

SHENANDOAH RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) COUNCIL, INC

Dedicated to Creating Healthy, Vibrant Communities in Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Warren Counties, and the Cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester

How Does the RC&D Work?

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is an exciting partnership between the federal government and a local nonprofit organization led by local community leaders. To help you understand how RC&D works in this partnership, the following information explains the RC&D program, the RC&D area, the RC&D Council, and the relationships and responsibilities of each.

THE WHOLE PICTURE

RC&D started back in the 1960's to address rural poverty and help rural communities generate sustainable natural resource-based economies. Although today, many RC&D areas are not rural and are not poor, the need for the RC&D program is just as strong as ever. RC&D is not the same-old, same-old – RC&D is collaborative, multi-level, action-oriented, and inclusive. Sometimes, "RC&D" is difficult to explain and quantify. However, the RC&D approach is to engage local people and organizations to collaboratively solve community problems through a series of locally-driven projects completed in RC&D areas across the country.

THE RC&D PROGRAM

RC&D is a nation-wide U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of the RC&D program is to accelerate the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and enhance the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. Current program objectives focus on improving the quality of life achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. This leads to sustainable communities, prudent use (development), and managing and conserving natural resources.

THE RC&D AREA

RC&D areas are locally-sponsored areas designated by the Secretary of Agriculture for RC&D technical and financial assistance. In the Shenandoah RC&D Area there were several founding members that worked on the RC&D application, which was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in 2003. The Shenandoah RC&D Area includes the following counties: Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Warren, and the cities of: Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester.

THE RC&D COORDINATOR

Once the RC&D area has been designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA provides a staff person to assist the Council in carrying out its objectives and goals by providing guidance, advice, and technical assistance. In general, the RC&D Coordinator is a facilitator, advisor, and coach to the RC&D Council and local groups and citizens who want to be involved in RC&D projects. In addition to the Federal RC&D Coordinator, USDA also provides office space and appropriate basic support for program administration.

THE RC&D COUNCIL

The RC&D Council is the heart of the RC&D concept. The Council is a membership-based nonprofit entity that is established and run by volunteers to carry out the mission of the RC&D. The Council is composed of members that are key community leaders in land conservation, water management, environmental enhancement, and community development. They are a steering committee and action team to implement the "Area Plan," a community-driven strategic long-range plan to improve the quality of life in the communities in the RC&D Area.

The RC&D Council members need to be action-oriented volunteers and leaders that help the Council address needs in the community through good planning and project implementation. In this "make it happen" style, the Council also periodically evaluates its progress on the Area Plan and gathers input from the community. The Council members represent all the counties of the RC&D area. This larger membership body formally meets numerous times throughout the year and elects the Board of Directors.

THE RC&D COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors manage the affairs of the RC&D Council as an incorporated 501(c)(3). The Board formally approves the Area Plan, mission, policies, budget, and projects. Board members have legal and fiduciary responsibilities including: Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience. Essentially, the Board of Directors ensures that the organization is well-managed and running properly in order to obtain the objectives of the RC&D Council.

So, THAT'S RC&D 101

It's the community-driven collaboration and communication that goes on between all these pieces of RC&D that make it work. From Washington, DC, down to a couple people brainstorming over ice tea, the RC&D network is a powerful way to help people change their communities for the better. Get involved with your local RC&D and help make things happen! Contact: Kathy Holm, Shenandoah RC&D Coordinator, (540) 248-3321; kathy.holm@va.usda.gov; P.O. Box 60, Verona, VA 24482. Fax: (540) 248-5502.

"The Shenandoah RC&D Council and the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (Voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.