



Chautauqua County 2026 Occupancy Tax Program for Grants for Lakes and Waterways

Part One: Watershed Program Guidance

Overview

Chautauqua County has a five percent (5%) occupancy or "bed tax" for the rental of lodging units within the County. Three fifths (3%) of the revenue that is generated from this tax is utilized to increase tourism, conventions, trade shows, special events and other directly related and supporting activities including business in the county. The two fifths (2%) bed tax revenues are utilized solely for the enhancement and protection of lakes and streams in Chautauqua County through two competitive grant programs, both of which are intended to increase tourism and recreation opportunities. **This grant application is for watershed projects located within the watersheds of Lake Erie, Chautauqua, Findley, Bear and Cassadaga Lakes.** A separate grant program is available for in-lake projects in Lake Erie, Chautauqua, Findley, Bear and Cassadaga Lakes. The projects funded by both programs must demonstrate clear evidence how they will provide a public benefit.

Available Funds:

For 2026, the minimum grant amount available is **\$5,000** and the maximum grant amount is **\$50,000**. Applications will be evaluated and ranked for the Legislature by the senior staff and management in the Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development based on the individual merits of the project (see evaluation criteria below). The Department of Planning and Development will provide the ranked list of projects to the Chairman of the Chautauqua County Legislature and to the Chautauqua County Executive, who holds the right to deny funding to any and all projects. The highest-ranking projects will be included in the tentative 2026 Budget for approval by the Chautauqua County Legislature. Funding for projects will not be available any earlier than January 1, 2026. Funded projects must begin and demonstrate measurable progress within one year following funding approval. Applicants from previous years that have not demonstrated measurable progress will not be considered for the current funding cycle. The County Watershed Coordinator will evaluate project progress and provide the Legislature a progress report as necessary.

Eligibility:

- Project is located in Chautauqua County and demonstrates clear evidence as to how the project will provide a public benefit.
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Governmental agencies
- Businesses and corporations
- Public and private schools

- All landowners of Chautauqua County

Evaluation Criteria and Weight:

(see Application Ranking and Evaluation form for more details)

- Water Quality Benefits (Weight 15%)
- Erosion and Sedimentation Control Benefits (15%)
- Riparian Buffers (10%)
- Tourism and Recreation Benefits (20%)
- Ecological Benefits (15%)
- Feasibility (10%)
- Partnerships and Project Leveraging (10%)
- Other Benefits (5%)

Selection Process/Ranking Procedures

All project proposals submitted for 2% occupancy tax grant funding will be reviewed by senior staff and management from the Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development. The Department of Planning and Development will develop a ranked list of projects and submit the list to the Chairman of the Chautauqua County Legislature and the Chautauqua County Executive for their approval and inclusion in the tentative 2026 Budget.

Detailed Ranking Criteria Description:

- 1. Water Quality Benefits (Weight 15%):** The water quality benefits derived from an individual project reflect the ability of the project to remove and capture pollutant loads from runoff prior to discharge into downstream waterbodies. Those projects that are specifically designed to provide a high level of treatment to currently untreated runoff from a large drainage basin or point source discharge would receive a high score. Conversely, those projects with little or no real water quality benefits receive a score of zero. In assigning scores in this category, the total suspended solids (TSS), total nitrogen (TN), total phosphorus (TP) loads, or other pollutants removed are to be considered by the reviewer in a qualitative fashion and scored based on the expected result of the project.
- 2. Erosion and Sedimentation Control or Stormwater Reduction Benefits (15%):** Projects that are designed to provide a long-term remedy for severe erosion problems or the reduction of stormwater flows will receive a high-ranking score. Projects that have the secondary benefit of reduced potential for erosion or lesser reductions in stormwater flows will earn an intermediate score depending on the magnitude of benefits. Projects that have little or no effect on the remediation of erosion and sedimentation or reduction of stormwater flows will be assigned a score of zero.

- 3. Riparian Buffers (10%):** Riparian buffers are considered the most effective and lowest cost means of protecting and enhancing water quality. The width of the buffer and the number of species (grasses, shrubs and trees), especially native species are factors that increase functionality of buffers. Projects with wide buffers and diversity of the plants and trees within the buffer will score highest. Projects with no buffers and grass monocultures will be assigned a score of zero.
- 4. Tourism and Recreational Benefits 20%):** This criterion ensures that that the investment of Occupancy Tax funds in any project will have a positive impact on tourism and recreation. Projects that reduce the influx of sediments and nutrients into our lakes and waterways also reduce the potential for excessive aquatic weed and algae growth. Excessive aquatic weed and algae growth reduces the usability of our lakes and waterways for tourism and recreation. Projects that can demonstrate a strong linkage to tourism and recreation and have long-lasting benefits will score highest, while projects that are not linked to recreation and tourism and have short-term benefits will be assigned a lower score.
- 5. Ecological Benefits (15%):** This ranking criterion can ensure that waters of ecological value get consideration in the decision process. These waters might include waters of aquatic / fisheries value, primary nursery areas, outstanding resource waters, and protected streams, wetlands, or rare, threatened and endangered (RT&E) species. The potential ecological benefits of an individual project are ranked based on evaluations of the anticipated improvements to habitat that will be realized by implementing the project. Factors for evaluation include; quantified effects on the project on NYS or federally recognized resources and the longevity of ecological benefits with required maintenance.
- 6. Feasibility (10%):** This ranking criterion is a measure of public benefit and the relative severity of obstacles that must be overcome to implement the project. Determining a score is a cumulative assessment of factors such as: public vs. private property, property easement acquisition, permitting requirements, impact or disturbance to nearby residences, long- term maintenance and operation requirements, completeness or status of project planning design and maintenance, phase of the project relative to past and/or future funding, and relative ease of construction. A high ranking would be assigned to projects with significant public benefit with no foreseeable implementation concerns related to any or all of these issues. A low ranking would be assigned to projects which would have a high degree of difficulty and little or no public benefit.

- 7. Partnerships and Project Leveraging (10%):** Partnerships and project leveraging is a quantitative measure of the various funding and in-kind support from other vested organizations. Factors to consider include: The ratio of partner contributions to the funding request (1:1, 2:1, etc.), how many project partners are contributing to the grant request, and the number of partner categories (state/federal government, local government, NGO, university, watershed group, etc.) involved in the proposed project. Projects that have high ratios of other sources of funding (monetary or in-kind) with several project partners of various categories will receive the highest score. Projects with no documented partners or leveraging will receive a score of zero.
- 8. Other Benefits (5%):** This evaluation criterion allows the reviewer the ability to examine the overall project and determine if other benefits exist that have not been addressed in the other sections. The reviewer will rely on professional judgment when applying a score to this criterion. Other project screening factors to consider:
- a. Project contributes to the implementation of an existing watershed management plan
 - b. Cost of the project relative to the benefits derived
 - c. Synergy with other restoration, research, or maintenance projects
 - d. Public and Neighborhood acceptance
 - e. Logical precedence: Some projects may rely on the prior completion of other projects, or a project might not function at its intended capacity unless implemented in conjunction with another project
 - f. Experienced based ranking: the ranking of a project may sometimes be based exclusively or primarily on the judgment of experienced managers, governing bodies, other officials, citizens, and anyone else who may be involved in the decision making process

Funding Agreement:

Each project selected for funding will enter into an agreement (contract or agreement of service) with Chautauqua County that defines the obligations of the applicant and the County. This includes, but is not limited to, items such as; reporting, payment schedule, terms of the agreement, use of funds, cancellations, reporting, insurance, disability, and workman's compensation. During the term of the agreement the applicant must allow access to the project area to the County Watershed Coordinator. Applicants are responsible for securing all permits necessary for work and fulfilling New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requirements. Funding will only be applied to costs incurred under the agreement after the agreement has been signed.

Project Timeline

All projects will be finished by December 31, 2026. Recipients of approved 2% projects that are not completed within the allotted timeframe may request an extension in written form to the Watershed Coordinator explaining why an extension is being requested. The extension requests will be reviewed and a determination will be provided on a case-by-case basis. Extensions shall not be extended beyond December 31, 2027.

Reporting Requirements

As the 2% project progresses, reporting with photographic documentation must be submitted to the Watershed Coordinator as defined in the agreement, which is typically at the initiation of the project, while work is underway, and at the completion of the project. All reporting will be consistent with the work plan (scope of services), timeline, and budget submitted as part of the application. Within 60 days of the completion of the project, the applicant must submit a project final report, which includes detailed financial information to the Watershed Coordinator in order to receive final payment.



Chautauqua County
2026 Application for Occupancy Tax
Grant Program for Lakes and
Waterways
Due April 1, 2025

Part Two: Watershed Instructions
& Application

1. Failure to include accurate and complete information will result in the removal of the application from the review process.
2. The electronic version of the application is provided in Microsoft Word format. Please note that the application for the 2026 grant program provides the Applicant with flexibility to describe their project and to facilitate scoring. Please do not attach additional information unless otherwise instructed on the application. Please utilize the 12 point Times New Roman font to prepare your application. Applications are found online at: www.chqgov.com click on the link to the Legislator home page and navigate to "Occupancy Tax Forms", or www.planningchautauqua.com, click on the watershed management link and navigate to 2% bed tax grants, or contact Dave McCoy for a paper version of the application at the Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development; 201 W. Third Street; Jamestown, NY 14701; (716) 661-8915; email: McCoyD@chqgov.com.
3. You may consider using the services of a Technical Services Provider (TSP) to assist you with preparing this application for Occupancy Tax Grant funding; however, you are not required to do so. Examples of TSPs include Not for Profit Environmental and Conservation Organizations, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Services and Professional Engineers.
4. When completing your application for Occupancy Tax Funding, please review the scoring criteria identified in the attached Application Ranking and Evaluation form. This form is used to provide a consistent means of scoring and ranking each application. This form should not be completed by the Applicant or returned as a part of your completed application.
5. The project budget must be submitted on the worksheet provided. Please identify the sources of funding for the project on the Project Budget Worksheet. Sources of funding may include (A) Occupancy Tax Funding, (B) Monetary or in-kind contributions provided by the Applicant or Landowner, and (C) Monetary or in-kind contributions provided by a Partner or by another Agency or Organization, such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, US Fish & Wildlife or Nature Conservancy.
6. The Occupancy Tax Grant program does not limit who is eligible to apply but the applicant must provide clear evidence as to how the project will provide a public benefit. Only projects from the following Chautauqua County lakes & watersheds are eligible for Occupancy Tax Funding: Lake Erie, Chautauqua Lake, Bear Lake, Cassadaga Lakes and Findley Lake.
7. To ensure the longevity of projects, the Landowner is required to complete the attached Operation and Maintenance Plan that demonstrates a 10-year commitment to inspect and maintain Occupancy Tax funded projects.

8. Many Occupancy Tax Projects are constructed in or adjacent to a stream or lake. To ensure the project will be constructed in an environmentally responsible manner, the applicant is required to submit an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan for construction activities. If you are unfamiliar with the aspects of an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan, please consult a TSP for assistance.
9. Required Application Attachments: (provide in digital format on a CD if possible).
 - a. Location Map: A US Geological Survey (USGS) Quadrangle Map, or equivalent identifying the project location.
 - b. Project Plans: Plan view, cross section and typical detail drawings
 - c. Project dimensions and elevations on plans
 - d. Materials and quantities
 - e. Operation and Maintenance Plan
 - f. Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan for construction activities
 - g. Photographs: include no more than 6 color photographs, taken from multiple directions that clearly depict the site of the proposed activity.
 - h. Completed Part I Environmental Assessment Form (SEQR)
10. Completed applications can be submitted electronically by clicking on the following link: [Submit Occupancy Tax Applications](#) by 4:00pm, April 1, 2025. Alternatively, hardcopies of the completed grant application can be delivered by 4:00pm, April 1, 2025 in-person to: Mr. Dave McCoy at; Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development; 201 W. Third Street, Suite 115; Jamestown, NY 14701.

**Chautauqua County
2025 Occupancy/Bed Tax Application
Watershed Version**

LANDOWNER'S NAME:

TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER'S (TSP) ORGANIZATION:

TSP ADDRESS:

TSP CONTACT PERSON:

TSP PHONE:

TSP E-MAIL:

PROJECT NAME:

Required documents for the application package

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

- a. Limit one page
- b. Double Space, 12 Point Font, Times New Roman

2. PROJECT PLANS

- a. Location map: USGS Topo at 1:24,000 scale
- b. Plan view, cross section and typical detail drawings
- c. Project dimensions and elevations on plans
- d. Materials and quantities
- e. Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan for construction activities
- f. Part I Environmental Assessment Form (SEQR)

3. PHOTOS (Limit 6)

- a. As applicable to show extent of project.

4. SIGNED OPERATION & MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

5. WILL THE PROJECT REQUIRE A PERMIT? IF SO, FROM WHAT ENTITY?

6. PROJECT BUDGET ON ATTACHED FORM

FUNDING PARTNER(S) NAME / TITLE (Printed): _____

LANDOWNER'S SIGNATURE: _____

LANDOWNER'S NAME / TITLE (Printed): _____

LANDOWNER'S EMAIL ADDRESS _____

LANDOWNER'S TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

DATE: _____

