



Tongue River Watershed ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

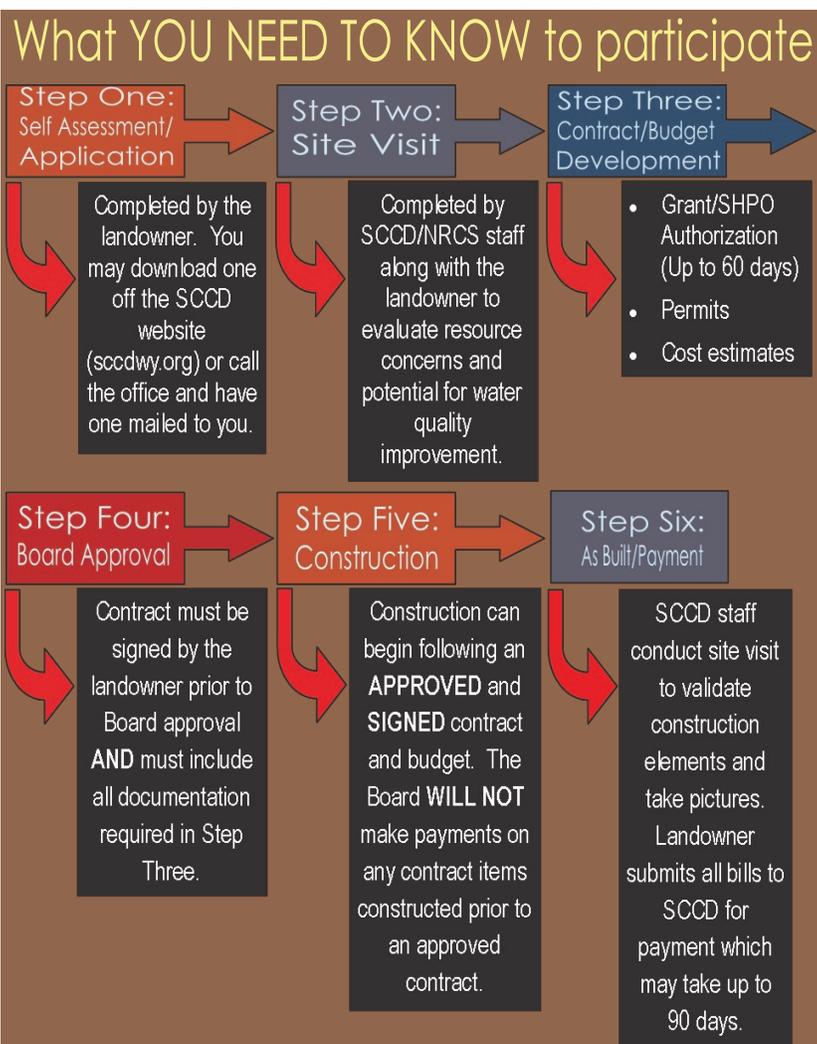
Tongue River Watershed Group
Sheridan County Conservation District
January 2016

Cost-share Program Requirements

Through Federal and State grants, the SCCD offers financial assistance for projects that benefit water quality. Typical projects include installing fencing/stockwater to minimize livestock access to waterbodies, relocating corrals or animal feeding areas away from waterbodies, and replacing septic systems to eliminate sewage discharges.

Although we try to be as accommodating as possible, as with any grant program, there are certain procedures we have to follow. When projects are rushed or try to push through the process, mistakes can be made, and the overall quality of the project is affected. To prevent frustration and avoid problems, we thought it was time to highlight some of the aspects of the program.

If you think you would like to apply for cost-share funds through one of the District's many water quality improvement programs, you are highly encouraged to see if you are qualified to do so. Keep in mind, there are a series of steps that must be followed to make these projects a reality. The following will highlight what you need to know to get the process started.



APPLICATION DEADLINES

Since the spring of 2015, the District has imposed batching deadlines for project applications. These deadlines help the District prioritize projects for available funding. If you are interested in applying for water quality grant funds for an improvement project on your property, please keep in mind that applications need to be submitted to the District for approval by the following dates:

- **March 1st for approval at the April Board meeting**
- **July 1st for approval at the August Board meeting**

Certain "hardship" exceptions will be considered if a project falls outside of the batching dates. For the Board to consider a project outside of a batching date, a written letter to the Board must accompany a complete project application, explaining the circumstances of the requested exception.

APPLICATION/CONTRACTING PROCESS

Contracts don't develop over night. In fact they can't for the following reasons:

- **Grant Agency/SHPO Requirements:** Any project that involves Federal funds must first be authorized by the granting agency and be cleared through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO has **60 days** to provide this authorization. Often it's much faster, but not always. If a landowner has a project and wants to complete it quickly (from application through construction), they need be prepared to go forward without funding.

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Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee Meeting

The annual Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee Meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 18th at 6:00 p.m.** at the **Ranchester Town Hall** (next to the Tongue River Branch Library). The Tongue River Watershed Steering Committee, which is comprised of landowners and interested parties, was formed in 1997 with the main purpose of identifying water quality sampling areas in the Tongue River Watershed. It has transformed into a steering committee that provides input and recommendations to the SCCD for implementing resource programs within the Tongue River Watershed. The meeting is open to anyone living in or interested in the Tongue River Watershed. We'll visit about the upcoming 2016 interim monitoring on the Tongue River Watershed, as well as other watershed activities the District is involved with. Please come join us on February 18th, your input is always welcome!

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- **Other permits, etc.:** Many of the projects that are funded through the District have permits associated with their development. For example, all septic systems must be permitted through Sheridan County and stockwater projects often have permits associated with construction of a new well or access to SAWS. These permits take time to acquire. A contract application is not complete and projects will not be submitted for Board approval until necessary permits are secured.

AT LEAST TWO COST-ESTIMATES

Landowners may choose the contractor they wish to work with. However, for projects (except septic system replacements) where a landowner is hiring a contractor to do the work, **A MINIMUM OF TWO BIDS IS REQUIRED FOR ALL CONTRACTED ITEMS.** Exceptions to this are portions of the project a landowner is completing themselves. The landowner does have the right to choose their contractor, even if it is the highest bidder, but the contract budget will be based on the average of the two. For all projects, the SCCD Board reserves the right to request additional bids if they feel it is necessary.

SIGNED CONTRACT

Construction **CANNOT** begin on a project until a contract has been approved and signed by Sheridan County Conservation District Board of

Supervisors **AND** the landowner. The Board has had a longstanding policy **NOT TO PAY FOR CONTRACTED ITEMS RETROACTIVELY.** The exception to this are test pits, percolation tests and engineering/design for septic systems that have to be done in order to develop a septic contract. These items will count towards the landowner's in-kind match.

BILL SUBMISSIONS/PROJECT PAYMENT

Upon project completion, landowners must remit all receipts, invoices, and in-kind match documentation to the District. The District will then process the payment at the agreed to cost-share percentage up to the budgeted amount. Project expenses above the original budgeted amount will not be counted in the final project payment **UNLESS** a project modification has been brought before the Board **PRIOR** to spending the additional amount. **IF A PROJECT IS OVER BUDGET WITHOUT A MODIFICATION, IT IS THE LANDOWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY FOR THE ADDITIONAL EXPENSES.**

The SCCD may take up to **90 days** from the submission of receipts by the landowners to make the final payment to the landowner. This is to account for the time needed to request and receive the funds from the granting agency. SCCD provides payment directly to the landowner. Landowners are responsible for any and all payments to the contractor.