



COVER CROP INCENTIVE PROGRAM 2026 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Dauphin County Conservation District (DCCD) seeks to promote the use of cover crops on Dauphin County farms. A tiered incentive payment based on method of establishment is being offered to support this goal.

- **Sign up deadline and program eligibility:**

- Sign up deadline: Applications must be received in the office by **August 14th, 2026**. Applications received after this date may be considered at the discretion of DCCD dependent upon funding availability or program demand.
- Applications need to be fully filled out and maps with directions or addresses submitted to be considered complete. Staff will not complete applications on behalf of the applicant, but can provide assistance.
- Submission of an application does not guarantee enrollment and is dependent upon application being complete and eligible under program guidelines and funding availability.
Operators will be notified when accepted into the program and provided with a District Operator Agreement to sign and send back to DCCD. This agreement officially enrolls the operator in the program for the acreage and funding amount listed on the agreement, pending completion of program paperwork and spring cover crop verification.

- **Incentive Payment Specifics**

- Cover Crop Incentive Program is a one (1) year program.
- Cover crop growth shall be maintained until **April 1, 2027**.
- This program is open to all farmers in Dauphin County.
- Operator must be in management control of the crop to qualify.
- Acreage that is already enrolled in a separate incentive program will not be eligible.
- Incentive Funding will be paid based on the following:
 - Tier 1: \$50 per acre** (No-Till Single-Species**)
 - Tier 2: \$65 per acre** (No-Till** Multi-Species)
 - Tier 3: \$30 per acre** (Minimum-Till* Single-Species)
 - Tier 4: \$45 per acre** (Minimum-Till* Multi-Species).
- An initial maximum of **200 total acres** may be applied for through this program. Applicants are encouraged to submit more than 200 acres as additional acreage may be funded at the discretion of DCCD and dependent upon volume of applications received and funding availability.
- Only approved winter cover crops are eligible. Alternative cover crops that are not pre-authorized will NOT be considered for incentive payment. **50% of total Cover Crop species mix cannot winter-kill**, see Cover Crop Suggestion Table Attached in the Application Form.
- Any mix planted should refer to suggested planting dates and seeding rates, listed in the PSU Agronomy Guide. The minimum seeding rate for any tier is 45 lbs. per acre and shall be comprised of no less than 50% winter small grains.
- **Multi-Species planting mixes may include no more than one (1) winter small grain and must contain two (2) additional species to be considered eligible for the multi-species tier and payment level. The Operator must plant a mix containing at least 50% one Winter Small Grain and the remaining percentage must include at least two additional species.**

- Spot checks may be conducted at DCCD's discretion throughout the growing season.
- Incentive payment checks will be authorized for payment following spring cover crop verification scouting. Spring verification scouting will occur sometime in March 2027, depending on climatic conditions.

- **Required Plans and Forms:**

- The applicant must have the following plan(s) that meet state requirements to be eligible:
 1. Chapter 102 Agriculture Erosion and Sediment Control Plan or Conservation Plan
 2. AND (If Applicable) Chapter 91 Manure Management Plan or Nutrient Management Plan.
Plans will be requested for verification by District staff.
- The following forms will be completed by the farmer/operator:
 1. Application Form: This form must be submitted by mail, email, or in person to DCCD by **August 14th, 2026**
 - a. Operator must fill out the application with each tract, planned species, and location. **If application is missing information or is incomplete it will not be accepted.**
 2. Maps with acreage: aerial imagery, FSA tract maps, and hand-drawn maps with location identifying features are examples of acceptable maps.
 3. IRS Form W-9: All producers must complete a W-9 to be submitted with the application form to be eligible for incentive payments. See DCCD for a blank form if needed.
- The following forms will be created by DCCD:
 1. Enrollment Notification: After receiving a completed Application Form, Maps, and W-9, operators will be issued an Enrollment Notification informing the operator of the submitted acres approved for enrollment in the program. This will be done by September 4th, 2026.
 2. District Operator Agreement: Upon receipt of the Enrollment Notification, the operator will also receive a District Operator Agreement that provides the operator with the acreage enrolled and the expected payment amount, pending spring verification. This form must be signed and returned to DCCD by **September 30th, 2026**, to be officially enrolled.
 3. Planting Certification Form: By the end of 2026 operators will be sent a planting certification form outlining tracts, acres, and crops planned, to be filled out by the operator with actual cover crop planting information and submitted to DCCD office by **January 15th, 2027**.
Further Planting Certification, to be submitted with the form by the operator:
 - a. Seed purchasing receipt or invoice
Bin Run seed may be used, but operators are required to get the seed cleaned and submit seed cleaning receipts or invoices to DCCD in lieu of seed purchase receipts.
 - b. Invoice of additional costs for planting including labor and machine time
See the Agronomy Guide for a typical planting budget.
 - c. Field map if acreage changed from application
 4. Cover Verification Form: Following Spring Cover Verification scouting, DCCD will provide the operator with a copy of the Cover Verification Form that includes the inspection report from spring scouting that will outline which fields were checked during scouting and the final eligible payment amount. Operators who do not meet cover criteria, and are deemed ineligible for payment, will be provided with a copy of the Cover Verification Form and a written explanation by DCCD. **This form needs to be signed and sent back to DCCD for payment to be verified and issued.**
 5. IRS Form 1099: All program participants will receive a 1099 form for funds received.

To receive incentive payment, growers must have all forms on file with DCCD.

- **Operator Responsibilities:**

- Operator must sign and submit all forms by given deadlines.
- Operator must fill out the given form with each tract, planned species and the location. **If the application is missing information or is incomplete the application will not be accepted.**
- Operator must plant cover crops by methods approved by DCCD to be eligible for incentive payment.
- Choose between **Tier 1: \$50 per acre (No-Till**)**
Tier 2: \$65 per acre (No-Till Multi-Species)**
Tier 3: \$30 per acre (Minimum-Till*)
Tier 4: \$45 per acre (Minimum-Till* Multi-Species).
- Soil cover including live cover crop must be **maintained until April 1st, 2027.**
- Soil cover must achieve no less than 50% total surface cover by inspection time in March to receive payment. Soil cover is defined as live cover crop and previous crop residue. 50% total soil cover must be achieved via a combination of these cover types, with at least 25% Live Cover to be eligible.
- Exceptions will be made if adverse climatic/agronomic conditions prevail. Any exceptions to the deadline will be made by DCCD.
- Manure application during cover crop growing period (August 1st, 2026 to April 1st, 2027) is permitted. Operator must still meet 25% soil cover criteria if applying manure in winter according to Chapter 93 regulations. Any manure applied must be applied per landowner/operator's Nutrient Management Plan or Manure Management Plan.

(*,) Tillage Definitions:**

***Minimum Tillage** – one pass with a light disk.

****No Till** – Cover crop broadcast or No-Till drilled into a field where no tillage has been done.