

**MARJORIE L. AND ARTHUR P. MILLER FUND
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
SUMMARY SHEET (One page only)**

Date: September 12th, 2018

Contact Information:

Organization Name:	Open Land Conservancy of Chester County (OLC)	Contact Name:	Raymond Clarke
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		Year Incorporated:	1939

Have you previously received the Miller Grant Award: Yes No

Field of Interest: Environment

Organizational Information:

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County municipalities served):
OLC serves primarily the residents of Tredyffrin, Easttown, East Whiteland and neighboring townships.

Annual # of Clients & Description of Population Served:

We do not track the number of visitors to our Preserves, but we consider that we serve all residents in our geographic area (30,000 in Tredyffrin alone) by providing opportunities for recreation (eg: hiking, fishing, birding), service (eg: student clubs, scouts) and education (eg: internships, nature walks).

Mission Statement:

- Preserve Chester County open space and acquire land suitable for nature preserves
- Protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat
- Maintain trail systems for the public for passive recreation
- Encourage and enable residents of Chester County to participate in conservation activities
- Provide educational programs in conservation and nature studies

Organization Description:

OLC is a non-profit land trust protecting 480 acres, 370 in 8 nature preserves owned in fee and 90 under conservation easement. We are operated by a hands-on Board and a volunteer cadre, and supported by approximately 500 members. We focus geographically around the Exceptional Value-designated Valley Creek watershed, protecting it from development and from invasive vegetation. We partner with local land management professionals including the National Park Service and National Lands Trust.

Annual Budget: \$45,000

60%	% of budget for program expenses	0	# of full time equivalent staff
30%	% of budget for administrative expenses	12	# of Board Volunteers
<u>10%</u>	% of budget for fundraising expenses	40	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers (est)
100%	Total	1,500	# of volunteer hours (est, Board and others)

Top 3-5 funding sources: Membership (40%); Investment Income (30%); Contributions (20%); Grants (5%)

Proposal Information:

Grant Amount Requested: \$2,500

Description of Grant Purpose:

The purpose is twofold: 1) \$540: To treat resurgent *Phragmites australis* in the riparian area planted in 2017 with a prior Miller Fund grant; and 2) \$1,960: To create an educational deer “enclosure” at a reclaimed building site in Airdrie Forest Preserve. Purchased materials and expertise will be matched with labor supplied by volunteers and by an Eagle Scout project.

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GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

**Please provide the following information clearly and concisely.
Proposals of 1 or 2 pages are strongly encouraged.**

- Organization's history, goals, key achievements and distinctiveness

OLC was founded in 1939 as Chester County Horticultural Society, and is one of the nation's oldest land trusts. The following extract from the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society Quarterly of July 1940 describes the donation of the Conservancy's first Preserve, since increased to 75 acres and now named Airdrie Forest, and also describes the purpose and values that continue nearly 80 years later:

Miss Lydia S. Moncure Robinson of Airdrie, Paoli, has recently conveyed to the Chester County Horticultural Society of which Howard S. Okie, Esq. is president, some 63 acres of woodland on the South Valley Hills overlooking the Great Valley.

This gift fulfils one of the Society's main objects, that of the "acquisition of land suitable for wild flower and forest preserve", the development of which will require energy and enthusiasm. We see in the future sparkling fern-bordered pools in the three branches of the Valley Creek, the steep sides of the wooded ravines glowing with shade-loving native flowers, and easy paths throughout the mile-long park. ... Surely our loyal citizens, especially those of Tredyffrin and Easttown, will give their hearty support to this worthy project.

In the years since, OLC has been a leading force for preserving open space in the face of extensive commercial and residential development in the Great Valley. Our seven additional Preserves were acquired and expanded by both donation and acquisition. The acquisitions were funded by both County and Commonwealth grants. For example, the acquisition of Cedar Hollow Preserve was funded by the first Growing Greener grant in 1999. We own five Preserves along Valley Creek, one each on the hillsides overlooking the valley, and a small Preserve in East Bradford township. All Tredyffrin Preserves have trail networks and are open to the public for passive recreational activities. We also hold 18 conservation easements on private lands, further protecting the watershed.

OLC is managed and operated by its volunteer Board of Directors, supported by its neighbors and volunteer organizations such as the Conestoga High School Key Club, scouts and groups of employees from corporations such as Vanguard and Siemens. Eagle Scouts have made major contributions: building creek crossings, trails and information kiosks. We also benefit greatly from connections with land management professionals at Valley Forge NHP, land trusts such as NLT and organizations like Trout Unlimited and the Sierra Club. Local partner companies provide discounted services such as trail mowing and tree management that we can not handle ourselves. These services are funded by dues and contributions from our 500 members and by interest income.

Each Preserve is managed according to objectives laid out in a management plan. A primary goal for all Preserves is to foster a diverse habitat of native species – to which this grant would contribute. The valley properties are vulnerable to invasive vegetation and our 2017 tree planting was a major counter-effort. The trees are flourishing, but - after a year of dormancy - we have seen a resurgence of the *Phragmites australis*. We believe that a selective chemical treatment now will allow the trees to continue to grow unimpeded and soon provide the shade that will control *Phragmites* regrowth with limited further intervention. Our upland properties are fortunate to have relatively old-growth trees which have limited invasive vegetation, but regeneration is severely limited by deer browsing from a high deer density. The proposed enclosure - on the site of a hazardous building to be demolished - will illustrate how a woodland can flourish in the absence of deer, and we envision in the future planting some less common native tree and shrub species to add to diversity in the Preserve.

2. Funding Request

This request is for funding for environmental enhancement projects in OLC's Cedar Hollow and Airdrie Forest Preserves to treat a resurgence of invasive grasses in a newly planted riparian buffer and to create a deer enclosure to allow for native vegetation regeneration and planting.

A. Specific Chester County needs and issues addressed

Both projects respond to the sixth Recommendation in the 2018 draft of the update of the Chester County *Landscapes* Comprehensive Plan:

“Encourage the restoration and stewardship of land and resources on protected open spaces”

The projects lie in, or close to, a “Conservation Corridor” identified in *Landscapes*, which recommends land trust properties have plans that include “*strategies to limit or even reverse environmental degradation such as from erosion or invasive species infestation*” – the objective of both projects.

Furthermore, these initiatives also contribute to the seventh Recommendation to expand educational programming - “*...which could include involving the public as volunteers, the installation of demonstration projects,*” - both through volunteer labor and the installation of on-site materials and the use of OLC publications.

B. Project impact

These projects will contribute to many of the Miller Fund objectives:

- Environmental education, through on-site signs and OLC materials
- Enhancement and preservation of significant sites, being located in OLC's ground-breaking 80 year-old initial Preserve and in one of its valley Preserves, home to a pristine trout stream
- Volunteer and leadership development, through Eagle Scout implementation and OLC Board training
- Demonstration project: the enclosure in particular will show the value of deer management

These projects are located in well-trafficked areas which allow their impact to be leveraged.

C. Overall strategies to implement the project

Our approach relies on a tested principle: to leverage professional design and oversight expertise with well-managed Eagle Scout projects and OLC volunteers. Weeds Inc has agreed to train and work with OLC Directors to reduce the Phragmites control cost by 50%. We engaged a professional ecological services firm to evaluate the building site, to design a long-lasting enclosure (and future potential plantings) that will withstand its woodland environment for many years, and to provide cost estimates for both the enclosure and future plantings. The Eagle Scout will need to refine the design to allow for maintenance access, and to finalize material and installation equipment needs.

D. Why it is important to fund this now

Control of the fast-growing *Phragmites* – now the same height as the trees just emerging from their protective tubes - is critical to maintain shade- and competition-free conditions for the successful growth of the new trees. OLC has contracted for the removal of the building in the Fall 2018, and the remaining disturbed soil will be prime territory for establishment of vegetation.

E. How do you intend to meet the challenge component of this grant?

The total project cost is budgeted at \$3,605 (\$21,605 including building demolition costs) (Attachment 5), which we are planning to fund as follows:

- OLC Funds: \$18,000 (demolition of building)
- Eagle Scout labor \$900 (equivalent hourly rate)
- OLC Labor \$205 (equivalent hourly rate) (cost avoidance \$505)
- Miller Fund Grant \$2,500 (*Phragmites* \$540, *Exclosure* \$1,960)

Although not directly associated with the projects, the precursor demolition cost is a significant strain on OLC funding capability. OLC has identified potential Eagle Scout candidates for the project.

3. Timetable, with anticipated outcomes and their relevance to the nonprofit's mission

<i>Phragmites</i> :	Herbicide Application	September 2018	Control of invasive grass
Exclosure:	Demolition	Sept/Oct 2018	Site preparation
	Construction	Oct/Nov 2018	Protected demonstration site

Outcomes directly address the 2nd, 4th and 5th components of our Mission, listed on the Summary Sheet, above.

4. How impact and results will be demonstrated

These are projects with highly visible impact: both are close to frequently walked trails. Preserve visitors will see the project and vegetation growth on both sites and be drawn to the educational signage both at the site and at the kiosks at the trail heads in each Preserve.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter
2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations
3. Most recent audited annual report and financial statement
4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year and current fiscal year to date
5. Itemized project budgets (2 documents, 1 page each [Exclosure Budget 2018 and Phrag Budget 2018]) and Exclosure design (1 document, 3 pages)