



**DISTRICT ONE (CUYAHOGA COUNTY)
NATURAL RESOURCES
ASSISTANCE COUNCIL**

CLEAN OHIO CONSERVATION PROGRAM

**ROUND TWO
PROJECT SELECTION AND EVALUATION
METHODOLOGY**

**Cuyahoga County Natural Resources Assistance Council
c/o Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
323 Lakeside Avenue, West, Suite 400
Cleveland, OH 44113**

November 8, 2002

CUYAHOGA COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The Clean Ohio Conservation Program is a unique opportunity for advancing environmental conservation in Cuyahoga County. Cuyahoga is the largest and most urbanized of Ohio's eighty-eight counties. Approximately 90% of the county's land is developed and only 10% of this developed land is designated open space.

However, these existing natural areas and watersheds are fragmented throughout the county and are not always accessible to the public. Some open space areas and watersheds have been degraded and destroyed by pollution and mismanagement and others lie abandoned because of outmigration and poor planning.

The Cuyahoga County Natural Resource Assistance Council (NRAC) considers open space an important and vital part of daily life, improving both the quality of life of its citizens and its economic prosperity. Promoting natural systems, natural aesthetics, habitats and biodiversity will result in a cleaner, healthier and sustainable Cuyahoga County.

It is the Council's intent to ensure that the open space and watershed projects it selects are visible, accessible, instructional and advance the Council's five fundamental principles of:

- ! Preserving natural areas or open space.
- ! Restoring landscapes that have been degraded or destroyed.
- ! Enhancing the quality of natural areas or open space.
- ! Linking natural areas to each other or to county cultural and civic heritage areas.
- ! Providing public access to natural areas and/or county cultural and civic heritage areas.

NRAC PROJECT SELECTION AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Project Selection

The NRAC has established a process to select the projects that meet the requirements of the Clean Ohio Conservation Program. The process has been divided into three major phases:

- ! Phase 1 - Preliminary Project Evaluation
- ! Phase 2 - Applicant Interviews
- ! Phase 3 - Final Project Scoring and Selection

Project Evaluation

The NRAC has established an evaluation process utilizing the evaluation criteria outlined in Ohio Revised Code Section 164.24. The NRAC has assigned points and weight factors to each of the evaluation criteria in order to determine which projects should be approved for Clean Ohio Conservation funding.

The following pages outline the Council's project selection and evaluation methodologies.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The NRAC will accept applications for Clean Ohio Conservation financial assistance from eligible applicants. The applications will be processed in the following phases to select the projects that will be recommended to the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC):

PHASE 1 PRELIMINARY PROJECT EVALUATION

- 1.1** All of the submitted applications will be reviewed by the NRAC members for compliance with Clean Ohio Conservation Program, OPWC and NRAC guidelines.
- 1.2** Using the Evaluation Criteria, the NRAC members will review each application and assign a preliminary score in each of the evaluation categories.

The documents that will be used by the NRAC in this review will be the OPWC Application, the NRAC Application Supplement and any documentation supplied by the applicant.

PHASE 2 APPLICANT INTERVIEWS

- 2.1** At a specific day and time, each applicant will meet with the NRAC to discuss their project. These interviews are intended to give the NRAC and the applicant an opportunity to clarify issues and highlight aspects of the project that could not be conveyed through the application.

PHASE 3 FINAL PROJECT SCORING AND SELECTION

- 3.1** After the interviews, each NRAC member will review their preliminary evaluation scores and will adjust, if necessary, their evaluation scores. These scores will be submitted to the NRAC administrative staff for calculation of the Unweighted Project Ranking. The weight factors will then be applied and the Weighted Project Ranking or Final Project Ranking will be assembled.
- 3.2** The NRAC will meet to review and discuss the project scoring and the Final Project Ranking.
- 3.3** The NRAC will either adopt the Final Project Ranking or after discussions make changes to the scoring.
- 3.4** In the case of a tie between two or more projects, the NRAC will discuss the projects and attempt to rescore the projects. If the discussions do not result in a tie breaker then the project with the highest percentage of local match will be selected.

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation criteria outlined in ORC 164.24 have been reviewed and adjusted by the NRAC to select projects that enhance, preserve and/or restore Cuyahoga County greenspace.

SECTION ONE - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.A. PROJECT NAME:

1.B TYPE OF PROJECT FOR WHICH FUNDS ARE BEING REQUESTED:

Check the type of project:

A. _____ Open Space Project - Check one of the following categories:

_____ **Acquisition of property** - Must include purchase or transfer of property.

Check the type of acquisition:

_____ Fee Simple

_____ Easement Purchase

_____ Transfer of Conservation Easement

_____ **Acquisition of property and enhancement of facilities to make land accessible and useable.**

B. _____ Riparian Corridor

1.C APPRAISAL OR CONSERVATION VALUE: Applies to Open Space projects only. (An appraisal **must** be included in application)

\$ _____

1.D PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Provide a written description of the project. Description should be no more than three (3) pages.

The project description **must** include the following information:

- If the project is being phased, describe all of the project phases, and the specific phase that is being requested for funding.
- Include a map showing the project location(s) and the local setting.
- Indicate if the project has been identified on the Cuyahoga County Greenprint Map (available at planning@cuyahoga.oh.us).

SECTION TWO - PROJECT EMPHASIS (No points are awarded in this category.)

Indicate which conservation factors will be advanced through the project. Check all the factors that apply.

2A. Open Space Project

- Is a result of a comprehensive open space plan.
- Incorporates aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
- Promotes a priority local economic development and/or community development initiative in high unemployment and low income areas.
- Protects habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species.
- Preserves high quality, viable habitats for plant and animal species.
- Preserves existing high quality wetlands or other scarce natural resources within the county.
- Provides educational opportunities and provides physical links to schools and after-school centers.
- Preserves or restores natural areas that contribute to the quality of life and the county's natural heritage such as: water quality; natural stream channels; the Lakefront; floodplains; wetlands; and streamside forests.
- Reduces or eliminates nonnative, invasive species of plants or animals.
- Promotes the proper management of the ecosystem while allowing for safe fishing, hunting and trapping.
- Provides appropriate public access.

2B. Riparian Corridor or Watershed Protection Project (including Lakefront projects):

- Increases habitat protection.
- Is a result of a stream corridor-wide or watershed-wide plan.
- Provides multiple recreational, economic and aesthetic preservation benefits.
- Preserves headwater streams or outfalls to Lake Erie.
- Restores and preserves aquatic biological communities.
- Provides appropriate public access.

SECTION THREE - COUNTY PRINCIPLES - Up to 10 points per principle. (0-50 points)

In order to direct Clean Ohio funding to projects that will advance the five principles determined by the NRAC to be critical to the improvement of open space and riparian corridors in Cuyahoga County, points will be awarded for each principle that the project will advance.

- 3A.** Project **preserves** natural areas or open space.
- 3B.** Project **enhances** the quality of natural areas or open space.
- 3C.** Project **restores** landscapes that have been degraded or destroyed.
- 3D.** Project physically **links** natural areas to each other or to cultural and civic heritage areas within the county.
- 3E.** Project **provides** public access to natural areas and/or cultural and civic heritage areas within the county.

SECTION FOUR - PROJECT BENEFITS - Up to 10 points per benefit. (0-30 points)

Studies have shown that conservation projects can provide additional benefits beyond those that are physical and natural. The existence of open space and watershed projects can provide benefits to all members of society and advance the public policy of “liveable communities.” Where applicable, applicants are to explain the additional benefits.

- 4A. Economic Benefits** - Explain how the project will:
 - Support a priority local economic and/or community development initiative.
 - Catalyze other improvements.
 - Increase the values of adjacent or nearby land.
 - Reduce annual municipal service costs (e.g., public safety, public service)
 - Develop or redevelop vacant, underutilized parcels/acres.
 - Other benefits.
- 4B. Social Benefits** - Explain how the project will:
 - Provide public access.
 - Create a gathering place.
 - Provide educational opportunities.
 - Provide bicycle and pedestrian linkages.
 - Remove a blighted image.
 - Improve public health and safety.
 - Enhance the cultural and civic heritage of the area.
 - Incorporate aesthetically pleasing and ecologically informed design.
 - Other benefits.
- 4C. Environmental Benefits** - Explain how the project will:
 - Balance the built environment with the natural environment.
 - Enhance environmental health or reduce ecological risks.
 - Convert brownfield parcels/acres to a natural area and/or open space.
 - Create new habitats or other natural areas and/or open space.
 - Improve biodiversity.
 - Protect a rare, threatened or endangered species.
 - Protect high quality or regionally significant biological communities.
 - Reduce the quantity or improve the quality of stormwater runoff.
 - Restores floodplain functions.
 - Other benefits.

SECTION FIVE -NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT (0-30 points)

The NRAC identified the need for an integrated system of key natural areas that would provide benefits to all residents, particularly those residents that reside in areas that lack greenspace and/or the ability to enjoy the benefits of these areas. The applicant will be required to explain to what extent the needs of the districts, outlined below, would be met by the project.

- 5A. Project is part of an adopted regional, county (including those shown on the Cuyahoga County Greenprint), community or watershed plan. Provide project plan documentation.
- 5B. Project is of regional or county significance.
- 5C. Project provides a key linkage to an existing or proposed greenway.
- 5D. Project preserves or restores an example of the county’s natural heritage.
- 5E. Project serves an underserved population.
- 5F. Project serves a low-income and/or minority neighborhood.

SECTION SIX - OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS

6.1 Other Project Funding (0 -10 points.)

Projects will be awarded points in this category based on the percentage of the local match committed toward the total project cost. The higher the local match, the higher the points that will be awarded. The project financial resources stated in the OPWC Application will be used to determine the points in this category. (The category is scored by staff and points provided to the NRAC.)

% of Local Match	Points
25	2
35	3
45	4
55	5
65	6
75	7
85	8
95	9
More than 95	10

6.2 Level of Coordination (0 - 10 points)

Projects that have involve more than one agency or organization will be extra given consideration. The level of coordination can be financial contributions, the donation of property, assistance in planning and implementing the project or responsibility for completing a part of the project.

1. What agencies and organizations have been involved in the planning and preparation of this project application?

NRAC EVALUATION POINTS				
CRITERIA	MAXIMUM POINTS	WEIGHT FACTOR	MAXIMUM WEIGHTED POINTS	%
County Principles				
Preserves	10	3	30	12.0
Restores	10	2	20	8.0
Enhances	10	2	20	8.0
Links areas	10	3	30	12.0
Provides	10	2	20	8.0
Subtotal	50		120	48.0
Benefits				
Economic	10	1	10	4.0
Social	10	2	20	8.0
Environmental	10	3	30	12.0
Subtotal	30		60	24.0
Needs of the District	10	3	30	12.0
Other Relevant Factors				
Other Project Funding	10	1	10	4.0
Level of Coordination	10	1	10	4.0
Readiness to Proceed	10	1	10	4.0
Immediacy (bonus)	10	1	10	4.0
Subtotal	40		40	16.0
Total	130		250	100