



## MEMORANDUM

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

**Date:** November 14, 2023  
**To:** CLFLWD Board of Managers  
**From:** Mike Kinney, District Administrator  
**Subject:** Community Cost-Share Pilot Program



**District Wide**

### Background/Discussion

The Board of Managers approved a Residential Cost-Share Program Policy on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. This policy was approved in order to pilot a new set of programs offered by the District. As part of the adaptive management principles of the District, staff are recommending an initial set of revisions in order to improve the administration of the program. The recommended revisions apply to the Mini-Grant and Community Water Cost-share programs and will improve the ability of staff to administer these programs in pursuit of the District's goals.

Staff are working with MP+G, a marketing and PR agency, to better understand our shoreline audiences and develop targeted materials for them through a public relations plan and campaign for the comprehensive shoreline program. Additional changes to the pilot program may be brought to the Board once that initial work is completed.

### Recommended Motion

Manager \_\_\_\_\_ moves to approve the proposed administrative revisions to the Comfort Lake – Forest Lake Watershed District Residential Cost-Share Program Policy.

### Attached

Proposed revisions

## COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

Cost-share programs provide an incentive for landowners<sup>1</sup> to adopt best management practices (BMPs) that improve water quality and the health of the watershed. The two cost-share programs available are a mini-grant, and a Community Water Cost-Share grant.

### MINI-GRANT

The CLFLWD Mini-Grant replaces the “Plant Grant” from previous years. This grant is a reimbursement grant for eligible land occupiers to offset some of the cost of simple projects that enhance water quality in the District such as native plantings, rain barrels, shoreline buffers, etc. The Mini-Grant provides a maximum reimbursement up to \$500. Grants are awarded on a first come–first serve basis to eligible applicants. An approved project must be started within one calendar year and completed, and receipts submitted, within two calendar years of the application being approved. This grant can be extended by agreement of both parties.

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#### Applicant Eligibility

All land occupiers of CLFLWD are eligible for this grant. This includes residents, homeowners associations, schools, non–profits, and businesses. Those renting or leasing the property where the project will be installed are required to secure the consent of the landowner when applying. Applicants who have received mini-grant funds within the past three years will not be considered until June 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

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#### Project and Expense Eligibility

Eligible projects for the mini-grant must improve water quality or improve native habitat within the watershed, either directly or through targeted education and outreach. Labor and time are not eligible expenses for reimbursement, except for native planting maintenance provided by an approved contractor. Applications for planting maintenance using a contractor must include an itemized quote or estimate.

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Projects can include:

- Native plantings
- Buffers and filter strips

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to landowners, land occupiers (those holding rental or lease agreements to the property) are eligible to apply but must secure the permission of the landowner in advance.

- Waterspout diversions and rain barrels
- No-mow/low-mow turf replacement
- Storm drain stenciling
- Native planting maintenance
- Other projects as determined by District staff

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Projects may not include:

- Decorative Landscaping
- Riprap installation

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Project Review, Approval, Closeout, and Payment

~~Staff will review complete and eligible applications as they are received.~~ Proposed projects will be reviewed by ~~staffa review team, the makeup of which will be determined by the Administrator. to determine if there will be a water quality benefit to the District, and- If it is determined that the project meets eligibility criteria and will be beneficial for the District, it will~~ be recommended for approval by the Administrator. If a proposed project is approved, the applicant will receive notification from CLFLWD staff. Upon receiving notification of approval, the applicant may then make purchases and proceed with the approved project.

Once a project has been completed, CLFLWD staff must be contacted to closeout the grant. The closeout process will include the collection of receipts and descriptive invoices for eligible expenses, gathering photos of the completed project, and documenting the results of the project. The reimbursement payment will be approved by the Administrator and may be made as a direct payment, a property tax payment, or another method as appropriate.

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Project maintenance and lifespan

Projects other than education and outreach must be maintained for at least five years. The applicant must follow the operations and maintenance plan provided by CLFLWD staff during the maintenance period. Grant recipients may be required to have their projects used in the District's education, outreach, and demonstration programs during the maintenance period. Possible activities include photos of projects being used in presentations or promotional materials, articles on the project or recipient, and/or inclusion in a project tour. District staff will get permission from the recipient before including a project in a tour or revealing any personal or identifying information. Participation does not require personal or identifying information to be revealed.

## COMMUNITY WATER COST-SHARE

The Community Water Cost-Share grant provides financial assistance to land occupiers for the installation of larger projects and practices that improve water quality within the Comfort Lake – Forest Lake Watershed District. Funding for projects will be determined using the cost-share ranking criteria included in appendix B. This grant provides funding of up to 50% of approved projects, with a maximum of ~~\$5,000~~\$7,500. Highly ranked projects may be eligible for funding up to 75% of approved costs, with a maximum of \$7,500. This is a competitive grant, with grants awarded twice a year in a spring and fall window. Projects must be started within one calendar year of funds being approved.

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### Applicant Eligibility

All land occupiers of CLFLWD are eligible for this grant. This includes residents, homeowners associations, schools, non-profits, and businesses. Those renting or leasing the property where the project will be installed are required to secure the consent of the landowner when applying. Applicants are unable to receive Community Water Cost-Share funds in consecutive years.

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### Project and Expense Eligibility

Eligible projects for this program must improve water quality in the watershed district. Examples of eligible projects include shoreline restoration, wetland restoration, and raingardens. Labor and time is an eligible expense only when provided by an approved contractor. All approved expenses must be incurred after the approval of the project.

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### Project Review, Approval, and Closeout

When a completed application is received, it will be reviewed by ~~staff~~the review team and ranked using the CLFLWD's residential cost-share ranking formula. Projects meeting the 50% ranking threshold will be recommended ~~to the Board of Managers~~for approval by the Administrator for funding in order of their ranking. Projects meeting the 70% ranking threshold may be eligible for up to 75% funding. Grants will be awarded in two windows each year, spring and fall. The application window for spring will run from August 1<sup>st</sup> until January 31<sup>st</sup>, with grants being awarded by March 1<sup>st</sup>. The application window for fall will run from February 1<sup>st</sup> until July 30<sup>th</sup>, with grants being awarded by August 31<sup>st</sup>. Outside of the regular application and approval windows, staff may recommend applications to the ~~Board of Managers~~Administrator that require expedited approval, so long as the project meets ranking criteria.

If a proposed project is approved, the applicant will be notified by District Staff of the approval and the amount funded. Following approval, the project can proceed.

The grant recipient must contact the District to begin the closeout process once the project is complete. Project closeout will include the inspection and documentation of the project, collection of receipts and descriptive invoices, and the review of maintenance plans. For eligible expenses, approved amounts of submitted receipts will be reimbursed to the grant recipient, while approved amounts from invoices will be paid directly to the contractor or supplier. Payments will be made within 30 days of staff inspection and documentation of the completed project.

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#### Additional requirements for Shoreline projects

All shoreline alteration projects must follow the District's shoreline rules<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, due to the influence of upland management on the long-term success of shoreline restorations, all shoreline projects must have perennial buffers that comply with the District's buffer requirements<sup>3</sup>. The costs of compliance with these requirements are eligible expenses for the cost-share program. Rip-rap may only be used in the cases outlined in the District rules, such as when it has been determined that bioengineering is not suitable.

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#### Project Maintenance and Lifespan

All projects must be maintained for a minimum of ten years, during which time the operations and maintenance plan provided by the District must be followed. Some projects may also require easements or deed restrictions that run beyond the ten-year lifespan.

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<sup>2</sup> District Rules: Section 5, Shoreline & Streambank Alterations

<sup>3</sup> District Rules: Section 4, Lake, Stream, and Wetland Buffer Requirements

## REFERENCES

CLFLWD (2022, January 1). 2022–2031 CLFLWD Watershed Management Plan. Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District. [https://www.clflwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-2031CLFLWDWatershedManagementPlan\\_Full.pdf](https://www.clflwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-2031CLFLWDWatershedManagementPlan_Full.pdf)

CLFLWD (2018, February 22). *Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District Rules*. Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District. [https://www.clflwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CLFLWDRules\\_2-22-18.pdf](https://www.clflwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CLFLWDRules_2-22-18.pdf)

US Department of Agriculture (2002, May 1). *Field Office Technical Guide MN*. Field Office Technical Guide. <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/state/MN/documents>

Approved March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

Redlined November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**APPENDIX A: APPLICATION MATERIALS**

**CLFLWD COST-SHARE APPLICATION FORM**

**Section I. Applicant Information (to be completed by landowner)**

Landowner Name	Address	City/State	Zip Code
Email		Phone	
Project Address (if different)		City/State	Zip Code
Nearest waterbody to project site:		Is the property sewered or unsewered?	
Check appropriate box: <input type="checkbox"/> Mini Grant Application		<input type="checkbox"/> Community Water Cost-share Application	

**Section II. Proposal Information**

Project Type (e.g. raingarden, shoreline buffer):	
Give a 2-3 sentence summary of funding request. If there are additional funding sources you are seeking or have acquired, please note that here:	
Estimated project start and end dates:	
Total project cost:	Grant request:

**Section III. Project Narrative**

<p>Briefly describe the current condition of the property and any previous site management as it relates to your proposed project. Please include project goals and expected outcomes. How does this project align with CLFLWD’s long term water quality goals? <b>Please attach project plans.</b></p>
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## Watershed Legacy Payment Program Application

### Section I. Applicant Information

Landowner Name	Address	City/State	Zip Code
Email		Phone	
Property Address (if different)		City/State	Zip Code

### Section II. Property Information

Describe how you manage your property in a way that benefits our natural resources:

Based on the program criteria (attached), what improvements would you be willing to make to your property?

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**APPENDIX B: RANKING CRITERIA**

## Cost-Share Project Ranking Sheet

CRITERIA	Max. Points Allowed	Actual Points	DISCUSSION
Water Quality Impact			
Project addresses an erosion issue	10		<p><b>Major Erosion, 6-10:</b> Gully erosion, soil loss exceeding 150% of the T factor, rapidly eroding or undercut shoreline</p> <p><b>Minor Erosion, 1-5:</b> Soil loss up to 150% of the T factor, vulnerable shoreline</p>
Project addresses stormwater runoff	10		Priority lake, river, or stream: 6-10. Non-priority surface water, 1-5. Range depends on distance to surface water.
Project reduces impervious surfaces	10		Points based on % reduction of impervious surfaces.
Runoff from outside property treated	5		Points based on proportion of runoff treated
Project Planning Criteria			
Readiness	10		Concept plans, cost estimates, agreements/easements are complete and thorough. Plans are consistent with generally accepted scientific and ecological practices.
Urgency & Opportunity	5		Project is contingent on securing funding now, or the opportunity would be lost if not funded and implemented now.
Cost Effectiveness	10		Level of cost benefit when compared to all similar projects
Natural Resource and Additional Criteria (maximum of 45 points allowed)			
Habitat	5		Project increases or improves habitat for native species of concern.
Community support	5		Project is supported by a local community group or organization such as a homeowners or lake association.
Supporting Practices	5		Additional supporting practices will be implemented that will extend the lifespan or enhance the effectiveness of the project.
Demonstration/Educational Site	5		Project will provide opportunity as a demonstration or educational site.
Easements or deed restrictions	20		Project will be on land under a deed restriction or easement.
Repair of violations and projects required by permit are not eligible for cost share dollars			
TOTAL:	100		

### Legacy Payment Program Criteria

CRITERIA	Max.Points Allowed	Actual Points	DISCUSSION
Impervious Surfaces	10		If more than 25%, runoff can be captured / treated to meet this requirement.
Tree Canopy	10		10 points for 75% of the lot, 5 points for 50%, 2 points for 25% or scattered trees
Ground Cover	10		10 points if 75% of the lot is unmowed plants, 5 points for 50 %, 2 points for 25%
<b>Upland Management</b>			
Turf management	10		5 points for a diverse lawn mix including at least one legume. 5 points for turf that is left at least 3 inches tall
Swale, ditch, or drainage way	10		10 points if drainage way is natural vegetation. 2 points if drainage way is unmowed
Pollinator Habitat	10		A diverse blend of native plants are present that provide food and habitat to species of concern year round.
Woody Habitat	10		Coarse woody debris such as brush piles, deadfall, or wildlife trees are present
<b>Stormwater</b>			
Treatment/storage	20		20 points – runoff from 75% of impervious surfaces is treated or stored onsite 10 points – runoff from 50% 5 points – runoff from 25%
Rain gutters	10		5 points if gutters are installed 5 points if downspouts are diverted
<b>Shoreline*</b>			
Shoreline Buffer	10		10 points for a native perennial buffer meeting buffer distance guidelines 5 points for unmowed vegetation meeting buffer distance guidelines
Emergent Vegetation	10		Emergent vegetation has not been cleared beyond that necessary for boat access
Aquatic Vegetation	10		Aquatic vegetation has not been disturbed
Shoreline Trees/shrubs	10		10 points- Woody vegetation is present on 75% 5 points- Woody vegetation is present on 50% 2 points- Woody vegetation is present on 25%
Woody Habitat	10		5 points each for downed and overhanging woody vegetation
<b>Natural Resources</b>			
<b>TOTAL:</b>	100		
<b>SHORELINE ADDENDUM:</b>	50		

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