



Vermont Association of Conservation Districts

Our Land. Our Water. Our Future.

Clare Ireland
Director of Operations, VACD

Please support Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts with a total budget of \$948,200 for the Natural Resources Conservation Council in fiscal year 2027.

Vermont's Natural Resources Conservation Districts represent a preexisting conservation delivery system here in the state. From their creation as county-scale government entities in the 1940s, they have been dedicated to addressing some of the most pressing issues we face as a state today, including water quality, flood and drought resiliency, soil health, and working landscape viability. Conservation Districts provide direct technical assistance to landowners and land managers of all types: private or public, individuals or municipalities, working lands or preserved habitat. They help identify, design, and implement large, infrastructure-heavy projects, such as dam removals, culvert upgrades, and stormwater system installation. They also work one-one-one with community members on smaller projects, like rain gardens, invasive species removal, and tree plantings. As such, they are a catch-all system, ready to help meet whatever natural resources challenges their communities face. Together, they serve every inch of the state.

That said, even as county-scale local government entities, the Natural Resources Conservation Districts do not have their own dedicated source of funding, and while much of their work is underwritten by competitive grants, their ability to secure these grants and respond to constituent needs relies entirely on the base funding provided by the legislature. For every \$1 appropriated by the legislature, Conservation Districts leverage at least \$9 in direct competitive grant funding. Furthermore, Conservation Districts have the unique ability to backfill federal staffing within the USDA, helping ensure that funds that are appropriated by the federal government actually make it onto the ground in Vermont communities. Conservation Districts represent a solution to some of the challenges posed by federal staff reductions, but their ability to leverage the grants needed to employ the staff to do this work relies on stable funding from the legislature.

Because of all this, we are asking for a total budget of \$948,200 for the Natural Resources Conservation Council in fiscal year 2027. Please support this request, which is critical to our continued work.

Thank you for your consideration and for all your work on behalf of Vermont.

Sincerely,

Clare Ireland, Director of Operations