



FLORIDA WEST COAST RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) COUNCIL, INC

*Dedicated to Building Healthy, Vibrant Communities
in Manatee, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Sarasota Counties.*

How Does the RC&D Work?

RC&D is an exciting partnership between the Federal government and a local nonprofit organization led by local community leaders. To help you understand how RC&D works in this partnership, the following information explains the RC&D program, the RC&D Area, the Council, and the relationships and responsibilities of each.

THE WHOLE PICTURE

RC&D was initially started back in the 1960's to address rural poverty and help rural communities generate sustainable natural resource-based economies. Although today, many RC&D Areas are not rural and are not poor, the need for the RC&D concept is just as strong as ever. RC&D is not the same-old, same-old – RC&D is collaborative, multi-leveled, action-oriented, and inclusive. And, sometimes, "RC&D" is difficult to explain and difficult to quantify. However, the effect of the RC&D approach to solving community problems involving local people in voluntary, empowering ways can be felt with almost every RC&D project that happens across the country.

THE RC&D PROGRAM

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is a nation-wide U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of the RC&D program is to accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. Current program objectives focus on improvement of quality of life achieved through natural resources conservation and community development which leads to sustainable communities, prudent use (development), and the management and conservation of natural resources.



THE RC&D AREA

RC&D areas are locally-sponsored areas designated by the Secretary of Agriculture for RC&D technical and financial assistance program funds. In the Florida West Coast RC&D Area (pictured left), there were several founding members that worked on the Application for Assistance, which was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture in 2001.

THE RC&D COORDINATOR

Once the Area has been designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA provides a staff person to assist the local group in developing a Council and assists the Council in carrying out its objectives and goals by providing guidance, advice, and "technical assistance." In general, the RC&D Coordinator is a facilitator, advisor, and coach to the RC&D Council. In addition to the Federal RC&D Coordinator, USDA also provides office space and appropriate basic support for program administration to help get the Council started.

THE RC&D COUNCIL

The RC&D Council is the heart of the RC&D concept. The Council is a membership-based nonprofit entity that is established and run by volunteers to carry out the mission of the RC&D. The Council is composed of members that are key community leaders in land conservation, water management, environmental enhancement, and community development. They are a steering committee and action team to implement the "Area Plan", a community-driven strategic long-range plan to improve the quality of life in the communities in the RC&D Area.

The RC&D Council members need to be action-oriented volunteers and leaders that help the Council address needs in the community through good planning and project implementation. In this "make it happen" style, the Council also periodically evaluates its progress on the Area Plan and gathers input from the community. The Council members represent all the counties of the Area. This larger membership body formally meets once or twice a year and elects the Board of Directors.

THE RC&D COUNCIL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors manage the affairs of the RC&D Council as an incorporated 501(c)(3). The Board formally approves the Area Plan, mission, policies, budget, projects, and hiring of Council Staff. Board members have legal and fiduciary responsibilities including: Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience. Essentially, the Board of Directors ensures that the organization is well-managed and running properly in order to obtain the objectives of the RC&D Council.

THE RC&D STAFF

The RC&D Staff, along with volunteer Board and Council Members, other volunteers and partners help implement the goals of the RC&D Council. Staff is hired by the Board to implement the long range goals, policies, and organizational operations that have all been approved by the Board.

So, THAT'S RC&D 101

It's the community-driven collaboration and communication that goes on between all these pieces of RC&D that make it work. From Washington, DC down to a couple people brainstorming over collard greens and ice tea, the RC&D network is a powerful way to help people change their communities for the better. Get involved with your local RC&D and help make things happen! Contact us at (941) 723-3252 or email us at info@fwcrd.org.