



## STANDARD CONSERVATION PROJECT APPLICATION

Financial Assistance Program 2020-2021

***Applications accepted July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Award notifications expected late November, 2020***

### **Overview**

The Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD/District) Financial Assistance Program is for the preservation of soil and water, and the natural landscapes that protect and enhance the quality and resilience of these critical resources. The program has been developed to promote effective **conservation practices**\*\*\* that can be used across many different landscapes, including rural, urban, wild land urban interface (WUI), rangeland, and agricultural lands within the Middle Rio Grande Valley floodplain, uplands, and mesas. Establishment of this program has been made possible through the VSWCD mil levy that was approved by referendum vote in May 2013. The Financial Assistance Program will continue to be developed to benefit the livelihood and quality of life of the residents of the VSWCD.

All agricultural and residential VSWCD mil-levy contributors (as shown on property tax receipts) are eligible for assistance through this competitive program. The application window opens on July 1<sup>st</sup> (the beginning of the District's fiscal year), and closes on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Award decisions are based on a District ranking process and are expected by the end of November (2020). All program activities are contingent on available annual funds.

The Financial Assistance Program process requires submittal of an application for **Community or Agricultural Assistance**.

- **Community Assistance** - submitted by individuals or groups (submitted by a mil levy taxpayer residing within the District area applying as an individual for self or group). Applications are considered 'Community' for residential, commercial, or public lands and when not solely for agricultural use.
- **Agricultural Assistance** is provided for individuals for agricultural land or rangeland who may be the lessee farming the land, or managing the range for livestock with landowner permission or the landowner. The property must be located in the District and the individual must provide proof of payment of mil levy taxes on the property.

**\*\*\*Conservation Practice is defined, for this assistance program, as a specific proposed natural-resources management practice or system for conservation, enhancement, or restoration of soil and water, which are the foundation for continued watershed health and productive agriculture.**

***Conservation Project Applications will be evaluated based on each application's level of completeness and upon the strength and durability of the conservation practices. Innovation is encouraged. Applications selected for funding will be on a reimbursement basis for high, medium, or low priority rates of assistance. Applicants will complete practices with their share of financial or other approved in-kind support prior to reimbursement.***

## Who can apply?

- Agricultural applicants may apply as individuals only, either as the landowner or as a leaseholder with the written consent of the landowner. The property must be located within the District, with agricultural designation and with proof of payment of VSWCD mil levy tax.
- Community applicants are Individual landowners, leaseholders (with the landowner's written consent), and group applicants. Groups may include schools, community gardens, senior centers, community centers, home-owner associations, or other similar groups (proof of contribution to VSWCD mil-levy tax is also required).

## **SECTION 1 – Main categories for assistance:**

**Note:** Assistance limits and rates per conservation practice do apply, although applicants may apply for more than one conservation practice..

**Limit:** The cap or limit for any single conservation practice is \$5,000 and the percent of reimbursement is based on priority of practice (high, medium or low), as determined through the District's ranking process. (see *VSWCD 2021 Ranking Sheet* and *VSWCD 2021 Program Overview* for more details).

- **SOILS TESTING & SOIL HEALTH:** for rangeland, cropland, gardens and landscapes. We fully support NM's Healthy Soils initiative & the Soil Health Champion program. We perform FREE Soil Tests!
- **EROSION CONTROL** projects include: 1) For private land where watershed wide erosion concern is identified, properties are at risk, and improvements enhance watershed health while reducing erosion of soils; 2) rangeland and cropland assistance for erosion control projects
- **WATER HARVESTING:** for wildlife, livestock, and irrigation, for landscaping and garden use in residential, public, and commercial property applications.
- **VEGETATIVE COVER:** for carbon sequestration, water catchment, and pollinator habitat and overall watershed health enhancements, with emphasis on native species.
- **POLLINATOR ENHANCEMENT HABITAT AND GARDEN PLANTINGS:** Technical assistance is available for developing a pollinator enhancement habitat landscape or garden plantings design and plan, often done in concert with farming. Please contact the VSWCD office for more information.
- **OTHER CONSERVATION PRACTICES:** not otherwise funded in an overall conservation plan from the NRCS, or equivalent, with support and technical assistance.
- **RIPARIAN RESTORATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATERSHED HEALTH, HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS, and SAFETY:** For 2021, the financial assistance limit is \$5,000, with the following conditions: Dependent on availability of funding (may fund only part of acreage).



Photo: Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area: Newly excavated Pond (December 2008)

**SECTION 2 – Application for Assistance**

All support documentation and information requested must be submitted for consideration of your application. For submittal of your completed application to the District office, hand-delivery, e-mail, or mailing of applications are all acceptable. If any questions or assistance required for completing your application, please contact our office in person, by phone at 505-864-8914 or by email at [valenciaswcd@live.com](mailto:valenciaswcd@live.com).

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of submittal: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Mailing address of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Other contact information, if helpful (optional) such as best time to contact you or secondary phone, preferred contact method (phone, email, text).

5) Please state here or attach a brief narrative describing the proposed project (Required):

6) Is this a group application; a community project? (Yes/No)\_\_\_\_\_

7) Are you the Landowner or Lessee? \_\_\_\_\_

8) Address or location of land to which application applies (if different from mailing address). Only one application will be accepted per location per year. If no address associated with the land, please provide nearest crossroads and directions to visit the site.

9) What is total area of interest for this request (acreage or square footage)?

10) What is the current physical condition of the site?

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11) How is the land currently being used/managed?

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12) What Conservation Practice Category or Categories are being addressed (Please use The District Conservation Practices ranking sheet for this application to identify the practice)?

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13) Also state if this land can continue to be irrigated without any encumbrances:  Yes or  No. If any encumbrances exist, state what those are.

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14) Do you have an existing site conservation plan you have created or has been provided by another agency or consultant?  Yes or  No. If Yes, please describe and attach to the application.

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15) If this request is for agricultural land use, attach proof of agricultural designation of land, either by zoning or tax filing for agricultural earnings. If practicing agriculture within other zone designation or if there are no agricultural earnings, please explain (ex. if you are a new or beginning farmer).

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16) Have you done soils testing for the property within the last year? ( Yes or  No ) \_\_\_\_ If you have tested your soils within the last year, please attach a copy of testing results with this application OR indicate here if tested through VSWCD.

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Note: If you have not tested your soils recently, the District asks for a soil test as part of this application. **\*\*\*We perform these soil tests for FREE\*\*\*.**

17) When do you want to start and complete the project presented in this request? (2021 projects are expected to be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of 2021 unless extension granted)

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18) Please let us know how you heard about this program. Check all that apply: \_\_word of mouth, \_\_friend, \_\_newsletter, \_\_newspaper, \_\_radio, \_\_seminar or workshop, \_\_other - state here please\_\_\_\_\_.

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### **SECTION 3: Application Guidelines and Submittal Process**

- i. Applications must be submitted to VSWCD via email, mail or in person by **September 30th 2020**
- ii. Written notice of application acceptance or rejection will be provided to each applicant. For this year, it is expected that **award notifications will be made by December 1st, 2020**. Applications rejected because of insufficient funding may be resubmitted upon funding availability. Projects may be determined to be eligible for partial funding, as determined by the VSWCD.
- iii. Project proposals and budgets may be modified by the VSWCD and VSWCD will create a site plan and budget that serves as the project agreement for the applicant's approval. Applicant's signature of the agreement is required prior to the start of any practice(s) or project. By law, no work can commence on any reimbursement before an applicant has received approval and a notice to proceed. All receipts must be dated after the project's approval date.
- iv. Projects are expected to be completed within the current VSWCD fiscal year, by **June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021** or an application would need to be submitted for the subsequent year. Extensions may be granted if applicant makes the request in writing (email is sufficient) prior to close of fiscal year, June 30<sup>th</sup> annually. Extension approval is at the discretion of VSWCD. If extension into the new fiscal year is not granted, the agreement will become void and a new application may be submitted for the following fiscal year.
- v. Approved assistance requests are paid by reimbursement, upon completion of a project and following site visit by District staff to verify completion. Following site visit and verification of receipts reimbursement is issued within 30 days. A full and detailed accounting of all expenses (supported by receipts) must be submitted at project completion. Any contractor invoicing is considered summarized, but all other receipts must be submitted with a summary page, including all charges and their explanation, in order for the project to be deemed completed. Assistance is not provided on gross receipts tax. Gross receipts must be itemized on invoicing and summary pages and, if not, it will be assumed to be included and removed for calculation of reimbursement.

- vi. All recipients of VSWCD financial assistance will provide an IRS W-9 form to VSWCD and be issued a subsequent 1099 miscellaneous income notice in the January following project completion, if their total assistance for all conservation practices is greater than \$600. VSWCD is required to report this funding to the IRS.
- vii. Practices in the approved plan are expected to be established for a minimum of 5 years for conservation benefit. If the practice is not maintained on the land for 5 years due to reasons beyond the applicant's control, the VSWCD may consider requests for re-establishing or replacing a practice in the same location prior to 5 years if it provides restored or greater conservation benefit.
- viii. VSWCD may request site visits for all financial assistance requests, before start of project, following completion of the project, and during the life of the practice (depending on the scope of the project). Applicants must agree to site visits, or applications will not be approved. This VSWCD oversight of public funds allows evaluation of the effectiveness of financial assistance programs in supporting best conservation practices within the District.

**Statement of Applicant:** *I have reviewed and understand the guidelines and process for this application. My signature following is to attest to my review and understanding and is required for submittal of my request for assistance.*

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*Applicant Signature* *Printed Full Name* *Date*

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*Landowner Signature (if applicable)* *Printed Full Name* *Date*

\*\*\*\*\**THANK YOU*\*\*\*\*\*

**Applicant Checklist for submittal of VSWCD *Conservation Project* Application**

**(Submit with application)**

**Check completed (please call if any questions at 864-8914):**

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ Application contains applicant's contact information (phone, email)
- B. \_\_\_\_\_ If soil testing (Free!) planned for with application, attach VSWCD soil testing application.
- C. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide a copy VSWCD mil-levy assessment (property tax bill) with proof of mil-levy payment.
- D. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide completed W9 IRS miscellaneous income form with application (copy available on website at [www.valenciaswcd.org](http://www.valenciaswcd.org) or we can send hard copy)
- E. \_\_\_\_\_ Groups must provide a signed affidavit that the majority or 3/4 of the participants reside within the District, and at least one of the participants must provide his or her property tax bill, indicating the VSWCD mill-levy assessment, and proof of mil-levy payment. The group applicant may request assistance for private, commercial, or public lands. Lands for group projects are considered community (residential private, commercial, public), when not for agricultural use.
- F. \_\_\_\_\_ Called office to arrange for site visit with District staff at 505-864-8914.
- G. \_\_\_\_\_ Attach any additional drawings/designs of the project and maps of the property with project areas identified if already prepared.
- H. \_\_\_\_\_ Attach a budget with cost estimates per practice is required; call the District if assistance is needed to develop the project budget.
- I. \_\_\_\_\_ For agricultural projects, attach proof of agricultural designation of land, either by zoning or tax filing for agricultural earnings (Disregard if provided explanation for #15 of the application)
- J. \_\_\_\_\_ Lessees of land who are applying can provide a signed statement (affidavit) of landowner's permission and agreement with the proposed actions of this request. Have you attached signed statement?
- K. \_\_\_\_\_ If part or all of a conservation practice will be built on adjoining land, then a written letter granting permission for this work to proceed must be obtained from that landowner PRIOR to the starting the work. A copy of this written permission must be provided to the VSWCD.
- L. \_\_\_\_\_ Sign and date the application.
- M. \_\_\_\_\_ Submit checklist and attachments with application.**