

Clean Water ~ Green Spaces

Rural and Agricultural Landowner Water Quality & Natural Areas Restoration Grant Program Guidelines 2024



Revised October 2024

Clean Water ~ Green Spaces Water Quality Enhancement & Natural Areas Restoration Program Eligibility Guidelines 2024

All projects must be pre-approved before work is started, with some exceptions listed below. Approved projects must be complete by March 1, 2025.

Habitat Improvement Projects

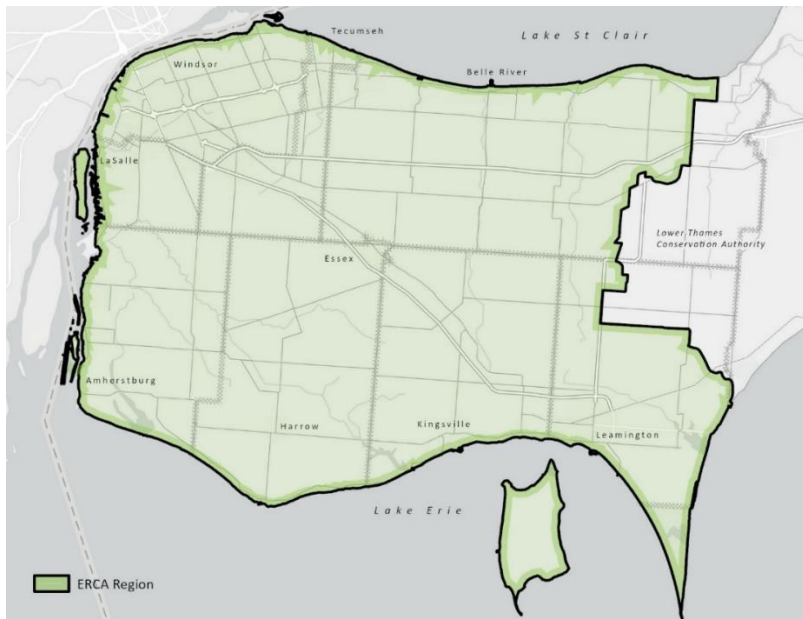
Eligible Projects	Grant Rate	Maximum Grant	Staff Contacts 519-776-5209
Tree Plantings	75%-90%	No Maximum	Paul Giroux Ext. 310 pgiroux@erca.org
Wind Breaks	100%	No Maximum	Paul Giroux Ext 310 pgiroux@erca.org
Prairie or Meadow establishment, Wetland enquiries	75%-100%	No Maximum	Kate Arthur ext 303 karthur@erca.org

Water Quality Improvement Projects

The projects below can be combined to a maximum of \$75,000 per farm business per year.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS	Grant Rate	Staff Contacts 519-776-5209
Cover Crops	\$50/acre	Chris Snip stewardship@erca.org
Crop Nutrient Planning	\$25/acre	
Strip Tillage	\$45/acre	
Equipment modifications	75% of cost up to \$50,000	
3-meter-wide permanent Buffer Strips	\$2/ linear foot	
Rock Chutes	\$10/square foot	
Header Tile Installation	\$12/linear foot	
Innovative Actions	80% of cost up to \$10,000	

All incentives are available for all land in the Essex Region as indicated in the map below.



Program Guidelines

To qualify for funding the following criteria must be met:

- Project types must fall into one of the categories noted in the table above.
- Projects must demonstrate an improvement to local surface water and/or groundwater quality and/or result in an increase in natural areas cover.
- The landowner must demonstrate good land stewardship practices.
- The landowner must contribute financially to the project as indicated
- The landowner must complete a Clean Water ~ Green Spaces Project application form
- Other grant programs can be used to top up ERCA's Clean Water ~ Green Spaces Program. Total grant dollars cannot exceed the cost of the project.

How to Apply for Grants

- Obtain specific program information from ERCA to determine if your project qualifies.
- Complete a Clean Water ~ Green Spaces application form.
- A site visit from ERCA staff will be necessary to determine eligibility, and again following project completion. **Do not start your project until you have written approval from ERCA. Projects initiated prior to written approval are not eligible for the grant program with the exception of certain agricultural activities that may have already occurred or are in progress as of July 2024 (e.g. planting cover crops, strip tillage, crop nutrient planning)**
- Projects that will result in the best benefits to water quality and fish and wildlife habitat will be prioritized for funding.

Habitat Improvement Projects

Note that habitat improvement projects are available throughout the Essex Region, as indicated by the map above.

All projects must include a minimum of 1 acre of restored habitat area – i.e. this can be a combination of tree planting, prairie and/or wetland(s), etc. to make up total project acreage

TREE PLANTING PROJECTS

75-90% of cost, no maximum

Project Details

- Projects must include a minimum of 500 trees or shrubs.
- A minimum cash contribution of \$0.15 per seedling is required for tree planting projects (not including buffer strips and wind breaks).
- Accepted tree planting practices apply (e.g., appropriate site preparation, spacing, diverse plantings etc.)
- Seedling trees only will be funded (not large stock or potted stock) and only native species are eligible
- Preference will be given to those applications that take into consideration water quality improvement, wildlife habitat and the creation/joining of wildlife corridors
- Tree plantations on erosion prone land will be given preference over applications that are not on erosion prone lands
- Preference will be given to those projects that incorporate a maintenance program e.g. mowing

Eligible project costs will include:

- Design, plant material and labour costs
- Tree protection systems (guards, etc.)
- In kind labour and machinery costs based on attached Eligible Expenditure Guidelines for projects larger than 1 acre (0.4 hectare)

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Commercial stock, Christmas tree, fruit tree or other species which are economically marketable in less than 10 years
- In kind land value
- In kind contributions on projects retiring less than 1 acre (0.4 hectare)

WINDBREAKS

100% of costs, no maximum

Project Details

- Projects must include a minimum of 500 trees or shrubs if planted by ERCA.
- Accepted tree planting practices apply (e.g., appropriate site preparation, spacing, etc.)
- A distance of not less than 1 meter will be left between the tree row and the cultivated crop. Distances of less than 1 meter at any point in the row will result in the Seedling Survival Guarantee being null and void.
- The landowner agrees to leave marker flags in the tree row for a minimum of 3 years. Removal will result in the Seedling Survival Guarantee being null and void.
- The landowner agrees to implement a regular maintenance program of mowing on each side of every row. Failure to have mowed by July 15 will result in the Seedling Survival Guarantee being null and void.
- Seedling trees only will be funded (not large stock or potted stock) and native species will be planted unless such species are not suitable for the application
- Preference will be given to those applications that take into consideration wildlife habitat and the creation/joining of wildlife corridors
- Preference will be given to windbreaks in combination with buffers that are at least 9 metres (30 feet) in width and consist of multiple tree rows and diverse species
- Tree plantations on erosion prone land will be given preference over applications that are not on erosion prone lands
- Grant amount will not exceed the cash costs to the landowner plus pre-approved in-kind contributions for labour and machinery as per Eligible Expenditure Guidelines (see attached)

Eligible project costs will include:

- Design, plant material and labour costs
- Tree protection systems (guards, etc.)
- In-kind costs can be included as eligible expenses only if the project retires at least one acre (0.4 hectare) of cultivated farmland

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Commercial stock, Christmas tree, fruit tree or other species which are economically marketable in less than 10 years
- In kind land value
- In kind contributions on projects retiring less than 1 acre (0.4 hectare)

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE & MEADOW PLANTING

75-90% of cost, no maximum

Project Details

- Only seed will be funded (not plugs or potted stock)
- Only **native species** are eligible
- Seeds can be planted mechanically and/or by hand (pending project size, site access and weather conditions)
- Preference will be given to those applications that take into consideration water quality improvement, wildlife habitat and the creation/joining of wildlife corridors
- Projects that have a connection with existing habitat areas (or located in priority watersheds), will be given preference
- Preference will be given to those projects that incorporate a suggested maintenance program e.g. mowing, burning, etc, as required

Eligible project costs will include:

- Design, plant material and labour costs
- Nurse crop (ie. annual oats or millet)
- In kind labour and machinery costs based on attached Eligible Expenditure Guidelines for projects larger than 1 acre (0.4 hectare)

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Non native and/or not locally appropriate species/seed mixes
- In kind land value

WETLAND CREATION PROJECTS

100% of cost, no maximum

We work with landowners to design and implement eligible wetland projects, which involves securing additional funding sources to cover a portion of the higher costs associated with excavating these features. A site visit is required to determine if there are opportunities for a wetland feature which would fit within the wetland funding/habitat creation criteria.

Wetland design criteria includes:

- Primary purpose is to create wetland habitat for wildlife
- Located in former/historical wetland sites or in low-lying, poorly drained or seasonally flooded areas
- Ranging from approximately 0.5 acres to 2 acres in size
- Fairly shallow – average depth of 3-4 feet but can include deeper 6.5' pocket(s)
- Irregularly shaped with gently sloping sides (approximately 5:1 or 6:1 grade)
- Seeded and planted with native wetland and riparian vegetation
- Connection/linkage with natural features/native species habitats
- Please note that we do not fund or excavate "backyard/landscaped" ponds, deep irrigation ponds, or stand alone features – in other words there must also be a connection to several acres of adjacent native habitat such as prairie/meadow, forest or riparian habitat, etc.

Project Details

- Preference will be given to those applications that take into consideration water quality improvement, wildlife habitat and the creation/joining of wildlife corridors
- Only native wetland species are eligible for planting around wetlands (seed and/or plugs)
- Projects that have a connection with existing habitat areas (or are located in priority watersheds), will be given preference

Eligible project costs will include:

- Project design, excavation and grading costs, native seed/plugs, permit application(s), as required
- Nurse crop (i.e. annual oats or millet) for slope stabilization
- Native wetland seed mixes

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Non-native and/or not locally appropriate species/seed mixes
- In kind land value

Water Quality Improvement Projects

Note that habitat improvement projects are available throughout the Essex Region, as indicated by the map above. Projects can be combined to a maximum of \$75,000 per farm business per year. Stacking of CW-GS funding with other programs is permitted if the other program(s) allow stacking, with the expectation that the combination of funding sources does not exceed 100% of the actual costs.

COVER CROPS

\$50/acre, no maximum

Project Details

- Cover crops provide undisturbed cover over winter months and/or early spring months
- Eligible crops must not be harvested for profit
- A site visit will be required to confirm growth of cover crops

Eligible project costs will include:

- Single stands, intercropping, one variety or complex mixes

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- In-kind land value
- Costs associated with mechanical or chemical termination of the cover crop
- Crops that will be harvested, grazed or fall terminated

CROP NUTRIENT PLANS

80% of costs up to \$25/acre, no maximum

Project Details

A 5-year written plan prepared by a designated specialist (e.g. Certified Crop Advisor, Agricultural Operations Strategy/ Plan Development Certificate holder, Non-Agricultural Source Material Plan Development Certificate holder) that makes recommendations on nutrient source, application, timing and placement for each applicable field and crop (4R) (e.g. a voluntary nutrient management plan prepared using NMAN software).

Eligible project costs will include:

- Soil testing and mapping exercises that are necessary for the plan
- Expert services provided by an eligible professional/ consultant
- Planning and design support tools (e.g. computer software need to develop plan)
- Plan must cover one full crop rotation cycle (five-year plan) and include:
 - Soil sampling and analysis;
 - Maps of fields, including locations of any sensitive features requiring special management or setbacks.
 - Fertilizer rate recommendations following OMAFRA's recommendations
 - Management practices to reduce risk of nutrient loss.

Ineligible Activities (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Computer hardware
- Claims for time invested by the producer in plan preparation
- Routine crop scouting and pest monitoring

STRIP TILLAGE

\$45/acre, no maximum

Project Details

- Supported tillage practices will leave a minimum of 30% of soil surface covered with living or dead residue after planting
- Preference will be given to projects where these practices are being newly introduced to the farm activities

Eligible project costs will include:

- Adoption of reduced tillage systems through modification of tillage and/or planting equipment
- Costs associated with hiring a contractor to provide supported tillage practices
- For a field to be eligible for payment of funding assistance, the target residue levels must be confirmed through field evidence (e.g. geotagged and dated photos after planting to confirm the minimum 30% of soil surface coverage was achieved)

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

In kind land value

EQUIPMENT MODIFICATIONS

75% of costs, up to \$50,000

Project Details

Optimizing the placement and timing of the phosphorus (P) and manure applications. Funding is extended to the customization of equipment, not the purchase of the entire unit.

Eligible project costs will include:

- Equipment modifications including those that:
 - Enable banding, variable or controlled applications, including high clearance equipment modifications to facilitate in-crop applications
 - Achieve incorporation of nutrients at time of application, combined with appropriate application rate and volume
 - Fertilizer carts, only if used to allow for subsurface placement of fertilizer
 - Permit one-pass liquid manure application with pre-tillage or incorporation
 - Increase accuracy to reduce over-application (i.e., GPS, vertical beaters, upgraded tool bars)
 - Convert new or existing manure application equipment, via specialized components, to allow direct injection, below canopy application, incorporation or pre-tillage methods
 - Allow slurry seeding of cover crops with manure application
 - Allow applying manure into strip tillage bands in fall in preparation for spring corn or for side-dressing manure into standing corn

Ineligible Activities (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Purchase of lift kit without purchase of components that will directly improve in-field fertilizer application
- Drones
- Spinner style fertilizer spreaders
- Annual service fees of any type
- Upgrades to tractors, combines
- Upgrades to spray equipment
- Maintenance costs, warranties for equipment or components
- Equipment to move manure from storage to field (e.g. tankers, box spreaders, drag hoses, pit agitators, hose reels and any other equipment that is not a tool bar or vertical beater)
- Separate pass cultivation unit or incorporation equipment
- Transportation costs of exported or imported manure from or to the farm
- Equipment that facilitates the movement of manure to the spreading unit
- Any equipment or equipment customizations that do not support an increase in soil health or a decrease in nutrient loss
- In-kind labour and/or equipment

BUFFER STRIPS

\$2/linear foot (\$6/linear metre), no maximum

Project Details

- Establishment of permanently vegetated buffer strips within riparian zones alongside streams, drains, rivers, ponds, wetlands and lakes.
- Buffers must be a minimum of 10 feet (3 metres) or wider buffer and a minimum length of 500 feet (150 metres).
- Buffer strips can be combined with other projects e.g. rock chutes.
- Preference will be given to projects in agricultural fields that increase the set back of farming activities from open ditches

Ineligible Activities (expenses not covered by a grant):

- Windbreaks (see windbreak incentives)
- Buffer strips less than 500 feet
- In kind land value

AGRICULTURAL SOIL EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURES

(e.g. Rock chutes and header tiles)

Rock Chutes: \$10/square foot, no maximum

Header Tile installation: \$12/linear foot, no maximum

Project Details

- Only structures that reduce soil erosion from agricultural fields will be funded (e.g. WASCoB, rock chutes, installation of header tiles).
- Rock chutes must be installed according to accepted practices e.g., gabion rip rap stone with a filter fabric layer, appropriate slopes, etc.
- Minimum 3-foot-wide buffer required with the rockchute(s).
- Projects must be properly designed in accordance with specifications included in the OMAFRA publication 832 titled Agricultural Erosion Control – A Design and Construction Manual
- Liaison with the municipal Drainage Superintendent is recommended and may be required
- Grant amount will not exceed the cash costs paid by the landowner plus pre-approved in-kind contributions for labour and machinery, **based on a maximum cost of \$10.00/sq.ft. of finished rock chute and \$12/linear foot for installed header tiles.**

Eligible project costs will include:

- Professional design, labour, material and equipment
- Costs associated with materials and construction of erosion control structures
- In-kind labour and machinery cost per attached Eligible Expenditure Guidelines.

Ineligible costs (expenses not covered by a grant):

- In-kind land value
- Any costs involving new or re-tiled lateral or systematic drain tiles
- Rock chutes at lateral tile ends
- Leveling of land/fields
- Constructing new drainage channels or repair of existing
- Ongoing maintenance costs

INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

80% of costs up \$10,000

Project Details

Other innovative practices that build soil health and limit the loss of nutrients from the field.

Eligible project costs will include:

- Infrastructure and development costs

Ineligible Activities (expenses not covered by a grant):

- In-kind land value
- Projects that will not improve soil health and/or reduce nutrient loss

Clean Water ~ Green Spaces Program
In Kind Landowner Contributions Eligible Expenditure Guidelines

The rates included in the table below should be used by landowners when calculating their in-kind contributions to projects. Information on whether your project qualifies for in-kind contributions is outlined in the *Eligibility Criteria* section of this application package. Rates are based on Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Custom Rate Schedule and Essex Region Conservation Authority Fee Schedule.

Project Type	Activity	Specifications
Rock Chutes	Backhoe	Up to \$75/hour (includes equipment & operator)
	Excavator	Up to \$130/hour (includes equipment & operator)
	Rock	\$20/ton (including trucking)
Tree Planting/ Buffer Strip/ Windbreak	Ploughing	Minimum \$148 or \$29/acre (includes operator)
	Discing or Roto tilling	Minimum \$289 or \$16/acre (includes operator)
	Broadcast seeding	Minimum \$94 or \$5/acre (includes equipment & operator)
	Drill seeding	Minimum \$136 or \$17/acre (includes equipment & operator)
	Pasture seed mix	\$2/lb at 10 to 35 lbs/acre
	Clover seed	\$3.50/lb at 8 to 15 lbs/acre
	Tree planting	\$0.65/seedling
	Spraying rows of trees (pre-emergent herbicide)	\$0.15/seedling (includes chemical, equipment & operator)
	Site burn down (Pull type sprayer) (broad spectrum herbicide)	Minimum \$452 or \$10/acre (includes chemical, equipment & operator)
Mowing between rows of trees	\$15/acre (based on 2-3 times/year for 2 years) (includes equipment & operator)	

Funding for the Clean Water ~ Green Spaces program is provided in part by the Government of Canada the Federal Environment Initiative.

Funding for certain water quality improvement projects (buffer strips, wind breaks, rock chutes, and header tile installations) in specific areas of the Ruscom River, Belle River and Canard River is provided wholly or in part through Fisheries and Oceans Canada through the Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk to support the recovery and protection of multiple aquatic species at risk.