



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

Contact Information:

Date: September 15th, 2022

Organization Name:	Open Land Conservancy of Chester County (OLC)	Contact Name:	Raymond Clarke
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Phone:	610 647 5380	Fax:	n/a
Web Address:	openlandconservancy.org	Year Incorporated:	1939

Have you previously received the Miller Grant Award: Yes ☒ 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.

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, 390 in 9 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 Natural Lands Trust.

Annual Budget: \$69,000 (2022)

75%	% of budget for program expenses	0	# of full time equivalent staff
20%	% 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	3,000	# of volunteer hours (est, Board and others)

Top 3-5 funding sources: Membership (65%); Investment Income (20%); Grants (15%)

Proposal Information:

Grant Amount Requested: \$2,500

Description of Grant Purpose:

This grant will match with expected funding from other grant programs and with volunteer labor and funding to replace 1 acre of invasive *Phragmites australis*, Common reed, from a riparian area in OLC's Valley Creek Preserve along the riparian buffer of Valley Creek (Exceptional Value), using chemical and physical treatment followed by a restoration planting of native trees. This project will follow the successful implementation of a similar Miller-funded project in OLC's Cedar Hollow Preserve in 2016/7.

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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 history began in 1939 as Chester County Horticultural Society, and it 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 OLC'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 eight 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 Growing Greener grant in 1999. We own five Preserves along Valley Creek, one each on the hillsides overlooking the valley, a 2021 donation at the headwaters of Valley Creek in Charlestown/East Whiteland townships, 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 has been managed to high standards for all of its 80+ years, and recently we received external validation of that with our accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance. This status demonstrates that we have the policies and practices that will sustain the open space under our care in perpetuity.

OLC is a distinctively community centered organization. It is managed and operated by its entirely volunteer Board of Directors, supported by its neighbors and organizations such as the Center for Families, 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 Natural Lands Trust 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, by interest income and by project-specific grants.

2. Funding Request

This request is for funding for an environmental enhancement project in OLC's Valley Creek Preserve to remove approximately one acre of *Phragmites australis* invasive grass in preparation for a – separately-funded – project to restore the area by planting native tree seedlings.

A. Specific Chester County needs and issues addressed

The project responds directly to the overall vision, and the “Preserve” and “Protect” goals and recommendations embodied in the County’s Landscapes 3 Comprehensive Plan:

Vision: *In 2045, Chester County abounds with healthy natural areas,*

Goal - Preserve: *Advance the protection and stewardship of open space*

Objective D: Promote stewardship of natural habitats

Recommendation 7: Encourage restoration and stewardship

Goal - Protect: *Advance the protection and stewardship of open space*

Objective D: Support comprehensive protection and restoration of the county’s ecosystems

Recommendation 7: Enhance flood resiliency

B. Project impact

The project (and thence the subsequent tree planting) will have four major impacts. 1) The riparian buffer will shade the creeks and maintain the cool water temperatures favorable to aquatic life. The PA-designated Exceptional Value Valley Creek is home to naturally reproducing brown trout. 2) The introduction of diverse native trees will provide seed sources of species like oaks, maple, blackgum, birch and willows to replace the ash trees being killed by the Emerald Ash Borer insect and to greatly diversify beyond the box elder, honey locust and sycamore that now remain; 3) The elimination of the dominant *Phragmites* monoculture will allow a diverse set of wetland shrubs to become established and provide wildlife habitat; and 4) All of the above will stabilize the floodplain and absorb run-off that will protect downstream locations from the effects of stormwater run-off.

This site preparation project is a key first step towards achieving many of the Miller Fund objectives. Most importantly:

- **Environmental enhancement and preservation of a significant site:** This site is part of the Valley Creek floodplain, which is a key component of the stormwater management in Tredyffrin Township. The project will remove approximately one acre of invasive *Phragmites australis* from the riparian buffer. Without this project, none of the subsequent benefits will be possible. Trees to be planted on the site (a 2023/4 project) will have roots that absorb groundwater and a canopy that will slow and absorb rainfall and shade the creek.

In addition, the completed tree planting, to which OLC is committed, will be leveraged through:

- **A public ... environmental education effort:** OLC recently received a grant to update and expand its signage. One site listed for the first phase is adjacent to this restoration site, where up to now there has been no educational signage regarding the Preserve and its projects or regarding OLC in general. This project will be featured on the new signage.
- **Volunteer and leadership development:** As in other major planting projects, OLC will reach out to prior and new volunteers to complete the planting.
- **A demonstration project with wide use application:** Visitors who enter the Preserve from the east walk along a driveway that bisects the two patches of *Phragmites* to be cleared. The whole project from the site preparation that is the scope of this application and the subsequent planting will be an excellent demonstration of the process and benefits of replacing invasive species.

C. Overall strategies to implement the project

Our approach follows a two successful projects – a pilot in 2014/15 on a ¼ acre plot further downstream in this Preserve and a 2016/17 project to restore 1¾ acres in Cedar Hollow Preserve:

- Phase 1 (this project):
 - o Contract with Weeds Inc. for a wetland approved herbicide application. Weeds Inc. is a proven, cost-effective service provider to land trusts in the area and to OLC.
 - o Contract with All Seasons Landscaping to mow the treated *Phragmites*. All Seasons is a proven cost-effective provider of annual meadow mowing services to OLC/
- Phase 2:
 - o Obtain tree seedlings and protection materials through grant sources such as the Keystone 10 Million Tree program or the Marshall Reynolds Foundation, and use community and corporate groups to provide the planting labor.

○

D. Why it is important to fund this now

Phragmites expands very aggressively and threatens not only OLC Preserves but also downstream properties such as Valley Forge NHP. The site aerial photographs on Page 5 show that the infested areas have doubled in size since 2014. Now that we have a proven control approach, we would like to proceed quickly to limit the destruction of habitat, the volume of control agents needed and the amount and cost of restoration plant material.

This project will be started in Fall 2022, which is optimal time for applying treatment that penetrates the root systems of the *Phragmites*. The contractor for the project has been engaged.

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

The total cost for this site preparation project is budgeted at \$5,000, plus a smaller amount to be determined for the 2023 treatment (Attachment 5), which we are planning to fund as follows:

- Miller Fund Grant \$2,500
- PECO Green Region grant \$2,500
- OLC reserves To Be Determined

The challenge component of this grant 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. In the event that one or both grant sources are not available, OLC is committed to fund this project by tapping into its reserves.

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

<u>Site Preparation:</u> (this phase)	Herbicide Application	September 2022	90% <i>Phragmites</i> control
	Mowing	Spring/Summer 2023	
	Herbicide spot treatment	September 2023	95%+ <i>Phragmites</i> control
<u>Restoration:</u> (next phase)	Tree planting	October 2023	~400 trees, tubed
	Site maintenance	Ongoing	Weed and vine control as needed

The outcomes directly address the second component of our Mission:

- Protect natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat

In addition, the project can also be leveraged to contribute to the fourth and fifth components of the Mission:

- Encourage and enable residents of Chester County to participate in conservation activities
- Provide educational programs in conservation and nature studies

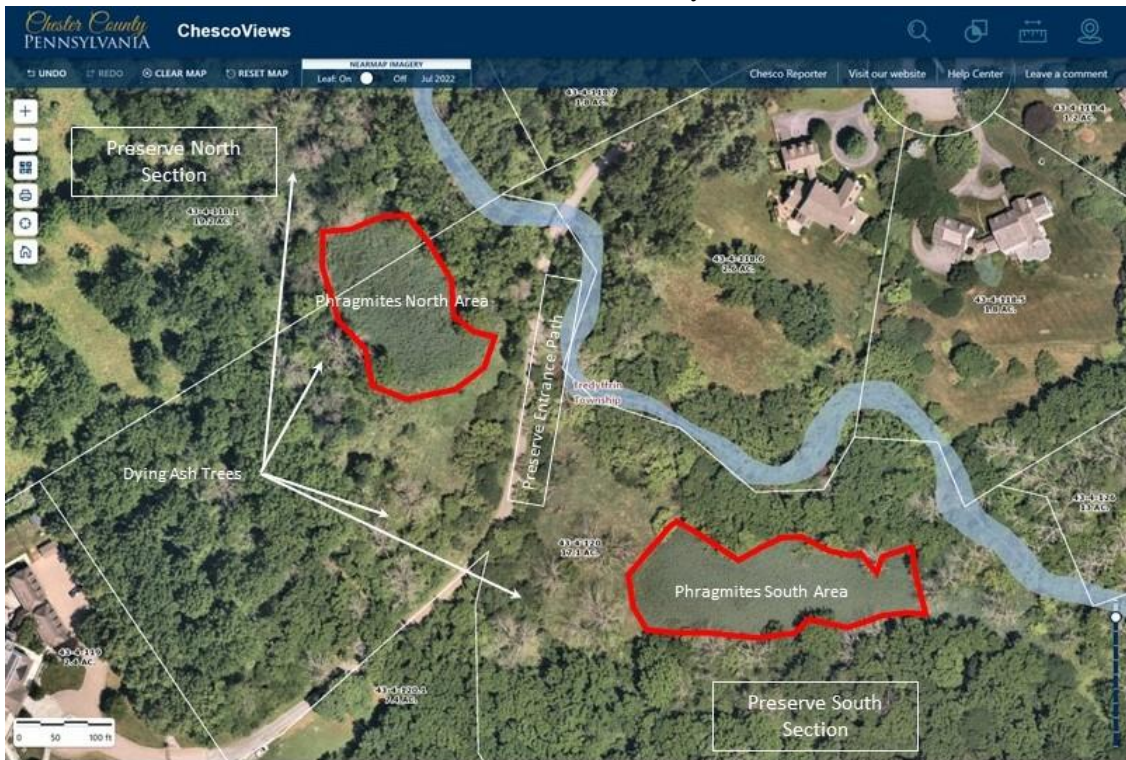
4. How impact and results will be demonstrated

This is a project with highly visible impact, located on either side of one of the main entrances to the Preserve. Visitors will see both the site preparation covered by this project and the subsequent tree planting and will be drawn to the educational signage both at the site and at the adjacent new kiosk at the trail head.

Site Pictures

Project Site Aerial View

Current Extent: Date: July 2022



Source: ChescoViews

Historic Extent: Date: 2014



Source: ChescoViews

Site Pictures



Phragmites, North Area
August 2022

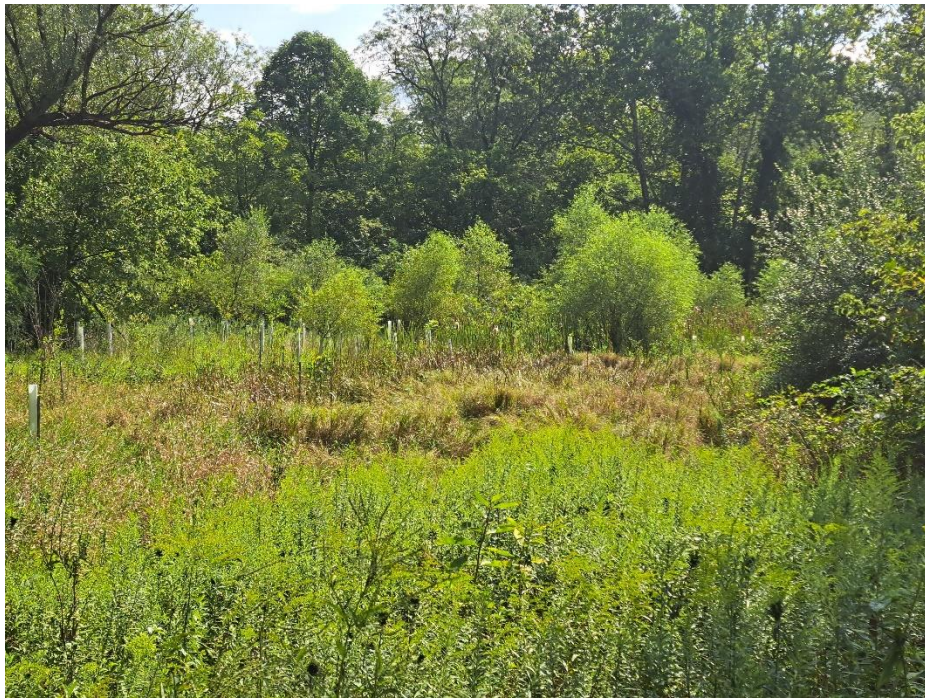


Phragmites South Area
August 2022

Prior Project: Cedar Hollow Preserve – Miller Grant Funded



Phragmites after Spray, October 2016



Planted Trees, August 2022

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
 - 2021 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
 - 2021 Actual, 2022 Budget, 2022 June YTD
5. Itemized project budget