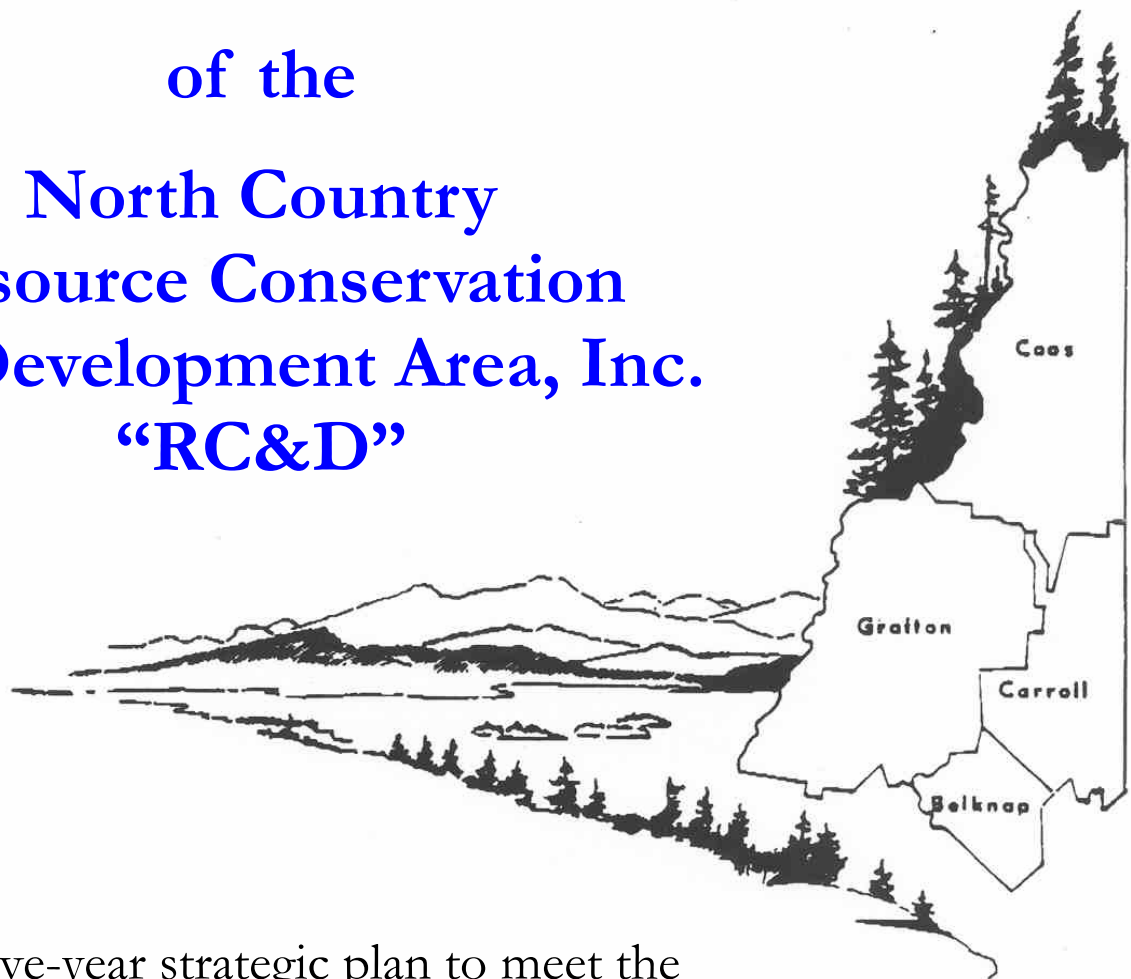


**Area Plan
2004 to 2009**
of the
**North Country
Resource Conservation
and Development Area, Inc.
“RC&D”**



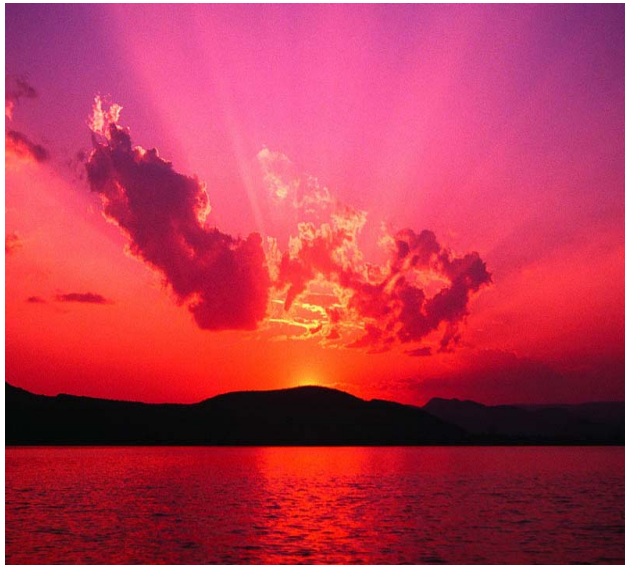
A five-year strategic plan to meet the needs and opportunities identified in New Hampshire’s “north country”

Prepared under authority and in compliance with Public Law 107-171 for our sponsors, partners and the citizenry of Belknap, Carroll, Coos and Grafton Counties in New Hampshire

January 2004

Our Mission:

To facilitate cooperative action and inspire leadership with people, organizations and communities for a sustainable economy rooted in the conservation and development of natural resources.



Our Vision:

The “north country” is a network of individuals, organizations, agencies and communities working together to address economic, social and environmental needs and opportunities.

Our Motto:

Bringing ideas, people and resources together to help make things happen!



Background

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a national program put into action to address local concerns by local people. The North Country RC&D Area, Inc. is part of a national network of volunteer directed, independent, not-for-profit councils organized by the people who live here and supported in part by the US Department of Agriculture under the authority of Public Law 107-171. This plan guides the work of the North Country RC&D Area, Inc. It is intended to be a dynamic, responsive and proactive tool. Comments, questions, suggestions and requests are always welcome and appreciated.

The North Country RC&D Area, Inc. is directed by a 15-member volunteer board. Standing sponsors include the Belknap, Carroll, Coos and Grafton County Conservation Districts, the Lakes Region and Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commissions and the North Country Council. Each of these organizations has a representative on the North Country RC&D board. The balance of the board is made up by members at large.

North Country RC&D Area, Inc. is a chartered 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization recognized by the State of New Hampshire and the IRS. Authorization to operate as an RC&D is provided by the US Secretary of Agriculture.

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A. Guiding Goals of the North Country RC&D Area, Inc.

The North Country RC&D Area, Inc. has worked in the north country since 1968. Over this 36-year period there had been a wide variety of program activity, but the goals have remained consistent. Exact words may have changed, but the intent has been the same. (For the purpose of helping the user and reader of this document, we define a goal as - a desired future condition.)

Goal #1 - The north country is a working landscape of successful farms and actively managed and productive forest land.

Goal #2 - Raw agricultural and forest products are processed to the maximum value-added potential at north country facilities.

Goal #3 - In the north country, soil, water and related natural resources are conserved using sustainable practices.

Goal #4 - North country communities are capable of providing necessary municipal services and preserving their character as defined by their Master Plan.

B. Needs and Opportunities of the “north country”

B.1 Overview

*Note: It is recognized that the following is by no means an exhaustive analysis:

The North Country RC&D Area includes the four northern counties of New Hampshire - Belknap, Carroll, Coos and Grafton. Maine, Vermont and Canada border it.

The north country is characterized by foothills, mountains, river valleys and lake basins. The White Mountain range dominates the central portion of the Area.

The North Country RC&D Area includes more than three million acres. The public (Federal and State agencies) holds approximately twenty-five percent, including the White Mountain National Forest. The area includes ninety-five cities and towns, ten grants, six purchases and five locations. Timber and paper companies own and manage a significant percentage of the area.

Forests comprise close to 95% of the land. North Country forests play a critical role, not only as a source of raw material, but as a vast recreational resource. Owners practice forestry on small woodlots and large industrial holdings. The need for diversified markets and value-adding industries are major current challenges facing the forest industry and communities searching for economic development opportunities. A shortage of labor and costs to hold land for long term investment are particular problems.

Agriculture remains an essential component in the blend of North Country resources. Principal agricultural enterprises lie in the Connecticut, Saco and Merrimack River valleys. However, smaller traditional and newer alternative "niche" agricultural enterprises dot the area. The Area needs to develop innovative methods and means to protect the important agricultural areas from conversion and to help create new opportunities for diversification of existing agricultural operations and

support the creation of new farming enterprises. Of particular concern is the shortage of animal and food planning capacity.

The Area holds a great wealth of water resources from the Connecticut Lakes of northern Coos County to the Lakes Region of Belknap County. Five principal drainage basins include the Connecticut, Androscoggin, Saco, Winnepesaukee and Merrimack. Water quality and supply remains generally quite favorable, although rapid residential and recreational growths pose local threats to the water quality. Groundwater withdrawal for both residential and commercial purposes is a growing concern.

As is typical in New England, the 95 cities and towns within the “north country” operate as independent incorporations providing municipal and social services, caring for public resources and striving to provide economic opportunities. Significant differences exist between southern communities with easier accessibility to resources, jobs and amenities that strengthen communities and northern-most communities that struggle to counteract population decline caused by limited access to resources, jobs and amenities.

The “north country” landscape, with its rugged mountains, clear running streams, pastoral valleys, expansive forests and classic New England villages embodies most peoples’ perception of rural New England. The challenge of north country communities is to find ways to maintain a “working” landscape, create jobs, offer long-term, sustainable work opportunities, provide necessary health and welfare programs and maintain the desired rural character articulated in most local Master Plans.

B.2 Needs and Opportunity Assessment

Consistent with policy and intent, the program of activities that North Country RC&D implements is guided by the people who live here. Public involvement strategy has been conducted to help insure that this Area Plan is responsive to and consistent with the opinions and recommendations of local people, organizations and partner agencies. In preparation for this plan, a network of over 280 individuals, organizations and partners were contacted in the fall of 2003 and asked to provide their specific viewpoints on how North Country RC&D should act to achieve its mission. Responses directed us to three specific strategies:

- **Entrepreneurial and Business Development**
- **Education**
- **Advocacy and Support**

C. Strategies, Objectives and a Timeframe to Implement Them

The following objectives and strategies will be pursued in this plan period to reach the previously stated goals according to the North Country RC&D Area, Inc.'s authority, mission and vision. These strategies and objectives were developed from the specific feedback provided during the public participation process described in Section B.

** This is a five-year plan. The following objectives and strategies are characterized as a Short Range (SR: years 1-2), Medium Range (MR: years 2-4) or a Long Range (LR: years 3-5) activity. Many are characterized as Full Range (FR: years 1-5).

C.1 Entrepreneurial and Business Development

C.1.1 (FR) - Expand marketing opportunities for existing agricultural and forest products.

C.1.2 (FR) - Find new uses and markets for low-grade, underutilized wood species and products.

C.1.3 (FR) - Research and assist the expansion and development of value adding processes.

C.1.4 (FR) - Create programs, networks and partnerships that help foster business expansion and creation.

C.2 Education

C.2.1 (MR) - Expand the awareness, understanding and pursuit of the recommendations contained in the Northern Forest Lands Study.

C.2.2 (FR) - Help small and entry-level farmers understand and be capable of capitalizing on market opportunities.

C.2.3 (FR) - Conduct public awareness programs and campaigns that promote the values of "local" agricultural and forest products as well as a "New England" image.

C.2.4 (SR) - Help agriculturists and forest land owners/managers use appropriate "Best Management Practices".

C.2.5 (FR) - Help communities and organizations understand "watershed" planning concepts.

C.2.6 (FR) - Provide organizational development assistance to existing and new watershed groups.

C.2.7 (MR) - Promote "Smart Growth" concepts with municipalities and community organizations.

C.3 Advocacy and Support

C.3.1 (FR) - Encourage communities, organizations, agencies and government to develop policies and programs that facilitate the growth, processing and marketing of agricultural and forest products.

C.3.2 (SR) - Assist the state of New Hampshire's Forestry Task Force address the needs of primary and secondary wood processors.

C.3.3 (FR) - Support and advocate for the continuation of the NH Current Use Program as a means to keep land in agricultural and forest land production.

C.3.4 (SR) - Encourage active participation in the White Mountain National Forest Plan Revision Process.

C.3.5 (MR) - Be an advocate for the required use of recognized Best Management Practices for agricultural and forest land.

C.3.6 (LR) - Be an advocate for better local and regional land use planning.

D. Correlation of Locally Developed Objectives to National RC&D Program Elements

<u>National RC&D Program Elements</u>	<u>North Country RC&D Objectives</u>
Land Conservation	C.2.4 and C.3.5
Water Management	C.2.4 - C.2.5 - C.2.6 C.3.4 - C.3.5 - C.3.6
Community Development	C.1.1 - C.1.2 - C.1.3 - C.1.4 C.2.2 - C.2.3 - C.3.1 - C.3.2
Land Management	C.2.1 - C.2.7 - C.3.3 C.3.4 - C.3.6

E. Partnerships to Help Implement This Area Plan

Specific outreach and feedback in the development of the Area Plan has been achieved with the following USDA agencies: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service (State & Private and White Mountain National Forest), Farm Service Agency and Rural Development.

F. Staffing Plan

The implementation of this Area Plan assumes the continuation of one full-time USDA provided RC&D Coordinator and a part-time USDA provided RC&D Administrative Assistant. Specific projects will hire employees of the RC&D Council or contract with independent contractors as needed and as resources allow.

G. Compliance Statement

“The North Country RC&D Area Council, Inc. agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the non-discrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other non-discrimination statutes; namely, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B), which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.”

The North Country RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non-procurement, debarment and State review.

H. Signatures

The North Country RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlines herein.

North Country RC&D Council, State of New Hampshire

By _____
Chairman, North Country RC&D _____ Date _____

Attest: _____
Secretary/Treasurer

This action authorized at an official meeting of the North Country Resource Conservation and Development Area Board of Directors on January 20, 2004.

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

The State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of the North Country RC&D Council as meeting the requirements under Public Law 107-171 to receive assistance from the USDA.

Acknowledged by:

State Conservationist _____ Date _____

North Country RC&D
Request for Assistance/Project Proposal Form

Date: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Location (Town, County): _____

Proposing Organization/Community: _____

Contact (Name, Address & Phone): _____

Description of Problem, Issue or Opportunity (Indicate whether scope is local, regional or statewide): _____

Actions Taken to Date: _____

Description of Project (What would you want to be done): _____

Expected Benefits of Project: _____

Assistance Needed (Type & Extent): _____

Preferred Completion Date: _____

Names, addresses & phone numbers of people who currently are or should be part of the project: _____

Project Sponsors Signature & Title, (for communities) Selectmen's Signature & Title: _____

For further information contact: North Country RC&D
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