

# VERMONT'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



January 2025



# § 715. Establishment of District as Governmental Subdivision

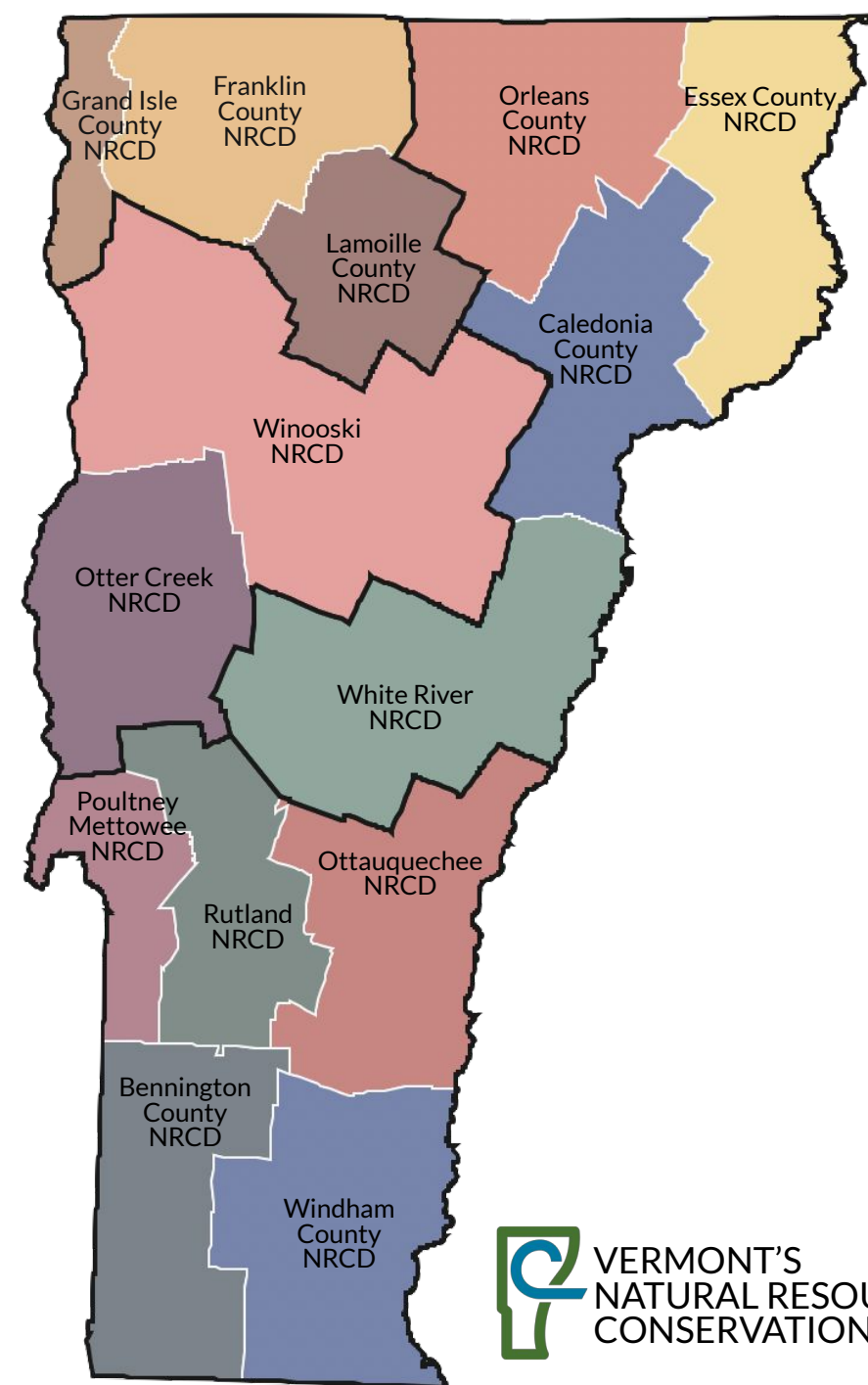
Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts are governmental subdivisions that operate as county-level government entities under the authority of the State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) and their elected Boards of Supervisors to connect people, organizations, and resources to steward our land and water resources for the future.

We are rooted in communities, and those roots help to strengthen and support the environment.



Vermont's natural resources conservation districts are trusted and effective members of the agricultural & conservation community.

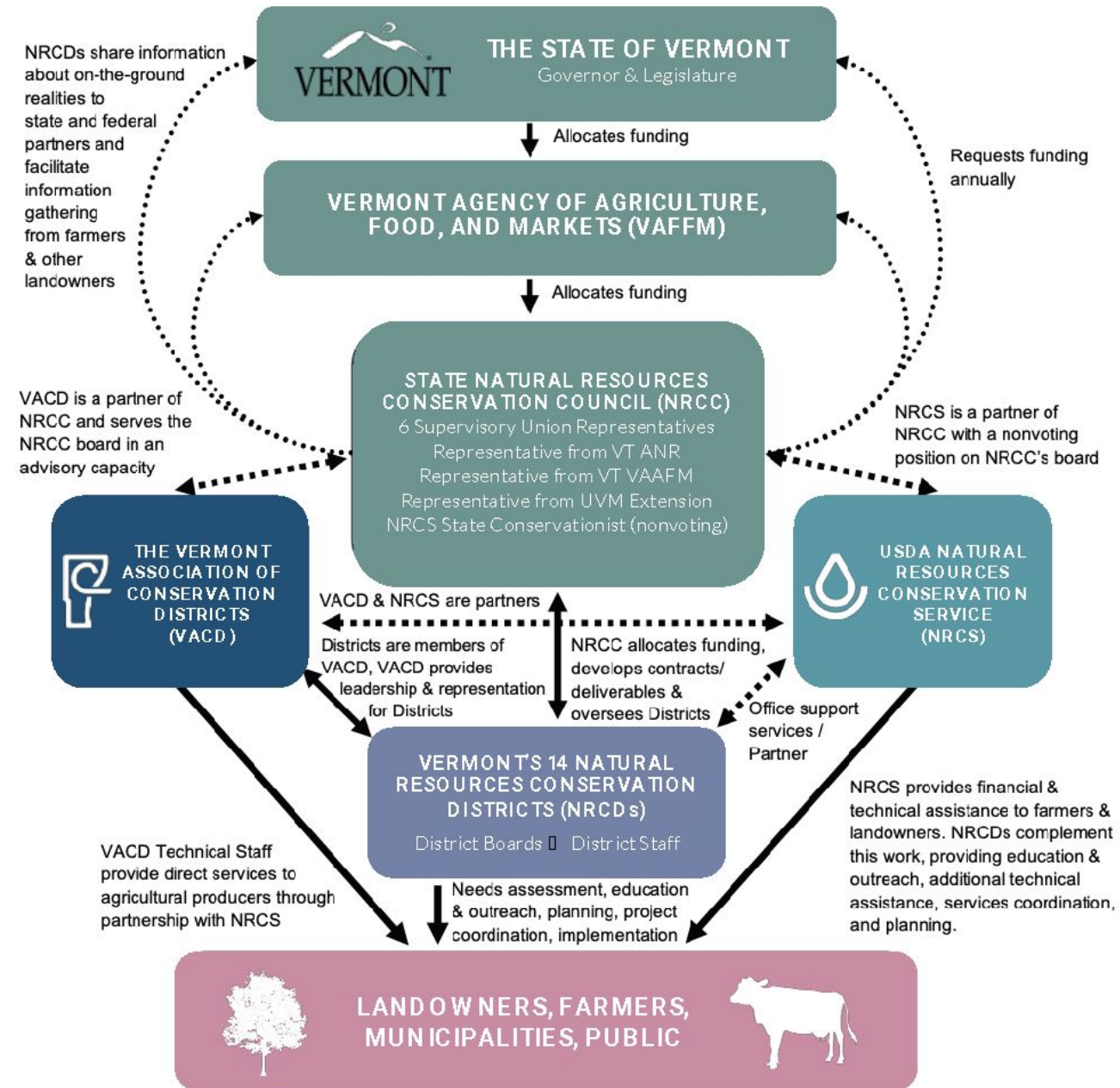
- ✓ We are rooted in communities and cover all geographic regions of Vermont.
- ✓ We work at the grassroots level and act as liaisons between state and federal government and local stakeholders.
- ✓ We help landowners make management and conservation decisions that improve the landscape for people and the planet.
- ✓ We connect people, organizations, and resources to steward our land and water resources for the future.



Vermont's natural resources conservation districts are organized to lead local efforts to protect soil health, water quality, and other natural resources.

### § 703. State Natural Resources Conservation Council; members:

*"A State Natural Resources Conservation Council is hereby established to serve as an Agency of the State to perform the functions conferred upon it in this chapter..."*





Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts request a base appropriation of **\$3,000,000** starting in FY26 to cover ongoing operational costs necessary to meet statutory obligations.



Last year, the Legislature restored level funding to the state Natural Resources Conservation Council for a total appropriation of **\$612,000** after the Governor proposed to reduce our base budget to **\$500,000** in FY25.

This base budget reflects decades of chronic underfunding and it not sufficient for meeting our statutory obligations. Districts currently have the capacity, with current staff levels, to successfully utilize a **\$3,000,000** base budget.

Increasing NRCC's base budget to **\$3,000,000** would support the administrative and operational costs of Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts.

- Salary & Benefits for 1 FTE for each NRCD
- Recruitment, training, and retention of Vermont's agricultural and conservation specialist's workforce
- Per Diems and reimbursements for Supervisor participation
- Outreach & community assessments for new state programs and policies (i.e. Payment for Ecosystem Services)
- Technology needs & software upgrades
- Increased administrative capacity at NRCC



# Relationship between NRCDs & NRCS



Collectively, Vermont's Conservation Districts hold written agreements with NRCS which authorize the following functions:

- Cost-share of office space and technology
- Access to NRCS data and tools
- Facilitate Local Working Groups to inform NRCS funding priorities
- Achieving National Conservation Planner status
- Federal-State Cross Participation
- Written Agreements to Share Work

While Vermont's Natural Resources Conservation Districts are critical state partners for NRCS, the federal government does not contribute meaningfully towards operational expenses outside of shared office space and technology. The federal government's support does not include any salary or benefits for staff, travel reimbursements, necessary equipment for on-site technical assistance, etc.





# Base versus Grant Funding

- NRCDs receive funding through a piecemeal approach of utilizing private, state, and federal grants, but do not currently receive adequate state funding dedicated to core organizational and administrative functions.
- Funding from grants is limited, inconsistent, and does not offer secure finances for long-term planning. The need to perpetually identify and apply for funding from various sources has put a major strain on NRCD budgets.
- Grant funding is competitive and requires significant amount of staff time to apply, manage, and report.
- District functions are limited to the specifications of various grants, which means we do not have the flexibility to purchase much needed equipment and software for our programming and projects, compensate administrative work properly, or be fully responsive to constituent needs.



# THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?



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