

The North Country Catalyst

A Newsletter of the
North Country Resource Conservation & Development Area Council, Inc.

RC&D

“Bringing ideas, people and resources together to Help Make Things Happen.”

Summer 2007



Annual Meeting & Dinner

The North Country Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) recently held its 2007 Annual Meeting and Program in Plymouth. At the brief business meeting, the following **officers** were elected: (l to r in picture above): Adam Tatem, Holderness – Secretary/Treasurer, Dan McLaughlin, Alexandria - Vice-Chair, Russ Dowd, Madison– Chairman. Dinner was followed by a presentation on climate change and the possible impacts to the north country by former state senator James Rubens, who represented the NH Carbon Coalition and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The Mission of North Country RC&D

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.

Battles over the National RC&D Budget and 2007 Farm Bill

The President issued the Administrations proposed 2008 Budget last February. The Administrations proposed budget would reduce the national RC&D allocation within the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Budget from \$56 million to \$14.6 million. The cost cutting strategy is to reduce the number of RC&D Coordinators from 375 (one coordinator for each RC&D Council) to 50 (one coordinator for each state). The National Association of RC&D Councils is leading the effort to reverse this recommendation and to maintain RC&D funding nationally at \$56 million. RC&D Councils and regional Associations around the country have been organizing education campaigns for the state and key legislative leaders. As there is still time to influence Congress, supporters of the RC&D program are asked to make their own personal contacts.

In addition to the 2008 Budget, RC&Ds across the country are providing recommendations on language that should be included in the new 2007 Farm Bill. The recommended changes:

- 1) Call for a planning process, for the RC&D program, which is locally led;
- 2) Provide mandatory funding for RC&D at a level of \$82.2 million annually for five years;
- 3) Call on the Secretary of Agriculture to designate a Coordinator and Program Assistant for each Council to provide and assist in providing technical assistance;
- 4) Add to the technical assistance definition - providing assistance for the implementation of area plans and projects; and

Budget & Farm Bill - continued:

5) Add to the technical assistance definition – providing services which bring to bear the resources of Department of Agriculture programs in a local community as defined in the locally led planning process.

Please contact the North Country RC&D if you would like more information or details on how you can make your feelings heard on these two critical issues for the RC&D Program.

New Hampshire Agriculture Innovation Program (NHAIP) adds 4 farms

Faced with the pleasant problem of having an operating budget surplus, the Advisory Committee of the NHAIP, which is administered by the North Country RC&D, solicited applications this past winter from NH farms seeking technical assistance in creating a new business plan for their farming operating. 4 applications were accepted. Those farms include Putnam Farm in Piermont, Two Sisters Garlic in Canterbury, Cold Pond Community Land Trust in Acworth and Old Cider Press Farm in Westmoreland. These farms join 13 other farms which are near to completing their new business plans.

Welcome and good luck to these new participating farms!



Ayn Whytemare, NHAIP participant and owner of a NH Plant Materials business named Found Well Farm in Pembroke

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North Country RC&D Issues New Plan of Work

In March, 2007 the Board of Directors of the North Country RC&D voted to adopt a new Plan of Work for 2007/2008. The ambitious plan addresses many critical issues including; support to natural resource business development, energy conservation and technology advancement, assistance to underserved and limited resource farmers, the need for increased capacity to process livestock, local food production, community wildfire protection, watershed management, and public education on the benefits of combining natural resource conservation with economic development.

You can obtain a copy of our 07/08 Plan of Work by contacting our office or by printing it off our website www.nhrcd.net.



New wood chip storage and boiler facility at the Merrimack Valley High and Middle School

Community Scale Biomass Heating

This year North Country RC&D along with several partners will be launching a program to increase the utilization of woody biomass heating applications at NH schools and businesses. Wood fueled biomass heat offers several advantages to conventional heating systems. One is that the fuel (wood) is a local renewable

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Biomass Heating - continued:

resource. Money spent on this fuel stays in our local economy and provides means to better manage our forest resource base. Another significant advantage is potential cost savings. With the price of fuel oil approaching \$2.50 per gallon and predicted to increase, a conversion to a woody biomass heating system can save thousands of dollars each heating system and has a quick payback for investment cycle. Another advantage is that woody biomass is considered a carbon neutral fuel. This means that the combustion of woody biomass does not increase CO₂ emissions and contribute to climate change. If you are a school, business or other institution interested in exploring how a woody biomass heating system could work for you just give our office a call.

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