



NEXT LEVEL CONSERVATION TRUST

Program Guidelines

Re-brand and extend the successful Bicentennial Nature Trust (BNT) program. Run the new Next Level Conservation Trust (NLCT) program through the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust (PBHCT) program facilities. NLCT program will have elements of BNT as well as the basics of PBCHT

The purpose of the NEXT LEVEL CONSERVATION TRUST program is to ensure that Indiana's rich natural heritage is preserved or enhanced for succeeding generations by acquiring real property or an interest in real property that:

- 1. is an example of outstanding natural features and habitats;**
- 2. has historical and archeological significance; and or**
- 3. provides areas for conservation, outdoor recreation, or the restoration of native biological diversity.**

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE NLCT

The Next Level Conservation Trust program, on behalf of the state or in collaboration with partners and local communities across Indiana, shall acquire real property, or an interest in real property, for new and existing state and local parks, archeological and historic sites, state forests, state and local nature preserves, state fish and wildlife areas, wetlands, local conservation areas, outdoor recreation areas, and river corridors.

To be eligible for NLCT funding, all projects must meet one or more of the criteria listed for PBHCT fund account project types (see Appendix).

WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM GUIDELINES THAT A NLCT PROJECT MUST MEET? **

There are minimum guidelines in place that will encourage public/private partnerships and ensure projects are located within every region of the State. They are:

- The maximum amount of money from CT for any single project proposal is limited

only by the reasonable ability to complete the project in a timely manner and a minimum size of \$100,000

- Projects will have a 3:1 match requirement State funds to private dollars. So for every three dollars requested from NLCT there will be at least one dollar of non-NLCT fund match within the project. PBHCT or other state funds can qualify as match.
- Projects will need to obtain ½ of the maximum 52 points in the scoring sheet to minimally qualify for funding.

** The DNR Director and PBHCT Project Committee may waive or alter CT guidelines throughout the life of the program.

WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES OR PROJECTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR NLCT FUNDING?

NLCT funds may NOT be used for: properties that were acquired by eminent domain; trails (see Next Level Trails Program), construction or removal of structures or improvements; removal or remediation of hazardous substances; wastewater treatment; or, for the restoration, renovation, or repair of historic structures.

HOW WILL NLCT BE FUNDED?

NLCT will be funded by:

1. Appropriations made by the General Assembly of funding from the American Rescue Plan and will carry federal restrictions on use.
2. Money transferred to the fund from other funds

Money donated to the NLCT fund will not be added to the program fund and will not increase funding capacity of the NLCT fund but may be used as match or directed match.

HOW WILL NLCT FUNDS BE SPENT?

FUND ACCOUNT USES:

Money in the NLCT fund account, may be used for the following general uses:

1. Cost of acquisition of real property or an interest in real property and associated acquisition costs, such as closing costs, title insurance, and other activities associated with the transfer of title to property to a maximum of 75% of supported value.
2. The costs of services and expenses related to acquisition, such as engineering, appraisal, surveying, environmental, accounting, project development, and legal services are eligible as match so long as the costs are directly related to the real estate acquisition and the total project cost does not exceed the supported value.

Money in the NLCT fund accounts may NOT be used for the costs of construction of, or removal of, structures and improvements; the costs of removal and remedial action relating to hazardous substances; or the costs of wastewater treatment.

Expenditures from the NLCT account may not exceed 75% of the supported or appraised value of the acquired real property or interest in real property, therefore NLCT is a 3:1, or 75%/25%, match program

Matching Funds can include:

1. Property donated to or for the benefit of the approved project, including bargain sale value, to the DNR or Grantor (the "Grantor" in a real estate transaction is the seller or owner of the property from which rights are being acquired)
2. Funds from other State programs directly involving the conservation of resources, including President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust
3. Improvements to property in an approved project which preserves the property or restores it to a more natural state
4. The dedication of or improvements to property adjoining the proposed project that enhance the approved project's conservation values
5. The value of other real property held by a nonprofit corporation, the federal government, or local government that can be used for the benefit of the approved project
6. Federal, local, nonprofit (including the Indiana Natural Resources Foundation), or private monies given, donated or granted directly to the approved project or given through the State for an approved project.

WHO CAN PROPOSE NLCT PROJECTS?

Projects proposed for funding from the NLCT will generally come from two sources:

1. Divisions of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
2. The general public, which includes, financially capable nonprofit organizations, local units of government, corporations, etc. The NGO's must be organized for conservation purposes

WHO WILL RECOMMEND PROJECTS FOR FUNDING?

NLCT project applications will be reviewed and scored by the DNR Land Acquisition Division, Land Bureau Deputy Director, and all DNR Land Holding Division Directors. Projects meeting minimum NLCT requirements will be forwarded to the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust Project Committee as established pursuant to Indiana Code 14-12-2

The projects recommended by the Project Committee will be forwarded to the DNR Director for approval and then forwarded by the DNR Director to the Governor for final approval.

The Director of DNR may designate an Executive Director of the NLCT to manage day to day activities of the NLCT fund.

REVIEW PROCESS FOR NLCT PROJECTS

A guiding principle is that all proposed NLCT projects, from whatever sources, are subject to the same criteria and the same review process.

All NLCT proposals, from whatever sources, shall first be referred to the PBHCT Executive Director, acting as the NLCT Program Manager, for review for correctness of form, structure and completeness, and for communication with applicants to correct any deficiencies.

The PBHCT Executive Director shall refer all qualifying NLCT proposals to the Land Bureau Deputy Director and DNR Division Directors for evaluation based on the approved NLCT criteria. The DNR Division Directors will complete a project evaluation/scoring form.

No NLCT project application will be placed on the PBHCT Project Committee's agenda for review until the application has been reviewed by the Executive Director and appropriate Division Director or Deputy Directors

The NLCT applicant will be informed if the proposed project is ready for the Project Committee's consideration. Readiness should include a determination of the property owner(s) willingness to sell or donate the property and the availability of match funding.

If a NLCT project qualifies, the applicant will be notified of the date, time, and place when the project will be reviewed by the PBHCT Project Committee. The applicants are requested to come to the PBHCT Project Committee meeting for the review so the applicant can discuss the merits of the project with the PBHCT Project Committee and answer any questions the committee may have.

If the PBHCT Project Committee recommends the project for funding, it will be sent to the DNR Director for approval and then forwarded by the DNR Director to the Governor. Notification of acceptance or rejection of the proposed NLCT project by the Governor will be made by mail.

The PBHCT Project Committee may waive or alter NLCT guidelines throughout the life of the program with the consent to the DNR Director

WHERE TO SEND NLCT PROJECT PROPOSALS AND APPLICATION DEADLINE SCHEDULE

Complete NLCT project proposal forms and documentation must be delivered to the Next level Conservation Trust Program, Program Manager, 402 W. Washington St., Executive Office, Room W-256, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2748, and postmarked by the deadline date.

Project proposals received after the deadline will not be considered for that proposal period but can be resubmitted for the next one.

Deadlines for submission of project proposals to the NLCT Project Committee are: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1. The Project Committee meets quarterly to consider project proposals for recommendation to the Project Committee. Based on the timeframes necessary to complete the NLCT program it may be advisable or necessary to have PBHCT Project Committee meeting more often than quarterly.

OPEN MEETINGS:

All meetings of the PBCHT Project Committee are open to the public by law. NLCT applicants of qualified projects will be informed of the date on which their project will be considered by the PBCHT Project Committee. The applicant is expected to present the project in a brief and concise manner. Photos and maps are encouraged. If you have any questions you may contact: Tom Laycock, Director of the DNR Land Acquisition Division, at 317-234-3419 or tlaycock@dnr.in.gov