

March 4, 2026

To: NRAC Chairs & Liaisons
Cc: OPWC Program Representatives

Re: FY 27 (Round 21) Guidance

Allocations

The allocations for the next round are at the bottom of this memo. Allocations are being requested in the forthcoming state capital budget, which will be effective July 1, 2026. NRACs should not award funds from a future round. The director is prohibited from approving an application in which financial assistance exceeds the NRAC's annual allocation.

Schedules & Methodologies

Slates are due to the OPWC by November 30, 2026. If this date cannot be met, contact your Program Representative as soon as possible as a delay may cause the OPWC to not meet the March 1, 2027, release. Agreements are released early if a project must close quickly. Methodologies may be submitted for approval at any time but allow time for review and expedite turn-around by indicating any substantive changes. When setting your calendar, maximize the solicitation period during the warm weather months for ecological surveys and other information to put applicants at their best competitive advantage. NRACs shall provide applicants a period of no less than ninety days after the director's approval of their methodologies to accept project applications.

NRAC Appointments & Rosters

Appointments must comply with [R.C. 164.21](#). In addition to the member from the District Integrating Committee and one representing a soil and water conservation district, the remaining nine members must be appointed from a category of "organizations, units of government, or agencies and shall include at least one member from each of those categories." These are as follows:

- 1) A county, municipal corporation, township, conservancy district, regional or joint district or unit of local government, or regional or joint political subdivision that is located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee;
- 2) A conservation organization, an environmental advocacy organization, an organization with a primary interest in watershed protection and restoration, the department of natural resources, the environmental protection agency, or the United States natural resources conservation service;
- 3) A city park system or metropolitan park system or a board of park commissioners from a county that is located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee, a statewide parks and recreation organization, or the United States national park service;
- 4) A statewide organization representing agriculture, an organization representing forestry interests, the department of agriculture, or the United States department of agriculture;
- 5) An organization representing business, local realtors, or a planning agency, including a port authority, located within the geographical jurisdiction of the appointing integrating committee.

The OPWC's counsel has confirmed that if a member appointed under a category should change

employment and that member's new employment does not meet that category description, the member must resign. In addition, if a member retires, they are no longer a part of that organization, unit of government or agency anymore and must resign. If you have any questions, please ask but any member that doesn't meet a category is not eligible for reappointment. It is encouraged to share nomination materials with your program representative to ensure eligibility before forwarding them to the district integrating committee. Remember to keep your roster current in WorksWise including your chair.

For multi-county NRACs, it has been determined that a soil and water conservation (SWCD) representative, as long as from a different county SWCD than the statutory representative, may serve category 4. So it goes to follow that single county NRACs don't have the ability of using SWCD representatives for category 4 since the county SWCD serves as the statutory representative.

Program Reminder – Easements and Improvements

[OAC 164-2-06](#) is written to give the director flexibility to make modifications to eligible and ineligible projects and activities, a list of which must be maintained by the OPWC. The OPWC has had a long-term policy to not permit improvements to easements except for one-time invasives removal. This policy is modified to allow improvements to easements if both the easement holder and landowner are OPWC-eligible applicants.

Resources

Various documents and links are listed on our webpage, [District Liaison](#), including the following:

- *Roles & Responsibilities*
- *NRAC Nomination Form*
- *Administrative Cost Disbursement Form*
- *Rules and Advisories*

Program Representatives are providing the New Clean Ohio Member Welcome Letter directly to the new member when their contact information is provided in the roster maintained in WorksWise.

Eligibility Determinations

Recall that a previous language change to [R.C. 164.26\(C\)](#) specifies that technical assistance provided by the OPWC director or staff does not constitute approval or denial of an application. This permits the OPWC to legally assist NRACs and applicants before resources are expended by an applicant for a potential project which may ultimately be denied by the director. This does not prevent an application from entering the system that has eligibility concerns. An NRAC should always first review for eligibility prior to scoring. Depending on the NRAC's meeting schedule and process, an NRAC may choose to delegate this responsibility to the liaison. Applications that are ineligible should not be vetted, scored, ranked, and advanced to the director. If the director determines a recommended application to be ineligible, it will be returned to the NRAC to determine the appropriate course of action. Furthermore, applications must comply with all NRAC policies, the Revised Code, and the Administrative Code. An NRAC cannot deviate from any legal requirement.

Application Requirements

Draft Deed Restrictions

Part of the NRAC review should include the Use and Improvement section of the draft deed restrictions to ensure that planned uses are consistent with program parameters. Some applications are being submitted to the OPWC without language. This is a required document so ensure that what is highlighted below is completed.

§1. Use and Improvement Restrictions. Declarant hereby agrees, for itself and its successors and assigns as owners of the Property, which the Property shall be subject to the following but used and improved only for conservation purposes including any approved appurtenances specified below. In addition, all uses and improvements must be in accordance with the applicable sections of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code. Any additional uses and improvements not specified below must be approved by the OPWC in writing and approval must be received prior to commencement of any improvements.

(Add any additional specifics on what the property can and cannot be used for including any eligible future plans.)

Administrative Costs - NEW

The Law permits for reimbursement of those costs directly incurred because of the need for labor, materials, supplies, equipment, travel, and support services to perform the committee's or counsel's statutory requirements. This program cannot be used to supplement any other costs or expenses not directly related to the administration of the OPWC's programs. **New:** OPWC will likely be working with counsel to revise the Administrative Cost Agreement over the summer to require employer signatures and provide clarifications on wages to not exceed the hourly rate of pay at the Liaison's employer.

Best Practices

- *Site Visits and/or Applicant Presentations* – In combination with the applications, visits and presentations ensure the NRAC is well informed as to the condition of the proposed property and give the NRAC members an opportunity to ask questions of the applicants. Also, seeing the site lessens the likelihood of overlooking potential issues. At a minimum, it is recommended that the liaison and Program Representative visit the sites together. It's also encouraged to suggest applicants include drone footage in a presentation if they have drone access.
- *Annual NRAC Workshops* – This is helpful to increase program awareness with potential new applicants as well as to introduce new NRAC members to the requirements.
- *Minimum Score* – This is required in accordance with [OAC 164-2-12](#); however, the Commission chose at the time of rulemaking not to qualify this. The rule does not provide for a vote to fund a project below the minimum score which should be set at a point to ensure the quality of the statewide program. It is not advisable to go below 50% of the total points available since it defeats the rule's purpose.
- *Review Other NRAC Methodologies* – Looking to make some revisions? Learn from other NRACs on OPWC's website. You may be inspired.
- **NEW Reduce Paper Copy Requirements** – we highly recommend removing the paper application requirement as part of the application process. Requiring paper is contrary to conservation. Going paperless supports conservation by reducing deforestation, conserving resources, and minimizing waste. Going paperless was a key basis for developing WorksWise.
- **NEW Virtual Meetings** – we encourage all our NRACs to adopt a virtual meeting policy. This allows you to meet quickly in consideration of quick changes to slates or project amendments. This does not mean that you only meet virtually but gives the NRAC the ability to do so on an as needed basis.

Rules – NEW

OPWC will be revisiting some of our rules. If you have any suggestions, please email Abbey.DeHart@pwc.ohio.gov.

Clean Ohio Program Analyst – NEW

OPWC hired a Clean Ohio Program Analyst last winter, Jeff Brown. Jeff has spent the past 12 months updating documentation on Clean Ohio projects, setting up an annual reporting process, and starting his Clean Ohio site visits. These visits are meant to ensure that Clean Ohio protected properties are being maintained and to ensure they are being used for the purposes outlined in the project application and deed restrictions. We encourage all our applicants to meet Jeff for these visits to answer any questions he may have and allow him to get better access and understanding of the properties. Jeff also intends to attend many NRAC meetings this year to introduce himself and give an overview of the work that he's doing.

Statewide NRAC Meeting – NEW

We will be holding a virtual statewide meeting for NRAC Chairs and Liaisons to attend sometime over the summer. The intent is to provide an opportunity to share ideas and come up with best practices to ensure a more cohesive statewide Clean Ohio funding process. More information to come regarding meeting dates, but if you have suggestions on topics you'd like to discuss, please send them to Abbey.DeHart@pwc.ohio.gov.

**Clean Ohio Conservation Program
FY 27 Allocations**

1	\$3,229,479
2	\$2,168,017
3	\$3,514,621
4	\$1,437,994
5	\$2,007,607
6	\$1,251,838
7	\$1,827,497
8	\$1,436,648
9	\$1,653,583
10	\$2,552,618
11	\$2,337,291
12	\$1,162,374
13	\$1,793,590
14	\$1,792,169
15	\$2,157,646
16	\$2,026,924
17	\$2,189,077
18	\$1,932,984
19	\$1,028,044
Total	\$37,500,000