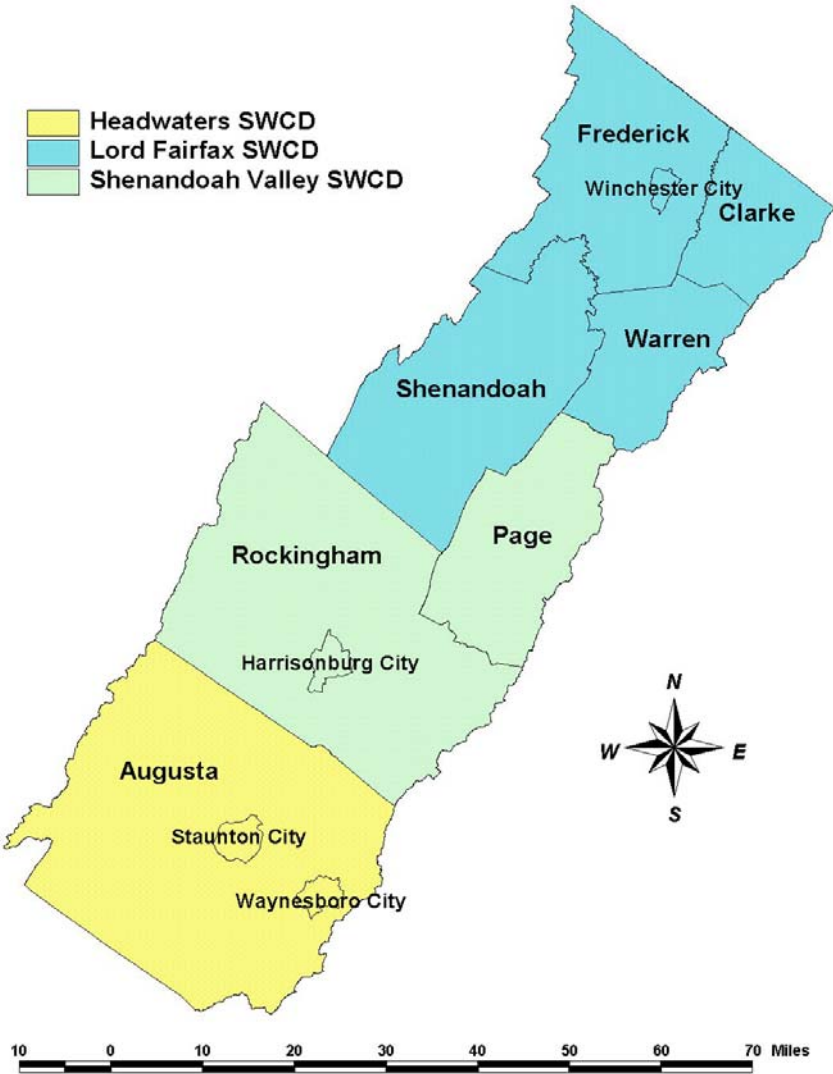


# Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council

## 5-Year Area Plan

2007-2012



## **Vision**

The Shenandoah RC&D Council works with partners to make the Valley region a world class example of efficient and equitable conservation, sustainable development, and stewardship.

## **Mission**

The Shenandoah RC&D Council's mission is to sponsor and promote projects and programs that improve the quality of life and sustainable use of natural resources, primarily in the Shenandoah River Watershed, by providing volunteer leadership, technical resources, and financial assistance.

## **Our Area**

The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area lies between the Allegheny and the Blue Ridge Mountains in the northwestern section of Virginia. It includes the independent cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester as well as the counties and towns of Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren. These seven counties represent a watershed drainage area covering 2,255,113 acres. The majority of the surface water in the area flows north as part of the Shenandoah River from its headwaters in Augusta and Rockingham Counties, to join the Potomac River at Harper's Ferry, WV. It flows on to the Chesapeake Bay and ultimately to the Atlantic Ocean. The James River also flows through a portion of the RC&D Area in Augusta County and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. The total population of the Area, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, is 402,463 and growing.

The Shenandoah Valley is a part of the Great Appalachian Valley. The limestone soils of the Valley make it one of the most fertile parts of the state. The Valley boasts four of the top five agricultural counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia in terms of agricultural receipts. It has high concentrations of poultry and livestock, but contributes less (on a statewide, percentage basis) in nitrogen and phosphorus to the Chesapeake Bay watershed than either Maryland or Pennsylvania. It leads the state in livestock production including poultry, dairy, sheep and beef cattle. Rockingham

County is number one in the state and nation in turkey production while Virginia ranks fifth overall. Major industries in the Area include manufacturing, exports, tourism, high technology, and agriculture.

The mountain ridges of the Valley region include the Massanutten, North, Shenandoah, and Cumberland. The prominent ridges are generally sandstone and siltstone, and the rolling hills of the Valley are generally limestone, dolomite, or shale. In the limestone area, which dominates the Valley floor, karst topography produces sinkholes, depressions, noted caverns, sinking streams, underground rivers, and streams.

The Valley region contains 1,213,000 acres of forestland, about 54% of the total area. About 450,000 acres of this forestland are in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and 99,000 acres are in the Shenandoah National Park. There is also a significant acreage in farms and harvested cropland. In the Shenandoah RC&D Area, according to the 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture, there are 6,825 farms representing 987,597 acres in farms with 326,292 acres of harvested cropland.

The Valley area is rich in cultural traditions. The Native Americans who lived, camped, hunted, fished, and criss-crossed the Shenandoah Valley for thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers are generally known as Eastern Woodland Indians. They usually lived in small groups instead of large settlements and often moved with the changing seasons. Over thousands of years, the Valley became a crossroads of activity for Native Americans from many groups. Today there are no remaining organized bands of American Indians in the Valley. The region was populated by European settlers in 1730 and by 1760 most tribes had left the Shenandoah Valley. The early history of the Valley was one of agricultural development by European settlers and it was a base for further western migration. At one time, Augusta County extended west all the way to the Mississippi River.

During the Civil War the Valley region, known as the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy,” was vital to both sides. This resulted in nearly four years of struggle for control. One legacy of this era is a number of historic Civil War era battlefields and related sites sprinkled across the Valley.

## **Needs and Opportunities**

The federal Resource Conservation and Development program statute requires RC&D Councils to consider during their Area planning process the following elements: Land Conservation, Water Management, Community Development, and Land Management. The Council has addressed these four

elements in the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in more detail in the following section. The four elements are defined as follows.

1. Land Conservation: This is defined as control of erosion and sedimentation. Soil and water conservation is the primary responsibility of the three conservation districts within the Shenandoah RC&D Area. The Council's work supports them in achieving erosion and sedimentation control for the Area and we will work with them when requested in a partnership arrangement, but do not seek to duplicate their efforts. (Relates to the Council's Goal 3 in the following section).
2. Water Management: This is defined as the conservation, use, and quality of water including irrigation and rural water supplies, the mitigation of floods and high water tables, the repair and improvement of reservoirs, the improvement of agricultural water management and the overall improvement of water quality. (Relates to the Council's Goal 3 in the following section).
3. Community Development: Defined as the development of resource-based industries, the protection of rural industries from resource hazards, the development of adequate rural water and waste disposal systems, improvement of recreation facilities, improvement of rural housing, the provision of adequate health and education facilities, the satisfaction of essential transportation and communications needs, and the promotion of food security, economic development and education. (Relates to the Council's Goals 1, 2, 4, and 5 in the following section).
4. Land Management: This is defined as energy conservation that includes the production of energy crops; the protection of agricultural land from conversion to other uses, farmland protection, and the protection of fish and wildlife habitat. (Relates to the Council's Goals 1, 2, and 3 in the following section).

The following narrative gives more background on needs and opportunities in the Shenandoah RC&D Area, helping put in context why the Council’s goals were selected from all the public feedback elicited.

Today the struggle for “control” of the historic breadbasket of the Confederacy is not a series of Federal versus Confederate battles, but battles for use of land for conflicting priorities. Home to four of the top five agricultural counties in Virginia, the Valley is under increasing growth pressure from those attracted to its quality of life and its proximity to large metropolitan areas, such as Washington, D.C., Richmond, and Charlottesville. These metro areas are seeing rapidly increasing land and housing prices, consequently more people in search of affordable land and housing are coming to the Valley. This presents many additional challenges for agriculture, conservation and development. One of the main concerns consistently expressed by Valley residents through numerous polls and anecdotally is urban sprawl and how to maintain a “rural” quality of life over time.

Overall percent population changes in the seven-county, four-city area range from a low of +4.6% change in population between 1990 and 2000 in Clarke County to a high of +29.5% change in Frederick County. The City of Harrisonburg was the most rapidly growing city in the Area with a +31.8% population change over 10 years.

**The following is from the 2000 Census:**

<b>County/City</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>1990 – 2000 % Population Change</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>American Indian/Asian</b>	<b>Hispanic/Other</b>
Augusta Co.	65,615	20%	62,347	2,360	286	620
Clarke Co.	12,652	4.6%	11,532	852	86	185
Frederick Co.	59,209	29.5%	56,240	1,550	480	1,004
Page Co.	23,177	6.9%	22,311	501	89	251
Rockingham Co.	67,725	17.8%	65,406	924	284	2,221
Shenandoah Co.	35,075	10.9%	33,533	412	184	1,194

**The following is from the 2000 Census (continued):**

<b>County/City</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>1990 – 2000 % Population Change</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>American Indian/Asian</b>	<b>Hispanic/Other</b>
Warren Co.	31,584	20.8%	29,280	1,526	220	494
Harrisonburg	40,468	31.8%	34,334	2,394	1,333	3,580
Staunton	23,853	-2.5%	19,866	3,328	162	265
Waynesboro	19,520	5.2%	16,877	1,945	173	643
Winchester	23,585	7.5%	19,355	2,470	431	1,527

The rapid growth seen across the Valley has added to the pressures on agriculture in our Area:

- Between 1982 and 1997, 164,800 acres of farmland were developed in Virginia.
- A 76% increase in rate of farmland loss over the past five years (1992-1997) in Virginia.
- The biggest loss in acreage was prime farmland.
- The average age of a Virginia farmer is 57 years old.
- American Farmland Trust estimates that 70% of Virginia’s farm and forestland will change hands over the next 10 years, which is HALF the Commonwealth’s 27 million acres.
- Farmland loss is not just concentrated in high-growth counties, but in the state’s top agriculture counties – nearly 68% of acres converted from agricultural use to non-agricultural use were in Virginia’s top-ranked agricultural-producing counties.
- The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission reports net changes in housing units in Shenandoah County from 411 in 2003 to 532 in 2004 ~ 30% increase in one year.
- Since 2001, the value of an acre of Virginia farmland has almost doubled, rising from \$2,380 per acre in 2001 to \$3,900 per acre in 2005.

Over the last twelve months, Virginia has seen the third largest increase in farmland values, coming in only behind the states of Maine and Maryland. On the national level, cropland is now averaging \$1,970 per acre, with pasture values averaging \$694 per acre. In Virginia, however, cropland averages \$4,000 per acre, with pasture values averaging \$3,500 per acre. Overall, farm real estate values in Virginia for 2005 average \$3,900 per acre, which is a 22 percent increase since 2004. Analysts say the dramatic increase was driven by a combination of factors, including low interest rates, high commodity prices, and strong demand for non-agricultural land.



**The following was taken from the 2002 Census of Agriculture:**

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of Farms 1940</b>	<b>Number of Farms 2002</b>	<b>Land in Farms 1940</b>	<b>Land in Farms 2002</b>	<b>Avg. Farm Size 1997</b>	<b>Avg. Farm Size 2002</b>
<b>Augusta</b>	3,719	1,691	367,792acres	306,048acres	162 acres	181 acres
<b>Clarke</b>	567	472	92,325 acres	74,279 acres	187 acres	157 acres
<b>Page</b>	1,327	549	105,897acres	64,045 acres	111 acres	117 acres
<b>Frederick</b>	1,674	720	199,123acres	112,675acres	156 acres	156 acres
<b>Rockingham</b>	3,884	2,043	321,872acres	248,578acres	114 acres	122 acres
<b>Shenandoah</b>	2,395	989	209,669acres	133,032acres	133 acres	135 acres
<b>Warren</b>	829	361	100,991acres	48,940 acres	149 acres	136 acres

Farm household income has changed markedly over the past decades. Most farm households today participate in non-farm activities and earn a major portion of their income from off-farm employment. Off-farm sources of income (including employment earnings, other business activities, other investments, and transfer payments) provided 85-95% of household income between 1999 and 2003, up from around 50% in 1960. In addition to cash, access to off-farm employment provides access to family health insurance and employer pension plans at lower costs than are available to self-employed farmers.

**The following is from the 2002 Census of Agriculture:**

<b>County</b>	<b>Farm operators: Principal occupation farming</b>	<b>Farm operators: Principal occupation other</b>
<b>Augusta</b>	970	721
<b>Clarke</b>	250	222
<b>Frederick</b>	373	347
<b>Page</b>	325	224
<b>Rockingham</b>	1,285	758
<b>Shenandoah</b>	549	440
<b>Warren</b>	167	194

Another key issue related to agriculture in the Shenandoah Valley that has received much attention as the Commonwealth approaches 2010 and the Chesapeake Bay Agreement deadline moves closer, is what to do with the excess waste and related organic byproducts produced by animal and production agriculture. In the face of increasing environmental challenges, regulatory hurdles and economic competition, livestock and poultry producers need new tools and innovative, effective approaches to survive and help provide the clean air and water we all desire. Working to implement alternative, value-added solutions for manure and litter management, including waste to energy options, are critical in the Shenandoah RC&D Area.

In addition to agriculture, the Shenandoah RC&D Area is rich in natural resources including water. Natural resources provide that basis for farming and forestry, for tourism and recreation, and for the quality of life appreciated in the Area. The seven counties in the RC&D Area comprise Virginia's Shenandoah River watershed which drains to the Chesapeake Bay. The headwaters for two major watersheds reside here, the Shenandoah and the Upper James. But while these waters originate in the region, many streams are polluted when they flow out. Most of the main watercourses in the Area rank as "high priority" (the worst category) for non-point source pollution. The watershed's worst hot-spots in the Shenandoah River watershed include: Cooks Creek, Muddy Creek, Pleasant Run, Mill Creek, Holmans Creek, and Linville Creek. Other impaired streams in the RC&D Area include Abrams, Back and Opequon Creeks in the upper Potomac basin. Non-point sources associated with animal and production agriculture in rural areas and stormwater management issues caused by the increase of impervious surfaces and erosion and sediment control from land disturbance in cities, towns, and urbanizing sectors, are of equal concern. Nearly 210 miles of impaired streams have been identified in Shenandoah County alone. The Shenandoah River was listed as the fifth most endangered river in the nation in *America's Most Endangered Rivers* report released by American Rivers in April 2006 due to water quality concerns caused by rapid, poorly-planned development, according to the report's authors.

During spring 2005, up to 80 percent of adult smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish died in the South Fork of the Shenandoah River; there was a similar fish kill in the North Fork in 2004. To investigate, a task force was formed headed by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, to investigate what caused the fish kill. Since mid-March 2006, the task force has received reports of a small number of sunfish and smallmouth bass in the North Fork and the South River either dead or with lesions. Other affected species also have been found, especially in the South River.

The Task Force is also evaluating a recent study that found individual fish with characteristics of both sexes, usually identified through microscopic examination of fish tissue. Fish with these characteristics are known as “intersex” fish. The task force will help determine the steps Virginia needs to take to identify the cause and extent of this condition.

Air quality has also been an issue in the Shenandoah RC&D Area. Since 2002, the Winchester and Frederick County area has had 11 days where they exceeded the 85 parts per billion (ppb) ozone standard. A measurement of 85 ppb is considered unhealthy or a Code Orange alert. The northern Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia, primarily Frederick County and the City of Winchester, have been identified as potential ozone non-attainment areas based on air quality data collected between 1997 and 1999. The northern Valley Area has entered into an Early Action Compact with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop an early air quality plan for the area to bring the area into attainment of the 8-hour ozone standard by 2007.

The Shenandoah RC&D Area while rich in natural resources is also rich in human resources as well. The area is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. According to the Department of Homeland Security between 2000 and 2003, Virginia ranked as the tenth largest immigrant-receiving state in the nation with over 40,600 newly naturalized citizens during that period. The immigrant population continues to increase in the RC&D Area, primarily due to opportunities in the poultry industry and other low wage/low skill jobs. Rockingham County, the City of Harrisonburg, Shenandoah County and the City of Winchester have the highest numbers of Hispanics in the Area. But they do not account for all immigration. More than 4,000 students are enrolled in Harrisonburg City Public Schools, and of these more than 35% are English language learners (English as a Second Language, ESL) -- up from 4 percent in 1993-94 -- and 65 percent of those students are Hispanic, according to school figures. Officials expect the schools' Hispanic population to increase by 2 percent a year for the next decade as Latino families continue to move to the area making the school system one of the most diverse in Virginia. The top foreign languages spoken by students are Spanish, Russian and Kurdish. More than 30 additional languages are spoken by students.

The Area's unemployment rate is low. The USDA Economic Research Service reported the unemployment rate for the Area in 2004 ranging from a low of 2.7% unemployment in Clarke County to 5.1% in Page County. The average unemployment rate in the seven-county, four-city Area, in 2004 was 3.3%. However, jobs in the Area are predominantly low skill, low pay service industry or food processing oriented. A major challenge for many of the communities is to attract businesses having jobs

with professional skills and pay in order to retain area young people once they complete their formal education.

The Shenandoah Valley is one of Virginia's top tourist destinations. Most of these visitors come for the "must see" attractions. The following is a list of the top 10 destinations for Virginia travelers according to the Survey of Current Business, 1990 U.S. Department of Commerce:

- 1. Blue Ridge Mountains 30.3%
- 2. Virginia Beach 29.9%
- 3. Williamsburg 24.4%
- 4. Richmond 23.1%
- 5. Charlottesville 20.6%
- **6. Shenandoah Valley 19.9%**
- 7. Norfolk 17.3%
- 8. Busch Gardens 16.6%
- 9. Kings Dominion 14.2%
- 10. Alexandria 14.0%

As this list reveals, the Shenandoah Valley is a "must see" destination in the State, its attractions being primarily scenic and natural--the Blue Ridge, the Shenandoah Valley in general, Skyline Drive, Luray Caverns, Shenandoah National Park, and the George Washington-Thomas Jefferson National Forest. Although it is impossible to pin down an exact number, thousands of visitors come to the Valley each year to visit Civil War sites. New Market Battlefield Park, for example, receives 45,000 to 65,000 visitors a year, while Belle Grove on Cedar Creek battlefield is visited by about 50,000 per year, a large portion attracted by their interest in the Civil War.

The Shenandoah RC&D Council was formed in 2001 to pull together resources to address a variety of regional concerns too big for any one organization to tackle. The RC&D provides a community-based vehicle for assisting in the regional management and development of the natural, social, and economic resources of the Valley. In order to provide effective services over time in the Shenandoah RC&D Area, the Council must strengthen its own structure and operations. There are a wide variety of non-profit organizations in the Valley competing for people's time and attention. The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council, in fulfilling its mission and vision, can serve as a catalyst and partner with others to strengthen resource protection and enhancement over time.

In gathering comments, feedback and information for this Area Plan, the Council sent detailed surveys to a wide array of individuals, local, state and federal agencies, and a variety of organizations and received feedback from numerous sources. Key local leaders were interviewed. The comments

received were remarkably cohesive and provided solid justification for the goals and objectives selected by the Council. There were also numerous documents reviewed pertaining to Area Plan issues. The overriding concern laced throughout numerous responses from surveys returned was growth/development pressure and all associated issues. The following is a synopsis of number of responses received for the first five questions of the survey the Council administered for the Annual Plan:

**Question 1: Top Five Emerging Issues:**

1. Growth pressures/sprawl related (53 mentions)
2. Water quality/air quality/natural resource quality (44 mentions)
3. Economic pressures increasing on all sectors (34 mentions)
4. Transportation (17 mentions)
5. Increasing cultural/socioeconomic diversity (17 mentions)

**Question 2: What Changes Would You Like to See to the Shenandoah Valley?**

1. Sprawl-related growth controls/better planning (28 mentions)
2. Better ways to address economic impacts (20 mentions)
3. Better protection for natural resources, water and air (18 mentions)
4. More cooperation on mutual issues of interest (8 mentions)
5. Transportation alternatives (7 mentions)

**Question 3: What Should Remain the Same?**

1. Almost everyone cited: Rural character of the Valley (42 mentions)
2. Other: (18)
  - a. Small-business dominated economy
  - b. Abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation
  - c. Strong commitment to community
  - d. Good balance of business, industry and agriculture
  - e. Proposed/potential improvements to I-81, including possibly 8-lanes
  - f. Personal security (feel safe)

**Question 4: What role Shenandoah RC&D should play?**

1. Education: officials/citizens about a variety of topics: (29 mentions)
2. Partner with other groups to support, complete and find new projects (13 mentions)
3. Provide and identify economic incentives to the problems (5 mentions)

**Question 5: How can the Shenandoah RC&D Council help your organization achieve its goals?**

1. Assist with seeking funding for projects (11 mentions)
2. Provide information and education/staff training on key issues, including National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) (5 mentions)
3. Support research on key environmental problems facing the Valley, e.g. fish kill (6 mentions)
4. Coordinate and expand Valley tourist promotion (2 mentions)
5. Facilitating partnerships and cooperation (2 mentions)
6. Consult with Rail Solutions on how to fit in on I-81 issue

7. Develop a database of Low Impact Development (LID) communities, energy conservation demos, model zoning, etc., as a resource for communities/organizations.
8. Become an expert at a number of efficient energy-related items, photo voltaics, poultry litter for fertilizer, etc.
9. By helping to maintain the rural character of the area
10. Consult counties on their needs

## Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Partners, Timeline

**GOAL 1.**     **Promote managed growth and development, with an emphasis on protection of farm and forestland and open space.** (Relates to Land Management and Community Development Objectives in the RC&D Statute)

- **Objective 1:** Sponsor at least 3 information/awareness events throughout the Area related to growth and development.

**Timeframe:** Within the next four years

**Potential partners\*:** FSA, RD, USFS, NRCS, DOF, VCE, NASS, AMS, Winchester-Frederick-Clarke Community Consensus Coalition, Shenandoah Forum, Augusta Community Partnership, VCC, PWF, PC

- **Strategy 1:** Work with partners to identify appropriate events to co-sponsor and hold in the RC&D Area.
  - **Objective 2:** Explore if there is an appropriate niche/role for the Shenandoah RC&D Council to play in affordable housing.
- Timeframe:** Within the next five years
- Potential partners:** Home Builders Associations, Realtors, RD, local Social Service Agencies
- **Strategy 1:** Make contact with organizations such as social service agencies, realtors, and home builders associations to determine gap between supply and demand for affordable housing and discuss potential roles RC&D can play.
- **Objective 3:** Identify an appropriate niche/role to play for RC&D Council concerning transportation and land use, roadways, mass transit, and related transportation opportunities.

**Timeframe:** Within the next three years

**Potential partners:** Shenandoah Forum, VCC, PC, Winchester-Frederick-Clarke Community Consensus Coalition, Augusta Community Partnership

- **Strategy 1:** Make contact with organizations to determine potential roles RC&D can play to fill in gaps related to transportation and land use.
- **Objective 4:** Continue to implement community financing strategies.

**Timeframe:** Complete by 2008

**Potential partners:** Local officials, EPA, ECA, EFC, local land trusts

- **Strategy 1:** Develop and implement Leadership Dialogue Program.
- **Strategy 2:** Convene Charrette Outreach Teams.
- **Strategy 3:** Develop and implement Financing Charrettes.
- **Strategy 4:** Sponsor and hold Implementation Workshops
- **Objective 5:** Promote Low Impact Development (LID) and compatible economic development.  
**Timeframe:** Within the next four years  
**Potential partners:** DCR, DEQ, EPA, SWCDs, Winchester-Frederick-Clarke Community Consensus Coalition, VCC, PWF, PC
  - **Strategy 1:** Meet with city and county planning/zoning officials to identify existing LID requirements and practices.
  - **Strategy 2:** Develop an action plan to promote more extensive LID policies and practices.
- **Objective 6:** Support Virginia’s initiative to preserve 400,000 additional acres of rural land by 2010.  
**Timeframe:** Within the next four years  
**Potential partners:** VARCDC, NRCS, VCC, PC, State PDR Managers, Governor’s staff
  - **Strategy 1:** Work with the Virginia Association of RC&D Councils to promote conservation easements, agricultural forestal districts, and purchase of development rights education and outreach efforts in an attempt to reach this goal.

**GOAL 2. Promote a sustainable agricultural sector.** (Relates to Community Development and Land Management Objectives in the RC&D Statute)

- **Objective 1:** Sponsor at least 3 information/awareness events throughout the Area related to sustainable agriculture.  
**Timeframe:** Within the next four years  
**Potential partners:** FSA, RD, USFS, VCE, NRCS, DOF, Winchester-Frederick-Clarke Community Consensus Coalition, Shenandoah Forum, Augusta Community Partnership
  - **Strategy 1:** Encourage Valley newspaper reporters to write articles related to agricultural sustainability in the Area.

- **Strategy 2:** Promote practices, such as use of the roller crimper, and support field days and innovative projects that help increase sustainable agriculture in the Area.
- **Objective 2:** Provide support to counties implementing agricultural task force recommendations.  
**Timeframe:** By 2008  
**Potential partners:** **DOF, FSA, local land trusts, NRCS, VCE, SWCDs, Farm Bureau**
  - **Strategy 1:** Review individual county agricultural task force recommendations for commonalities.
  - **Strategy 2:** Meet with local agricultural task force representatives to explore regional commonalities expressed in task force reports for possible collaboration.
- **Objective 3:** Promote alternative biomass-related energy sources including biodiesel and alternative fuels such as ethanol.  
**Timeframe:** By 2008  
**Potential partners:** Clean Cities, Green VA, USDA, FSA, FB, DOE, DMME, JMU, VA Tech, county/city transportation directors, VDOT, private sector oil companies
  - **Strategy 1:** Sponsor at least one workshop or event per year on alternative fuels.
- **Objective 4:** Increase direct marketing opportunities for farm fresh, local products to institutions, schools, etc., to increase farmers' bottom line.  
**Timeframe:** By 2009  
**Potential partners:** VCE, local officials, local colleges, universities, public schools, institutions, hospitals
  - **Strategy 1:** Work with Virginia Cooperative Extension to convene steering committee to discuss possible increased institutional use of locally-produced foods.
  - **Strategy 2:** Continue work with James Madison University students/classes to explore possible increased institutional use for locally-produced foods.

**GOAL 3. Promote the conservation of natural resources, with an emphasis on improvement and protection of water and air quality.** (Relates to Land and Water Management and Land Conservation Objectives in the RC&D Statute)

- **Objective 1:** Sponsor at least 3 information/awareness events throughout the Area related to conservation of natural resources.

**Timeframe:** Within the next four years

**Potential partners:** FSA, RD, USFS, NRCS, DOF

- **Strategy 1:** Explore feasibility of developing/producing/distributing “Welcome to the Valley: Conservation Guide.”

- **Objective 2:** Bring more awareness and attention to major conservation challenges in the Valley and actions individuals should take to improve.

**Timeframe:** 2007, 2009, 2011

**Potential partners:** All federal, local and state agencies.

- **Strategy 1:** Continue to implement Waste Solutions Forum’s action strategies to reduce nutrient loads in Area watersheds and provide value-added markets for organic byproducts.
- **Strategy 2:** Work with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and other partners to prepare biannual articles summarizing major conservation challenges in the Valley and how they can be improved.
- **Strategy 3:** Improve management of trash, litter and junk through proper disposal and clean up efforts by exploring existing programs such as Assign A Highway.

- **Objective 3:** Assess stormwater management efforts by counties and towns.

**Timeframe:** By 2008

**Potential partners:** DEQ, DCR, EPA, RD, local Public Works directors, Center for Watershed Protection, Virginia Tech

- **Strategy 1:** Meet with appropriate city and county officials to identify existing stormwater management requirements and practices.
- **Strategy 2:** Identify specific actions the Shenandoah RC&D should take to promote effective stormwater management and/or increase public understanding of stormwater management issues.

- **Objective 4:** Promote more intensive water quality monitoring.

**Timeframe:** By 2009

**Potential partners:** DEQ, DCR, JMU, EPA, NRCS, Friends groups, Pure Water Forum, USFS, Virginia Tech, Virginia Save Our Streams

- **Strategy 1:** Work with Friends groups and agencies to determine barriers and potential solutions to more intensive water quality monitoring.

**GOAL 4. Promote community development and diverse rural economies.** (Relates to Community Development Objectives in the RC&D Statute)

- **Objective 1:** Sponsor at least 3 information/awareness events throughout the Area related to community development and diverse rural economies.

**Timeframe:** Within the next four years

**Potential partners:** FSA, RD, USFS, NRCS, DOF, Winchester-Frederick-Clarke Community Consensus Coalition, Shenandoah Forum, Augusta Community Partnership

- **Strategy 1:** Work with local partners such as economic development directors to explore an appropriate RC&D role in promoting alternative agricultural enterprises.
- **Objective 2:** Help bring more environmentally compatible, high wage, high skills jobs to the Valley, in keeping with local comprehensive plan goals.

**Timeframe:** By 2010

**Potential partners:** RD, local college, universities, local economic development directors

- **Strategy 1:** Meet with local Community Colleges, colleges, and universities to determine local placement success for higher tech/skill jobs in the Area.
- **Objective 3:** Promote agriculture-based tourism and alternative ag enterprises.

**Timeframe:** By 2008

**Potential partners:** USFS, NRCS, RD

- **Strategy 1:** Work with county economic development directors to identify current efforts and barriers to enhancing agritourism and alternative agricultural enterprises.

**GOAL 5. Strengthen Shenandoah RC&D Council operations.** (Relates to Community Development Objectives in the RC&D Statute)

- **Objective 1: Increase Council member understanding and build sponsorship support for the Shenandoah RC&D.**

**Timeframe:** By 2011

**Potential partners:** All Shenandoah RC&D sponsors.

- **Strategy 1:** Develop at least one project in partnership with each Council sponsoring organization.
- **Strategy 2:** Hold at least one official Council event in each of the counties served within the next three years.
- **Objective 2:** Establish a Community Development Committee and elicit participation from community/county representatives.

**Timeframe:** By 2008

**Potential partners:** VCE, RD (technical advisor), local city and county officials

- **Strategy 1:** Meet with local city and county officials to determine community needs and opportunities.
- **Strategy 2:** Identify appropriate people for the Community Development Committee and invite to join.

**\*Potential Partner acronyms:**

**AMS: Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA)**

**DCR: (Virginia) Department of Conservation and Recreation**

**DEQ: (Virginia) Department of Environmental Quality**

**DMME: (Virginia) Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy**

**DOE: United States Department of Energy**

**DOF: (Virginia) Department of Forestry**

**EPA: Environmental Protection Agency**

**ECA: Evergreen Capitol Advisors, Inc.**

**EFC: Environmental Finance Center (University of Maryland)**

**FB: Farm Bureau**

**FSA: Farm Service Agency (USDA)**

**JMU: James Madison University**

**NASS: National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA)**

**NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)**

**PC: Potomac Conservancy**

**PWF: Pure Water Forum**

**RD: Rural Development (USDA)**

**SWCDs: Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

**USFS: United States Forest Service**

**Va Tech: Virginia Tech**

**VCC: Valley Conservation Council**

**VCE: Virginia Cooperative Extension (Virginia Tech)**

## Compliance Statement and Signatures

“The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI of VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B) that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any Agency thereof.”

The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non-procurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to use effectively the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council, Verona, Virginia

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Council Secretary

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date).

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
State Conservationist

## Appendix

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### **Survey Used to Compile Area Plan:**

#### SHENANDOAH RC&D COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS: Your answers will be used to create our new Area Plan which will guide the Council's activities over the next five years

1. What are the top 5 current and/or emerging issues affecting the Shenandoah Valley environment? Communities? Economic sectors? Culture?
2. What changes would you like to see in the Shenandoah Valley area?
3. What would you like to see remain the same in the Shenandoah Valley area?
4. What role should the Shenandoah RC&D Council play in:  
Addressing the issues you identified?  
Promoting the changes you advocate?  
Maintaining the current situation you advocate?
5. How can the Shenandoah RC&D Council help your organization achieve its goals?
6. Is there some aspect of Homeland Security that should get attention in the Shenandoah Valley?
7. What role should the Shenandoah RC&D Council play in protecting water quality in the Shenandoah Valley (given the other agencies and organizations that are active in this issue)?
8. What should the Shenandoah RC&D Council do to protect open space and conserve farms and woodlands? What should the Shenandoah RC&D Council do to protect or improve wildlife or aquatic habitat?
9. What should the Shenandoah RC&D Council do to help local Valley communities achieve their goals?
10. What should the Shenandoah RC&D Council do to help maintain a strong agricultural sector in the Valley? How should the Council address nutrient management issues? Should the Council help promote alternative agricultural enterprises, organic products, direct marketing of farm products? Other?

#### MISSION STATEMENT

Currently the Shenandoah RC&D Council's mission statement is, "enhance the quality of public and private decisions and programs in the Shenandoah River watershed as they affect the care and use of natural resources."

Based on your understanding of our Council and your responses to our planning questions, do you think this mission statement adequately reflects our purpose, OR would one of the following provide a clearer statement? Underline your preference.

The Shenandoah RC&D Council's mission is to:

A. bring together local people and complete projects that address environmental, economic and social challenges facing our area. OR

B. support the ability of individuals and communities in the Shenandoah River watershed to improve their quality of life, and to enhance the area's natural resources, by providing volunteer leadership, technical resources, and financial assistance in the areas of greatest need. OR

C. enhance the quality of life and the quality of natural resources in the Shenandoah River watershed.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS (Please suggest projects the Shenandoah RC&D Council should consider doing that reflect your responses to the previous questions.)

1. Land Conservation Projects (e.g., control erosion and sedimentation):
2. Water Management Projects (e.g., conservation, quality, flood mitigation, etc):
3. Community Development Projects (e.g., develop resource-based industries; improve recreation opportunities; improve rural housing, health and education facilities; address transportation and communication issues; economic development, etc):
4. Land Management Projects (e.g., promote energy conservation, protect agricultural land and open space; protect fish and wildlife habitat, etc):

Name:

Organization:

Address:

E-mail:

Phone:

### **Responses to Survey Used to Compile the Area Plan:**

Updated based on surveys received by noon 4/6/06 (Original: 2/28/06; Revised: 3/30/06; Revised: 4/6/06)

**Number of surveys completed: 35**

**Individuals: 15; Organizations: 7; Agencies – State: 4; Federal: 4; Local: 5**

#### **Question One – Top Five Emerging Issues:**

Growth pressures/sprawl related (53 mentions)

- a. Loss of farmland
- b. Lack of local ordinances being enforced
- c. Open space protection
- d. Poor planning for growth
- e. Taxing citizens to pay for growth
- f. Increased demand for services
- g. Loss of historic and cultural resources
- h. Growth of JMU in Harrisonburg/related university growth

Water quality/air quality/natural resource quality (44 mentions)

- i. Lack of protection for natural resources/wasting NR
- j. Fish kill
- k. Nutrient pollution in small watersheds
- l. Ground water contamination
- m. Stormwater management/NPDES/TMDL/Poor enforcement of existing laws

Economic pressures increasing on all sectors (34 mentions)

- n. Farm and ag profitability declining
- o. Land and housing prices for local workers are too high
- p. Problems with economically dealing with excess animal wastes and nutrients
- q. Farm economy is changing, how to maintain a form of agriculture with increasingly fragmented land
- r. Lack of professional job opportunities
- s. Strained public facilities, schools, recreation, etc.
- t. High taxes affects elderly on fixed incomes
- u. Lack of adequate infrastructure to support development
- v. Energy costs/food costs
- w. Disappearing ag infrastructure
- x. Disappearing farmland

Transportation (17 mentions)

- y. I-81 expansion
- z. Lack of effective transportation planning
- aa. Bicycle, pedestrian, transit
- bb. Transportation infrastructure
- cc. Volume of traffic on secondary roads
- dd. Rail

Increasing cultural/socioeconomic diversity (17 mentions)

- ee. Respect for local ways from newcomers
- ff. Proliferation of drugs/crime
- gg. White flight to counties
- hh. Immigrants to cities, ESL in schools
- ii. Clash between long-time residents and newcomers
- jj. Illegal immigration

## **Question 2: What Changes Would You Like to See to the Shenandoah Valley?**

Sprawl-related growth controls/better planning (28 mentions)

- a. More smart growth/better planned developments/more open space
- b. More LID
- c. Improved long-term planning for better land use
- d. Higher density mixed developments
- e. Preserving historic/cultural resources in face of development
- f. Tougher zoning

Ways to address economic impacts (20 mentions)

- g. Provide more affordable housing
- h. Developers pay more impact fees
- i. More ecotourism, development of tourism industry
- j. Strong farmland protection programs to give farmers alternatives to development
- k. Find ag niches that work economically
- l. Better paying jobs

Better protection for natural resources, water and air (18 mentions)

- m. Improving soil quality in production ag
- n. Improved water quality
- o. More riparian areas
- p. De-listed streams
- q. Watershed management level planning
- r. Education/research on environmentally related health issues
- s. Conservation also applies off-farm

Transportation alternatives (7 mentions)

- t. Train from DC to the Valley
- u. Trucks on trains
- v. Alternative transit to the car

More cooperation on mutual issues of interest (8 mentions)

- w. More cooperation and information sharing
- x. Cooperative efforts on a regional scale to address issues
- y. More citizen involvement in local decisionmaking
- z. More awareness of environmental issues

**Question 3: What Should Remain the Same?**

Almost everyone cited: Rural character of the Valley (42 mentions)

- g. Small town environment
- h. Strong ag identity/farming heritage
- i. Nice views/open vistas
- j. Keep good farmland in farming, sustaining food-producing agriculture

Other: (18)

- k. Small-business dominated economy
- l. Abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation
- m. Strong commitment to community
- n. Good balance of business, industry and agriculture
- o. I-81
- p. Personal security (feel safe)

**Question 4: What role Shenandoah RC&D should play?**

1. Education: officials/citizens about a variety of topics, including: (29)
  - a. Finance/economics
  - b. Public awareness of green infrastructure
  - c. NPDES requirements/importance of stormwater management – foster an understanding by the public, present in a positive light
  - d. Act as coordinator/motivator for workshops, conferences, trainings promoting ideas
  - e. Health concerns
  - f. Growth concerns
  - g. Regional tourism opportunities
2. Partner with other groups to support, complete and find new projects (13)
3. Provide and identify economic incentives to the problems (5)

**Question 5: How can the Shenandoah RC&D Council help your organization achieve its goals?**

- Assist with funding (11)
- Provide information and education/staff training on key issues, including NPDES (5)
- Support research on key environmental problems facing the Valley, e.g. fish kill (6)
- Coordinate and expand Valley tourist promotion (2)
- Facilitating partnerships and cooperation (2)
- Consult with Rail Solutions on how to fit in on I-81 issue (1)
- Develop a database of LID communities, energy conservation demos, model zoning, etc., as a resource for communities/organizations.(1)
- Become an expert at a number of efficient energy-related items, PVs, poultry litter for fertilizer, etc.
- By helping to maintain the rural character of the area
- Consult counties on their needs

**Question 6: Homeland Security concerns?**

1. Protection of water supplies (9)
2. Identifying key public infrastructure and developing ways to protect it (7)
3. Bio-security concerns (6)
4. Food security (6)
5. A fair amount of no's (6) and no answers.
6. Illegal immigration (3)
7. Public education – things people can do to protect themselves (1)