

To: Land Conservation Committee Members
From: Amy Piaget – County Conservationist
Laura Hicklin – LWRD Director
Date: March 18, 2020
Subject: Delegation of Cost-share Agreement Approvals

In light of the current COVID-19 outbreak and precautionary measures being taken to slow the spread of the virus, LWRD staff are requesting delegation to approve cost-share agreements for contracts over \$10,000 in order to continue operations and work functions as seamlessly as possible for our customers with the approaching construction season. The committee or the chair has the authority to grant this delegation on behalf of the committee. LWRD staff would continue to follow all existing policies and procedures for implementing state and local cost-share programs. This request is similar to the requests made in December to address end of year requirements as well as the requests typically made around election time with the transition of the County Board and committee assignments.

As has previously been presented, a large number of county LCC's have this delegation as part of their standard operating procedures so this process already occurs across the state. LWRD staff would continue the process for tracking and reporting on projects that are approved for cost-share funding. For the next few months, most of the contracts that would exceed the current \$10,000 threshold for county conservationist approval include: Conservation Cover Program, Harvestable Buffers Program, Low Disturbance Manure Injection Program, Nutrient Management Planning, and isolated CLEAN projects for large erosion control practices and grazing. The LCC has already established a \$6,000 cap on cost-share agreements for state Bond funding.

Delegating authority for cost-share agreement approvals will allow LWRD to continue providing core services to the Land Conservation Division customers as well as meet the current recommendations from the County Board Office (dated March 15, 2020) "not to schedule meetings unless absolutely necessary".

The recommendation from staff is to delegate authority to the county conservationist to approve all cost-share contracts while precautionary measures are in place in response to the COVID-19 outbreak until such time that the Land Conservation Committee is able to reconvene and hold public meetings.