

Bio-Diesel Workshop

In August 2006, **South Hampton Roads RC&D** hosted a local Bio-Diesel Workshop. Seventy participants learned what bio-diesel is; how to make it safely; and how to make a quality product that can be used in tractors and trucks. Extension specialists informed the group which oil seed stocks were best suited for bio-diesel production. Partners included Hampton Roads Clean Cities Coalition, U. S. Department of Energy, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Griffin Oil and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Converting Waste Wood to High Quality Charcoal

Waste wood left after harvest, hurricanes and other activities is a common problem in coastal Virginia. The Tidewater RC&D worked with a local logging business and Virginia Tech to create a microbusiness that produces high quality lump charcoal. This charcoal is used by gourmet cooks who prefer a more natural product without chemical binders.



Phil Radke lights the charcoal burner.

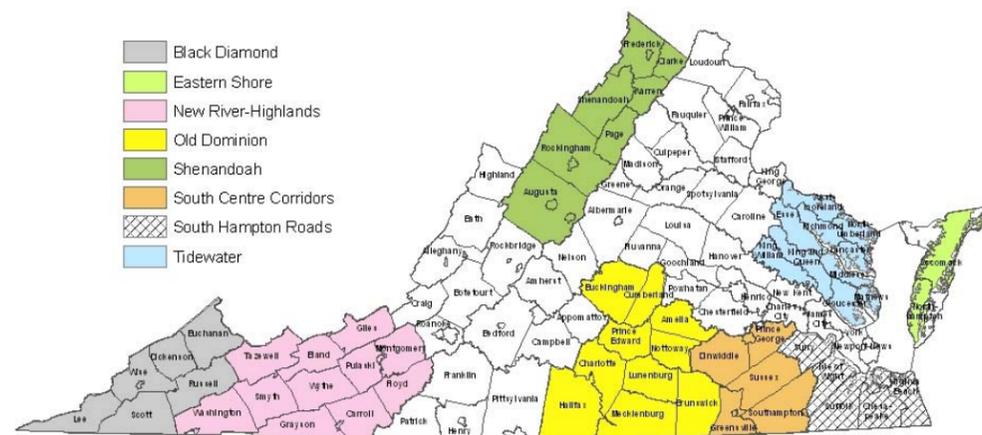
A grant from the US Forest Service Economic Action Program was used to purchase two custom designed kilns. These kilns are portable and can be moved to harvest sites. The kiln design was provided by Phil Radke of Virginia Tech.

The first person to explore this new enterprise was Carolyn Balderson of Cimmonon Forestry, a local logging business. For Carolyn this was an opportunity to gain extra income from an unused waste product. Marketing, having an ample supply of waste wood, and learning the art of producing this type of charcoal are important to making this business a success. The charcoal will be marketed locally to other small businesses and private users.



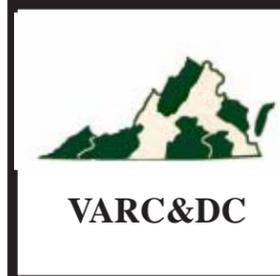
The finished product ready for sale!

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Areas



The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance for the RC&D program. For every NRCS dollar invested, RC&Ds generate nearly five dollars in benefits for their communities. RC&Ds obtain additional funding from grants and services provided by other federal, state, local and private entities.

Virginia's Resource Conservation and Development Councils receive technical assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service. They are equal opportunity employers and providers.



Virginia Association of Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Councils 2006 Annual Report

Creating jobs, protecting

Vision:

Prosperous communities in harmony with the environment through the wise use of natural and human resources.

Mission:

Enhance the ability of RC&D communities to achieve their goals by providing leadership, capacity building opportunities, training and resources.

RC&D Areas:

*Black Diamond
Eastern Shore
Old Dominion
New River-Highlands
Shenandoah
South Centre Corridors
Tidewater*

Applicant Areas:

South Hampton Roads

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Fighting Litter Successfully

Nine counties and two cities within "far" Southwest Virginia continue to garner national attention of their successful multi-year "War on Litter" campaign! Keep America Beautiful, Inc., Associated Press, television stations across the nation and the USA Today spread the word about this regional effort during 2006.

Black Diamond RC&D kicked off this campaign in 2003. Since then, over

1,300 illegal dumpsites have been mapped; 150 dumpsites have been cleaned up; nine of the eleven local governments have implemented the Assign-A-Highway Program; two litter summits have been held; and the Wise/Norton General District Court established the first Environmental Court in Virginia to hear litter cases with fines levied up to \$5,000 per conviction.



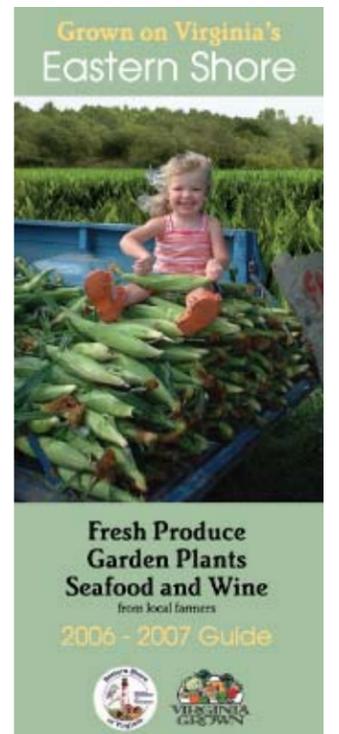
RC&D officers inspecting an illegal dump.

Increasing Sales of Locally Grown Products

Tourists and local people may see acres of corn growing along Route 13, but it's not always easy to find fresh local produce for dinner. To overcome that challenge, a group of organizations partnered with the **Eastern Shore RC&D**, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission to create a guide to local businesses selling Eastern Shore grown fruits, vegetables, garden plants, wine and seafood. Twenty-seven businesses, including two wineries, are listed in the newly published "Grown on Virginia's Eastern Shore" guide. Ten thousand copies were distributed to hotels, visitor centers and restaurants.

Mason Beach Fruit farm offers a pick-your-own orchard with apricots, apples, blackberries, and blueberries. Customers come from as far away as Washington, D.C. to buy crawfish from Jibbey Point farm during the summer. For a few Saturdays in June and July, customers can wander through Sterrett's Daylily Garden marveling at every color and shape of flower imaginable. Plants are dug the same day they are selected.

A frequent comment by people who have lived their entire life on the Eastern Shore is that they never knew these places were right here – until they picked up the brochure.



Cultural Heritage Drives Economic Development

Using history to increase the local economy through tourism, the Wilson Kautz Driving Trail offers historical interpretation at 26 Civil War sites in nine counties and the City of Petersburg. In the fall of 2000, the **Old Dominion RC&D** provided funds from the Virginia Department of Transportation to build the trail. They also researched historic locations, contracted for interpretive signs, and coordinated marketing of the trail.

The trail has proved a boon to local economies. In fact, Civil War trails are the second most popular visitor attraction in the state. Since the trail opened, thousands of people have come to Southside Virginia. These Civil War trails have boosted the region's economy by more than \$6 million.

Along the trail, large metal signs recount the battles which occurred on this land—the most fought over ground during the final days of the Civil War. They carry details and pictures of a raid on one of the major Confederate supply lines by Union Generals James Wilson and August Kautz.



West Point Military Academy's Cavalry and Scout Club using the trail. Photo by Doug Ford, The Gazette-Virginian

Now, 140 years later, the trail is being used by the West Point Military Academy's Cavalry and Scout Club as part of their cadets' military field training. One of the cadets to visit the trail was Captain Andres Houghton who was fatally wounded in combat in Iraq. His family has established an endowment to sponsor the trip each year as a memorial to Captain Houghton. An article in the Military Academy newsletter noted, "The staff ride extends the legacy of his honorable service and provides the cadets of the Cavalry Club with a model of dedicated service and officership to emulate."

Protecting Woodland Homes from Wildfire



The **New River-Highlands RC&D Council** completed fuel reductions on 186 acres of woodland reducing wildfire risks for 105 woodland homes. The fuel reduction was completed on eligible property within 3 miles of a National Forest. Fuel reduction measures included cutting brush and eliminating other materials that might fuel a fire.

Living in a house surrounded by nature and woodlands can be peaceful and beautiful, but it can also be risky. The Virginia Department of Forestry reported 869 wildfires that burned 5,331 acres and damaged 12 homes and 34 structures in 2004. To protect woodland homes from the threat of wildfires, the New River-Highlands RC&D Council secured a \$200,000 grant from the Virginia



J. E. J. Moore Middle School Outdoor Classroom and Nature Trail

In an effort to help educate our youth about nature and its importance to our lives, **South Centré Corridors RC&D** worked with volunteers from J. E. J. Moore Middle School to develop a nature trail/outdoor classroom. This trail is approximately ¾ of a mile in length. It begins in an upland wooded location, then winds down to an isolated wetland and small amphitheatre. This trail offers a wonderful opportunity for all teachers of Prince George County Schools to give students an outdoor experience, while learning about our natural environment. On August 7th, science teachers from ten Prince George County Schools completed training on how to best utilize the Outdoor Classroom/Nature Trail. The teachers were aided in learning by resource professionals at five separate stations along the trail in aquatics, wildlife, watersheds, soils, and forestry.



Amphitheatre



Protected land in Augusta County

Financing Local Land and Water Protection

Many communities struggle with natural resources protection: how do we weigh and address the costs and benefits of protection versus restoration?

While there is a great deal of sophistication in terms of environmental planning for communities, knowing how to pay for resource protection is significantly more complex.

To meet this challenge, the University of Maryland's Environmental Finance Center (EFC) and Evergreen Capital Advisors (ECA) are working with the **Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council** and the Valley Conservation Council (VCC) to gather stakeholders across the Shenandoah and James river watersheds. They are identifying reasonable protection goals, setting local strategies, and putting in place pilot projects to finance Shenandoah Calley land and water protection initiatives over the long term.

This project, funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment, kicked off with a series of "Leadership Dialogues" in which the project team met with representatives from all cities and counties in the Shenandoah RC&D region to find out key natural resource concerns and goals. As a result of those dialogues, three financing charrettes were held on key topics identified by localities: land protection, stormwater management, and greenways. A financing charrette brings together local leaders to design the most effective financing mechanism for the topic at hand. Finally, pilot projects will be designed and implemented.

