

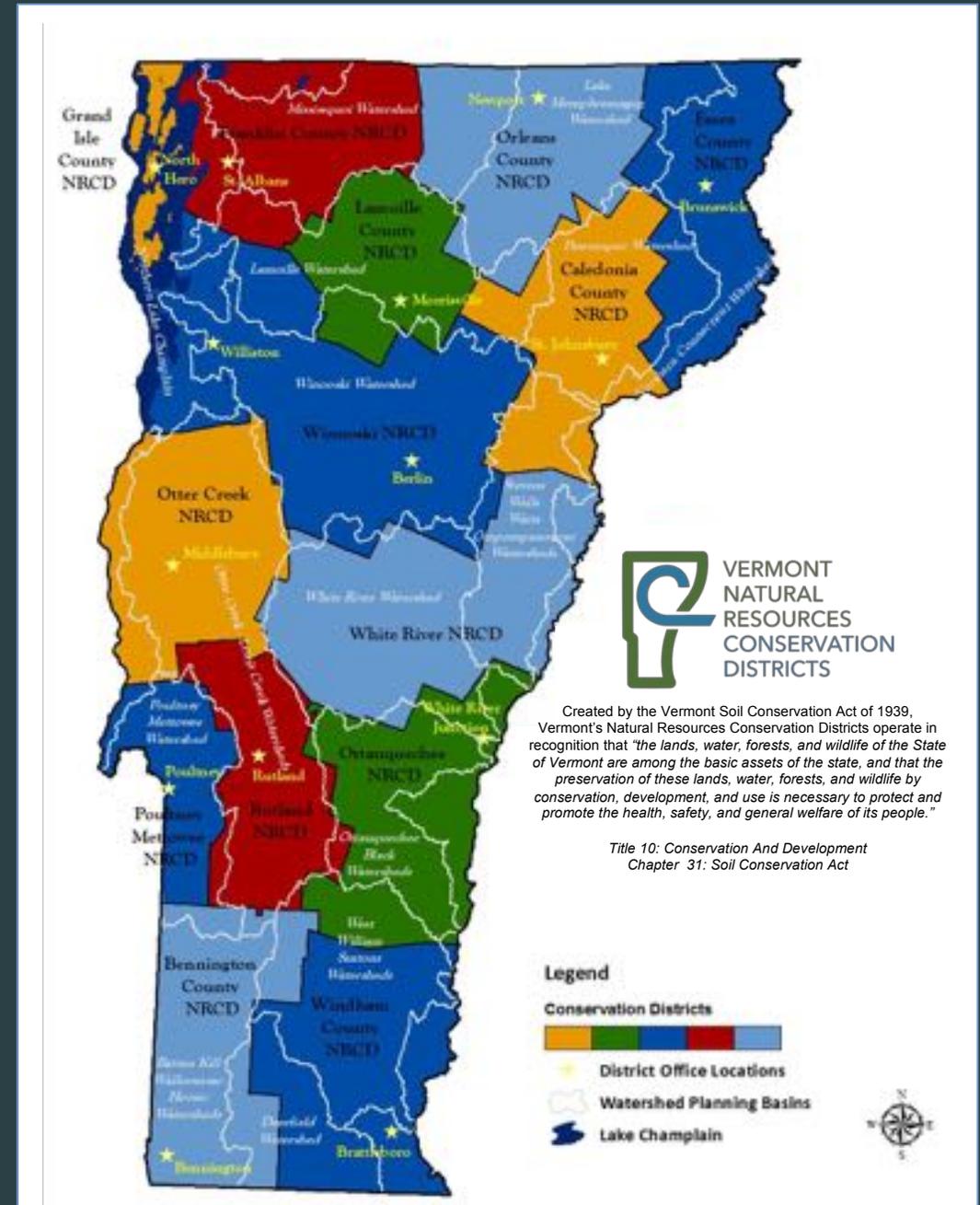
# VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



FY2023 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST

# VERMONT'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICTS ARE TRUSTED AND EFFECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE AGRICULTURAL & CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

- ✓ We are rooted in communities and cover all geographic regions of Vermont.
- ✓ We work at the grassroots level and act as liaisons between government and local stakeholders.
- ✓ We help landowners make management and conservation decisions that improve the landscape for people and the planet.
- ✓ We connect people, organizations and resources to steward our land and water resources for the future.



# CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAM AREAS



AGRICULTURE



NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION & RESTORATION

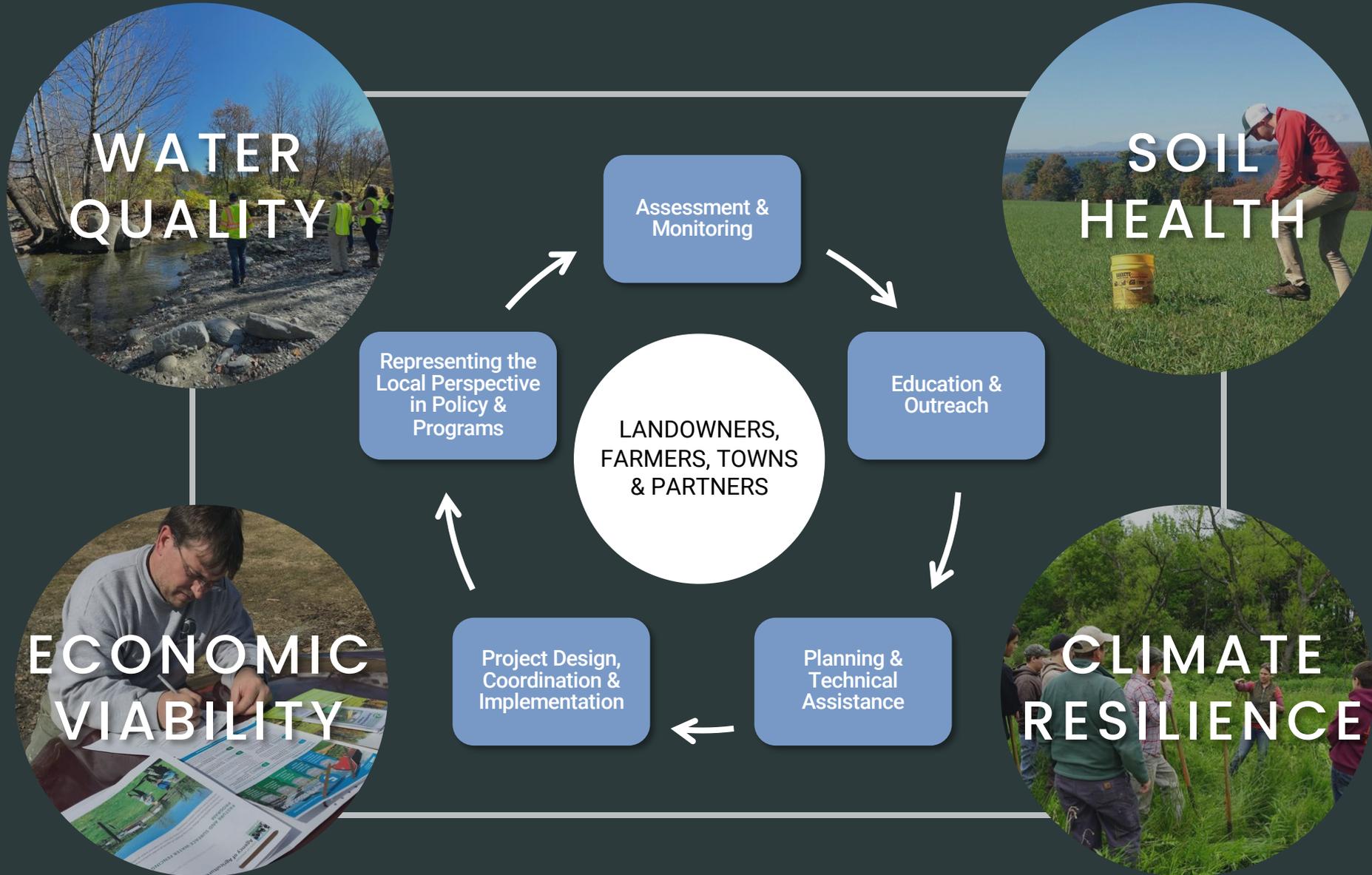


EDUCATION & OUTREACH



STORMWATER REMEDIATION

# PROGRAM METHODOLOGIES & OUTCOMES



# CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

FACILITATING VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE  
WITH RAPs

SOIL SAMPLING

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

CONSERVATION PLANNING

ACCESSING FINANCIAL  
ASSISTANCE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT – LOCAL WORK GROUPS

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

COORDINATION OF FARM TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE TEAMS

PAYMENT FOR PHOSPHORUS & ECOSYSTEM  
SERVICES

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

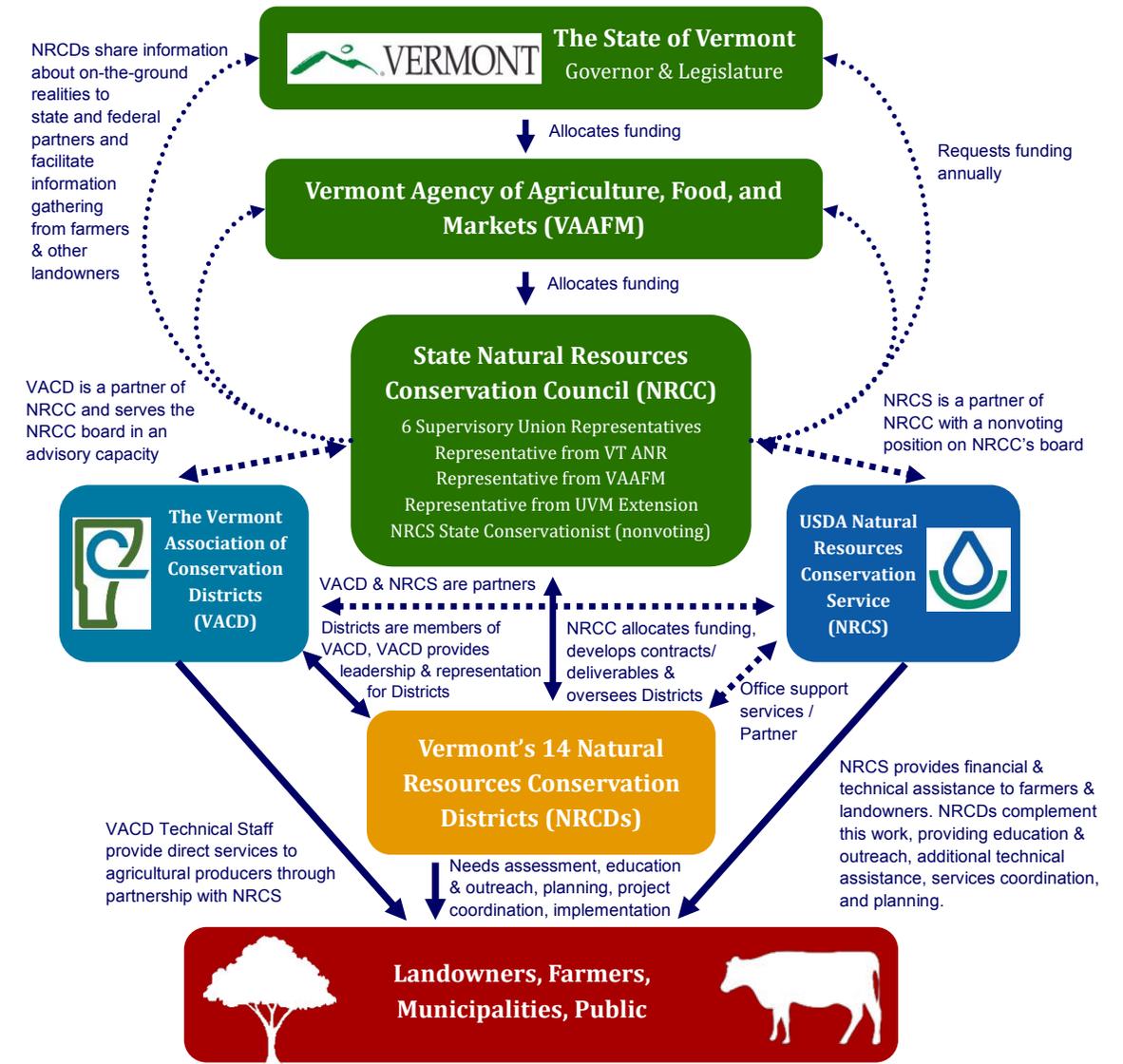
CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN AGRICULTURE

Under the 1939 Vermont Soil Conservation Act, the Natural Resource Conservation Council is designated an “agency of the state” and Vermont’s Natural Resources Conservation Districts as local governmental entities.

Conservation Districts are mandated to preserve the “lands, water, forests, and wildlife by conservation, development, and use...to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people.”

However, unlike Conservation Districts in other states, Vermont’s Districts do not receive adequate funding through state appropriations.

# ORGANIZATION CHART OF VERMONT CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



# OUR REQUEST FOR FY2023 APPROPRIATIONS



**\$1.5 million** in base funding to support ongoing needs



**\$2.1 million** in one-time funding for a 3-year Agricultural Resource Specialist Training Program



**\$248,000** in one-time funding for immediate equipment and capital improvement needs

# INCREASED FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION DISTRICTS WAS THE MOST POPULAR CATEGORY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE GOVERNOR'S FY23 BUDGET, WITH 107 COMMENTS SUBMITTED.

Vermont's new Climate Action Plan recommends that the State *"dedicate funds to support Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Districts...with the specific objective of allowing them to reach...farmers, foresters, and landowners with education about climate resilient practice implementation (page 169)."*

The plan encourages an increase in funding to hire and support natural resource staff through Conservation Districts to *"meet the needs of Vermont's land managers in adapting to the impacts of climate change"* and *"provide consistent expertise, education and assistance that is essential (page 179)."*

*"With the additional climate concerns...partnerships must not only be maintained but strengthened to ensure the most efficient and effective means for maximizing opportunities for co-benefits of all programs."*

- Vermont Climate Action Plan 2021, Vermont Climate Council



# 1

## \$1.5 MILLION IN BASE FUNDING TO SUPPORT ONGOING NEEDS

- NRCC base budget has been level funded at \$112,000 for the past decade, which results in less than \$8,000 per District and minimal administrative support for NRCC.
- We are requesting an additional appropriation of \$1,388,000 to increase NRCC's base budget to \$1.5 million to support the following administrative and operational costs of Vermont's 14 Conservation Districts:
  - Salaries & Benefits for 14 District Managers
  - Community Engagement & Needs Assessments
  - Program Planning, Outreach & Communications
  - Technology Needs & Software Upgrades
  - Professional Development & Training
  - Per Diems for Local Work Groups
  - Legal Support
  - Shared Funding Pool for Implementation of Local Projects
- Increased base funding would empower Districts to leverage more federal funding.



# 2

## \$2.1 MILLION IN ONE-TIME FUNDING FOR A 3-YEAR AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST TRAINING PROGRAM

- To be spent over the next three years to develop and implement a state-wide training program for our Agricultural Resources Specialists.
- The Agricultural Resource Specialist is an advanced professional service coordinator. Tasks include:
  - Outreach & Education regarding Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs)
  - On-Farm Resource Reviews & Needs Assessments
  - Conservation Planning & Technical Assistance
  - Grant Writing & Program Applications Assistance
  - Farm Resource Referrals
  - Coordination of Teams of Technical Assistance Providers
  - Conservation Project Design, Implementation & Oversight
  - Data Collection & Monitoring Water Quality, Soil Health & Climate Impacts



# 3

## \$248,000 IN ONE-TIME FUNDING FOR IMMEDIATE EQUIPMENT AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS

- District functions are currently limited to the requirements of various operational grants that are piecemealed together. This does not include funding for capital improvements.
- \$248,000 in immediate equipment and capital improvement needs include:
  - \$105,000 for a District-owned vehicles with a mounted hydraulic soil sampler and associated precision agriculture software to conduct soil sample farm visits
  - \$16,000 for Agricultural Equipment & Tools at two Districts
  - \$20,000 for infrastructure upgrades & program needs at the District owned and operated Lamoille County Nature Center and the Champlain Valley Native Plant Restoration Nursery
  - \$1,500 for tree planting equipment at one District
  - \$5,500 for Office Hardware Upgrades at two Districts
  - \$100,000 for the Poultney Mettowee District to purchase a local building for permanent office space



# QUESTIONS?

Jill Arace

Executive Director, Vermont Association of Conservation Districts

[jill.arace@vacd.org](mailto:jill.arace@vacd.org)

(802) 496-5162

[www.vacd.org](http://www.vacd.org)