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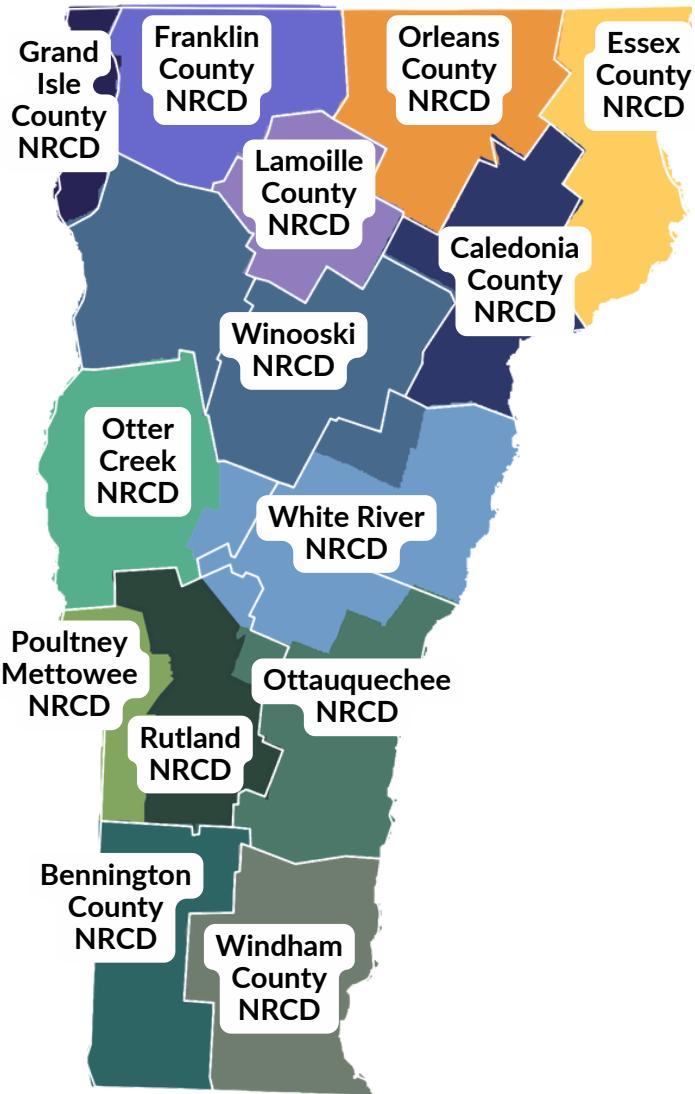
Please support Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts with a total budget of \$948,200 for the Natural Resources Conservation Council in fiscal year 2027. I have been with the Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District, one of the 15 organizations that are impacted by the Natural Resources Conservation Council's budget, for the past five years and I have seen the incredible impact that the work of the Districts can do on the ground. Last year, myself and my staff worked with over 110 farmers on efforts directly related to clean water, nutrient management, and economic viability; I have had the honor of working with farmers during some of their toughest and most vulnerable times, wondering what the future of their farm will be given the existing economic, climate, and public support conditions they are facing. This work that Districts do deeply matters to their communities, and we need more support to keep ourselves afloat and functioning to serve our communities. As subdivisions of state government, units established decades ago to lead local efforts to protect soil health, water quality, and other natural resources and mandated under Vermont State Statute to serve our communities, we are asking you to please support a base budget of \$948,200 in base dollars for the Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council in the Agency of Agriculture's budget.



Vermont Association of Conservation Districts

Our Land. Our Water. Our Future.

Please support Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) with a **budget of \$948,200** in FY27 to fund Vermont's local governmental conservation delivery system.



What Conservation Districts Are

Natural Resources Conservation Districts are county-level units of government charged with enhancing and protecting the state's natural resources (10 V.S.A. Chapter 31).

What Conservation Districts Do

Conservation Districts address some of the most pressing issues facing the state including:

- **Flood mitigation** – Districts restore flood plains, conserve wetlands, plant riparian buffers, remove dams, upgrade culverts and work to reduce water flows from headwaters.
- **Drought mitigation** – Districts work with farms to implement practices to reduce the short- and long-term impacts of drought, work Districts have been ramping up over the past five years.
- **Clean water** – Districts work with farms, forest businesses, private landowners, and municipalities to install infrastructure and implement land management practices that protect Vermont's lakes and streams
- **Farm viability and food security** – Districts help farmers access state and federal assistance, and identify and implement on-the-ground practices to help ensure the long-term viability of the farm.

For every \$1 Districts receive in direct operational funding, they bring in \$9 for implementing conservation work. Districts are also able, by working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to secure federal funds focused on addressing conservation needs in each District. For the 2026 federal fiscal year, Districts brought in **\$4.4M in federal funds that went directly to farmers and other landowners** for work on conservation needs identified by local residents through a public process.

Districts need \$948,200 to support this work. Unlike other states, Districts in Vermont do not have a dedicated source of revenue identified in statute, such as a percentage of a statewide tax or county tax revenue.

These funds support the on-the-ground technical assistance NRCDs provide directly to Vermonters and municipalities so we can all better protect our natural resources and adapt to a changing climate.

This is also the funding that pays for the work necessary to secure the grants to upgrade culverts, remove dams, restore wetlands and ensure Vermont has viable farms with healthy, resilient soils.



Vermont's Natural Resources Conservation Districts connect people, organizations, and resources to steward our land and water for the future.



Winooski NRCD worked for years to remove the Hands Mill Dam in Washington which was classified as a Significant Hazard potential dam.



Windham County NRCD works with the Connecticut River Conservancy and volunteers to remove invasive water chestnuts from the Connecticut River.



Orleans County NRCD planted over 300 trees in North Troy. These trees will grow to reduce erosion, create wildlife habitat, filter clean water, and protect aquatic ecosystems.



In Fall 2024, Franklin County NRCD hosted four educational workshops for maple producers in Franklin County and across Vermont.



Otter Creek NRCD hosted a program on Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS) services for farmers in Orwell. A drone demonstration was led by VACD's sUAS team.



Essex County NRCD led a stormwater runoff treatment project in Concord that will prevent an estimated annual flow of 1,500 pounds of pollutants into the Moose River.