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.
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Town of Washington
John Fox Sullivan

*RRRC Executive Committee Member

As of September 2015

STAFF

Jeffrey Walker, AICP, Executive Director
Jenny Biché, Mobility Program Coordinator
Michelle Edwards, Regional Planner II—Environmental
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
As part of ongoing efforts to foster sustainable agriculture, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) conducted a comprehensive study of the region’s food system, culminating in the development of a Regional Food System Plan. 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. An asset assessment, economic analysis, stakeholder interviews, focus group meetings and a producer survey were conducted to document the conditions in the region’s farm and food economy as well as stakeholder’s challenges and resource needs. The goal of the plan is to strengthen the local food economy in order to retain more local dollars within the region, while also promoting citizens’ health, encouraging preservation of local farmland and enhancing farmers’ quality of life.

The study found four core obstacles the food system needs to overcome in order to be sustainable:

1. Lack of labor
2. Lack of farmers
3. Lack of infrastructure, including need for community kitchen for value-added products
4. Need for local food promotion/consumer education & preserving integrity of truly local foods

To address these obstacles, a list of priority projects was then developed through a public strategic planning process:

• Regional Food System Council
• Local Food Regional Marketing Plan
• Community Kitchen and Food Processing Center
• Food Node/Aggregation Center
• Farmer Mentorship Programs
• Farm Labor Internship Programs
• Regional Farm Labor Needs Assessment
• Mobile Slaughter Unit
• Promote Existing Resources

The recommended first step in plan implementation is the creation of a Regional Food Council to act as an advisory body and ensure the continuation of this effort. The Plan suggests that the council’s first major task should be development of the regional local foods marketing plan in collaboration with key stakeholders such as local tourism and economic development directors, Piedmont Environmental Council’s Buy-Fresh-Buy-Local Program Staff, and Virginia Cooperative Extension Agents. These steps will lay the groundwork for implementation of the other projects. Additional information, including the plan document, can be found on the project webpage at http://www.rrrregion.org/foodsystem.html.
RRRC and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) worked closely with local partners and area residents to develop a plan to improve water quality in the streams within the Upper Rapidan watershed. Currently, the streams are considered unhealthy due to high amounts of fecal bacteria in the water. People face a greater chance of illness and infection when they go swimming in the streams or get water in their eyes, ears or mouth. Successful plan implementation will be measured by restored water quality and subsequent delisting of the streams from the Virginia Impaired Waters List.

To gather local input for the plan, a series of both workgroup and public meetings were held from January to August 2015. Stakeholder workgroups were formed for three categories: government, agriculture and residential. The ideas and feedback gathered through this public process ensured the plan utilizes the most effective and practical solutions possible.

The plan describes control measures to be implemented in two phases over a 15-year period. Control measures for the agriculture sector include practices such as livestock stream exclusion systems, cover crops, and animal waste storage facilities. Residential measures include septic system pump-outs or repair, identifying and removing straight pipes, pet waste disposal stations and education programs, as well as rain gardens and other residential stormwater best management practices.

The Implementation Plan also includes a cost-benefit analysis and potential funding sources, which include cost-share programs, grant programs, in-kind donations, and private funds. An approved Watershed Implementation Plan makes the Upper Rapidan watershed eligible for TMDL Implementation grants awarded by DEQ. As previous TMDL implementation projects have demonstrated, this funding should provide a significant amount of work for the region, from engineers to fence builders, providing not only environmental benefits but also an economic one.

Additional information concerning the Upper Rapidan TMDL Implementation Plan, including the draft document can be found on the RRRC website at www.rrregion.org/tmdl_rapidan.html, or DEQ’s TMDL Implementation Planning Progress webpage at www.deq.virginia.gov/programs/water/waterqualityinformationtmdls/tmdl/tmdlimplementation/tmdlimplementationprogress.aspx.
Between July 2012, when homeless services programs in the region were consolidated under the Foothills Housing Network (FHN), and June 2015, more than 400 households and 1,100 persons who were homeless or facing imminent homelessness were stabilized in permanent housing through the assistance Foothills Housing Network programs. FHN is a regional partnership of shelters, county Departments of Social Services, and other human service, community action and housing providers that have joined efforts to create a single collaborative entity to address homelessness in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region. The Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission is lead agency for FHN, serving as liaison with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and administrator for all FHN Rapid Re-housing and Prevention grants. The success of these housing-first programs can be attributed to a robust collaboration in which Fauquier County serves as regional fiscal agent, Community Touch Inc. and Culpeper Housing and Shelter Services (CCDC) provide case management and housing location services, and each of the shelters and county DSS offices provide screening and referral to the FHN programs.

Central Entry system for all individuals and family who are facing homelessness. By channeling requests across the region through a central call center, FHN will have better data on pending requests and those that cannot be met, as well as the ability to conduct initial assessments and data entry, freeing up time for case managers for housing stabilization services. More complete and timely data will improve program evaluation and allow program adjustments to improve outcomes for participants.

This year, RRRC is also administering a grant from the Fauquier Health Foundation to create a plan for Permanent Supportive Housing in Fauquier County. Permanent Supportive Housing is a demonstrated best practice for homeless individuals with disabilities that prevent them from succeeding on their own without long-term housing solutions and supportive services. Currently, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region has no Permanent Supportive Housing units that qualify for funding under this definition. Partners in this project include Aging Together, Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services, and the Fauquier Mental Health Association. In addition, a separate grant from the Virginia Housing Development Authority has made it possible for RRRC to engage consulting assistance to complete a complementary affordable housing plan, which will cover all five counties. An intended output of this study is recommendations for long-term sustainability of FHN and regional homelessness programs.
The Foothills Area Mobility System (FAMS) continues their collaboration to expand and improve transportation services in the region. With New Freedom funding from the Department of Rail & Public Transportation, the Foothills Express and FAMS One-Call/One-Click Transportation Center has provided assistance to many of the residents and businesses in the community. Data is collected monthly on ridership, unmet need, trip purpose, travel training and trip planning which provides stakeholders with the information needed to maximize funds, streamline services and focus on opportunities. In addition, human interest stories are collected and perhaps best demonstrate the impact these services provide.

One example that demonstrates the benefits of the FAMS programs involves a grandmother who contacted the One-Call/One-Click Center needing transportation assistance for her daughter. The grandmother was taking care of her daughter, who had advanced stages of breast cancer, and her two small children. The driving back and forth to appointments, which were long and tiring, was difficult on all of them. The Transportation Solutions Specialist was able to connect them with Virginia Regional Transits on demand bus that could provide door to door transportation from their home in Sperryville to the Hope Cancer Center three days a week for $2 one way. The radiation would be every day for a total of 62 treatments. This reduced the time driving by more than half the time and saved money in gas. The family was very grateful for the referral and service. This is just one of hundreds of stories collected throughout the region that highlight the impact these services provide.

In the Spring FAMS partners Aging Together, Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services and RRRC’s mobility manager worked with non-profits Madison Literacy Council and the Madison Free Clinic to recruit volunteer drivers for Madison County. An open house event was held with many residents coming out to learn about the volunteer driving opportunities available and several signed up to assist each of the non-profits. The program was funded by a DRPT Senior Transportation Grant and Aging Together plans on replicating the program in each of the other counties in the region.

Finally, the Foothills Express made its debut in the Culpeper Fourth of July parade and Madison’s Fireman’s parade, bringing about awareness of the service and distributing free tickets to attendees to try it out. The shuttle will be wrapped with the Foothills logo this winter, continuing to build awareness up and down Route 29.
The Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Tourism Committee is wrapping up a busy year having accomplished many initiatives throughout the region. The ‘Tween Rivers Trail, an agri-artisan trail developed with funds from an Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) planning grant, launched its website www.tweenriverstrail.com over the summer and the committee has been actively advertising and promoting the trail through numerous venues. Brochures, distributed to each of the trail sites, each of welcome centers throughout Virginia. Paid publications such as Edible DC, Edible Blue Magazine. In addition, the ‘ Tween Rivers September 1st and runs through October 31st Challenge is a sweepstakes contest where sites and/or attends any of the ‘ Tween enter to win one of five prize packages themselves at the trail site or event and or Instagram sites with #tweenriverstrail. Committee on November 9th.

In April the Regional Tourism Committee hosted a two day Agritourism Symposium with the Virginia Cooperative Extension at the State Theater in Culpeper. In addition to an array of informative speakers, a panel of local agritourism businesses gave presentations on the successes and challenges they faced and fielded questions from the audience. The ‘ Tween Rivers Trail provided a vendor table at the event showcasing many of the participating trail sites. The AFID grant will wrap up at the end of the year with the development of two Green Infrastructure Maps of the region; Prime Ag Soils and Water Quality. These two layers will complete RRRC’s Green Infrastructure Map Set and be made available to local government and other stakeholders along with fact sheets and other publications.

In November and December 2014 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 events and destinations throughout the RRRC region. The new ‘ Tween Rivers Trail website was unveiled and products from some of the sites were featured.

www.tweenriverstrail.com
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

REGIONAL RESPONSE TO TRANSPORTATION FUNDING CHANGES

There were significant changes to the transportation funding process in Virginia in 2015 and the Regional Commission and its Rural Transportation Technical Committee worked diligently to clarify how the new funding process will affect the region’s transportation system. The funding process now includes a quantitative assessment of transportation projects using criteria and methodologies adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in July 2015. Projects seeking funding through two new programs – the statewide HB2 High-Priority Projects program and the Construction District Grant program – will be evaluated and ranked according to projected benefits relating to safety, economic development, accessibility, congestion mitigation and environmental impacts.

In anticipation of these changes, the Regional Commission identified eight Regional Priority projects in late 2014. Two of these projects – construction of an interchange at the southern entrance to the Town of Warrenton in Fauquier County, and corridor improvements along Broadview Avenue in Warrenton – will be submitted to the initial HB2 evaluation process. In addition, improvements at two of the region’s highly utilized Park and Ride lots – the Brandy Station lot at Route 663 and Route 15/29 in Culpeper County and the Warrenton lot at Route 605 and Route 15/29 in Fauquier County - will be submitted to provide increased transportation demand management opportunities in the region.

RRRC COMMUTER SERVICES

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 Expo, and Culpeperfest to promote the services and options available to commuters in our region. In its second year, a program at Orange County High School explains commuting and encourages transit use to students in the Driver’s Education classes.
IN RECOGNITION OF LONG-STANDING AND SIGNIFICANT AREA CONTRIBUTIONS, ENHANCED REGIONAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION ACROSS PD9

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 2014 the Commission presented long-time Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Board/Area Agency on Aging advocate Sallie Morgan with the Citizen Award, and Harry Hopkins, Town of Orange Council 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

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<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>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Ruth Updike</td>
<td>David Scott</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Robert Anderson</td>
<td>Bev Hunter</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Frank Bossio</td>
<td>John J. “Butch” Davies</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>John McCarthy</td>
<td>Mary Root</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Rick Carr</td>
<td>Bill Speiden</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Grover Wilson</td>
<td>Hunt Cheatwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Harry Hopkins</td>
<td>Sallie Morgan</td>
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Below: View looking east from Cedar Mountain Battlefield
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.

Left: RRRC’s Board/Staff retreat was held in April at the John Barton Payne Building in the Town of Warrenton
The offices of the RRRC/Planning District 9 are located in Southridge Office Park, S. 106, just off Rt. 29 Bus./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: Shirley Workman of the Madison Senior Center reports on the successful outcome of a Foothills Express fundraiser to members of the Regional Commission.