

# VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



February 2025





# § 715. Establishment of District as Governmental Subdivision

Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCs) are governmental subdivisions that operate as county-level government entities under the authority of the State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) and their elected Boards of Supervisors to connect people, organizations, and resources to steward our land and water resources for the future.

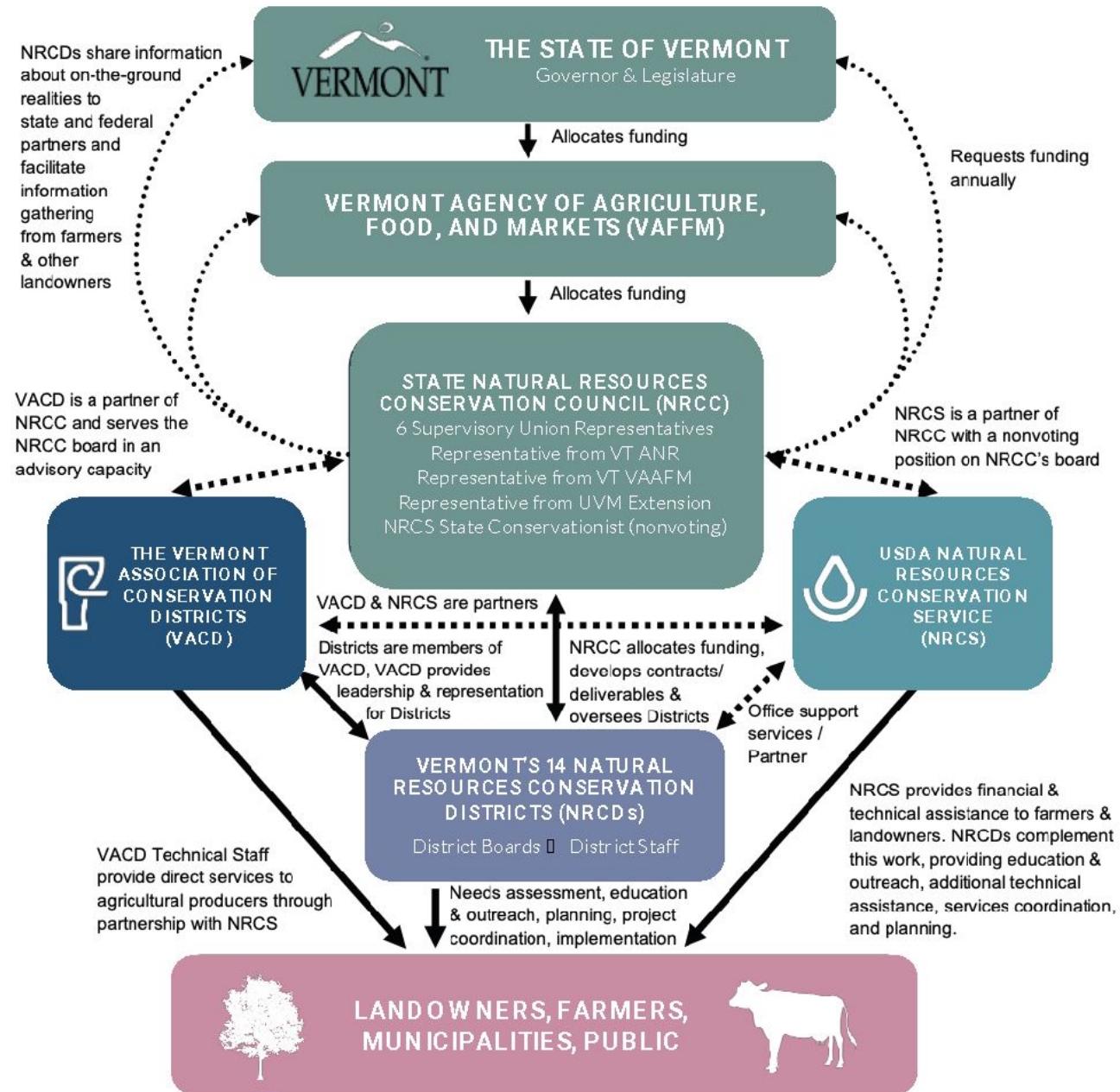
We are rooted in communities, and those roots help to strengthen and support the environment.



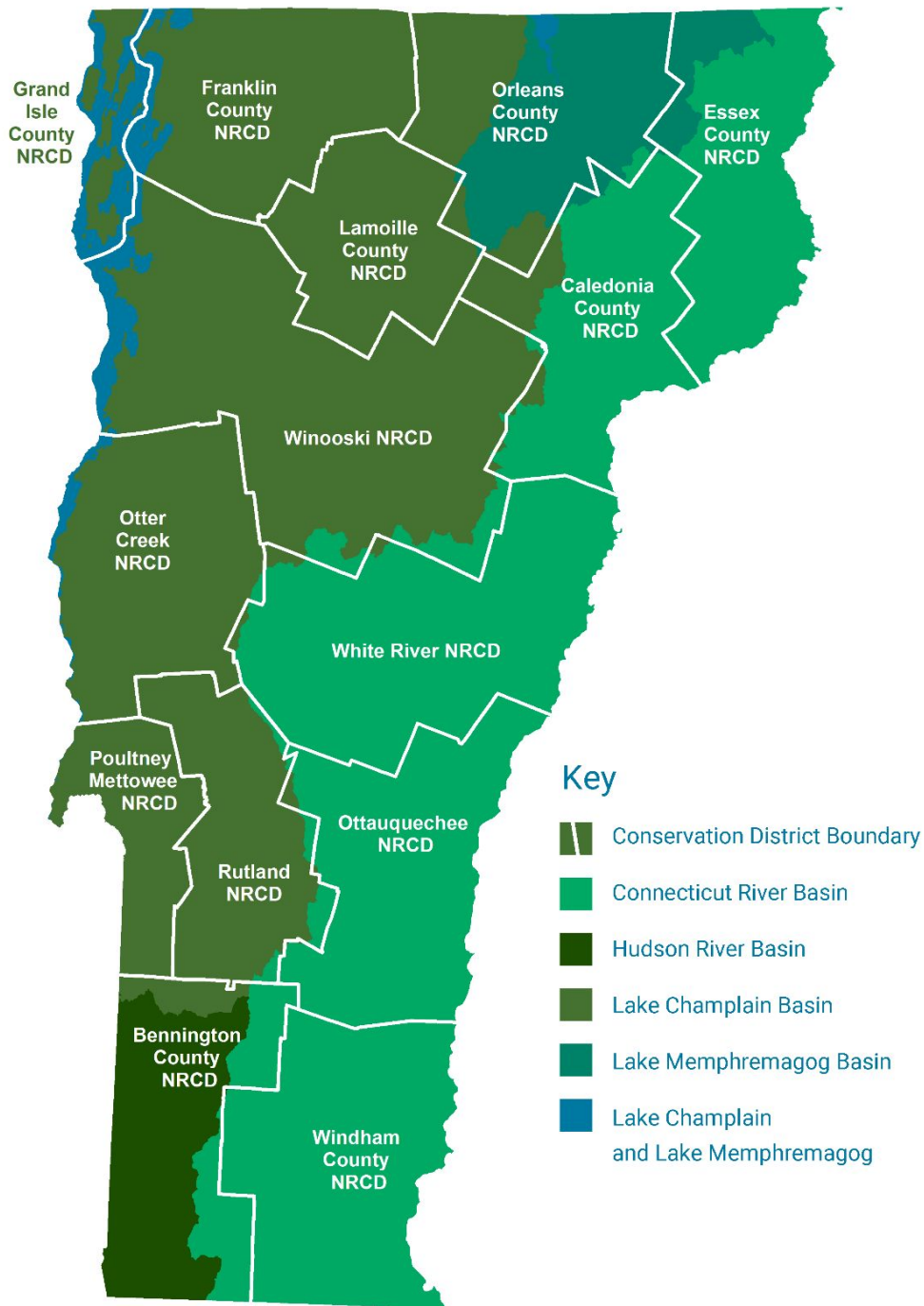
Established by the  
**Vermont Soil Conservation Act**  
**(10 V.S.A. Chapter 31)**  
 Vermont Natural Resources  
 Conservation Districts  
 are organized to lead local efforts to  
 protect soil health, water quality, and  
 other natural resources.

§ 703. State Natural Resources Conservation  
 Council; members:

*“A State Natural Resources Conservation Council is  
 hereby established to serve as an Agency of the  
 State...”*







Vermont 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 state and federal 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



Natural Resources  
Conservation & Restoration



Stormwater Remediation



Agriculture



Education & Outreach



# Clean Water Act

- NRCs are statutory partners in the tactical basin planning process
- NRCs are statutory members of all Basin Water Quality Councils.
- NRCs are eligible to be Clean Water Service Providers (CWSP) and Poultney Mettowee NRC is the co-CWSP for Rutland County
- NRCC is a Funding Program Administrator (FPA) resulting in **\$4,021,498** in funding distributed, supporting:
  - ✓ **59** stormwater projects
  - ✓ **25** floodplain/stream restoration projects
  - ✓ **27** lakeshore projects
  - ✓ **6** roads projects
  - ✓ **36** planting sites
  - ✓ **230** new projects developed





# NRCDS & VACD Clean Water Impacts Since 2016



- ✓ **17,200** soil, manure, & water quality samples collected
- ✓ **4,868** on farm site visits
- ✓ **532** Nutrient Management Plans (NMP) developed & updated
- ✓ **1,254** referrals to agricultural funding programs (NRCS, UVM, AAFM)
- ✓ **20,863** participants in public workshops





Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts request a base appropriation of **\$3,000,000** to cover ongoing operational costs necessary to meet statutory obligations.





The Governor has proposed to reduce our base budget to **\$500,000**  
a decrease of **\$112,000** from FY25.

This base budget reflects decades of chronic underfunding and it not sufficient for meeting  
our statutory obligations. Districts currently have the capacity to  
successfully utilize a **\$3,000,000** base budget.



Increasing NRCC's base budget to **\$3,000,000** would support the administrative and operational costs of Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts.

- Salary & Benefits for 1 FTE for each NRCD
- Recruitment, training, and retention of Vermont's agricultural and conservation specialist workforce
- Per diems and reimbursements for Supervisor participation
- Outreach & community assessments for new state programs and policies (i.e. Payment for Ecosystem Services)
- Technology needs & software upgrades
- Increased oversight and support capacity at NRCC







# Base versus Grant Funding

- Piecemeal approach of utilizing private, state, and federal grants.
- Funding from grants is limited, inconsistent, and does not offer secure finances for long-term planning.
- Grant funding is competitive and requires significant amount of staff time to apply, manage, and report.
- District functions are limited to the specifications of various grants.
- No flexibility to purchase much needed equipment and software for our programming and projects or compensate administrative work properly.
- Unable to be fully responsive to constituent needs.
- More appropriate for project and programmatic work than basic operations.





# Relationship between NRCDs & NRCS



Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) have had a unique partnership with the U.S. Department of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) since their founding after the Dust Bowl in the late 1930s. The purpose of this partnership is to help the federal government reach local farmers and land stewards. NRCDs hold written agreements with NRCS which authorize the following functions:

- Cost-share of office space and technology
- Access to NRCS data and tools
- Facilitate Local Working Groups to inform NRCS funding priorities
- Achieving National Conservation Planner status
- Federal-State Cross Participation
- Written Agreements to Share Work

The federal government's support does not include salary or benefits for staff, travel reimbursements, necessary equipment for on-site technical assistance, etc.



# Impacts of Federal Funding

- NRCs help bring federal funding to the natural resources community.
- Locally led conservation

Approximately \$4 million dollars to VACD & NRCs frozen through various agreements

- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
- Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

Unknown possible reduction in EPA funding.

Funding to land stewards through IRA also frozen.





# NRCDS & VACD Results in FY2024



- ✓ **552** farms assisted
- ✓ **1,242** soil, manure, & water quality samples collected at farms
- ✓ **33,372** stems sold from NRCD plant sales
- ✓ **3,998** participants in public workshops
- ✓ **12** Rural Fire Protection projects installed
- ✓ VACD program assistants facilitate half of NRCS VT grants to land stewards

Conservation Districts have made a difference  
at your favorite place!



NRCDs have made an impact in our favorite places in Vermont,  
please support our request for a base appropriation of  
**\$3,000,000.**





# THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

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