



Vermont Association of Conservation Districts

Our Land. Our Water. Our Future.

Examples of Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Districts' (NRCD) Role in Disaster Response, Recovery, and Mitigation

Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) play a critical role in statewide flood recovery, as county level governmental subdivisions, by conducting outreach, assessing local damage, and providing technical assistance.

All 14 NRCDs field flood-related inquiries from constituents and help those constituents navigate the assistance and resources available to them, including helping with funding applications. This is a natural component of our structural model to **respond to local natural resources needs** and **act as resource navigators for individuals and municipalities**.

Disaster Response

In the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, NRCDs respond by:

1. Assessing damage to land and infrastructure;
2. Reaching out to landowners and municipalities to provide technical assistance where needed and to facilitate community wide forums and communications about response; and
3. Providing direct assistance around land and natural resources by connecting businesses, landowners, and municipalities to resources and funding opportunities for flood repairs and recovery work.

Examples of this work include:

- Working with towns and engineering firms to **assess and repair damage to stormwater systems**
- Disseminating information about **debris cleanup**, particularly around **work done in river corridors**
- Inventorying **road erosion** and identifying **culvert replacement** projects
- Assessing **tree planting** sites and other natural resources project sites for damage
- Communicating with dam authorities to help communicate with landowners about drawdown times, flood response protocol, and recreation area safety
- **Reporting damage** to relevant state and local authorities

Disaster Recovery

Districts support ongoing recovery by:

1. Monitoring land, natural resources, and infrastructure concerns;
2. Developing and implementing recovery projects;
3. Connecting landowners, land managers, and municipalities with funding for recovery activities; and
4. Assisting with grant funding applications.

Examples of this work include:

- Creating a [guide to flood recovery resources](#) for dissemination to landowners and land managers
- Connecting farmers and other working lands businesses to **USDA assistance** through FSA and NRCS. This work includes:
 - conducting outreach about insurance opportunities for socially disadvantaged farms
 - conducting outreach for NRCS Watershed Protection grants
- Disseminating information about **free drinking water** and **free soil test kits**
- Offering farms **free soil sampling assistance**

Disaster Preparedness & Mitigation

Districts play a key role in preparing for natural disasters by working with individuals and communities to identify areas of risk and develop and implement projects to address existing or projected issues.

Examples of this work include:

- Working with landowners around long-term property protection strategies, including **large scale river corridor protection projects** that cross property ownership and municipal boundaries
- Coordinating with municipalities, watershed groups, and communities to develop strategies for future response
- Assisting municipalities and RPCs in developing **Stormwater Master Plans (SMPs)**, **Road Inventories**, and **Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMPs)**

- Assisting lake associations in developing **Lake Watershed Action Plans**, and working with lakeshore landowners to identify and implement clean water and disaster mitigation projects
- Assisting individual landowners in **identifying natural resources issues** and developing plans to address those, such as through the **Storm Smart** and **Lake Wise** programs
- Managing projects that improve the mitigation potential of land and infrastructure, such as:
 - Dam removals, berm removals, and culvert replacements
 - Tree plantings to establish buffers along rivers and stream corridors
 - Rain gardens
 - Stormwater systems
 - Bank stabilization projects and Strategic Wood Additions (SWAs)
 - Water quality monitoring

Statewide Coordination

The State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) is an agency of the state that supports and provides oversight to NRCDs. During active disaster declarations, NRCC has acted as a link between NRCDs and emergency management operations by:

- Distributing information from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to NRCDs and other local natural resources and environmental organizations
- Facilitating communications between NRCDs and other relevant agencies and operations
- Providing information around disaster response to help operational interface between NRCDs and other agencies

Long-Term Climate Resiliency

Finally, it is worth noting that NRCDs play a crucial role in long term **natural disaster mitigation** and **climate change resiliency** projects to help Vermont prepare for future natural disasters. Some examples of this work include:

- Helping landowners and land stewards assess opportunities to implement climate resilient practices, such as opportunities for carbon sequestration or emissions reductions
- Conducting demonstrations of land management techniques that can help address climate concerns and increase disaster resiliency, such as cover cropping techniques or forest management techniques
- Hosting the Rural Fire Protection Program (RFP) on behalf of the State of Vermont to install dry hydrants statewide to assist with rural fire suppression
- Hosting equipment rental programs that help communities and land managers implement resiliency practices:
 - Skidder bridge rental programs that can facilitate forest access in increasingly challenging climatic conditions
 - Farm equipment rental programs that can assist agricultural producers in implementing climate smart practices
- Operating native plant nurseries to ensure a supply of locally grown native plants to assist with habitat restoration and partnering in efforts to increase pest resiliency in native tree species
- Enabling agencies to implement climate resilience and disaster mitigation programming:
 - Assisting USDA NRCS implement their Climate Smart programs
 - Assisting VAAFm implement their Pay for Performance program
 - Assisting ANR implement Clean Water programming
- Partnering in the state's long-term planning initiatives, including the Climate Action Plan, Act 59 (30x30), and Act 181 Tier 3 Working Group (Act 250)
- Participating in statewide partnerships that support boots-on-the-ground project implementation, such as the River-Floodplains Restoration Working Group, the Dam Removal Taskforce, and the Statewide CISMA Initiative
- Being listed as key partners in the Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture Report and Vermont's Forest Action Plan
- Providing staffing, regional coordination, and logistical support to the Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership (VAWQP)

Signed,



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