



Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point
12800 Gerard Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55346
(952) 835-2078
ninemilecreek.org

MEMO

TO: Nine Mile Creek Board of Managers
FROM: Erica Sniegowski, Lauren Foley
DATE: August 11, 2020
RE: Cost Share Habitat Restoration Grant Policy Memo

Background

Native restoration project proposals are a common grant application type through the cost share program. Ongoing discussions between NMCWD staff, board members, and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members led to the decision that native habitat restorations cost share projects should be reviewed, and new policies drafted for this grant type.

A subcommittee made up of two staff members, two board members, and two CAC members met virtually in 2020 (June 12, July 8, and August 6) to discuss native restoration grants and draft policies for these grants. The deadline for review of the policies was the August 2020 board meeting.

The subcommittee's recommendation is to have habitat restoration separated from other grants, creating a separate grant application track, which would be referred to as **Habitat Restoration Grants**. The other project types that the District funds would collectively be known as **Stewardship Grants**. Stewardship Grants is how several metro watershed districts refer to their main cost share program.

A secondary goal of the subcommittee is to reduce staff time to administer these grants through simplifying the application and review process. Policy recommendations are incorporated to reduce review time on habitat restoration grants and staff will work to simplify the application process, including looking into an online application process, to reduce staff time to administer these grants.

The policy changes for habitat restoration grants are outlined in the following document. Any changes not outlined default to the established Cost Share Grant Guidelines and other supporting cost share program documentation.

Recommendation

We request the Board adopt the native habitat restoration grants policies based on the recommendation of the habitat restoration subcommittee. The draft scoring matrix for staff review of grant applications is included for your information.

Attachments

Native Habitat Restoration Grants Policies
Native Habitat Restoration Grants Draft Scoring Matrix



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Native Habitat Restoration Grants Policies

A native habitat restoration (alternately called “habitat restoration”) restores native plant communities, restores wildlife habitat, and includes other activities, such as invasive plant removal, that lead to a healthier ecosystem by growing plants native to Minnesota. A healthy ecosystem is one well suited to function naturally by doing things such as providing habitat, filtering water, and helping to regulate climate. Habitat restorations are funded through the District’s **Native Habitat Restoration Grant**.

Landscaping does not qualify for habitat restoration grants. Landscaping alters land for aesthetics or human functionality. Landscaping is not considered habitat restoration and is not eligible for grant funding.

Bee lawns and fescue lawn conversions are not eligible for habitat restoration grant funding.

Habitat restorations differ from shoreline buffers. A shoreline buffer is a vegetated area of land adjacent to a water body, designed to intercept runoff before it reaches the water body. Shoreline buffers are funded through the District’s **Stewardship Grants**.

The cost share program has three goals, and projects, including habitat restoration projects, must fulfill one or more of the cost share program’s goals:

- Preserve, protect, and restore native plant and wildlife habitats, with emphasis on projects adjacent lakes, rivers, and wetlands
- Protect and preserve groundwater quality and quantity
- Improve water quality or increase the capacity of the watershed to store and infiltrate water

NMCWD will allocate a maximum of \$50,000 from the total cost share budget for habitat restoration grants.

The funding maximum per habitat restoration grant is:

- \$3,000 for residential sites
- \$5,000 for townhome, condominium, and lake association sites
- \$10,000 for city, business, and nonprofit sites

A 50% match is required for all habitat restoration grants.

Removal of vegetation and/or invasive species, including buckthorn removal, garlic mustard, etc. is not an eligible grant expense, but may be used as grant match.

NMCWD will have two deadlines for habitat restoration grants. The deadlines for each year will be posted on the NMCWD grant webpage(s).

- The entire balance of the \$50,000 will be available to fund habitat restoration grant applications submitted by the first deadline in a calendar year.
- Any remaining balance of the \$50,000 after the first round of habitat restoration grants is funded will be available to fund habitat restoration grant applications submitted by the second deadline.
- No additional habitat restoration grant applications will be accepted within a given grant year after the second deadline passes, regardless of grant funds remaining.

NMCWD staff will rank applications based on a scoring system, published on the NMCWD grant webpage(s).

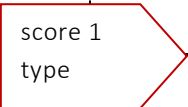
- Habitat restoration grant applications chosen for funding that are \$5,000 and under will be administratively approved, habitat restoration grant applications chosen for funding that are over \$5,000 will go to the Board of Managers for final approval.
- NMCWD staff retain discretion to consider a variety of project types (residential, association, business/city/nonprofit) when awarding funds and other factors as necessary (such as geographic distribution within the watershed, types of habitat restored)
- Applications for projects that do not meet the NMCWD definition of habitat restoration as provided in this document will not be accepted for funding consideration.

Any policies not addressed in this document (e.g. payment schedule, lifetime funding limits) default to the Cost Share Grant Guidelines and other supporting program documentation.

Timeline

Upon adoption, this policy will remain in effect for two calendar-year grant cycles. Before the third year, it will be reviewed and updated, as necessary, or adopted permanently.

Native Habitat Restoration Grants Draft Scoring Matrix

<i>Minimum Criteria</i>		<i>Requirement met?</i>
Is the applicant planning to plant the entire area of disturbance with native vegetation?	If no, grant cannot be awarded	Yes / No
Will the restoration establish at least 5 native plant species?	If no, grant cannot be awarded	Yes / No
Will there be regular watering of the restoration area after it is fully established? This means no regular watering from hose and/or irrigation/sprinkler system will be removed/disabled; watering with reclaimed water from a rain barrel or similar is not "regular watering"	If yes, grant cannot be awarded	Yes (no regular watering)/ No (regular watering)
<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Answer / Point value</i>	<i>Point Value Assigned</i>
What is the percent property area restored?	0-5% / 0 points 6-20% / 1 point 21-34% / 2 points 35+% / 3 points	
<u>Residential Projects:</u> What is the size of the restoration?	0-0.02 acres / 0 points >0.02-0.5 acres / 1 point 0.5-1 acres / 2 points 1+ acres / 3 points	
<u>All Other Projects (association, nonprofit, business, city):</u> What is the size of the restoration?	0-0.1 acres / 0 points 0.11-1 acres / 1 point 1-3 acres / 2 points 3+ acres / 3 points	
Is the project's property adjacent to a water body (any type)?	No / 0 points Yes / 1 point	
Total score		