

Area Plan

THE COUNCIL AREA OF SERVICE INCLUDES CALHOUN, CHAMBERS, CLAY, CHEROKEE, CLEBURNE COOSA, ETOWAH, ST. CLAIR, RANDOLPH, TALLADEGA AND TALLAPOOSA COUNTIES.

All programs and assistance of the Coosa Valley RC&D Council are available without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, marital or family status, political belief, sexual orientation or disability

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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Vision for Coosa Valley RC&D Area

We are encouraged by the leadership and participation at the community level, units of local government, and various partnerships in planning and implementing projects to solve area problems and to conserve and develop resources. We expect this leadership to continue and to broaden as the people become more aware of opportunities provided by the RC&D Program.

Mission of the Coosa Valley RC&D Area

The mission of the organization is to provide local leadership required for developing and carrying out a plan for orderly conservation, improvement, development, and wise use of natural resources, thereby improving economic opportunities for all those entities within the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Project Area.

Background and Council Structure

In 1962, Congress passed the Food and Agricultural Act, which authorized Resource Conservation and Development areas. The purpose of the act was to expand opportunities for conservation districts, local units of governments, and individuals to improve their communities in multi-county areas. This included assistance in enhancing the economic, environmental and social well-being of the RC&D Areas.

In 1965, four counties in east Alabama came together to improve the quality of life for their citizens by forming the Coosa Valley RC&D Council. Those counties included Clay, St Clair, Calhoun, and Talladega respectively. In 1966, 3 additional counties were added, which included

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Etowah, Cherokee, and Cleburne. Randolph and Chambers were added in 1971, and Coosa and Tallapoosa were added in 1973. The RC&D area serves 4,326,980 acres.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Council is sponsored by the eleven County Commissions and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The thirty-three member council is comprised of three members from each of the eleven counties. The members include one Soil and Water Conservation District Board member, one County Commission member and one At-Large Member. The RC&D Council and its staff are responsible for the development and implementation of this plan.

In 2004, the Council elected a Board of Directors to approve project proposals and oversee the management and distribution of project funds. The Board of Directors is comprised of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary/treasurer and one representative from each of the eleven respective counties

The Council is fortunate to receive membership dues from each of the sponsoring counties to assist in the operating expenses for meetings and Executive Board travel.

Overview of the Coosa Valley RC&D Area

Within the 6,868 square miles of land within the Coosa Valley RC&D area, forestry is the major land use. Forest land consists of 3,218,166 acres – almost 75% of the area. The remaining acres are grassland, cropland, and other uses.

The Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee Rivers and their tributaries flow through the area.



R. L. Radney Elementary School Outdoor Classroom-Alexander City, AL

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Demographics

Table 1. Population – Racial Composition (2007)¹

County	Total	White Percent	Black Percent	American Indian Percent	Asian Percent	Hispanic Percent
Calhoun	113,103	76.2	19.8	0.4	0.7	2.1
Chambers	34,764	59.9	38.1	0.2	0.2	1.2
Cherokee	24,560	92.1	5.5	0.4	0.3	1.1
Clay	13,788	81.6	14.9	0.4	0.1	2.1
Cleburne	14,700	92.4	4.4	0.4	0.2	2.0
Coosa	12,202	66.3	31.5	0.4	0.1	1.5
Etowah	103,362	81.4	14.5	0.4	0.5	2.6
Randolph	22,425	75.7	21.7	0.2	0.3	1.6
St Clair	78,054	88.6	8.4	0.4	0.3	1.4
Talladega	80,255	66.3	31.3	0.3	0.4	1.2
Tallapoosa	41,475	72.1	25.9	0.3	0.3	1.0
Area Total	538,688					

Table 2. Educational Levels of Persons 25 Years Old and Older²

County	Percent High School Graduates	Percent College Graduates
Calhoun	73.9	15.2
Chambers	64.2	9.5
Cherokee	63.5	9.7
Clay	66.0	7.8
Cleburne	62.9	9.2
Coosa	65.7	8.0
Etowah	74.1	13.4
Randolph	61.9	10.0
St Clair	71.3	11.1
Talladega	69.7	11.2
Tallapoosa	70.1	14.1

¹ USDA Economic Research Service; County-Level Population Data for Alabama 2000 - 2007 and U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts

² U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts

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Table 3. Average Unemployment Rate (2003 – 2007)³

County	Number Unemployed 2008	Rate 2008	Rate 2007	Rate 2006	Rate 2005	Rate 2004	Rate 2003
Calhoun	3165	5.7	3.5	3.5	3.9	4.9	5.4
Chambers	2245	14.4	5.8	5.1	5.0	6.3	5.8
Cherokee	741	6.2	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.3	4.4
Clay	414	7.2	4.9	4.0	4.3	5.7	6.6
Cleburne	342	5.2	3.2	3.1	3.4	4.7	5.5
Coosa	380	7.9	5.1	4.9	4.4	6.4	7.4
Etowah	2748	6.0	4.0	3.7	4.1	5.7	5.9
Randolph	658	6.9	4.5	4.7	5.3	6.0	6.8
St Clair	1717	4.8	3.1	3.1	3.4	4.5	4.7
Talladega	2774	7.2	4.6	4.5	4.1	6.1	7.0
Tallapoosa	1258	6.8	4.7	4.4	3.9	5.6	6.3
ALABAMA	111,903	5.1					

Land Use/Agriculture: Most of the Coosa Valley area is in small farms, but a sizable acreage is controlled by woodland companies. Land adjacent to and in major cities is being converted to subdivisions, shopping centers, schools, and associated urban development at an alarming rate. Although most of the land was once cultivated, much has reverted to mixed stands of pine and hardwoods. Most of the open land is pasture, but some crops, such as soybeans, small grain, corn, cotton, wheat, and, to a lesser extent, tobacco, are grown. Cattle and poultry are also very prevalent.

Soil: The dominant soils are Udults. They have a clayey or loamy subsoil, a thermic temperature regime, a udic moisture regime, and kaolinitic or mixed mineralogy. Well drained very gently sloping to gently sloping Kanhapludults (Cecil, Madison, and Appling series) and Kandiudults (Davidson series) are on uplands. Well drained Kanhapludults, Dystrochrepts and Hapludalfs (Pacolet, Cecil, Gwinnett, Louisa, Louisburg, and Wilkes series) are on the steeper slopes. In some localities, these soils contain coarse fragments. Dystrochrepts (Chewacla series) Udifluvents (Congaree and Cartecay series), and Fluvaquents (Wehadkee series) are in alluvial deposits.

³ USDA Economic Research Service; County-Level Unemployment and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, Labor Market Information Division

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Socio-Economic Information

Table 4. Income and Poverty Status (2007)⁴

County	Median Household Income (2005)	Families Below Poverty Level (2004) Percent	Number Disabled Age 5+	Age 65 and Over %
Calhoun	\$35,937	16.9	25,861	14.6
Chambers	31,538	17.2	9,207	15.9
Cherokee	33,858	16.1	5,774	17.2
Clay	33,512	13.9	3,307	17.8
Cleburne	34,287	14.7	3,202	14.5
Coosa	31,142	14.0	3,559	16.2
Etowah	32,973	16.1	24,405	15.8
Randolph	32,974	16.1	5,181	16.4
St Clair	45,416	13.1	12,858	13.4
Talladega	33,986	17.8	19,976	13.6
Tallapoosa	32,672	17.1	10,901	16.9

The average median household income in 2005, for the Coosa Valley RC&D area was \$34,390.

By developing and utilizing both human and natural resources of the area, we believe this will benefit local people by improving their social and economic environments. The conservation and development of natural resources will help attract new business and industry. We could not successfully address any of the previous concerns mentioned without considering the social and economic status of the people involved. We attempted to research the welfare of our people ranging from racial composition, education levels, income status, and trends in unemployment. After reviewing the attached tables, it is imperative that the overall goal for the Coosa Valley RC&D Council is to acquire greater funding and always have education as the basis for any program. Our Council area is comprised of people with a strong work ethic. Our Council upholds the obligation to render creative opportunities to enable each county to be productive and reduced its unemployment rate. (Refer to Tables.)

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

⁴ Economic Research Service...

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The results of the information gathered from published sources and public input have identified the concerns and issues the Coosa Valley RC&D will need to address over the next five years. The results were categorized into four main RC&D Program Elements:

Land Conservation

The control of erosion and sedimentation is an on-going resource concern. The continuation of Best Management Practices is having a positive effect in all eleven of the Coosa Valley RC&D counties. These practices are being implemented by the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the highway departments (county, city, state and federal), farmers and ranchers, home and urban builders during construction and post construction, as well as others who utilize the land.

Some of the issues are:

- Soil erosion on cropland
- Loss of prime farmland to urban development
- Sedimentation of area lakes and streams from farmland and urbanization
- Point and non-point source pollution of underground and surface water supplies

These issues will be addressed in working with partners including the Farm Service Agency, NRCS, the USFS, ACES, ADEM, EPA, AFC, and others in planning and implementing strategies aimed at reversing this trend.

Water Management

Water management is defined as the conservation, use and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies; the mitigation of floods and high water tables; the repair and improvement of reservoirs; the improvement of agricultural water management; and the improvement of water quality. The Coosa Valley Area is facing one of its worst droughts in nearly 45 years. Water quality and quantity is becoming one of the greatest challenges of the public water works suppliers in the area. Water rights issues with Georgia and Florida are increasingly on the rise as the supply of water decreases and the demand increases.

Some of the issues are:

- Water quantity/quality of the area's lakes and streams
- Wastewater disposal treatment
- Nutrient management
- Sedimentation
- Increased demand for water recreational activities
- Endangered species

These issues can be addressed with continued operation of the Watershed Structure Improvement Program; continuing partnerships with Alabama Clean Water Partnership, ADEM, ACES, EPA, Alabama Forestry Commission, the National Forest Service, FSA, Poultry Growers Associations, and other partners; participation in a conservation nutrient management program; and USDA cost-share programs.

Community Development

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Communities recognize the need for recreational facilities which include parks, trails, ball fields, water-based recreational sites and much more. The growing population increases the use and need for access to these areas. Communities need assistance with planning and funding these facilities.

Some of the issues are:

- Recreational needs for at-risk teens
- Recreational and physical fitness facilities for a growing elderly population
- Tutorial/Intervention programs for students performing at subpar standards on standardized tests
- Cultural, linguistic and diversity training and development of local leaders in managing a growing Hispanic population
- Leadership development of local governmental officials
- Establishing local industrial parks and infrastructure needed in attracting and fostering new industries
- Improved and increased medical facilities/personnel

The council will continue working with local units of government in order to provide leadership in fostering community development.

Land Management

Land management is “energy conservation that includes the production of energy crops; the protection of agricultural land as appropriate from conversion to other uses; farmland protection; and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats”.

Some of the issues are:

- Idle land naturally converting to low quality hardwoods
- Loss of prime farmland to urbanization
- Land becoming a financial liability rather than an asset due to overgrown and undesirable vegetation such as kudzu and etc.
- Loss of quail populations
- Lack of profitable farming operations for limited resource farmers
- Assisting farmers in production of energy crops

The development of alternative crops and value-added specialty crops is needed. The RC&D Council can assist with this through a plastic-culture program. The council will also be assisting rabbit, sheep and goat producers to maximize profits from their current operations by helping them to acquire and utilize the latest research.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

The Coosa Valley RC&D Council developed long range goals, objectives and strategies to address regional concerns and opportunities. Although broad in scope, we worked to define each goal and expected outcome to be attainable. As detailed plans and steps to address each goal are made, these and any new goals that develop will be included in the Annual Plan of work. Projects specific to each goal will be listed and as they are completed, included in the efforts to reach a final solution. As with most problems and opportunities, long-term solutions and ever changing complex issues are the rule, so total closure of a goal may never be reached. By periodically reviewing and updating this Area Plan, the Council will remain flexible and proactive to the issues at hand.

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LAND CONSERVATION (Identified Issues: Soil Erosion, Loss of Prime Farm Land, Pollution & Energy Conservation)

GOAL I: Over the next five years engage all eleven counties across the Coosa Valley RC&D area to utilize Best Management Practices to reduce the effects of soil erosion on agricultural and urban lands

Objective 1.1: Assist with the education of all interested county commissions, farmers and ranchers, homebuilders, school students, other land-users and partners in developing and implementing Best Management Practices that reduces soil erosion over the next five years.

Strategy A: Conduct at least 5 annual enviroscape kit workshops for school students in order to teach them about how they affect the watershed.

Strategy B: Continue to work with local units of government and sponsor at least one project per year in each of the eleven counties that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation from urban lands such as schools, construction sites and road banks.

Strategy C: Hold at least 14 annual outreach workshops in the Coosa Valley area to inform farmers and ranchers about how to receive technical and financial assistance through the USDA agencies that subsidizes Best Management Practice installation.

Strategy D: Provide continued financial and technical support for 11 poultry producers in obtaining a conservation nutrient management plan for their operation.

Objective 1.2: While considering energy conservation, sustainable production and job creation, over the next five years work to protect agricultural lands from conversion to non-agricultural uses through the development of sustainable/innovative methods of crop production.⁴

Strategy A: Hold at least 5 workshops per year to assist farmers and ranchers to adopt innovative farming methods including plastic culture/micro-irrigation and high tunnel houses in order to provide them with economic stability while making their farms more sustainable.

Strategy B: Plan and implement at least one annual energy audit workshop for poultry producers in the Coosa Valley Area.

Strategy C: Continue working with the Alabama Clean-water Partnership by serving as a sponsor and assisting them with program planning and implementation.

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Strategy D: Assist/encourage/educate community leaders, government officials, civic groups and other entities to convert 15 vacant lots and other unused areas to community gardens in all eleven counties of the Coosa Valley area.

WATER MANAGEMENT: (Identified Issues: Water quality/quantities of lakes and streams, nutrient management, endangered species and increased demand for recreational activities)

GOAL 1: Over the next 5 years, develop and/or maintain partnerships that result in projects to advance conservation and proper use of irrigation and rural water supplies, giving consideration to climate change adaption and an increase in human population.

Objective 1.1: Continue to assist and educate all sponsors in the operations and maintenance of 105 watershed structures (dams and main channels) in the state.

Strategy A: Provide annual watershed structure improvement (WSI) maintenance (mowing and debris removal) on 103 watershed dams and principle spillways to insure proper functioning.

Strategy B: Hold bi-annual WSI workshops to educate new county commissioners and other sponsors about the importance of properly maintaining the watershed structures in their respective counties.

Objective 1.2: Assist with the planning and implementation of at least two water quality demonstration/educational projects with vocational, science and or vocational agricultural teachers and students with schools in the Coosa Valley RC&D area.

Strategy A: Plan and implement at least 3 water quality programs annually to elementary schools in the area to help students to understand the water cycle and how their activities affect it.

Strategy B: Continue to sponsor the clean water partnership program facilitator and assist in the implementation of their area plan.

Strategy C: Participate each year as a trainer for Alabama Envirothon Program at the 4H Center in Shelby County.

LAND MANAGEMENT (Identified Issues: idle land converting to low quality hardwoods, land becoming a financial liability rather than an asset, lack of profitable farming operations and loss of quail populations)

GOAL I: Over the next 5 years, develop opportunities for the RC&D to be the regional entity to coordinate conservation activities: forest health, alternative energy, wise water use, and agricultural sustainability.

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OBJECTIVE 1: Continue in promoting and developing key components of the regional food network system to support local agricultural producers and preserve a rural way of life.

Strategy A: Adopt at least one project in each of the eleven counties with the purpose of establishing and expanding local farmers markets.

Strategy B: Assist at least 10 small scale and limited resource farmers to identify and develop strategies to market produce from their farms.

Strategy C: Plan and implement at least one USDA Program Awareness workshop annually in each of the eleven counties in the CV area.

Strategy D: Assist at 4 forestry planning committees in the Coosa Valley Area to plan and implement at least 4 forestry field day/demonstration workshops for forestry related activities and practices that reduces soil erosion, promotes wildlife management, utilizes friendly reforestation methods and that provides for sustainability by 2019.

Strategy B: Plan and implement at least 2 alternative energy (wind and/solar) awareness workshops by 2016.

Strategy C: By the end of 2017, plan and implement a minimum of 3 Agricultural Sustainability workshops to educate the participants on the importance of the 3 pillars of sustainable agriculture (Environmental, Economic and Social) with special emphasis on the environmental pillar.

Strategy D: Install at least 5 plastic culture/micro-irrigation jobs each year through 2019.

Strategy E: Plan and implement at 3 estate planning workshops over the next three years.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: (Identified Needs: Programs that improves health, recreational and educational, and job opportunities; improvements to infrastructure; and availability of locally grown foods

GOAL 1: Over the next five years, assist the counties in the Coosa Valley RC&D area to build sustainable communities by providing economic, human and natural resource assistance through 2019.

Objective 1: Provide support for community development aimed at increasing the vitality and resiliency of communities in the region, partnering to realize sound social and economic growth.

Strategy B: Maintain established partnerships and development at least 4 new partnerships with other regional organizations (i.e. East Alabama Regional

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Planning and Development Commission, ACES, ASAN, Regional Transportation Planning Organization and other organizations) to identify a role for the RC&D in implementing economic or community development projects and planning efforts by 2019.

Objective 2: Continue working with existing partners and partner with 5 new partners to assist cities, towns, tribes, and organizations with the development of local, cultural, and heritage resources that promote the region, address local concerns, and provide economic development opportunities.

Strategy A: Adopt at least 5 projects that will create and/or improve existing museums by 2019.

Strategy B: Continue working with organizations to promote and provide funding for at 5 nature trails (i.e. Chief Ladiga, Coldwater Mountain Bike Trail, Birding Trails and The Pinhoiti Trail)

Strategy C: Provide funding to help equip five under-funded rescue/volunteer fire departments with training and/or equipment to better serve the needs of their local communities by 2019.

Strategy D: Assist in the establishment and management of 8 community and school garden opportunities with community groups, conservation districts, school districts, and cities.

Strategy E: Assist in the establishment and/or improvement of 5 farmers markets.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH USDA AND OTHERS

In addition to the participation of the County Commissions and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in all of our activities, we also have working partnerships with the following:

- ***Alabama Clean Water Partnership*** – This non-profit organization is a diverse and inclusive coalition of public-private interest groups and individuals working together to improve, protect and preserve water resources and aquatic ecosystems in Alabama. They offer improved communication and coordination, data and information sharing, and opportunities for collaboration. Coosa Valley RC&D receives funding from this organization to help provide a Coosa River Basin Facilitator.
- ***Soil & Water Conservation Committee*** - This agency works with landowners to help control erosion, protect water quality, and to enhance and protect the environment. Coosa Valley RC&D receives partial funding for our Watershed Structure Improvement Program, which provides annual watershed mowing and maintenance.
- ***Alabama Cooperative Extension System*** – Coosa Valley RC&D works with Extension offices in all eleven counties. The Extension System provides partial funding for educational projects.

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- **East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission** – Coosa Valley RC&D has partnered with this agency concerning the Senior Prescription Program and the Senior Aide Program.
- **USDA Forest Service** – We have received funding for the construction of three timber bridges.
- **Alabama Forestry Commission** – All eleven forestry commission offices participate with us in our attempt to implement better forestry practices
- **Alabama Department of Environmental Management** – Water Quality
- **Tri-State Rabbit Association** -
- **Goat & Sheep Producers of Alabama**
- **Piedmont Association of Caged Fish Producers**
- **Tuskegee University**
- **Alabama A&M University**
- **Auburn University**
- **School Boards of Education in the Coosa Valley Area**
- **Sylacauga Utility Board**

SIGNATURE PAGE

The Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council agrees that the RC&D program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination 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 nondiscrimination statutes; namely, *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, the *Age Discrimination Act of 1975* and in accordance with regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (*CFRI-15, Subparts A&B*) which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, marital status or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied 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 Coosa Valley 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 nonprocurement, suspension, disbarment, and state review.

The Coosa Valley RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the United States Department of Agriculture to realize its goals and objectives outlined herein.

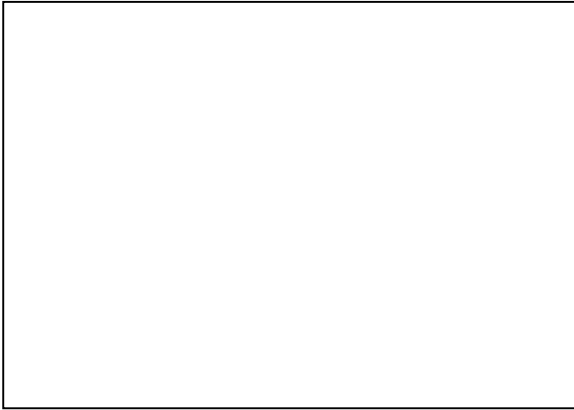
Coosa Valley RC&D, Alabama

By: _____ Chairman Date: _____

Attest: _____ Executive Director

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Coosa Valley RC&D Council and Board of Directors on _____

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