

Amy,

I am so sorry I didn't get this to you yesterday, I was having internet issues. If submission today is not acceptable, I understand!

Barry Conservation District has been negatively impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. Many of our grants were "paused" for several months, without us knowing if or when they would reopen. Every day we reassessed if we could continue to keep staff on in hopes the grants would reopen, and how we were going to adapt and make ends meet to do so. Luckily, we were able to keep staff on and the grants unfroze, but the situation highlighted our financial instability as an organization.

Another important impact of the pandemic is the restrictions it has placed on our current ways of conducting outreach and education. Our tree sale became a delivery-only sale, cutting our total sales and profits, and costing us more in staff time and mileage for the deliveries. Moving forward, we are having to adapt how we reach the community. Personally, I think this is a positive opportunity for us to try some new things, especially with virtual outreach. We have the opportunity to create lasting virtual outreach tools for community members to access at any time. Unfortunately, we hadn't planned to make this switch, so we don't currently have the tools and equipment to best do so. It would be wonderful to be able to purchase some better equipment to overcome the issues that come with trying to record outreach videos in the field with a cell phone.

Finally, we are all concerned with how the pandemic will continue to impact available grant funding and county funding in the next 2-5 years. These are uncertain times and all too often, environmental and community outreach programs like those of the Conservation District are the first to get cut.

Thank you for taking the time to hear about our struggles and for offering to help. Best regards,

Sarah Nelson
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