

Emailed testimony from Claire Ireland 2/25/25

Dear Chair Sheldon,

I wanted to follow up with new information regarding the funds Vermont's Natural Resources Conservation Districts leverage statewide. As you know, conservation districts are extremely effective at using their minimal state dollars to leverage other funds to be able to do their work. We've pulled together some numbers, below.

The table below shows how much each District gets in base funding (from the \$612,000 NRCC base) versus their total budget (FY24). In FY24, the ROI for state dollars invested in these local government units was 9.2x: **from the total award of \$612,000, Districts plus NRCC leveraged a total statewide budget of \$5,635,634.20**. This funding supports boots on the ground technical assistance to natural resources stewards statewide as well as a wide variety of Clean Water and other natural resources project work.

I also want to draw your attention to the handout attached with background information on NRCD funding. This handout includes testimonials from 6 Districts about the extraordinary leaps they have already been able to make with the small increases in their base to date. These testimonials give real world examples of the disproportionate benefit the state receives in exchange for small investments in Vermont's 14 NRCDs.

FY24 Core Services ROI		
NRCD	State base funding	Total Leveraged Budget
Bennington	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 219,652.00
Caledonia	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 652,867.98
Essex	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 478,823.00
Franklin	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 614,921.00
Grand Isle	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 84,927.00
Lamoille	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 263,592.00
Orleans	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 309,585.00
Ottauquechee	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 152,919.53
Otter Creek	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 92,487.00
Poultney-Mettowee	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 855,040.00
Rutland	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 137,443.50
White River	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 384,480.00
Windham	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 526,598.55
Winooski	\$ 35,500.00	\$ 414,362.80
NRCC	\$ 115,000.00	\$ 447,934.84
TOTALS	\$ 612,000.00	\$ 5,635,634.20

In addition to this information, I'm attaching a spreadsheet that shows some of the impacts of the recent federal funding freezes and other actions taken by the administration. Conservation Districts have taken the opportunity to leverage Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding, but this funding -- and other federal grants -- are now uncertain, on

hold, or, in some cases, cancelled. These funds support everything from tree plantings to dam removals to Climate Corps programs to train the next generation of natural resources stewards. We are monitoring this situation closely since retraction of funding would result in delayed and cancelled projects, as well as impacts to staffing.

I'm happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Thank you,

Clare

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