

I. GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

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Date 08/12/2026

Contact Information

Organization Name: French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust ED/CEO Name: Bill Gladden
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Year Incorporated: 1967 Primary Contact Name: Mary Beth Jackson
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

☒	Arts, Culture, Heritage	☒	Education, Library	☒	Environment, Animals
☒	Health		Human Services		Social Justice, Civic Engagement
	Religion		If other, please describe:		

Mission: The Mission of French & Pickering Creeks is to preserve, steward, and connect people to the land in northern Chester County.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust primarily serves northern Chester County, including communities throughout the French Creek, Pickering Creek, and Great Marsh watersheds. Our conservation work protects critical natural resources connected to the Schuylkill River watershed, creating environmental benefits that extend beyond Chester County to Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Delaware Counties.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served. (Include Chester County # &/or % served.)

While our work is geographically focused on northern Chester County and serves 2,500 people directly, the effect of our conservation work flows downstream to serve hundreds of thousands indirectly by improving air and water quality. Our educational programs serve over 3,000 people annually and are available to the broader public community since we offer our lectures both virtually and in person. The population we serve is the broader public with interests in conservation and the natural world.

Annual Budget \$ 1,119,478 8 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
80 % of budget for program expenses 20 # of Board Volunteers
14 % of budget for administrative expenses 132 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
6 % of budget for fundraising expenses 2,525.5 # of Volunteer Hours

100% = total

Top 3-5 funding sources: Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation, Virginia Cretella Mars Foundation, The Allerton Foundation, Raymond and Therese Bentley, I. Stockton Illoway, and Lawrence Stone

This grant proposal is for: X Direct Service Programs & General Operating &/or Capacity Building

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ \$10,000

Proposal Summary: *(a few sentences, please)*

French & Pickering Creeks requests general operating support to preserve and steward land in northern Chester County. Flexible funding is critical to secure conservation easements, protect open space, monitor and care for preserved lands, and connect people to the land through education, restoration, and volunteer opportunities. As development pressure continues to grow across Chester County and land preservation and long-term stewardship require more resources, operating support will help safeguard the open spaces and clean water local communities rely on now and for years to come.



II. GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Provide clear, concise information in 1-3 pages. Please be brief.

1. Nonprofit's overall aims, key initiatives, key achievements & distinctiveness

Overall Aims

Land Preservation and Stewardship, Watershed Protection, Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality Improvements, Environmental Education, Public Access, Community Engagement, and Physical and Mental Health through Connecting with Nature

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Permanently preserved more than 13,700 acres of agricultural, natural, and park lands through donated and purchased conservation easements, fee-simple acquisitions, and public-private partnerships.
- Protected 58 acres from January to June of 2026. 12-20 projects are in the active land protection pipeline at any one time and currently encompass over 580 acres.
- Monitor and enforce 204 easement properties annually. This number increases with every successful easement. We invest time and money to protect and defend the land entrusted to us.
- Opened the Thomas P. Bentley Nature Preserve in 2019, our first publicly accessible preserve which offers 108 acres miles of trails to explore. In response to growing public demand, we opened the 550-acre Templin Woods Preserve in 2020 and have significantly improved accessibility.
- Own and maintain these 2 signature nature preserves, with dawn to dusk access to 5 miles of trails free to the public while offering an ideal location for stewardship and environmental based programs.
- Use our preserves as living laboratories where community members can observe plant and wildlife habitat and help with restoration and conservation.
- Actively working to provide similar experiences at 2 additional locations we own and manage. Preparing for expanded public access with environmental cleanup, demolition, trail planning, and conceptual planning at both the French Creek Preserve and the Morris Preserve.
- Manage an additional 11 properties for their environmental benefits.
- Offered 39 free educational programs (in-person and virtual) and guided nature hikes in 2025, serving more than 3,000 participants.

- Sharing local history by displaying a cannon that was made and buried on the Thomas P. Bentley Nature Preserve and bringing a second Historic Warwick Furnace cannon to community events and local America 250 celebrations.
- Accreditation through the Land Trust Alliance, a designation awarded only to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence, stewardship, and conservation permanence.

Key Initiatives

Initiative I: Land Preservation

- Increase the breadth and depth of preservation partnerships to advance strategic land preservation projects that protect high-priority and ecologically sensitive lands.
- Inventory unpreserved lands within 100 feet of French Creek and Pickering Creek to identify and connect with owners of the top 40 preservation priorities.
- Expand and improve public trail access. With over 4 miles of publicly accessible trails under management, additional funds will help us expand this network, increase accessibility, and improve maintenance for our existing trails, which are experiencing unprecedented popularity.

Initiative II: Land Stewardship

- Continue stewardship and restoration work on protected lands, including:
 - 6 lawn-to-meadow conversion projects
 - 6 riparian buffer projects on eased properties
 - Partnership with the Stroud Water Research Center leveraging field work to facilitate extensive riparian plantings and stream restoration work
- Advance demonstration creek restoration work underway at the Thomas P. Bentley Nature Preserve utilizing over \$1.5 million in grant funding through public and private partnerships.

Initiative III: Community Engagement

- Expand the number and diversity of people engaged with French & Pickering and the land.
- Build community and connections among easement owners, donors, and French & Pickering.
- Re-engage and grow our volunteer network to provide hands-on opportunities for land management.
- Work closely with municipal partners to leverage support and maximize results.

Distinctiveness

Founded in 1967, French & Pickering is uniquely connected to residents who have called this land home for generations. These relationships, together with public partners, give us a distinctive role within our community. We are the only community-based land trust working exclusively in northern Chester County. We serve the public by preserving and restoring land, providing public access, creating awareness and appreciation of nature, sharing local history, and fostering a sense of community through lectures, programs, guided walks, and volunteer work.

2. Funding request

- **What specific needs & issues are being addressed, via what programs and services?**
 - Land protection – identify and partner with willing landowners and stakeholders to preserve the most ecologically sensitive land, create easements, and continue monitoring more than 13,700 protected acres.

- Water protection – maintain and improve water quality that hundreds of thousands of people depend on. We also strengthen floodplain resilience so preserved land can absorb stormwater, reduce erosion, and protect people and property during extreme weather events.
- Community education and access – steward French & Pickering owned preserves as outdoor classrooms and public resources. Additionally, we aim to increase voluntary land stewardship on eased property. Our free programs, trails, hikes, and volunteer opportunities connect residents to nature, increase environmental awareness, and support physical and mental well-being.
- **Why is it important to fund this now?**
 - Impending development – there are emerging pressures to convert precious open space to industrial use along with record homebuilding. This is placing unprecedented demand to exploit our irreplaceable open spaces. At the same time, increasingly complex financing complicates and delays easement transactions. It now takes 10 times as much money, 3 times as long, and requires twice the paperwork to execute an easement as it did just a decade ago.
 - Challenges to the quality of our water – development in the wrong places would threaten 90% of residents who drink well water, along with everyone who relies on clean water from our rivers, creeks and streams.
 - Challenges in stewardship – French & Pickering has over 204 properties permanently protected by easements, a number which increases each year. Every easement requires annual reporting, monitoring, funder coordination, and strong landowner relationships. As ownership changes and stewardship interest grows, we need more staff capacity to protect these lands forever.
 - Growing public demand – increased visitation and program participation shows that residents want accessible natural spaces, public trails, educational programs, and volunteer opportunities.
 - Climate resilience - as we experience more intense weather events, including extreme heat or a lack/excess of rain, nature remains the most economical buffer. Additional trails, trees, and healthier preserve ecosystems give people refuge from these extremes and reduce their downstream impacts.
 - Funding - as nonprofit capacity needs increase, the need for philanthropic funds increases. Public sector partners are experiencing increased financial stress, limiting their ability to support our work. Private funds allow us to invest in our work many times over.
- **How will results & impact be demonstrated?**
 - Number of acres preserved each year through landowner easements.
 - Number of increased and improved acres owned by French and Pickering.
 - Number of trees planted.
 - Length of stream frontage protected.
 - Number of trail miles open to the public.
 - Water quality assessments.
 - Funding leveraged for conservation easement and fee land purchases.
 - Funding leveraged for restoration projects.
 - Partnerships with municipalities, nonprofits, land trusts, and local businesses and corporations.
 - Number of individuals served in educational programs and outreach.
 - Number of volunteer hours donated for our conservation work.