated total project cost: a minimum 25% local match is required.

## ELIGIBLE LOCAL MATCH SOURCES:

The local match is all non-OPWC funds. It can consist of other agency funds (federal, state, or local) or local “pre-pays” for engineering or in-kind work (labor, equipment, materials). Pre-pays, costs paid by the recipient prior to the Project Agreement, may either be reimbursed (up to one year prior to the date of the Agreement) or credited toward the local match.

See [OPWC In-kind Instructions](#) for more information.



# PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The NRAC has established a three-phase process to select the projects that will be recommended to the OPWC for final evaluation and approval.

## PHASE 1: ELIGIBILITY

- 1.1 The applicant must submit their application by the deadline as published herein. The NRAC will complete a cursory review of the submitted applications and the NRAC or designee shall communicate with the applicants any identified missing documentation.
- 1.2 The applicant will be given a one-week (5 business days) remediation period for the submittal of any missing documentation that is required for the review of their application. **Applications deemed ineligible will not be scored by the NRAC** (see the NRAC Policy Manual, Part I above).

## PHASE 2: PRELIMINARY PROJECT EVALUATION

- 2.1 Applications will be reviewed by the NRAC members for compliance with OPWC and NRAC policies and procedures.
- 2.2 Using the Evaluation Criteria, the NRAC members evaluate each application and assign a preliminary score in each of the evaluation categories. Documents used by the NRAC are the OPWC Application, the NRAC Application Supplement, and any other documentation supplied by the Applicant.
- 2.1 While not required, each applicant is provided the opportunity to conduct a site visit and make a presentation to the NRAC. This is in an effort to allow the applicant an opportunity to clarify minor issues and highlight aspects of the project that could not be conveyed through the application. Site visits and presentations should not be utilized as a means to notify the NRAC of major issues with a project. Each project presentation will be allotted the same amount of time which will be determined based on the number of projects submitted during that funding round.
- 2.2 Site visits will occur in the weeks prior to the initial review meeting.
- 2.3 NRAC members submit preliminary scores. Preliminary scores must be submitted to the district liaison at least one week prior to the initial project review meeting.
- 2.4 Presentations will occur at the initial project review meeting. Should any NRAC member need to adjust their scores based on presentations, that may be done after all presentations have been completed, prior to a final vote.

## PHASE 3: PROJECT SCORING AND SELECTION

- 3.1** NRAC members will meet to review and discuss the project rankings. The NRAC can choose to adopt the project rankings as final and close the funding round at this first review meeting.
- 3.2** If NRAC members need to significantly reconsider or refine their scores and submit new scores, the NRAC will set the date and time of a follow-up meeting to reconvene to review and discuss the revised Project Ranking and adopt the funding round Final Project Ranking.
- 3.3** To be considered for recommendation to OPWC, a project must receive a minimum evaluation score of forty percent (40%) of the total points available.
- 3.4** In the case of a tie between two or more projects, the project with the highest percentage of local match shall prevail.
- 3.5** If the last qualified project on the funding list cannot receive its full funding request, the NRAC will consider a request for partial funding along with a revised budget and project scope.
- 3.6** The funding round results will be submitted to the OPWC for final project review and funding determination.

## PROCESS FOR AWARDED PROJECTS

For information on the following topics with regard to the process post project award, please visit the OPWC Advisories page on the OPWC website.

- Project Agreement
- Prevailing Wage and Other Bidding Requirements
- Request to Proceed
- Disbursements
- Land Acquisition Disbursement
- OPWC Project Signs
- Post-Acquisition Activity / Site Improvements
- Project Cost Overruns / Changes in Scope
- Project Cost Underruns / Supplemental Funding
- Travel Expenses

## GLOSSARY

Please refer to the OPWC Glossary of Terms on the OPWC website.