

Partnerships Serving America's Communities



Citizens know what is best for their communities. Non-profit RC&D Councils comprised of local leaders identify community needs and work with the United States Department of Agriculture to plan and realize projects.

Message from the VARCDC Chair

The past year has been one of dynamic progress for Virginia's Resource Conservation and Development Councils as each works to address the needs of its particular constituency.

The diversity of Virginia is reflected in a wide range of projects that address the needs of folks from the Eastern Shore RC&D at the ocean to Black Diamond in the Southwest Virginia coalfields. From the Shenandoah to South Hampton Roads, Old Dominion, Tidewater, South Centré Corridors, New River-Highlands and our newest applicant council, Upper James River, Virginians have benefitted from projects initiated by our volunteer councils.

In 2010, our councils leveraged 4:1 the value of projects completed with what it costs USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to administer the program statewide. That figure translates into 63 completed projects with a total value of more than \$3.7 million. These projects

are investments in our rural communities, creating jobs and businesses while benefiting the land and water resources.

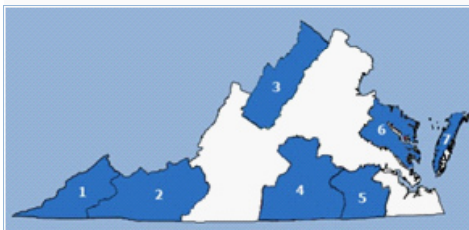
In my two years as chair of the Virginia Association, I have seen our voice grow in support of the RC&D program at the state, Southeast Region, and National levels. The Association is moving forward with energy and enthusiasm.

It has been an honor to serve in a leadership capacity. I look forward to the coming year in which our councils will continue to respond to local and regional concerns, building on a platform that works for America's communities today just as it was designed to do almost 50 years ago.

Sincerely,

H. William "Bill" Smith
Black Diamond RC&D

Virginia RC&D Areas



There are seven designated and two applicant RC&D Councils in Virginia.
All RC&D programs are offered on an equal opportunity basis.

Black Diamond RC&D Area Office -
Lebanon, VA (1)
PH: 276-889-4180
Web: www.blackdiamondrcd.org

New River-Highlands RC&D Area Office -
Wytheville, VA (2)
PH: 276-228-2879
Web: www.newriverhighlandsrcd.org

Tidewater RC&D Area Office-
Tappahannock, VA (6)
PH: 804-443-1118, Ext. 3
Web: www.tidewaterrcd.org

Eastern Shore RC&D Area Office-
Accomac, VA (7)
PH: 757-787-2786
Web: www.esrcd.org

South Centré Corridors RC&D Area
Office- Prince George, VA (5)
PH: 804-732-4375
Web: www.southcentrecorridorsrcd.org

Shenandoah RC&D Area Office- Verona, VA
PH: 540-248-3321 (3)
Web: www.shenandoahrcd.org

Old Dominion RC&D Area Office-
Charlotte Court House, VA
PH: 434-542-5489 (4)
Web: www.olddominionrcd.org

South Hampton Roads
RC&D Applicant Area
PH: 804-732-4375

Upper James River
RC&D Applicant Area
PH: 540-562-6828

Mission: To enhance the ability of RC&D communities to achieve their goals by providing leadership, capacity building opportunities, training and resources.

Vision: Prosperous communities in harmony with the environment through wise use of natural resources.

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“Without a doubt, the strength of this project is based on strong local partnerships and a whole community approach.”

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Re: Onancock Creek Watershed Restoration

Kristen Hughes Evans
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Virginia Staff Scientist
Richmond, VA

Sustainable Timber Grows Local Economies

Black Diamond RC&D serves southwest Virginia in the mountainous Appalachian coal belt. Landowners in this region face a challenge in creating jobs and growing local economies based on sustainable natural resource management. Black Diamond RC&D has demonstrated how to maintain and harvest productive timber stands, improve wildlife habitat and recover abandoned strip mines for local economic growth.

In October, the Council partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension to host a day-long Forestry and Wildlife Tour for land managers in Russell and Wise Counties. Participants discussed fueling local economies through renewable resources as they viewed a prescribed burn demonstration, a successfully reforested strip mine, and an active harvest site. The tour is slated to become an annual event to promote tools and techniques to realize the economic, social and environmental benefits of sound land management.

Working to Improve Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Watershed by Watershed

Virginia's Eastern Shore peninsula is located between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Nutrients and sediment lost from its productive farmland and rural landscape negatively impact water quality. Partnering with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the **Eastern Shore RC&D** developed a three-year \$1,329,000 project that will combine citizen outreach, planning, technical assistance and use of best management practices to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in Onancock Creek watershed.

Project components include installing systems to capture rainwater runoff from two municipal parking lots; encouraging homeowners to use rain gardens, rain barrels, and better lawn management techniques; restoring two miles of stream buffers on farm and non-farm land; and demonstrating how farmers can vary rates of fertilizer they apply on row crops. The project emphasizes how Bay clean-up involves the entire watershed community and that, by working together in Onancock Creek, annual reductions of over 385,000 pounds of nitrogen, 155 pounds of phosphorus and 20,000 pounds of sediment are possible.



Growing a Tourist Economy

Recognizing the power behind locally-led conservation, stakeholders in the upper reaches of the James River have organized as a 501c-3 and are in the process of applying for designation as a new RC&D Council.

The **Upper James RC&D** Applicant Area would encompass six western counties and members are already working on the Upper James River Heritage Trail with funding from the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program. With beautiful mountain scenery, the Upper James RC&D is poised to grow their economy with tourist dollars. The current initiative will create an integrated trails system incorporating regional water, hiking and bicycling trails, and historic and natural resources in one strategic master plan.

2010 Accomplishments: 63 completed projects across Virginia valued at \$3.7 million.

Energy efficiency and alternative fuels can make a bottom-line impact for institutions such as Longwood University. In 2010, the **Old Dominion RC&D** funded a study at Longwood to look at types of fuel and costs of improvements to their physical heating plant that now uses sawdust in lieu of heating oil.

The study evaluated the cost/benefit ratios of switching over to other renewable energy sources and upgrading the current technology to use heat exchange to produce cool air. Three viable technical solutions provide the university with actionable improvements that will reduce their energy costs.

Powering the Future with Alternative Energy



Creating Local Incentives to Protect Forest Lands

The **Tidewater RC&D** Forestry Committee created a model land-use taxation ordinance to encourage RC&D counties to provide economic incentives to landowners to sustain working landscapes. The ordinance requires landowners to have management plans addressing their objectives to receive land use tax benefits. These objectives can include production forestry, conservation and/or aesthetic value.

Foresters and consultants helped draft the ordinance that was distributed to the 10 county planning commissions and boards of supervisors. At least one county used the model when rewriting their land use policy this year. The long-term impact is that more landowners will seek to develop professional management plans for their lands that will promote sustainable forestry throughout the region.

Green infrastructure, a strategically planned and managed network of natural lands and open spaces, contributes many community benefits - improved air quality, better stormwater filtration, energy conservation, carbon sequestration, and an attractive urban setting.

With grants from the Virginia Department of Forestry and the USDA Forest Service, **New River-Highlands RC&D** and the City of Radford partnered to evaluate green resources within the city. Project partners identified and mapped Radford's street trees, urban tree canopy, forest parcels, karst resources and the storm water basins. This baseline assessment builds awareness that green infrastructure is an investment in local communities with economic value that contributes to the quality of life for City residents.



Protecting Green Infrastructure for the City of Radford

Improving Water Quality in the Elizabeth River

Over six square miles of the Elizabeth River bordering the Cities of Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Norfolk and Suffolk are impaired waterways that violate Virginia's water quality standards for bacteria. To improve the river's water quality, **South Hampton Roads RC&D** partnered with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Louis Berger Group, Inc., to begin planning an Elizabeth River cleanup. The process began with a Total Maximum Daily Load Study (completed in April) to identify pollution sources and how much they must be reduced. The next step will be to develop cleanup strategies in an implementation plan. Once actions are identified and carried out, the Elizabeth River will be a greatly improved water resource and removed from the State's 303d list of impaired waterways.

2010 Annual Report

Virginia Association of

RC&Ds

RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
& DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

Connecting Farms to Table

To improve the economic vitality of Southside farmers, **South Centre Corridors RC&D** initiated the 75th Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter in the U.S.



This nationwide program builds greater awareness of local and community food systems and improves the infrastructure needed for local consumption and institutional buying of local foods.

With funding from the Virginia Tobacco Commission and the Cameron Foundation, the new South Centre Corridors Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter has secured funding for a three-year start-up campaign. One of the chapter's first tasks was to create a local food guide for the Counties of Dinwiddie, Greensville, Prince George, Southampton, Sussex, and Cities of Hopewell and Petersburg.

This guide includes the names and contact information of 32 farmers, specialty vendors, CSA's, farmers markets, specialty stores, and restaurants that sell or buy locally grown foods. These businesses are further supported with web-based marketing and branded promotional materials.

Virginia's RC&D Forestry Program:

A USDA, NRCS and Virginia Department of Forestry Partnership

Virginia's forest resources contribute an estimated \$30.5 billion annually to the state's economy. RC&D Foresters work with Councils across Virginia to identify and implement projects that conserve the forestland base while promoting forest-based ecosystem services, industry and diversified markets.

In 2010, the RC&D Forestry partnership developed strategies to identify and promote biomass to energy business opportunities in the Tidewater, New River-Highlands and Old Dominion RC&D areas. Using woody biomass as an energy source can lead to sustainably managed forests as an abundant, renewable natural resource, local energy dollars and forestry and agricultural job creation in the surrounding regions.

Marketing Conservation Through Local Food Systems



Everyone eats. The most direct way to engage farmers and consumers in their shared responsibility for water quality in the Chesapeake Bay is to touch on how food is produced and consumed.

Shenandoah RC&D's "Creating a Culture of Conservation from Farm to Table" is an initiative to build lucrative markets for "Bay friendly" products. The program offers farmer incentives to reduce nutrients and encourages consumers to achieve their own reductions, in part by purchasing fresh, local Bay-friendly products.

Developed through a \$700,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the project capitalizes on the combined expertise of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Water Stewardship, Lexington/Rockbridge Grows, Washington and Lee University, and the Shenandoah Valley Food and Farm Working Group. These partners will verify nutrient and sediment reductions being made on participating farms, profile and market farmers who are making those reductions, and encourage consumers to buy locally-produced, Bay-friendly products. They will also seek to persuade consumers to reduce their nutrient and sediment footprints by sharing tips for improving water quality.

This effort is a natural follow-up to the Shenandoah RC&D Council's ongoing work on local food systems which includes:

- Advocating for a regional agricultural director
- Funding/supporting a Buy Fresh Buy Local Shenandoah Valley Chapter and the Crossroads Media Resource Center's study to promote community investment in local food production
- Participating in a local Food and Farm Working Group
- Supporting local co-ops that sell and feature local foods and projects to help reduce grocery bills by creating community gardens.