Virginia Trees for *Clean Water*
Request for Proposal

Through funds from the USFS Chesapeake Watershed Forestry Program, Virginia Water Quality Improvement Funds, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) CB Rapp, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) has developed the Virginia Trees for Clean Water program. The program is designed to improve water quality across the Commonwealth through on-the-ground efforts to plant trees where they are needed most. Our goals are to expand tree canopy, positively impact water quality, increase energy conservation practices, advance community health and grow recreation and educational opportunities.

Projects funded through the program include tree-planting activities of all types: riparian buffer tree planting, community and neighborhood tree plantings etc. **Both trees and shrubs are allowable.** Winning proposals must demonstrate the merit of the project and how the trees will be maintained in perpetuity. The Environmental Justice Screening tool (https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/) that looks at environmental indicators, demographic indicators and EJ indexes developed by EPA will be used to prioritize planting projects funded.

Grant funds will be reimbursed at the conclusion of the project and funding is available on a **(match what you can) basis due to COVID-19.** Providing match (including in-kind) is recommended but due to the limitations in congregating volunteers for planting projects will not be required. Not being able to match the grant project by 50 percent will not affect your ability to receive funding under this cycle.

This cycle of grant funds will be used for planting projects occurring in the spring and fall of 2021. Please submit your applications by **Tuesday, February 16 2021**.

OBJECTIVES of Virginia Trees for Clean Water

The specific objectives of the program are to:
- To plant trees that restore and improve the waters for the benefit of current and future citizens of the Commonwealth
- Achieve long-term improvements in water quality through long-lived tree cover and increased public involvement
- To raise public awareness about the benefits of planting trees for the health of our citizens, streams, wildlife and rivers

ELIGIBLE GRANT PROPOSALS AND CATEGORIES

Grants may be awarded to local units of government, approved non-profit organizations, community civic organizations, educational institutions and tribal communities.

There will be approximately **$100,000** available to fund projects during the current grant cycle. The funding range for proposals is **$1,000 to $14,000** per project.

Proposal Categories

The following project work areas are examples; projects are not limited to the following:

- **Riparian tree planting** in <u>non</u>-Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) areas, including urban areas and private lands. These plantings should be a minimum of 35 feet wide with no maximum. Seedlings are generally planted at 10 -15 ft. centers or 195 to 435 per acre. A maximum of 435 seedlings per acre will be paid for by the grant at a 10 x 10 spacing. Riparian plantings generally need tree protectors as well, because of the deer browse and destruction. The accepted rate per seedling for a full turnkey planting project including; providing the seedling, planting labor, using a tree protector, mulch, all together is $9.00/seedling total. This may not be your cost as project needs and requirements differ. When budgeting, please use your anticipated real cost.

- **Community tree planting** projects include tree plantings on public lands. A long term maintenance plan must be included with the grant application.

- **Street Tree planting** projects including planting strips and cutouts should be as large as possible to provide ample growing space for the tree. Cutouts must be at least 4'x10' or equivalent to be considered for funding under the program. Also, proposed projects with planting strips or cutouts less than 3' wide will not be considered.

- **Neighborhood or NeighborWoods Tree plantings** may be organized by the local civic association or homeowners association or by the community government. Projects should be located on common ground or within 35 feet of the roadway.

- **Turf to Trees (T2T) projects** include conversion of regularly mowed lawns greater than 0.1 acres to trees, usually using tree seedlings, saplings or small potted trees. The cost of tree protection is an allowable expense. Annual mowing between the seedlings is also allowed during establishment.

Proposal Format: Items that should be included in the grant narrative

- Background of project area and description of need
- Experience in completing similar projects
- Explanation of community engagement
- Project Description/Scope of Work
- Design plan drawing and species list
- Tree Maintenance Plan
- Deliverables / Expected Outcomes
- Application form, attached
- Project Budget on attached form

The proposal should not exceed **four** pages, plus the application and budget pages. Photos should be included in the proposal and do not count towards the four page narrative.

- All projects must have written approval from the landowner or an authorized representative of the landowner in the form of a letter as a part of the grant application and prior to funding approval, this letter should also designate the organization responsible for the long-term maintenance of the project.

- All projects must have a direct community engagement component. Please describe how you have engaged or are going to engage with the residents or the local community where the tree planting is going to occur. Community engagement must be completed prior to tree installation in order to receive funding in hopes of empowering local citizens to take an active role in the development and maintenance of their urban forest. It can take many forms such as virtual town halls, volunteer training, educational outreach or distributing flyers to name just a few. Please reach out if you have any questions on this requirement.

- We require local VDOF staff to review the project prior to proposal submission. The local VDOF forester should provide a letter of recommendation for the project, to be submitted <u>with</u> the proposal. Please note that a follow up planting inspection using VDOF My Tree Count Application (https://arcg.is/WryDG) will also be conducted for all approved projects. This inspection must be completed prior to the final reimbursement.

Indirect costs can be used as match under this program. The entity receiving the grant must keep all expenditure records and submit copies as part of the reimbursement request. A final report with photographs of the completed project is also required for all entities receiving a grant before reimbursement can occur.

Time Line:

Email the application package to U&CF Program staff (emails on pg. 5) by 4:30 pm, Tuesday, February 16 2021 for applicants hoping to receive funding spring and fall 2021 plantings. All applicants will be notified of grant status by February 23 2021.

General Criteria

- All projects should include site plan, plant list, tree planting specs, site photos, and a commitment to the project's long-term success from specified personnel or individuals.

- Due to COVID-19 and limitations on volunteer gatherings, we have a match what you can program.

- We require local VDOF staff to visit the site and review the project prior to proposal submission. The local VDOF forester should provide a letter of recommendation for the project, to be submitted <u>with</u> the proposal.

- Trees for all projects should be seedlings or up to 2-inch caliper when approved. The maximum reimbursable cost for 2-inch caliper trees is $130.00. If higher value trees are purchased that is ok, but the grant will **only pay up to $130.00**. When larger caliper trees are approved fewer trees will be planted per acre. The accepted rate per seedling for contract planting: providing the seedling, planting labor, using a tree protector, mulch, all together is $9.00/seedling. This may not be your cost as project needs and requirements differ. When budgeting please use your anticipated actual cost.

- Trees for riparian projects should generally be seedlings; other projects may be funded for trees up to 2-inch caliper.

- A *detailed* tree maintenance plan must be included with each grant application.

- Applications should include a letter of permission/support for the planting, if the project is not on the applicant's personal property.

- Projects should educate participants of the water quality benefits of tree planting.

- Projects must include community outreach and engagement components to enhance the benefits of the project and promote those activities as models for others to replicate.

- Any street tree planting should provide the square footage of planting space, such as the dimensions of the tree pit or planting strip for each site.

- NeighborWoods projects must be carefully planned and technically sound, and involve the assistance of qualified technical experts, agencies, or organizations.

- NO large shade trees shall be planted under power lines.

- Grant funds will not be approved for projects that have been completed or materials that have been purchased prior to grant award.

- Grant funds will not be approved for projects that are initiated as a requirement of landscape ordinance, zoning, mitigation etc.

It is expected that all projects will be maintained for a **minimum of 15 years**, up to forever.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or want to discuss a potential project, please contact

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Payment Process

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a **reimbursement basis** in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Grantees must file a *Request for Reimbursement* (included in award paperwork package) and send records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs to the Virginia Department of Forestry. Also, a planting quality inspection must be conducted using VDOF My Tree Count Application (https://arcg.is/WryDG) before the final reimbursement will be issued and the grant closed. The U&CF Program Manager will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full funding.

Guidelines for Budget Categories
Project Budget Form

The Project Budget Form summarizes the project budget. For approved projects, in addition to being part of the project application, this form is an element of the grant agreement. This form is used to record a summary of all expenditures and matching funds. Guidelines for budget categories for project expenses are below.

Trees: This category covers the cost of the trees and woody shrubs that will be planted for the project.

Supplies: This category includes the supplies needed to plant the trees such as tree protectors, mulch etc. These items must be listed in the financial narrative, in sufficient detail to determine if they are reasonable and allowable.

Volunteers: The use of volunteer hours as an in-kind match is acceptable and encouraged. However, volunteer hours must be meticulously documented. You must use the **Volunteer Assistance Time and Activity Log** contained in this package or a form constructed in a similar format. It is essential that we have the date and times for the volunteer's service and his or her signature. If the form is compiled by the volunteer supervisor, then it should be **signed** by that person at the bottom. Volunteer hours are valued at the current rate established by the Independent Sector, which is $27.20 per hour.

Travel: Mileage traveled directly related to the project, travel reimbursements are for actual costs based on organization policies, and is not to exceed those included in the *Commonwealth of Virginia Policies & Procedures, Topic No. 20335, State Travel Regulations.* A vehicle mileage rate of $.58/mile is used.

Contractual: Contractual costs include subcontracted work to be completed by those other than the project sponsor. This may include design and engineering services.

Indirect: Indirect costs can be used as match under this program.