

## Conservation District HB223 Grants Guidelines

*Background:* The 47<sup>th</sup> Legislature provided to the conservation districts one half of one percent of the coal severance tax monies for any purposes that they are authorized to perform pursuant to MCA, Title 76, Chapter 15, Part 4. Since 1981, conservation districts have used these funds for conservation related projects.

DNRC provides fiscal management of the grant programs while the Resource Conservation Advisory Council (RCAC) review applications and provides recommendations for funding to DNRC.

### Applicant Eligibility

HB223 grants provides funding for any project sponsored by a Montana conservation district under its authority.

### Grant Types and Limits:

***On-the-ground projects:*** \$20,000

***Demonstration projects:*** \$20,000

- A 50:50 cash match is required for the entire amount if the request is more than \$20,000.

***Educational events and projects:*** \$10,000

- Funds can only be used to pay for expenses that exceed revenues (registration fees, sponsorships, donations, etc.). A detailed spreadsheet that itemizes expenditures made and revenues received must be submitted with the final report (see 223 Grant Final Report Guidelines).

### Guidelines

**Eligibility:** To be eligible to receive a 223 grant, a conservation district must:

1. Have levied the maximum county mills allowed for the current fiscal year
2. Have or in the process of developing a special project as authorized in MCA, Title 76, Chapter 15, Part 4
3. Have a need for additional funds above the maximum statutory authority
4. Provide a copy of the conservation district's annual plan
5. Submit an annual budget. Administrative grant applications may serve this purpose, however, for those conservation districts that do not apply for or receive an administrative grant must submit an annual budget prior to receiving grant funds.
6. All previous grants received by the applicant must be current (i.e. all reports filed) before any new grant funds can be released.
7. The chairperson of the conservation district must sign the application form. Mail a signed original copy and an electronic Word Document of the application must be submitted by the posted deadline.

***Ineligible Applications:***

- Submitted after the deadline due date
- Submitted without approval at a conservation district board meeting
- Submitted without the signature of the conservation district board Chairperson or designate
- Incomplete application

***Projects:*** Funds may be used for any project a conservation district is authorized to carry out, including, but not limited to planning, education, feasibility studies, demonstration projects, farm experiments, equipment purchases, or construction projects.

***Examples of Projects:*** Saline seep and weed control projects; conservation education and information projects; soil surveys; various water and soil conservation related projects.

***Equipment Purchases:***

- Must include a maintenance plan that covers:
  - Rental fees
  - Repair and maintenance costs
  - Equipment replacement costs
  - Deposits and long-term leases (if applicable)

***Irrigation Projects:***

- Irrigation construction or design projects, including sprinklers and drip systems must have a 50:50 cash match from the landowner(s) or other beneficiaries (such as an irrigation district, ditch company, or community garden host).

***Weed Projects:***

- *Seek alternative funding sources first:*
  - Weed project funding must be first sought through the Noxious Weed Trust Fund at the Montana Department of Agriculture. <https://agr.mt.gov/NoxiousWeedTrustFund>
  - Aquatic invasive species project funding must be sought through the DNRC Aquatic Invasive Species Program. <https://invasivespecies.mt.gov/montana-invasive-species/Aquatic-Invasive-Species-Grant-Program>
  - Provide documentation that alternative funding was sought with 223 grant application
- All weed projects must be coordinated with the local weed districts – especially for the purchase and application of chemicals.

***Plans:***

- Must include a plan to monitor the effectiveness of the project
- Must include a plan for public outreach and educational efforts
- Must include a plan identifying partners participating in the project and the tasks performed

***Budget:***

- Provide a detailed budget indicating how the grant funds will be used.
- Administration fee is based on the percentage of the total expenses and cannot exceed 10 percent.
- Must include money or in-kind services from other sources (if applicable)

***Ineligible Costs***

- Activities outside of the scope of work
- Costs incurred outside of the contract term
- Salaries/wages, travel, and other expenses not directly related to the project
- Food and beverage items
- Common items that can be easily borrowed
- Equipment for contractors

***MEPA:***

- Fill out the supplemental checklist if a project is expected to have some environmental impact.

*Examples of Environmental Impacts:* Include but are not limited to any stream restoration activities, chemical applications and/or treatments for weeds, complete changes to irrigation lines or infrastructure.