ABOUT THE RRRC

The purpose of Planning Districts, or Regional Commissions, as set forth in the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-4207, is:

“...to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing on a regional basis problems of greater than local significance. The cooperation resulting from this chapter is intended to facilitate the recognition and analysis of regional opportunities and take account of regional influences in planning and implementing public policies and services.

The [regional commission] shall also promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district by planning, and encouraging and assisting localities to plan for the future.”

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC), one of 21 such regional, or Planning District Commissions across the state, provides a variety of cost-effective, coordinated and professional technical services to its member local governments.

Such services, among others, include:

- Grant-writing, technical assistance, and program administration
- Project management
- Land use planning and mapping (GIS)
- Rural transportation planning, corridor study development, rideshare/commuter services delivery, bicycle and pedestrian facility planning, and public transit integration
- Environmental planning, including, water quality improvement efforts, such as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development and Implementation, water supply and hazard mitigation planning, and open space and agricultural/rural character preservation.

All are central facets of the Planning District/Regional Commission’s role.

Across the Commonwealth, Planning District/Regional Commissions also collectively constitute an accessible data network.

Each serves as an Affiliate State Data Center for its respective region. In this role, they provide important information to local government, businesses and community residents.

Planning District/Regional Commissions are the designated point of contact for the Commonwealth’s Intergovernmental Review process, and in turn provide vital regional input and feedback on proposed plans for a host of other agencies and entities.

The program work of Planning Districts/Regional Commissions has been meeting the needs of local and state government for over 40 years, with the Rappahannock - Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) having served its member jurisdictions since the organization’s founding in 1973.

Finally, commissions facilitate enhanced regional coordination and broad-based citizen participation in a cost effective manner.

Cover Photos: Compliments of Culpeper Renaissance, Inc., Orange Downtown Alliance & Karly Murphy Photo, Fauquier Tourism, staff.

Left: 2014 Board/Staff Retreat, The State Theatre
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*Sue D. Hansohn, Executive Committee At-Large

Fauquier County
*Paul S. McCulla, Executive Committee At-Large
Chester W. Stribling

Madison County
Ernest Hoch
*Doris Lackey, Chairman

Orange County
James Crozier
R. Bryan David

Rappahannock County
*John W. McCarthy, Vice-Chairman
Roger Welch

*RRRC Executive Committee Member

Town of Culpeper
*James Clements, Treasurer
Michael T. Olinger

Town of Gordonsville
*Robert Coiner, Executive Committee At-Large

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William L. Lamar

Town of Orange
Martha B. Roby
Greg Woods

Town of Remington
Evan H. “Skeet” Ashby

Town of The Plains
Robert Gurtler

Town of Warrenton
Lowell S. W. Nevill
Yakir Lubowsky

Town of Washington
John Fox Sullivan

As of September 2014

STAFF

Jeffrey Walker, AICP, Executive Director
Jenny Biché, Mobility Program Coordinator
Michelle Edwards, Regional Planner II—Environmental
Kate Gibson, VCEH AmeriCorps VISTA Member
Sue Hromyak, Office Manager/RRRC Commuter Services
Patrick Mauney, GIS Program Manager
Terry Snead, Grants Administrator/Fiscal Officer
Cathy Zielinski, Human Services Planning Program Manager
Environmental planning continues to be a cornerstone of the Regional Commission’s overall mission, with a wide range of programs that transcend local and regional boundaries. Highlights this year included assisting localities in addressing rapidly evolving stormwater management requirements, launching the Backyard Rainscaping pilot program, and initiating a comprehensive regional food system planning effort.

As part of an ongoing effort to foster sustainable agriculture across the Planning District, the Commission initiated a comprehensive study of the region’s food system. A food system is a collaborative network that includes everyone involved in putting food on our tables, whether that table is located in our homes, a restaurant or our children’s cafeteria. The system integrates food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management in order to enhance not only the regional economy but also the environmental and social health of the region.

Following a series of public meetings, the Commission’s newly formed Agriculture Working Group took the first step in the effort by conducting an assessment of the food system’s assets, including an inventory of area processing facilities, educational programs and potential institutional markets. This information will next be combined with existing state and national level economic and production data to establish a quantitative baseline of the conditions in the local farm and food economy. Surveys and interviews of the local agriculture sector will also be conducted to supplement the results of the economic analysis.

The baseline information will then be incorporated into a strategic planning process to be undertaken in 2015, which will culminate in the development and release of a detailed regional food system plan containing a list of priority projects for improving the region’s agricultural economy. Such identified projects may include policy and regulatory changes, as well as publicly funded facilities and opportunities for private investment. By strengthening the local food economy, more local dollars can be retained within the region, while promoting citizens’ health, encouraging preservation of local farmland and enhancing area residents’ quality of life.
In 2014, the Commission continued its effort to assist local governments in the development of stormwater programs compliant with revised state regulations. Six area local governments, the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Friends of the Rappahannock joined in this collaborative effort, which made use of existing expertise in the region to enhance existing local stormwater programs and develop programs in localities where one did not exist.

Despite changing guidelines owing to recently enacted legislation, the Commission and its project partners were able to assist participating localities according to their needs, as they developed or revised their local ordinances and policies. Capacity-building to prepare for program implementation was also addressed, through such activities as workload analyses, staff training, and purchase of needed equipment. Commission staff also facilitated communication and coordination between jurisdictions to share new techniques and creative solutions to common problems.

While most of the participating localities ultimately chose to opt-out of implementing a locally-adopted stormwater program following the above-referenced legislative changes in this year’s General Assembly session, initial progress made during the initiative has not been lost. Ordinance language, policies and manuals developed can be utilized should other localities choose to opt-in at a later date, and portions of these materials are being incorporated into localities’ existing erosion and sediment control programs.
FOOTHILLS HOUSING NETWORK

In FY 2014, RRRC and FHN renewed the three state grants secured the previous year. The Homeless Prevention Program, operated by Culpeper Community Development Corporation, provided rental and utility assistance and case management to 66 households facing eviction to help them maintain their housing and avoid homelessness. The Homeless Solutions Grant, operated by Fauquier Department of Social Services and Community Touch, Inc., provided short-term financial assistance, case management, and housing location services to 89 households experiencing homelessness to help them obtain and sustain permanent housing. The Child Services Coordination Grant contributed to the salaries for child services case managers in homeless shelters and allowed RRRC to provide training and networking opportunities for child services case managers.

RRRC also secured a VHDA Capacity Building grant to help FHN develop an affordable housing plan for the region. A consistent problem facing the region is the lack of affordable housing, the immediate implication of which is that many low-income households cannot afford the rent they currently pay. For households in the region with income less than $35,000, 74% pay more than 30% of their income in rent (2008-2012 ACS). Affordable housing is central to the success of Housing First homeless services programs like rapid re-housing and vital for preventing and ending homelessness.

The VHDA grant has also allowed RRRC and FHN to participate in the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness AmeriCorps VISTA program, and RRRC has received a VISTA member who will help FHN build capacity by promoting permanent housing focused solutions to ending homelessness, improving data quality and use in decision-making, and building strategic partnerships that advance efforts to end homelessness.

FOOTHILLS HOUSING SUCCESS STORIES

Jane (name changed to protect privacy) and her two young children were living in a hotel paid by the Red Cross after they lost their home in a fire. When they could no longer stay in the hotel, the family entered the emergency shelter run by Culpeper Community Development Corporation (CCDC).

With the help of CCDC staff, the family quickly located an affordable rental unit and obtained a lease. CCDC used rapid re-housing funds to help the family pay the security deposit and first month’s rent, which allowed them to move into their own place after staying in the shelter less than 30 days. CCDC continued to provide case management once the family was housed, but the family did not need additional financial assistance.

It has been over a year, and the family is still stably housed.

Anna (name changed to protect privacy) and her sons were fleeing an abusive relationship when they entered the transitional housing program run by Community Touch, Inc (CTI). CTI helped Anna to establish a budget so that she could begin to pay off her debt and taught her to independently manage her finances after years of relying on her husband.

Within two months, she secured permanent housing for her family and moved in with assistance from the FHN Rapid Re-Housing Program. In addition to her full time job, Anna has started a part time position to help her family maintain housing stability.
The Foothills Area Mobility System continued to provide assistance on a number of regional transportation initiatives over the past year, including:

- Completion of an 18 month dialysis transportation pilot serving UVA Orange Dialysis patients in Orange, Madison and Culpeper through grants from Dept. of Aging & Rehabilitative Services and Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation
- Start of Veterans Transportation Community Living Initiative (VTCLI) research grant project implementation and education and outreach to area veterans and military families
- Commencement of Volunteer Driver recruitment campaign in Madison County funded through a Senior Transportation Grant with the Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation
- Leveraging of critical $11,000 local cash match needed to continue the Foothills Express connecting Culpeper and Madison to Charlottesville for fiscal year 2014 made possible thanks to a Madison Senior Center fundraising event on Sept. 21st and generous donation received from the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation
‘TWEEN THE RIVERS TRAIL— GROWN IN THE FOOTHILLS

This year the Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Tourism Committee has been developing the ‘Tween the Rivers Trail, a regional agri-artisan trail funded by an Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) planning grant through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). The trail will consist of “trail sites” comprised of local agricultural and forestry related businesses such as Christmas tree farms, wineries, nurseries and farmers markets, as well as agri-artisans who use local agricultural or forestry based products like alpaca fiber, beeswax, and lavender. In addition, “support sites,” such as farm to fork restaurants, bed and breakfasts and agricultural and forestry related events (farm tours, county fairs, etc.) will also be promoted to encourage tourists to fully experience the rural nature and many treasures that make up the Rappahannock-Rapidan region.

Tourism Directors from each of the five counties in the region worked with the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Agricultural Committee to identify potential trail and support sites and sent invitation letters requesting their participation in the pilot trail. Although certain criteria is required to be included on the trail, there is no membership fee for businesses to join during the first year. Once the participants have been vetted and approved, the Regional Tourism Committee will work with consultants to design a logo, website, brochure and signage to use for advertising and promoting the trail.

In addition to the agri-artisan trail, the AFID grant will also include additional projects aimed at supporting and sustaining agricultural and forestry-based businesses in the region. Those projects include a regional agri-artisan event to be held in October of 2015, a regional agri-artisan directory, a recording of oral history records of the region’s agriculture, and regional green infrastructure maps and data on water quality and prime ag soils. Combined, these projects will increase awareness of agricultural and forestry related businesses in the Rappahannock-Rapidan region and provide opportunities for additional sales and revenue. It is an exciting economic venture with the Regional Tourism Committee and the Ag Working Group Committee working collaboratively to bring about great outcomes for our region.

In November 2013, the Regional Tourism Committee participated in the Virginia Welcome Center Blitz program at the Manassas Welcome Center on Interstate 66. Several displays were arranged throughout the building with information on wineries and distilleries highlighted. A whiskey barrel and life-sized cut-out of Chuck Miller from Belmont Farm Distillery complimented the bottles and brochures from our local wineries.

In November and December 2014 the Manassas Welcome Center will again be the location of the next RRRC Regional Tourism Blitz. See you there!
The Regional Commission completed an inventory and update of the region’s geographic information system sidewalk data in 2014, using aerial photography to identify sidewalks not previously collected.

Sidewalk data was available, though incomplete, for the towns of Culpeper, Orange and Warrenton, and the Regional Commission had previously worked to digitize sidewalks and other relevant GIS data in the Town of Gordonsville.

In addition to updates in those areas, sidewalks were digitized in each of the region’s five counties. Based off of this effort, the Regional Commission estimates that there are over 165 miles of sidewalks in the region, with more than half of that total in Fauquier County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles of Sidewalks per county</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper County: 49.4 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fauquier County: 89.2 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madison County: 2.0 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange County: 24.2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rappahannock County: 1.0 miles</td>
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RRRC's Commuter Services program can help residents find or start a car or van pool by connecting commuters with others going the same way. We also provide information about other commuting options such as the regional commuter bus, Academy Bus, and the VRE. This year the commuter service team visited the transportation fair at the Pentagon, Warrenton Spring Festival, Madison and Orange Business Expos, and Culpeperfest, to promote the services and options available to commuters in our region. A pilot program was started at Orange County High School to explain commuting and encourage transit use to students in the Driver’s Education classes.
The RRRC annual Distinguished Leadership — Citizen & Government Awards were initiated in 2007 to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of member jurisdiction citizen and government leaders who have gone above and beyond in their promotion and encouragement of enhanced regional communication, coordination and planning across the region.

In October 2013, the Commission presented long time Town of Warrenton Planning Commission member and RRRC Commissioner Hunt Cheatwood with the Citizen Award, and Grover Wilson, Orange County Board of Supervisors member and RRRC Commissioner, with the Government Award, each for their numerous and significant contributions to their communities and surrounding region at large.

PREVIOUS REGIONAL DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP RECIPIENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Citizen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Harry Atherton</td>
<td>Khalil Hassan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Ruth Updike</td>
<td>David Scott</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Robert Anderson</td>
<td>Bev Hunter</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Frank Bossio</td>
<td>John J. “Butch” Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>John McCarthy</td>
<td>Mary Root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Rick Carr</td>
<td>Bill Speiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Grover Wilson</td>
<td>Hunt Cheatwood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Left: Lake of the Woods
In addition to other programming, RRRC continues to provide timely educational opportunities for area stakeholders, community service based outreach events and rotation of said trainings, inclusive of Living Towns workshop series and annual Board & staff retreats throughout the 2,000-sq. mile Planning District.

Above: RRRC hosted two data training workshops led by U.S. Census Bureau staff in March and April. The training sessions allowed participants to interactively access and manipulate census data and was attended by planners, housing advocates, transportation specialists and other regional stakeholders.

Above: RRRC’s Board/Staff retreat was held at the State Theatre of Culpeper in April

Right: RRRC organized a Day to Serve event at the Fauquier Education Farm where volunteers helped harvest potatoes for the Fauquier Food Bank
The offices of the RRRC/Planning District 9 are located in Southridge Office Park, S. 106, just off Rt. 29Bus/Madison Road in the Town of Culpeper. Office hours are M-F 8:30-5:00.
(540) 829-7450 phone  (540) 829-7452 fax  planinfo@rrregion.org

Above: Rt. 211, Rappahannock County