

The Indiana County Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Maintenance Program Quality Assurance Board (QAB) met July 28, 2022 at 9:00AM am at 435 Hamill Road Indiana PA. In attendance were voting QAB members John Somonick – Indiana County Conservation District Associate Director, John Dudash– PA Fish and Boat Commission, and Matt Heffner – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Others present were Brooke Russick - QAB Chair, Doug Beri – Indiana County Conservation District Executive Director, Monica Lee – Indiana County Conservation District Educator.

There were no public comments.

Project status report:

FY20 Grants open

East Mahoning Township, Steele Road

Nearly complete, deadline July 31, 2022

FY21 Grants open (contracts ending 12/31/2022)

(LV) East Mahoning Township, Decker’s Point Road

Slated for September

(LV) East Mahoning Township, Pollock Road

Construction complete, working on reimbursement

(LV) Banks Township, Spotts Road

80% complete

(LV) Center Township, Johnson Road

Started 7/21/22

(LV) Green Township, Raspberry Road

Slated for September

Buffington Township, Red Mill Road

Secured engineering, not yet secured landowner off right of way permission

Grant Township, Lentz Road

Contractor selected, slated for August

Grant Township, Magnolia Road

Contractor selected, slated for August

Green Township, Pear Road

Engineering 80% complete. Will need extension into 2023

Rayne Township, Chambersville Hill Road

Completed

West Mahoning Township, North Point Park Road

Not yet started, requested reduced scope of work

Washington Township, Craig Road

Not yet started

FY22 Grants (contracts ending 12/31/2023) – Contracts to be sent in August

Russick reviewed project status reports. There were no follow up questions or concerns about these current projects.

Stream Crossing Policy – Discussion

SCC approved a new policy, standard, and technical manual for Stream crossings at their May 2022 meeting. Russick shared these documents with the QAB members.

Somonick asked about the size of streams that are able to be exempt from SCC’s new policy. Russick explained there is exemption criteria written into the standard for small channels. Somonick is concerned about the extent of exhausting funds for engineering costs and being time consuming for small streams.

New QAB policy and/or Ranking Criteria Changes – Action

### Cancellation Policy

Due to recent contract cancellations, the staff brainstormed options to discourage future cancellations. At the last QAB meeting (3/30/22) several members were in favor of municipalities becoming ineligible for a period of time after cancelling a contract. Staff presented an option for a cancellation policy and an option for adjustments to the Ranking Criteria to penalize municipalities who have cancelled contracts.

The goal of these changes is to reduce the risk of cancellations and encourage municipalities to exhaust all efforts to complete a project. Russick explained that cancelled contracts negatively affects the ICCD DGLVR program due to 2-year program spending requirements. Russick encouraged this determination be at the discretion of the QAB to allow for exemptions of declaring a township ineligible (i.e. change of supervisors, unpredicted budget increasing with no alternatives, township puts forth efforts to adapt to changes). QAB did not feel that adjustments to the Ranking Criteria for contract cancellation was needed at this time. **Hefner motioned to enact a cancellation policy, “Any grant recipient that cancels a contract without exhausting efforts to complete the contract may be ineligible for funding for subsequent DGLVR grant rounds for two years, at the discretion of the QAB”. Somonick seconded this motion.**

### Phasing Policy

Another item that has been discussed at QAB meetings is the need to prioritize subsequent phases of projects. As it is set up currently, there is no priority given to finish later phases of a project because the highest-ranking components are typically addressed in the first phase. Russick reached out to other Conservation Districts for ideas on how they handle phasing. Strategies from other Conservation Districts fell into three categories that were presented to the QAB:

Option 1: Rank the whole project once, keeping in mind all phases, fund a feasible portion of the project (based on cost/amount of construction/capacity) and automatically fund a phase each year until the project is completed.

Option 2: Rank the whole project once, keeping in mind all phases, and use that first score through all funding rounds.

Option 3: Add a component to the ranking criteria that gives a significant bump to later phases of a project.

Beri mentioned past phasing projects that have not been finished as they now rank lower. One example is Cherry Tree Borough, High Street project that remains unfinished without a driving surface and will not rank high enough to fund because all drainage was completed. Beri concludes these projects should be immediately considered for funding if the applicant submits their applications to complete these projects. Larger phased projects were also discussed and District staff will assist municipalities determine appropriate sized phases. Somonick expresses concern of phases being susceptible to inflation for upcoming years after the initial proposal. Beri and Russick state budgets will be re-evaluated during the fiscal year that the next phase will be contracted. Many considerations were discussed including: all phases must be submitted with the initial application, district staff will assist applicants to determine appropriate phase delineation, how to handle fluctuating material costs, requiring annual pre-application site visits for each phase with necessary scope of work changes, re-evaluating the project’s current phases and costs at each QAB meeting, only contracting one phase

per year of a multi-phase project, how to prioritize projects if funding is a constraint, possibility of limiting the number of contracts to a township if they have a multi-phase project in action, a possible decrease in project numbers per fiscal year, and the definition of what a “phase” is for a project including it must be connected and continuous. QAB consensus was in favor of Policy Option 1 to guarantee a multi-phased project gets finished. Russick proposed drafting a policy to be considered at the next meeting to make sure the policy allowed for QAB discretion based on aforementioned discussion items. **Dudash motioned to accept policy development to rank the whole project once, keeping in mind all phases, fund a feasible portion of the project (based on cost/amount of construction/capacity) and automatically fund a phase each year until the project is completed”, Hefner seconded.**

New ranking criteria changes

Russick presented three possible changes to the ranking criteria last updated in 2018.

The first change was to set a maximum score for the # ESM trained to be more equitable to municipalities. Staff briefly discussed Boroughs who do not have any full-time staff and municipalities who only have 3 working supervisors. QAB discussed that adjusting the maximum score to 3 was more appropriate.

A second proposed change was to add a Project Phase criteria to prioritize subsequent phases of a funded project. The QAB agreed that a developed policy would be sufficient and did not find it necessary to add any additional components of project phasing to the ranking criteria.

A third proposed change was to increase the total available points to the grant history category. Staff presented increasing points from 10 to 20 with a new maximum score of 125. QAB was not in favor of this proposal and agreed that the cancellation policy would be more effective than adjustment to the Grant History category of the ranking criteria.

**Hefner motioned to change the ranking criteria for Number of ESM trained officials at a maximum score of 3, seconded by Somonick.**

Utilization of Fiscal Year 2022-2023 LV Funds (FY22) – Action

**FY22 (2022-2023) Proposed LVR Budget**

FY22 Allocation	\$166,138.00
(Less) Admin 10%	(\$16,613.80)
(Less) Education 10%	(\$16,613.80)
Plus FY21 Education Funds (actual)	\$8,474.87
Plus FY20 Education Funds (actual)	\$3,191.35
Plus FY21 unallocated project funds (estimated)	\$60,814.80
<b>Available for Projects</b>	<b>\$205,391.42</b>

**Somonick motioned to approve the proposed FY22 LVR budget as presented, Dudash seconded.**

Select Projects for Funding Fifteen Low Volume grant applications totaling \$868,656.68 were received. Each project was ranked by every QAB member, the totals were tallied, and projects were ranked highest score to lowest. **Hefner motioned to approve to fund Green Twp: Acorn Rd \$39,058.40, Rayne Twp: Kirkland Rd. A \$104,356.00, Rayne Twp: Kirkland Rd. B \$35,422.50, Center Twp: Henry Rd. \$11,084.33, Brush Valley Twp: \$3,160.03, and Brush Valley Twp: Spruce Hollow Rd. \$5,156.70 totaling \$198,237.96, seconded by Somonick, motion carried.**

**No future meeting date was set. Dudash motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:42 AM seconded by Somonick.**

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Lee  
District Educator