

OLD DOMINION

Resource Conservation & Development

Annual Report 2004

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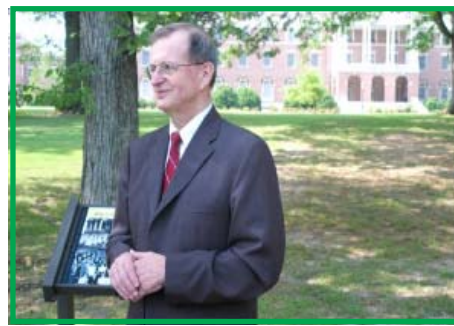
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Farmville Female Seminary Association (Longwood University), one of the featured stops on the Civil Rights In Education Heritage Trail



Russell Grove Presbyterian Church and School, located in Amelia Court House



Blackstone Female Institute (VA United Methodist Assembly Center), located in Nottoway County



Charlotte County Library, located in Charlotte Court House

A Message from the Chairman

As I reflect on the year past, I realize the great gains our council has made. Years of planning became a reality when we launched the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail. We are proud that Governor Mark Warner was the keynote speaker at our grand opening at the Moton Museum. People will be coming to Southside Virginia to experience the trail, and in turn, stimulate the economy as they travel around to appreciate our beautiful area and a portion of its history.

Another accomplishment was the Southside Virginia Rails Trails Workshop for local governments, key community decision makers and the public to understand the process to convert abandoned railroad beds into economic-boosting hiking, biking and equestrian trails. Again we were honored to have our Governor as the keynote speaker. It will be exciting to see several new trails open within our region in the next several years. The Tobacco Heritage Trail along the Roanoke River is well on its way to becoming a reality, and not far behind is the High Bridge Trail in Cumberland and Prince Edward counties.

The Environmental Field School program had another successful year with over forty students, many from socially disadvantaged families. We received two more Earth Team Awards from NRCS for exceptional volunteer service to projects to better our communities and our natural resources.

I have been proud to lead this council for the past two years. It has been rewarding and educational. I have a sense of accomplishment that I hope each and every member on the council shares. Instead of local governments competing with each other, they are pulling together and working to improve the region, knowing that this approach will

Hanks Inducted Into VARCDC Hall of Fame

Franklin Hanks, former member of the ODRC&D Council was a recent inductee into the Virginia Association of RC&D Councils' Hall of Fame. This prestigious award is given to only one individual each year.

Contributions made by Franklin and highlighted for his award included his major assistance toward the establishment of the Old Dominion RC&D Council in 1991.

Franklin contacted members of Congress concerning funding and led meetings to get the council started. He became the Council's first chairman. Under his leadership, the Council became incorporated, set up committees, began new projects, and adopted a constitution and bylaws.

Franklin served actively on the Executive Committee, Budget Committee, and Bylaws Committee. During Franklin's term as chairman, he led the effort to complete the Upper Meherrin River Natural Resource Inventory for Lunenburg, Charlotte and Mecklenburg counties and promoted the Virginia State Dry Hydrant study. He helped



From left, Mary Alice Park, Billy Park, Sherry Swinson, Franklin Hanks, Gloria Hanks, Stephanie Heintzleman, Dee Ingram and George Ingram.

the Council pursue grant funds and recruited volunteers to help with RC&D activities. He also served as a delegate to the VARCDC and became chairman of the its Legislative Committee.

Franklin went on to serve two years as chairman of the Virginia Association of RC&D Councils. Franklin led the VARCDC to take a more active role in the Southeastern and National Associations of RC&D Councils.

Education Heritage Trail is Launched



On May 14, 2004, Old Dominion RC&D opened the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail with a ceremony at the Moton Museum in Farmville. Approximately 300 people attended the ceremony with Governor Mark Warner giving the keynote speech. Other speakers were Tom Weber, Associate Chief of

USDA NRCS; Kenneth Marcus, Asst. Secretary for Civil Rights, US Department of Education; Michael Schewel, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of VA, and Patricia Cormier, President of Longwood University. William Park, chairman of the Old Dominion RC&D Council gave the opening remarks. The benediction was given by Rev. Joseph Fields, Jr. of Mt. Nebo Baptist Church in Nottoway County. The ceremony began with music performed by the Randolph-Henry High School Jazz Band. A reception followed. The Trail has been a work in progress for six years. There are 41 stops along the trail which allow visitors the opportunity to travel into history to sites where African Americans, American Indians and women struggled to achieve an education equal to that of white males.

Council Cited for Two Awards from NRCS



At the Annual NRCS Awards luncheon in Roanoke, ODRCD was honored with two awards. The first was in recognition of the opening of the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail while the second award was in recognition of the outstanding service by a volunteer to RC&D. This award was earned mainly due to the contributions of Paula Robins of Keysville. One of the goals of the RC&D Council is to coordinate a strong and active volunteer program by pursuing volunteers to assist with carrying out the council's goals. Finding funding for a recreational park in Keysville led a group of concerned mothers to Old Dominion RC&D. As a result, funding to build Keysville Tower Park was found and a beautiful park for



children up to age 12 was opened. Paula Robins, a member of the Keysville Tower Park Committee, helped coordinate many of the fundraising activities and the opening of the park. As word of the new park spread to surrounding localities, Ms. Robins spoke to groups about the project and also informed them about RC&D.

The RC&D Council was asked to make a presentation at the Virginia Association of

"Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Meade

Outstanding Volunteer Service 2004

RC&D Councils about the Keysville Tower Park project. Ms. Robins volunteered to develop a presentation and attend the meeting in Tappahannock to present it. She combined the trip with her vacation plans and traveled many hours in order to make the presentation. We applaud her efforts.

Friends of the Appomattox River Work on Blueway Project

Friends of the Appomattox River (FOAR) are a local volunteer organization working to define a vision for a Blueway. Presently this involves making an inventory of the river corridor and documenting findings, grant writing, and developing partnerships. In the near future, work will begin to build consensus in the community by bringing people together to express their ideas, clarify agreements and disagreements, and develop resolutions.

Blueways are a non-consumptive use of the public-waterways from which the community reaps economic and social benefits while maintaining the natural, historic, and scenic value of the river. A Blueway can be part of effective and healthy economic development because recreational opportunities make the area more attractive to new residents and employers. Studies show that the paddling opportunities provided visitors and residents alike will enhance Farmville's quality of life. The Blueway project



Friends of the Appomattox River Mission Statement

"Foster the vitality of the Appomattox River, promote stewardship, and facilitate sustainable use of the watershed. We support this mission as we: connect people with the natural world, stimulate public and private partnerships, provide educational support, encourage community involvement in conservation, and promote responsible recreation."

continues to gather steam with a new Blueway map launched at the June Friends of the Appomattox River meeting. Blake Robertson, Longwood 2004 senior, designed a foldable map illustrating the Blueway route on one side and water safety, points of interest, and project sponsorship on the other. FOAR members continue to attend Farmville Town Council meetings to keep the Town informed of Blueway progress. FOAR sponsored river cleanup events on October 4, 2003, and April 24, 2004. Both events focused on the Blueway route. Volunteers filled eight canoes with litter and brush and performed some needed chainsaw work. Adopt-a-Stream, Stewardship Virginia, and Clean Virginia Waterways recognized the contributions and rewarded participants with certificates of appreciation. Twin Lakes State Park generously loaned FOAR the use of their canoes for the April clean up.

Environmental Education Program Completes Fifth Year

“The field schools give students opportunities to learn about natural resources and how we are all connected to the environment.”
Deanna Fehrer

Through educational projects such as the Environmental Field School, the council is improving public awareness of our natural resources. This year, the Environmental Field School project was awarded a mini-grant from Virginia Environmental Endowment. This annual program helps children learn about nature from specialists from several state and federal agencies. Our conservation education partners - Soil and Water Conservation Districts along with Department of Conservation and Recreation staff - planned and taught over forty students who attended two week-long area field schools and got hands-on instruction. Experts from various fields taught or assisted with the classes. Classes were fun as well as educational and students got their feet wet when they took to the water during stream monitoring exercises. Time was spent in the classroom learning about watersheds, pollution, best management practices, forestry, fish and wildlife.



Students overlook the James River while taking a break from their canoe trip.

Students gained more awareness of their surroundings and learned about the impacts their decisions have on the environment. The field schools supplement the instruction students receive in county school systems during the regular school year and increase their scores on Virginia's required Standards of Learning tests. Students were introduced to the relationships of land uses within their watersheds and learned the importance of watershed planning to achieve better water quality. In order for this program to be free to students, sponsorship from organizations that share our vision are sought. Facilities, instructors and educational tools are provided by the partners. Monetary donations were received during 2004 from Farm Credit of the Virginias, Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, Charlotte Co. Farm Bureau, Buckingham Co. Farm Bureau, Colonial Ag Credit Foundation, Bank of Charlotte County, Luck Stone and Farmville Wal-Mart. A special thank you to all who helped make the schools successful.

Rails to Trails Symposium Held in Keysville

The Old Dominion Resource Conservation & Development Council and other state and local agencies sponsored a Southside Rails-to-Trails Symposium on November 5, 2004, in Keysville, VA. This was a one-day session addressing the opportunities and challenges of converting an abandoned rail line to a recreational trail.

There were 20 exhibits that featured greenway and trail projects around the region, as well as design and construction considerations.

Governor Warner was the keynote speaker. Others speaking on behalf of rail/trails were Joe Maroon, Director, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Alisa Bailey, Director, Virginia Tourism, Kent Spellman, Hugh Morris, Mark Hufeisen, Paul McCray, Karen Cross, Ursula Lemanski, French Moore, Tom Horsch and Linda McKenna-Boxx. Approximately 175 participants attended the workshop which was paid for by a grant from the Department of Forestry, Urban and Community Forestry Program.

An afternoon tour of an existing rail to trail project was taken to Staunton River Battlefield State Park in Randolph for participants comprised mostly of local officials and key community decision makers. The purpose of this workshop was to explain the benefits of developing



“I think it offers enormous, enormous potential...I think it's terribly important that we take advantage of these assets, these rail beds that have been abandoned.”

Governor Warner

abandoned railroads into hiking and riding trails to government personnel, organizations and the public. The potential economic boost to communities and adjacent landowners was demonstrated as well. The workshop described the process involved in developing a trail system. Many people from areas with successful trails were on hand to point out the benefits.

Phase II of Education Trail Plans Comes to an End



This year saw the installation of the interpretive signs for the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail. Encompassing 300 miles of Southside Virginia, the trail is comprised of 41 sites, with each marker a tribute to an event, location or person who profoundly affected the civil rights in education movement. The sites along the trail tell a poignant story of the struggles some Americans faced as they sought to obtain an equal education. Travelers along the Heritage Trail will gain insight into how education has changed over the years in Southside Virginia. Many of the sites explain the unselfish efforts of individuals while others speak to the unusual circumstances of having no county public education system whatsoever. The trail depicts 300 years of educational history, starting with Governor Spottswood spending his own money to educate American Indians through efforts to educate women in the 19th and 20th centuries up to the peaceful movements of African Americans in the 1950s and 60s for equal education.

The trail currently has 41 sites within 13 counties and the City of Petersburg in Southern Virginia, covering over 300 miles through scenic rural areas. The trail highlights individuals, schools and churches. The trail marks the newest historic tourism destination in Virginia and will drive economic development in Southside Virginia. It is managed by Virginia's Retreat, a regional tourism marketing consortium comprising the counties of Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Halifax, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward and the City of Petersburg. Virginia's Retreat was established as a regional approach for marketing tourism in neighboring counties to pool their resources to attract visitors to the The RC&D Council is already thinking of the next phase of the heritage trail. Opportunities exist to add more sites that describe the improvements over the years for the mentally and physically challenged and for the American Indians. In addition to the interpretive driving trail, the Council is interested in producing a compact disk to serve as an aid to travelers. Visitors will be treated to living testimonials of people who actually lived

through some of the struggles highlighted in the trail such as the events of the student walkout on April 23, 1951, at R.R. Moton High School. These events happened over a half century ago, and time is of the essence to capture these stories before the memories are lost forever.

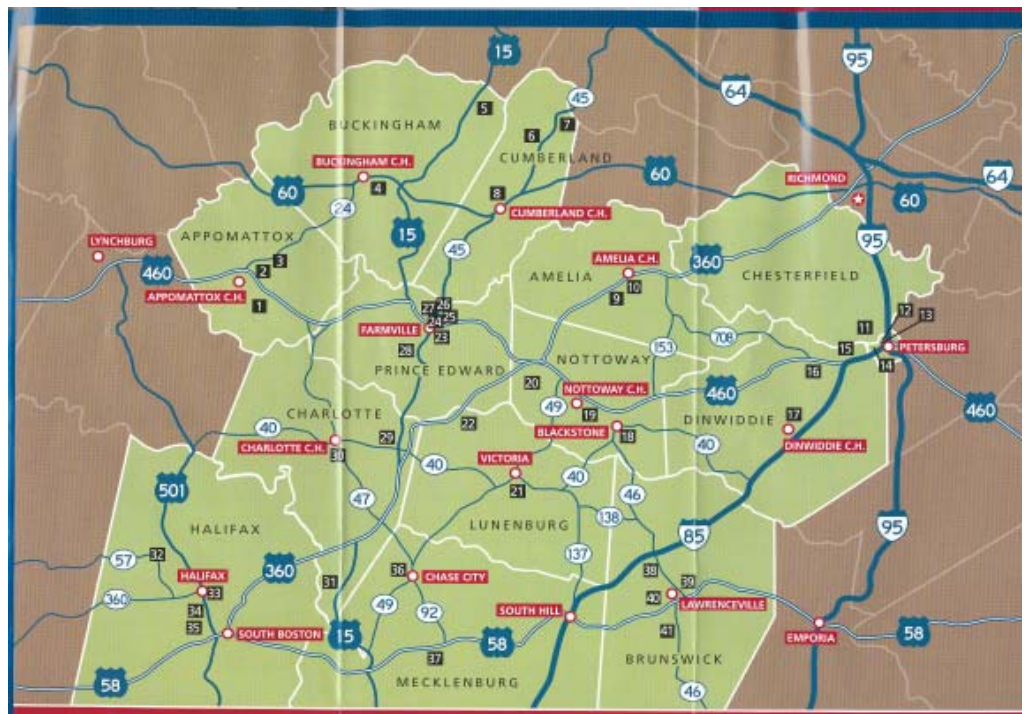
Because the story of the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail is so nationally significant, travelers from all walks of life are coming to Southside Virginia to learn area history. People are revisiting sites where they or loved ones gained their education. Others who lived their life within the region are becoming more familiar with their own local history. Calls have been received from people as far away as California. Travelers who drive the region and in turn, boost the local economy will experience the culture of Southside, meet the people and enjoy the wondrous natural beauty that exists in Virginia. If success can be measured in news coverage, to date, 29 articles have been written about the trail in newspapers in Virginia, Washington DC and even in New

Jersey. The trail was featured in television news, on radio stations and on 16 websites, including a site in Canada. Some of the rural counties in the area are at a 10% unemployment rate, which is higher than the state average of 4.1%. The average annual personal income is \$15,202 compared to the state average of \$32,338. More important than the media coverage is the revitalizing effect this project has made to the region's dwindling economy.

"The Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail is well on the way to turning history into economic stimulus in Southside Virginia."

*Stephanie Heintzleman
Chair, Virginia's Retreat*

The Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail encompasses 13 counties and the City of Petersburg. Shown below are the 41 sites that are featured on the trail.



Assistance Given for Chase City Park

Old Dominion RC&D has teamed up with The Friends of Chase City on "Project Playground" to provide a mega structure play station. The project objective is to provide a safe, enjoyable, and stimulating playground for children ages 2 through 12, who live within the community and neighboring rural areas. The playground will be available to families who live in three rural counties of Southside Virginia. It will be the first playground in Mecklenburg County to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Presently there are playgrounds at the elementary schools within the county, although they are not open to the public due to liability issues. The closest public playground is an average of 30 to 45 minutes away. Chase City is centrally located in the county with a population of over 2,400 residents with Mecklenburg's total population just over 32,000. The local elementary school of 530 students will be able to use the facility for special incentives, rewards and class picnics. The centrally located playground will be within walking distance of the local preschool for an alternative play facility



RC&D Coordinator Dave Roberts is shown assisting Tina Wood of Project Playground with a grant application.

"Once built, the park will provide a centrally located facility that is safe and enjoyable for families. The park will give an economic boost to local restaurants and merchants."

Tina Wood

Mini-Grant Awarded by Department of Forestry

An opportunity for computer training for the support staff of the RC&D councils' was provided through a mini-grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry. While attending a state meeting of all Virginia RC&D staff in Staunton, the administrative assistants attended two courses at a nearby college. This instruction was held at a satellite office of Blue Ridge Community College and included hands-on computer training using the XP operating system. The training enabled the assistants to improve their skills in tracking grants, managing databases and compiling documents such as letters, forms, mailing labels, directories, email messages, envelopes etc.

Additional training for the administrative assistants was conducted by local experts. Grant writing and management and media relations topics were covered.

for the children. Upon receiving funds, a mega structure will be purchased. Additional playground equipment, picnic tables and benches will be added as funds become available.

Eight fundraising events have been held by the Project Playground Committee. They have raised about \$2500 and have pledges of \$5,000. The community has showed its support by donating time, resources, and free advertisement to benefit the playground. A local survey has revealed that parents are willing to work towards making this playground a reality. Land centrally located in Chase City has been provided for the use of a playground.

RC&D adopted this project in August, 2004. In addition to helping the committee search for funding, the council has allowed the project to apply for grants using its 501(c)3 non-profit status.

National RC&D Week Celebrated

In July, the Old Dominion RC&D Council joined 375 RC&D Councils across the country in celebrating "RC&D Week." RC&D week was declared in recognition of the 40th anniversary of the designation of the first 10 RC&D areas. In the past 40 years, the program has grown from 10 designated areas to 375 designated areas that cover over 80% of the United States and its territories.

Sharon Ruggi, President of the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils expressed pleasure and pride as the thousands of RC&D council members celebrated the National Community Service that RC&D Councils provide to America.

"Local people determining their community needs and creating solutions for these needs in our communities, and the many projects that RC&D Councils carry out, are far too important to go unnoticed in our communities and unrecognized by the media."

*Sharon Ruggi, President
National Association of RC&D
Councils*

RC&D Councils are made up of volunteers who serve their communities in all 50 states and US territories. RC&D Councils identify, address and solve the challenges needed to sustain and improve the quality of life in their own communities. Shenandoah RC&D, Virginia's newest council, began operations in 2004 bringing the total to seven RC&D authorized areas in Virginia.

More information can be obtained about the state, regional and national RC&D programs by calling the Old Dominion RC&D office at 434.542.5489.

Council Sponsors: Council Member and Alternate


Amelia County Board of Supervisors: Kenneth Llewellyn, Phillip Vannoorbeeck
Brunswick County Board of Supervisors: Robert Conner, Gerald Vincent
Buckingham County Board of Supervisors: Henry Hagenau, Rebecca Carter
Charlotte County Board of Supervisors: Stephanie Heintzleman
Cumberland County Board of Supervisors: Sherry Swinson, Elbert Womack
Halifax County Board of Supervisor: Carlyle Wimbish, James Edmunds
Lunenburg County Board of Supervisors: George Ingram, Catherine Giorgetti
Mecklenburg County Board of Supervisors: Wayne Carter, Jim Jennings
Nottoway County Board of Supervisors: Ronnie Roark, John Prosisie
Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors: Susie Hampton, Sarah Puckett
Halifax Soil & Water Conservation District: Baxter Wilson, Kenneth Cassada
Lake Country Soil & Water Conservation District: Cynthia Gregg
Peter Francisco Soil & Water Conservation District: Sherry Ragland, David Harris
Piedmont Soil & Water Conservation District: Gary Dillard, Don Maxey
Southside Soil & Water Conservation District: Julie Hamlett, Mark Palmer
Piedmont Planning District Commission: Andre Gilliam, Jack Houghton
Southside Planning District Commission: Billy Park, Joyce French

2004 Executive Council

Chairman, William "Billy" Park
Vice Chairman, George Ingram
Secretary, Cynthia Gregg
Treasurer, Stephanie Heintzleman
Past Chair, Sherry Swinson
Member-At-Large, Kenneth Llewellyn

The Old Dominion RC&D Council wishes to express appreciation to all of the groups, organizations, and agencies for their assistance in support of projects during 2004. Active involvement and leadership on the part of local people were the key components toward the successful completion of projects. Special thanks to the Natural Resources Conservation Service for providing an office, staff and supplies to help us carry out our mission.

The Old Dominion Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. is a 501c(3) non-profit organization with a mission to initiate and coordinate resource development and conservation programs that enhance the social, economic and environmental quality of the region.



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