

FY27 Budget Public Hearing Testimony
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Hello, and thank you for accepting my testimony. My name is Sam Mayne, and I work for the Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District in Brunswick. I'm here to ask you to **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.**

This base funding for the parent agency of the State's 14 Conservation Districts is a cost-efficient way to ensure that State and Federal programs reach the people in the state with the highest need. One example from my District is a stream restoration project, where we have been able to secure \$1.2 million dollars in federal funds to complement a \$207,000 State Clean Water grant to replace culverts in Lunenburg, Ferdinand, and Brighton. These culverts restore fish passage on key streams identified collaboratively with US and VT Fish & Wildlife. They will be resilient to flooding for the next century, and also reduce water quality issues from erosion. All of this has been accomplished at a fraction of the cost to the State and communities where this work is happening. This is just one of many examples across the state where Conservation Districts are the boots on the ground, connecting local communities to available programs to meet local needs and conservation priorities.

An increase in base funding could exponentially increase the impact of Conservation Districts in helping communities access available programs. While we are already carrying out projects like these statewide, we frequently have to pass on Federal grant opportunities for similar work because of limited staff capacity to manage the associated workload. Consistent core funding allows us to staff up so that we are ready to jump on opportunities as they come, unpredictably, from the Federal government, providing a significant return on investment by these core State funds. **Again, 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.**