



September 12, 2024

Request for Proposals: Conservation Ditches, Enhanced Floodplain, Wetlands, and Other Stacked Practices for Treating Agricultural Runoff

Dear Local Partner:

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) is soliciting proposals for projects reducing nutrients by adding stream, floodplain and wetland services to channelized waterways and agricultural watersheds in the Maumee River watershed. This request seeks conservation ditch design projects (e.g. two-stage ditch and self-forming channel designs) or those adding new or enhanced wetlands capturing runoff from agricultural runoff and or tile drainage systems. Additional practices that enhance pollutant removal into the channel or wetland (e.g. controlled drainage or saturated buffers) may also be included. Consideration will also be given to projects in Ohio watersheds outside the Maumee River drainage but within other tributaries to the Western Basin of Lake Erie (WLEB). Conservation ditch projects should result in greater floodplain access during storm events, allowing for sediment deposition and removal of pollutants, and sorting of fines into or onto floodplain benches from coarser substrates in the main channel. These also provide more self-sustainable agricultural drainage than traditional trapezoidal channels that reduces the need for ditch clean-out activities and may also improve riparian or in-channel habitat and reduce water resource impairment.

This opportunity will be funded by Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds. Proposals will be considered for funding under this request for proposals up to \$289,497. Proposals not selected for immediate implementation may be considered for additional state or federal funding opportunities later in 2024 or 2025. Projects must be able to be completed before November 2026. Proposed costs must be provided with a justification within the application and be reasonable for the extent of work that is proposed. Ohio EPA anticipates more opportunities to fund these types of projects. Eligible entities are encouraged to seek out and develop potential projects for future funding opportunities.

- Eligible applicants include soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), local governments, park districts, regional councils of government, and nonprofit (501(c)(3)) conservation or watershed groups.
- Priority watersheds for this opportunity include all HUC-12 watersheds in the Maumee River watershed. Consideration will also be given to projects in the western Lake Erie basin (e.g. Ottawa Portage, Sandusky and direct tributaries to WLEB).
- Selections will be prioritized based on criteria such as: the estimated annual nutrient and sediment load reduction; eligible and appropriate estimated costs; local contribution (e.g., design, grant-administration, permitting, etc.); and where complimentary conservation or edge-of-field BMPs may be appropriately “stacked” upstream of ditch/streamside or wetland projects.

Please note that projects funded by this federal grant may be subject to Buy America Build America requirements.

Application Deadline & Review Procedures

Applications may be found at: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/surface-water/financial-assistance/319-grants>. Complete grant applications must be submitted to the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water representatives below by **November 15, 2024**, to be considered for funding.

Please submit your signed application by email (in both **Excel** and **PDF** format) to:

- Josh Griffin, 319 NPS Program Manager, joshua.griffin@epa.ohio.gov
- Rick Wilson, 319 Program Specialist, rick.wilson@epa.ohio.gov

Applications will be reviewed for completeness, technical merit, and adherence to guidance. Final funding decisions will be made by the director of Ohio EPA. Selected applicants will be required to execute a grant agreement and adhere to all requirements of the federal and state guidance.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity and in develop practical implementation strategies that further Ohio's important water quality goals. If after reviewing this information you require additional assistance, please contact Rick Wilson or Joshua Griffin.

Sincerely,
Mark Johnson
Chief Division of Surface Water