**Contact Information:**

Organization Name: Open Land Conservancy of Chester County (OLC)  
Address: P.O. Box 1031  
Paoli, PA 19301  
Phone: 610 647 5380  
Web Address: openlandconservancy.org  
Date: September 29th, 2020

Contact Name: Raymond Clarke  
Contact Title: Vice-President  
Contact E-mail: raymond.clarke@outlook.com  
Year Incorporated: 1939

**Have you previously received the Miller Grant Award:** Yes X No _

(1) Year: 2017 Amt Rec’d: $2,500  (2) Year: 2019 Amt. Rec’d: $540

**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, service and education. The pandemic has led to an estimated 50% increase in the number of visitors compared to prior years, as Chester County residents have come to appreciate preserved open space even more highly.

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 natural threats. We partner with local land management professionals including the National Park Service and National Lands Trust.

Annual Budget: $56,500 (2020)

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Top 3-5 funding sources: Membership (40%); Investment Income (25%); Contributions (15%); Grants (15%)

**Proposal Information:**

Grant Amount Requested: $2,500  
Description of Grant Purpose:  
To match a PECO Green Region Open Space grant to provide funding for a habitat restoration project to plant native tree and shrub species adjacent to a stormwater management system and in an educational deer “exclosure” at a reclaimed building site in Airdrie Forest Preserve. Purchased materials will be supplemented with labor supplied by community volunteers and an Eagle Scout project.
MARJORIE L. AND ARTHUR P. MILLER FUND
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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

1. 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 fulfills 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 funded by both County and Commonwealth grants. For example, the acquisition of Cedar Hollow Preserve was funded by the first 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. Each Preserve is managed according to objectives laid out in a management plan. 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. In addition to the acquisition of open space, our achievements to sustain the land include public access (trails, bridges, kiosks), invasive species control (trees, vines, and shrubs) and increased diversity (warm season grass meadow and tree planting).

OLC is a distinctively community centered organization. It is managed and operated by its entirely 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. 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.

2. Funding Request

This request is for funding for an environmental enhancement project to plant diverse native species in, and adjacent to, a deer exclosure in a high traffic area in OLC’s Airdrie Forest Preserve. A primary goal for all Preserves is to foster a diverse habitat of native species, and this Preserve is fortunate to have many relatively old-growth trees which have limited invasive vegetation. However, storms in 2020 toppled very many large mature trees. Further, regeneration is severely constrained by high density deer browsing. The restoration project we are undertaking now is to plant a selection of diverse native trees inside and nearby a fenced “exclosure”. This project has been under consideration since we undertook the demolition of a hazardous building on the site and an adjacent Township
stormwater system was expanded. Not only would the project add trees and diverse native species to the Preserve, its trailside location and the proposed signage would serve a powerful educational purpose.

A. Specific Chester County needs and issues addressed
The project responds directly to the overall vision, and the “Preserve” goal and recommendations embodied in the County’s Landscapes Comprehensive Plan:

Vision: In 2045, Chester County abounds with healthy natural areas, ....
Goal - Preserve: Advance the protection and stewardship of open space
   - Encourage restoration and stewardship: .... protected open space should be prioritized for significant restoration projects
   - Expand open space education: .... initiatives could include involving the public as volunteers, the installation of demonstration projects ....

B. Project impact
This project will contribute to a majority of the Miller Fund objectives:
- A public or school-based environmental education effort: a key element is the educational opportunity presented by creating a planting of 75 native trees and shrubs to emphasize the importance of native plants and accompanying protection from deer browsing. The project is located adjacent to the most frequented trail in the Preserve, very accessible to the public.
- Environmental enhancement and preservation of a significant site: The project will restore barren ground remaining from an old building site and an adjacent area impacted by construction of a stormwater facility, both located in OLC’s 80 year-old first Preserve, Airdrie Forest.
- Volunteer and leadership development: This is a major opportunity to increase OLC’s volunteer corps, and we have already secured commitments from the Rotary Club of the Upper Main Line, Boy Scout Troop Paoli 1, and new volunteers who have reached out to OLC through its website.
- A demonstration project with wide use application: As noted above, the project is expected to be a powerful demonstration of deer management and of the beauty of diverse native species.

C. Overall strategies to implement the project
Our approach relied on a tested principle: to leverage professional design and oversight expertise with well-managed OLC volunteers. We have refined the approach in the interval between our first design presented in last year’s grant application and the project now underway. We decided to base the exclosure on a standard “Deerbusters” fencing system; this assures quality, reduces costs and comes with all materials necessary for a 50’x50’ gated exclosure that allows for maintenance access. Trees outside the exclosure will have individual fenced cages (see photo for example). We have selected and ordered a mix of upland shrubs, understory and canopy trees of larger caliper than we have typically used in other Preserve plantings, for greater chance of success and quicker impact. We have worked with an Eagle Scout candidate to manage a team to build the exclosure and we also have commitments from the Upper Main Line Rotary Club and other volunteers to carry out the planting.

D. Why it is important to fund this now The project is literally “shovel ready”!
This project will be implemented in October 2020, which is optimal planting time for new trees and shrubs. All materials have been ordered, matching funding has been obtained and volunteers lined up.

E. How do you intend to meet the challenge component of this grant?
This will be met with a PECO Green Region Open Space grant, which is an excellent complement to the Miller grant: it is also worth $2,500 and requires matching funds. We propose to allocate the Miller grant to the exclosure portion of the project and the PECO grant to the stormwater facility area (see project budget). In addition, OLC has already paid for the site demolition/site preparation and design work, which – even before consideration of the value of volunteer hours - far exceeds the value of both grants.

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

| Site Preparation | July 2019 | Building demolition (complete) |
| Construction | October 3rd, 2020 | Exclosure (Eagle Scout project) |
| Planting | October 24th, 2020 | Native trees and shrubs Rotary Club and others |

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
This is a project with highly visible impact, close to frequently walked trails. Preserve visitors will see the project and vegetation growth and be drawn to the educational signage (an important part of the project) both at the site and at the kiosk at the trail head.
Site Pictures

Exclosure Site

Volunteers clearing the exclosure site of trees felled by the June 2020 “derecho”

Deer Pressure

Successful individual planting typical of planned restoration of stormwater system site
ATTACHMENTS

1. Copy of 501 (c) (3) federal tax-exempt letter

2. List of Board of Directors, with their affiliations

3. Most recent annual report and financial statement, audited if available
   - 2019 compiled financial statement, with independent accountant report

4. Itemized organizational operating budget with actual results for prior fiscal year and current fiscal year to date
   - 2019 Actual, 2020 Budget 2020 August YTD

5. Itemized project budget