

### **WHAT IS A RC&D COUNCIL?**

RC&D stands for Resource Conservation and Development. The purpose of the RC&D Program is to encourage and improve the capability of volunteer local elected and civic leaders in designated RC&D Areas to plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development.

The RC&D Council is a unique program that is **led by local volunteers**. The RC&D Council is a way for people to work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their area a better place to live. Such activities lead to sustainable communities, prudent land use and the sound management and conservation of natural resources.

Program objectives focus on "the quality of life" improvements achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. An RC&D Area usually covers several counties.

### **HOW DOES THE 2002 FARM BILL AFFECT THE RC&D PROGRAM?**

The RC&D Program is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (The Farm Bill).

Significant changes to the Statute include:

- Permanent authorization of the RC&D Program
- More accurate description of the program as it currently operates
- Additions of the role and definition of an RC&D Council
- Acknowledgment of participation by Tribes in the program
- A requirement that a program evaluation and report to the Congressional committees of Jurisdiction be made by June 30, 2005

### **HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF DESIGNATED RC&D AREAS ALLOWED BY LAW?**

The number of allowable designated areas remains 450. To date, there are 375 designated areas across the Nation, the Caribbean and the Pacific Basin. The RC&D Areas serve more than 85 % of US Counties and over 77% of the US population.

Oklahoma has 9 RC&D areas that cover all of the 77 counties. Oklahoma & Cleveland counties recently became members of Cross Timbers RC&D Council.

### **IS RC&D A FEDERAL PROGRAM OR A LOCAL ONE?**

RC&D is a local program. The local RC&D council makes decisions. A RC&D Council may have representatives from County Governments, Municipalities, State Agencies, Comprehensive Planning Agencies, local, non-profit organizations Conservation Districts and local interested citizens. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the RC&D program by providing a NRCS Coordinator for each authorized RC&D.

### **WHY THE EMPHASIS ON NATURAL RESOURCES?**

Utilization of the resources at hand, both natural and human, is central to the RC&D approach. Many resources are renewable - that is, they continue to replenish themselves if managed properly. Communities can acquire immediate benefits from developing such resources, and continue to have the same or greater benefits year after year by conserving the resources as they develop them.

### **HOW CAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROVIDE MORE JOBS FOR AREA RESIDENTS?**

RC&D can provide more jobs for area residents by expanding the existing economy or by stimulating new economic growth. Irrigation, for example, can add millions of dollars to farm income in some areas. Developing a dependable water supply, or protection from flooding, allows new industries to locate. The resultant factory payroll supports additional jobs in the service industries. By improving the economy, the environment, and the community facilities, an RC&D Area becomes a place where people are able to work and want to live.

### **WHAT AGENCIES PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?**

Technical assistance is available from USDA agencies to RC&D areas designated by the Secretary of Agriculture. Technical assistance is available for the planning and installation of approved projects specified in RC&D area plan for land conservation, water management, community development and environmental enhancement elements.

Any agency may provide technical assistance. USDA agencies usually include:

- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
- Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES)
- Economic Research Service (ERS)
- Farm Services Agency (FSA)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
- Forest Service (FS)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Rural Development (RD) Agencies

Other USDA agencies may participate in the RC&D Program. At the state level, the Cooperative Extension Service, State Departments, including those dealing with agriculture, natural resources, commerce, planning, and transportation usually assist. Many RC&D Areas have received technical assistance from universities, colleges and corporations.

Often, agencies assist by providing technical advisors to the council's resource committees. The usual procedure is for the RC&D Council to ask all concerned agencies to attend a meeting. At the meeting, the council explains what it expects to accomplish through the RC&D project and asks agencies to designate representatives to serve as advisors to appropriate resource committees.

Technical assistance is available to RC&D Councils for the planning and installation of approved projects identified in RC&D area plans.

### **WHAT IS USDA'S OBJECTIVE IN ASSISTING RC&D PROJECTS?**

RC&D Areas fit into the US Department of Agriculture's main objectives. By helping local residents conserve, develop, and better utilize their natural resources, USDA helps bring about:

- Quality in the natural resource base for sustained use
- Quality in the environment
- Quality in the standard of living, based on community improvement and adequate income

Achievement of these three goals for all Americans is a mission of NRCS.