

## **Important Information Regarding the Contents of this Document**

Please note that the policies and information presented in this document are current through the date given below. The documents made available within the [Center's Conservation Districts web pages](#) are intended to serve as a guide for the policies set by each Conservation District. While these policies may in fact be current at the time of your viewing, it is strongly recommended to contact the relevant Conservation District for the most current version.

Document Current Date: October 21, 2020



Beaver County Conservation District

156 Cowpath Road Aliquippa, PA 15001

Phone: (724) 378-1701 Fax: (724) 857-1044

[www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org)

## **Beaver County Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Roads Program Quality Assurance Board - Policies and Procedures Summary**

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

The QAB will establish priorities and requirements for funding through the Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program. The QAB responsibilities to promote the use of Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) will include review of applications submitted for funding, conducting site visits (as necessary and determined by the QAB) and recommending eligible applications to the Beaver County Conservation District Board of Directors for funding of environmentally sensitive road maintenance practices to address road runoff and sediment to local streams, dust control and items which may cause negative impacts to the streams.

The QAB in Beaver County will be comprised of a non-voting chairperson and a voting member appointed by the Beaver County Conservation District Board, one voting member or appointed designee from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and one voting member or appointed designee from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC).

The established meeting schedule for QAB meetings will be on a quarterly basis for the DGLVR Program and also on an as-needed basis as determined by the Chairman. Public notice of meetings will be in the newspaper and posted on the Beaver County Conservation District website at [www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org)

Minutes of the QAB meetings will be taken by the District staff, and kept on file with the DGLVR Program files. These files will be kept on record and available to the public pursuant to the Open Records Policy. QAB meetings may be held via conference call as long as they meet the public notice requirements.

The QAB meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. There must be a quorum (at least 2 of the 3 voting QAB members), to vote on any recommendations to the district board. The QAB chairman may vote to decide a tie.

Any and all policies adopted by the Beaver County QAB will be posted on the District website at [www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org](http://www.beavercountyconservationdistrict.org) Written copies of these policies are available upon request.

# **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Conflict of Interest Statement**

## **Policy:**

No District Director, Quality Assurance Board 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. This shall preclude the payment of normal salary and benefits to employees provided in their normal course of employment.

## **Protocol if instance arises:**

If such an instance occurs, the affected person shall exclude themselves in every way from the discussion and decision making process. The QAB reserves the right to solicit advice from a qualified outside source agreed to by unanimous vote. This may be accomplished by designating at least one alternate person to serve in the absence of a voting member of the QAB.

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Roles and Guidelines Implementing the Program**

- A District employee will be appointed by the District Manager to assist in administering the program at the direction of the Conservation District Board of Directors. The appointed employee will implement the program in the following manner:
  1. Sign-up periods will end every December 31<sup>st</sup> as a way of receiving applications from municipalities. Correspondence will be sent as well as news releases. The technician will also make personal contacts with municipal officials; offering assistance in the completion of the application, if necessary.
  2. After applications are received, the technician will review them for completeness and also make a site visit with a QAB member and/or district representative and municipal officials to assess the proposed work plan. The technician will determine:
    - If the site has an erosion problem.
    - If the proposed plan will fix the entire problem.
    - If other work elements need to be added to the plan
  3. From this site visit, the technician will assist the QAB in prioritizing the projects.
  4. After projects are approved for funding, municipal officials will be notified and bidding procedures will be reviewed with and sent to the officials.
  5. The Technician or municipality will set-up a pre-construction meeting to set the perimeters of the work area, assure that site is prepared to receive materials and review the procedures with municipal officials and contractors involved with implementing the plan.
  6. The Technician or designee will be on-site for most of the construction of the project, assuring the validity of the products and work plan. If materials do not meet specifications or the work plan is not being followed, the Technician or designee will contact the municipality for the municipality to stop work until corrections are made.
  7. The Technician will inspect the site according to QAB, SCC, and The Center for Dirt and Gravel Road requirements.

**Conservation District Board of Directors and the District Manager Shall:**

1. Receive and manage the funds apportioned by the Commission.
2. Manage and administer the Program under Commission guidelines. Including the supervision of personnel associated with the program.
3. Impanel a four-member QAB comprised of the following:
  - A nonvoting Chairperson appointed by the District
  - A member from the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service
  - A member from the Fish and Boat Commission
  - A staff member of the District
4. Have final approval of funding recommended projects.
5. Have final approval of documentation or procedures adopted by the QAB.
6. Enter into an agreement with project participant.
7. Work with project participants to achieve final approval by the district under the performance standards adopted by the QAB, SCC and or The Center for Dirt and Gravel Road.
8. Conduct an annual audit of Program expenditures in accordance with guidance provided by the Commission.
9. Report Program accomplishments to the Commission on prescribed forms at times as specified by the Commission.
10. Maintain a separate account of funds received under Program.
11. Retain all records for 3 years after completion of work.

**Quality Assurance Board SHALL:**

1. Administer the program under the direction of the directors
2. Consider and adopt the following:
  - Written criteria to assure equal access for all eligible applicants.
  - Procedures that assure a minimum amount of procedural paperwork.
  - Written criteria to specify priorities.
  - Funding categories to provide separate budgeting for road maintenance projects, road demonstration projects, training grants and administrative costs (not to exceed 10%).
  - Incentives for training road managers and equipment operators.
  - Standards that prohibit use of materials or practices which are environmentally harmful.
  - Bidding procedures to be used by municipal officials.
  - Site inspection requirements to verify completion of work.
3. Prioritize applications and recommend project participants to the Conservation District Board of Directors.
4. Verify performance of work in order to recommend satisfaction of project to the Conservation District Board of Directors.
5. Consider and adopt procedures for the conduct of business by the Board, including the following:
  - Meeting schedules and procedures for public notice of meetings.
  - Record-keeping and provisions to make minutes and records available to the public.
  - Rules of conduct, including rules necessary to avoid conflicts of interest by members of the QAB.

- **Project Participant SHALL:**

1. Conduct the dirt and gravel road maintenance project in accordance with the project agreement with the district, the bidding procedures, and the work plan for the project, the standards established by the QAB for the district, and the policies adopted by the Commission.
2. Not use materials or practices that are environmentally harmful.
3. Apply for necessary and local, State and Federal permits required for the project and provide the district with suitable documentation of permit issuance and requirements.
4. Report program accomplishments to the district in a manner prescribed in the agreement.
5. Be on site at all times during construction of project - have the capacity to shut a project down if necessary.
6. Maintain gravel roads as gravel roads for a minimum of three years after completion date of a gravel road project.

- **Claims for Reimbursement**

1. Claims for payment must be submitted to the district in accordance with the schedule contained in the agreement. The claims must be itemized and show that the utilization of funds are in accordance with the budget outlined in the agreement. The claims must also include receipts, weigh slips or other appropriate supporting information, as determined by the District, to document actual expenditures by the project participant.
2. The district and the Commission reserve the right to audit project related accounts and records to determine if funds were expended in conformance with the agreement.
3. Maintain a separate accounting of the funds received under the program
4. Records shall be retained for 3 years following the last payment for the project.
5. Upon the request of the district or the Commission, or both, project participants shall provide access to all records, files and documents related to Program projects.

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Equal Access to Funds Policy**

To encourage and promote equal access to funding, the QAB recommended to the District Board that any state or public entity which owns and maintains roads open to the public within Beaver County are eligible for funding provided the entity has:

- a) Inventoried their dirt and gravel roads with District Staff, and
- b) Evaluated their dirt, gravel and low volume roads with District Staff and assisted in the creation of worksites within their entity, or conducted and provided an approved Low Volume Road traffic count of 500 vehicles per day or less with a Low Volume Road application.
- c) Have at the minimum, one current elected/appointed or employed individual attend and complete the two-day Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance (ESM) Workshop within the last 5 years. The ESM certified individual must be a person in charge of the project design and implementation for the applying road entity. Individuals (interns, secretaries, etc.) not directly involved with the project design and implementation DO NOT qualify an applicant to be eligible for funding. Engineers on retainer or others who serve multiple public road entities are welcome to attend ESM trainings, but their attendance DOES NOT count toward ESM Certification for an entity they represent.
- d) District Staff will advertise or attempt to notify by regular mail or by electronic means all eligible road owning entities of the availability of Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program funds before a new grant round opens.
- e) District staff will also post the road owning entities awarded funds for ESM projects and the amount of those funds on the District website.

In order to keep the entity who owns the road eligible for participation in the program, District Staff will advertise or attempt to notify the entities by regular mail or by electronic means of the Regional Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) trainings scheduled each year when made available by the Penn State Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Roads Center

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Inspections of Potential, In-Progress and Completed Projects**

To assure that the District is efficiently and successfully funding projects, the following inspections should be made:

1. Upon receipt of an application, the program administrator should visually inspect project area to determine whether current information in computer corresponds to the actual conditions of the site. Application should be present during inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed best management practices (BMPs) in correcting identified road problems.
2. Upon receiving notice from program participant that work will commence on a project, administrator should meet with program participant to discuss submitted plan and the implementation of proposed BMPs.
3. Inspections will be made during road improvement activities.
4. Upon completion of a project, district will perform a final inspection of the project which will provide a summary of all BMPs used and to determine whether project is permanently stabilized and has completed all proposals in the original application, or an amendment thereto. This inspection will include measurements and dimensions of items such as crosspipes, ditch and bank stabilization, rock apron pipe outlets, roadway length and width and vegetative stabilization.

All inspections will be documented and will contain all relevant photographs, contact information and weather data.

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Disbursement of Funds Policy**

For the purposes of disbursing funds to a project participant under a project agreement, the district may process an advance working capital payment as follows:

1. Upon full execution of the project agreement, the district may process an advance payment to a project participant of up to 50% of the approved project expenses.
2. Subsequent payments to the project participant will be made on an actual cash expended basis at the discretion of the District.
3. In all cases, the district shall withhold payment of at least 30% of the approved project expenses until the satisfactory completion of the project. Final payment for the project expenses shall be made only after a final inspection by the district determines that the work was performed consistent with the project application and work plan, and to the satisfaction of the district.

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Ranking of Applications for Potential Funding**

To establish ranking of multiple project applications for potential project funding, the District will



consider the following criteria.

1. Previously identified worksites:
  - A site which has been previously identified will be given higher priority than non-identified sites.
2. Scoring of road using Center-based “Dirty Dozen” criteria:
  - Projects scoring higher using the Center’s GIS program will be given priority over those with lower scoring projects.
3. In-kind services:
  - Projects which receive a higher percentage of in-kind services from the road owning entity will be given priority over those that receive no or very little in-kind service.
4. Availability of funds:
  - Since Beaver County receives the minimum allotment of funding from the state, it will be a priority to fund those projects which will have the greatest environment benefit. The District may fund multiple, smaller projects in lieu of one large project. The District may also decide to split larger projects into smaller segments that can be funded at different times, through different applications.
5. Previously denied worksites:
  - Projects which may have been denied during earlier application periods may be given priority over new applications; however, remaining criteria will still all be factored into decision making process.
6. Funding categories:
  - District will give funding priority to new projects before funding is disbursed for maintenance or repair to previous projects.

The absence or presence of any one criterion in a project application will not be a deciding factor in the funding of a project; the District will balance all criteria in making final decisions on project funding.

## **Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Project Emergency Repair Policy**

The District recognizes that there are storm occurrences in the County that will overwhelm the capacity of a majority of road drainage systems. The District believes that in such storm occurrences, the investment in an affected project are worth restoring in partnership with the municipality, and will provide a limited amount of technical and financial assistance to do so.

The Municipality that experiences a storm event that they feel is exceptional and has caused damage to roads and their related drainage system, which includes Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads

projects funded through the District, and is seeking funding to help repair or restore the project, should do the following:

1. Declare the event and resulting damage an “emergency”.
2. The damage, including the project site, should be reported to the District with estimates of damage and any photographic documentation.
3. The District, within 10 days of receipt of request for assistance, will visit the site to assess the damage and determine if circumstances other than a storm event affected the project.
4. Within 15 days after receiving the request, the District will respond to the municipality in writing, or other, as to whether funds are available.
5. Process for application for repair or restoration of project will be handled in the same manner as a new, proposed project, using existing ranking for new projects. An emergency may, but is not guaranteed to, receive a higher ranking versus other potential projects depending on extent of damage to project.
6. Funding for emergency projects will follow District policy outlining disbursement of funds

**Beaver County Conservation District     Dirt, Gravel and Low  
Volume Roads Program**  
**Low Volume Roads Eligibility Funding Policy**

**Project Focus**

The focus of road projects in the 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 Projects, the focus of LVR projects should be on long term road and environmental improvement projects.

- Routine maintenance of LVR or storm water systems such as cleaning inlets, street sweeping, crack sealing, etc. is not eligible for funding under this Program.
- Program funds should not be used to pay for deferred or neglected maintenance on drainage/storm water systems without road improvements.
- Program funds should not be used to fund any LVR 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 LVRs that are the responsibility of the original project engineer or construction firm. If recent (within it's reasonable design lifespan) LVR 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 LVR funds should not be allocated for these purposes.

**Project Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for LVR 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). For more information on traffic count guidance, see Section 7.4.

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).

### **Paying for Asphalt or Other Surfacing**

Resurfacing paved roads (sealing or paving) is not a primary focus of the LVR Program component. Resurfacing costs **WILL NOT BE COVERED BY PROGRAM FUNDS.**

### **Reclaiming Paved or Sealed Roads to D&G**

The Program recognizes the value of converting a poorly constructed or poorly maintained LV road into a high quality DGR through full depth reclamation or other similar processes. Beaver County Conservation district may utilize either LVR or D&G low volume Program component funds for these purposes.

### **Miscellaneous**

The State Conservation 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 Beaver County Conservation District.

### **Traffic Counts for Low Volume Roads**

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

- Applicant is responsible for providing traffic counts before a contract can be signed.
- A traffic count is not required in order to submit an application, unless required by local QAB policy.
- The conservation district is responsible for verifying that a count exists, and that the count meets the criteria established in state and local policy.
- Traffic counts are considered valid for a period of 5 years, provided there are no new significant changes in traffic flow volumes or patterns.
- 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. Beaver County Conservation District will require the completed traffic count validation form to be attached to the project Contract.
- Beaver County Conservation District may, at their discretion, use administrative and education funding to facilitate or support traffic counts for applicants. Beaver County Conservation Districts will insure that all potential applicants have equal access to any traffic count facilitation measures they may employ.
- 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.

Traffic counts should be done on the proposed project location, or on a road that insures that traffic on the project location can be determined.

Traffic count must meet the following criteria:

- It must be conducted between March 1 and the week before Thanksgiving.
- It cannot be conducted on a holiday, or the day before or after a holiday.
- It must be conducted on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.
- It must be conducted for a minimum of two consecutive hours between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm.
- Only the number of vehicle passes is counted, regardless of direction of travel or type of vehicle.
- 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)
- Only licensed motor vehicles should be counted.

### **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.

## Policy for Obtaining Traffic Counts

Acceptable documentation of traffic counts for projects to be eligible for LVR funds include:

**Option A: Use or extrapolation of existing data.**

**Option B: Level 1 Count: 2 hour traffic count.**

**Option C: Level 2 Count: 24 hour automated count.**

### **OPTION A:**

#### **Validate with Existing Traffic Count Data, or Extrapolation from Existing Data**

##### **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.) 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 ADT on the road is 500 or less to be eligible for LVR funding.

##### **Potential sources of existing traffic count data:**

- State Roads:  
<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/Internet/bureaus/pdplanres.nsf/infoBPRTrafficInfoTrafficVolumeMap>
- Local Roads: PennDOT regional offices or County Planning Commissions.

### **OPTION B:**

#### **Validate with Level 1 Count: 2 hour count**

An applicant may do 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:

- It must be conducted between March 1 and the week before Thanksgiving.
- It cannot be conducted on a holiday, or the day before or after a holiday.
- It must be conducted on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday
- It must be conducted for a minimum of two consecutive hours between 3:00pm and 6:00pm.
- Only the number of vehicle passes is counted, regardless of direction of travel or type of vehicle.
- 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)
- Applicants may skip the level one count and go straight to a level 2 count if desired
- 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 hours (per day) / 2 hours (per study) = 12

$$12 \times 25 = \underline{300 \text{ average daily count.}}$$

**This worksite would be eligible (no level 2 count needed).**

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

$$12 \times 53 = \underline{636 \text{ average daily count.}}$$

**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.**

### **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.) 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 ADT on the road is 500 or less to be eligible for LVR funding.

### **Potential sources of existing traffic count data:**

- State Roads:  
<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/Internet/bureaus/pdplanres.nsf/infoBPRTrafficInfoTrafficVolumeMap>
- Local Roads: Penn DOT regional offices or County Planning Commissions.

## **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:

- It must be conducted between March 1 and the week before Thanksgiving.
- It cannot be conducted on a holiday, or the day before or after a holiday.
- It must be conducted between 12 AM Tuesday and 12 AM Friday.
- It must be conducted for a minimum of 24 consecutive hours.
- Only the number of vehicle passes is counted, regardless of direction of travel or type of vehicle.

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 Penn DOT.)