**Program Funding Update**

As detailed in our [last newsletter](#), the Center has been involved in securing existing and additional funding for the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program as part of a potential “Comprehensive Transportation Funding Package” in Harrisburg. The Governor is set to announce his Transportation Proposal on February 5th. Those of you directly involved in the Program should look for separate correspondence on this topic once details are known. The goals of this effort are to 1) make sure existing Program Funding is secure, 2) make sure existing Program structure is not changed, and 3) advocate for additional Program funding. ([more info](#))

**Center Partners with PA Game Commission**

The Center has recently partnered with the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) to provide design and oversight assistance on several PGC road projects around the state. Although not funded through the Dirt and Gravel Road Program, the Center is employing Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance Practices to help the PGC create better roads while reducing environmental impacts. (Note that PA Game Commission is eligible for Dirt and Gravel funds by applying to Conservation Districts, just like municipalities). Many potential projects are in the pipeline, three of which are summarized below:

**Centre County SGL #176, Scotia Road**: The first collaborative project, Scotia Road just outside of State College, is one of the most heavily used PGC roads in the state with nearly 200 cars per day leading back to a popular range. The 3 mile long road received drainage upgrades, a 2A base course, and was surfaced with Driving Surface Aggregate in the summer of 2012.

**Bedford County SGL #48, Wills Mountain Road**: The Center is currently working with the PGC on Wills Mountain Road, just south of Bedford. The project includes drainage and surface improvements to approximately 4 miles of public assess road, and 2 miles of administrative road.

**Dauphin County SGL #211, Ellendale Forge Road**: This 2 mile section of road access the popular gamelands and serves several residents.

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A large base improvement / French Mattress is installed on Scotia Road in a spot (formerly) know as “the Mud Hole.”

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How soon should A Conservation District commit funding?

Several times over the past few years we have seen Districts signing contracts with grant applicants before the District receives funding. This practice is not recommended since the District is essentially entering into a binding contract using money that it does not have yet. If something were to happen that reduced or eliminated Program funding, the District would be unable to fulfill the contract.

District Allocation advances are typically received in August or September. These new funds should not be encumbered under contract until the advance is received by the District. Applications can be accepted and selected ahead of time, but contracts should not be signed until funding is available.

Sample Policies on Website

Since the Dirt and Gravel Road Program is based on “local control,” Districts are free to tailor their policies to their specific needs and priorities. Center and Program staff have worked to collect some sample policies used by Districts and make them available as examples. These include things such as the “project ranking sheet,” “equal access criteria,” and more. The samples are located on the Program’s website at www.dirtandgravelroads.org (click “PA Program,” then “Program Resources,” then “Sample Policies” (or direct link HERE)).

New-Hire Program Guide

At the 2012 Dirt and Gravel Road Workshop in September, an introductory session was held for new hires. A two-page “New-Hire Guide” to the Dirt and Gravel Program was developed and distributed at the session. The New-Hire Guide summarizes most of the important information needed by Conservation District staff to administer the Program at the County level. A copy of the New-Hire Guide is included as an insert in this newsletter for your reference. It is also available at www.dirtandgravelroads.org (click “PA Program,” then “Program Resources,” then “Reference Material” (or direct link HERE)).
Other Center Activities

Once in a while we like to share some of the projects that the Center is involved with that are a little beyond the scope of things directly related to the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. Below is a summary of some of the Center’s recent “other” projects:

“ESM for Trails” Training Development: DCNR has funded the Center through the C2P2 grant program to develop an “Environmentally Sensitive Trail Maintenance” one-day training based off the concepts currently taught in the Center’s ESM road training. The contract runs through 2015 and work on training development is in the beginning stages.

Central Appalachians Dirt Road Project: The Nature Conservancy in Maryland is spearheading an effort to look at Dirt and Gravel Road pollution issues in the Central Appalachian region from Tennessee to New York. Currently in an early “data gathering” phase, the effort hopes to build on some of the successes of PA’s Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program and to expand the Program’s message to a wider audience. The Center is currently participating as an advisor to the effort.

Transportation Research Board (TRB): Center Staff attended the TRB conference in Washington D.C. this January and presented on Marcellus-related road impacts. Center staff will begin planning TRB’s “11th Annual International Conference on Low-Volume Roads” scheduled for Summer 2015 in Pittsburgh.

ATV Trail Rehabilitation: The Center is working with DCNR on the rehabilitation of a badly eroded section of ATV trail in the Michaux State Forest in Adams County. Improvements were made to upgrade the trail system while reducing its environmental impact. Work was completed this past December and January.

PSU Altoona Trail: The Center recently designed a half-mile long trail on the Penn State Altoona campus. The trail incorporated many drainage features including a 300’ long French mattress. Although originally planned for Trail Surface Aggregate, the trail was paved due to the expected high traffic load and need for winter maintenance.

Ohio State Sediment Study: Researches at Ohio State are looking to build on what the Center has done in regards to quantifying sediment production from unpaved roads in Ohio’s Marcellus and Utica Shale region. The Center is working with them on this potential project.

Trout Unlimited Project in Potter County: PA Trout has applied for a Growing Greener Grant to complete sediment reduction work, including two Dirt and Gravel Road projects, in the Kettle Creek Watershed. The Center is planning to work as an advisor on the project if the grant is successful.

QAQC corner

The Program’s “Quality Assurance/Quality Control” effort:

The QAQC effort visits individual Conservation Districts to assess and recommend improvements to the local Dirt and Gravel Road Program.

2013 Visits:
York: 3/13-14
7 additional visits planned, counties and dates TBD

For questions about the QAQC process, contact Karen Books at the State Conservation Commission at kbooks@pa.gov or 717-787-2103.

Annual Summary Reports

Thanks to Conservation Districts for working to submit their Annual Summary Reports on time using the DGRoads GIS system. The reports will be merged into a statewide coverage and used to create the Program’s Annual Report.

The importance of these annual reports has become apparent this year with the data and analysis needed to justify the Program’s efficiency and the need for additional funding to the State Legislature.
The two-day ESM training covers many aspects of road maintenance and focuses on practices to reduce maintenance costs and environmental impact from unpaved roads. Certification within 5 years is required to apply for Program funds.

Have questions or want to schedule an ESM training? Contact Kathy Moir at: (1-866-668-6683) dirtandgravel@psu.edu

Two-Day ESM Training Schedule
Beaver/Lawrence: March 19-20  Tioga: April 16-17  Crawford/Erie: May 14-15
Indiana: June 12&13  York/Lancaster/Lebanon: July 10-11
Pike: November 13-14

Contact the Center to register for a training, or to discuss hosting one (814-865-5355).
Registration is also available online at www.dirtandgravelroads.org under “edu/training.”
Trainings are set up on request in conjunction with County Conservation Districts.

Other Events
SCC meetings: March 12 (Hbg), May 4 (Hbg), July TBD, Sept 10 (Hbg), Nov 12 (Hbg)
PA State Association of Township Supervisors Convention: April 21-24 (Hershey)
Dirt & Gravel Annual Maintenance Workshop: Oct 1&2, 2013
This document is meant as an overview of administering the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program for new staff and technicians at County Conservation Districts.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW:** The Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program (Program) began in 1997 stemming from an initiative by Trout Unlimited. The goal of the Program is to reduce sediment pollution to streams while improving the rural road network. The Program directs funding to “worksites” where unpaved road runoff is affecting water quality. The Program implements long-term fixes to rural public roads in order to create a more environmentally and economically sustainable rural road network.

**CENTER OVERVIEW:** The Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies (Center) at Penn State was formed in 1999 to handle the statewide education and outreach component of the Program. The Center provides: 2-Day ESM training, Annual Maintenance Workshop, website, newsletters, technical documentation, technical Assistance to Districts (for Projects, GIS, or administration), and more. The Center is funded by the PA State Conservation Commission and PA Bureau of Forestry through the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. The Center also maintains other research and educational contracts with outside entities.

**PROGRAM STRUCTURE:** The Program is unique in that it relies heavily on “informed local control” to function. This philosophy puts more power and decision-making and the local level, and relies on a statewide education and oversight program to insure local projects follow Program guidelines.

- **State Conservation Commission (SCC):** Administers Program Statewide.
- **PSU Center:** Education, outreach, tech support for the Program Statewide.
- **Conservation Districts:** Run the Program within each County including: create local policy and priorities, accept Grant Applications, fund and oversee projects, track projects and spending, and submit annual reports.
- **Quality Assurance Board (QAB):** (one per District) Advises District on policies and funding priority, and ranks applications for funding. QAB only provides recommendations to the District Board. The QAB has 4 members: a non-voting chair appointed by the District, and a voting representative from the District, PAFBC & NRCS.
- **Grant Recipients:** Apply to Conservation District for funding. Do work or hire contractor to do work. Mostly townships, but PAGC, PAFBC, DOT any other public entities are eligible.

**DISTRICT ALLOCATIONS:** District receive Funds from State Conservation Commission through DEP

- **District Allocations:** The Program’s $4M annual allocation is distributed by the SCC to Conservation Districts based largely on the number of unpaved roads and worksites in each county. Allocations range from $20,000 to $275,000. Allocations are typically received in September. Counties who receive more than $25,000 receive a portion of their allocation up front, and must apply to DEP for a replenishment for the remaining funds by claiming that advanced funds have been spent. An additional $1M is allocated to the PA Bureau of Forestry.
- **Spending Requirements:** Funds must be spent or committed within 2 years of receipt. Counties failing to meet this requirement will be ineligible for future allocations until they meet this spending requirement. This is determined as part of the Annual Summary Report each January.
- **Administration:** Districts can spend up to 10% of their annual allocation on Program administration, and 5% on education. Eligible expense include salary, travel, training expenses, equipment (field and office), etc.

**GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS:** Municipalities (and others) apply to District for Funding

- **Eligibility:** Applicants must have been to ESM training within the past 5 years in order to be eligible to apply to the Conservation District for funding. Only unpaved (not “tar&chip”) publicly-owned roads that are open to public travel for at least part of the year are eligible. Projects must also have an impact on water quality.
- **Application Cycle:** Many Districts have an application deadline each year. Some smaller counties continuously accept allocations. Find out what your District’s policy has been.
- **Project Ranking:** Each District should already have written ranking criteria to determine project funding priority developed by the QAB. This formal ranking is important as it serves to justify the recommendations of the QAB.
- **“Preemptive” site visit:** Counties who have the most success typically meet with the township BEFORE they submit applications to collaborate on creating a site plan. The earlier you get involved, the easier changes will be.
- **Notification:** The applicant should notify the Conservation District in advance as to when project works will start.

The publishers of this publication gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the PA State Conservation Commission. For additional information or assistance, contact: Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads Studies, Penn State University, 207 Research Unit D, University Park, PA 16802. (Toll-Free Phone: 1-866-668-6683, Fax: 814-863-6787, Email: dirtandgravel@psu.edu). Additional copies available on our website at: www.dirtandgravelroads.org. © 2012 All Rights Reserved
GRANT ADMINISTRATION: Conservation District is Responsible for Project Oversight

- Contract: The “grant application” and other documentation become attachments to a two-page contract.
- Advances: Up to 50% of the project funds can be advanced to the applicant before work begins. At least 30% of the project funds must be held until project completion and inspection.
- Eligible Costs: All materials, equipment, and labor costs to complete the project are eligible. There is no statewide requirement for matching funds from applicants (although the Program average nearly $0.45 per dollar spent). Often applicants will donate some or all labor and equipment time as “in-kind”. Up to 10% of the project cost can go towards engineering and/or permits. Equipment rental is eligible, but no equipment can be bought.
- Cost Overruns: Cost overruns can be made at the discretion of the District Board. They can be made for up to 10% of the original contract. Overruns of over 10% should be handled in a new or separate contract.
- Field Visits: It is not necessary for District staff to be on-site for all project work. Some oversight is typically required though, especially early in the project, to ensure both parties will be satisfied with the finished road.
- Project Performance Report: Summary page with project deliverables and cost breakdown for the project. Typically completed during final project inspection to officially close out project.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: Learn more about the Program’s ESM Practices

- Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) Training: 2-day classroom training held by the Center. The ESM training focuses on the specific ESM practices to be used on projects in the field. Both Conservation Districts and participating townships are required to attend one every 5 years. The Center holds ~8 ESM trainings at various locations around the State each year. Conservation Districts should contact the Center if they are interested in hosting one in their county. The training is free of charge to public entities (Conservation District typically covers facility and lunches through educational funds, and the Center provides the training).
- Annual Maintenance Workshop: 2-day “conference” with concurrent classroom sessions and field trips to active and completed projects. The Workshop is held at a different location every fall and typically attracts 120-200 attendees from across Pennsylvania. Workshop topics and field sites change each year.

GIS & REPORTING: Districts Track Projects and Submit Annual Report

- DG Roads GIS System: To cut down on paperwork and facilitate project tracking, the Program uses a customized GIS interface called “DG Roads”. This system is housed on a computer at each Conservation District. The system is used to track project location and details such as what was done and what was spent.
- Annual Summary Reports: Each year on January 15th, reports are due using the DG Roads GIS system. Project data from the previous year must be entered for all completed and contracted projects.
- GIS help: Center staff typically visits each region of the state offering GIS help late each fall.

QAQC: Quality Assurance / Quality Control Effort: The QAQC process is a collaborative effort between the Center and the Program. The QAQC team visits each Conservation District individually in an effort to evaluate and improve the Program at the County level. The QAQC team visits approximately 8 Districts on an annual basis. The second round of QAQC visits started in 2011.

PROJECT WORK: On the Ground Projects: The average Dirt and Gravel Road Project is around 0.4 miles long and costs around $17,000, although it varies widely. The best way to get familiar with project work is to attend an ESM training as soon as possible. Then take some project files into the field to look at some projects that have already been completed. Talking with the townships that completed those projects is also recommended.

MORE HELP:

- www.dirtandgravelroads.org: The Center and Program website contains information including technical bulletins, blank forms, GIS program download, reference material, training information and schedule, and more.
- Center: Outreach and education is what the Center does! From a simple question, to GIS help, to help with project design, to onsite project assistance. 814-865-5355
- SCC: For more “Programmatic” questions, contact the Program Coordinator at the SCC at 717-787-2103.

PROJECT HARD FILES MUST INCLUDE

1. Signed Contract with all attachments, including grant application and project sketch showing project location and site layout (what was done and where).
2. Contract amendment if applicable.
3. Copies of receipts for all expenses paid.

TYPICAL PROJECT LIFECYCLE

1. Applicant attends ESM training.
2. Applicant notifies District of desire to do a project.
3. District meets with applicant on site to come up with a workplan together, or make recommendations to applicant’s plan.
4. Applicant submits application.
5. QAB recommends project for funding based on established criteria.
6. District Board approves project and a contract is signed with the applicant.
7. 50% of funds are advanced to the applicant.
8. Applicant notifies District of start of work.
9. Project work is done by township or contractor, with oversight from District.
10. District conducts final inspection and fills out Project Performance Report.
11. Remainder of funds is paid to applicant.
12. District enters project data into GIS system.