Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission

FY '08 Highlights & Annual Report

October 2008

Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
420 Southridge Parkway, Suite 106
Culpeper, VA 22701
(540) 829-7450
www.rrregion.org
WHAT IS A REGIONAL COMMISSION?

The purpose of Planning District, 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.”

Virginia’s 21 Planning District or Regional Commissions, of which the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) is one, provide a variety of technical services and programming to member local governments.

Such services, among others, include:

- **Grant-writing** assistance and administration
- **Project** and program management
- **Land use planning** and mapping/GIS
- **Transportation planning**, inclusive of metropolitan planning organization/Rural Planning Organization Transportation Technical Committee coordination, corridor study development, rideshare/commuter services delivery, bicycle and pedestrian facility planning, airports, and public transit
- **Environmental planning**, involving, among other projects, water quality efforts, such as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development and implementation, water supply and watershed management planning, and natural resource, open space, and agricultural/rural character preservation.

All are significant parts of the Planning District/Regional Commission’s role.

Across the Commonwealth, Planning District/Regional Commissions comprise an accessible data and assistance network that enable quick and comprehensive statewide coverage.

Each serves as an Affiliate State Data Center for its respective region. In this role, they provide important information to local government, business and citizens.

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 more than 30 years, with the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) having been active for 35, following its formation in 1973.

Within their respective boundaries, they may also serve to facilitate regional approaches to issues such as economic development, hazard mitigation/emergency preparedness planning and legislative priority identification.
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING...

As part of the Commission’s recently concluded data collection phases and in conjunction with preparations toward the development of a detailed and comprehensive Long-Range Transportation Plan for the R-R Region, staff has been actively working with member jurisdictions, VDOT Culpeper District, Transportation Mobility Planning Division (TMPD), Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and other area stakeholders to collect information, and preliminarily identify and prioritize needs.

The next and key central focus of the planning effort will be to take the process public in order to solicit comments, ideas, and active participation of area residents.

Toward that end, the RRRC Rural Transportation Technical Committee (RTC), made up of area planning directors and staff, along with representatives of above-referenced stakeholder and other groups, is presently in the process of scheduling meetings around the planning district to engage the public in the planning process.

& RRRC COMMUTER SERVICES

RRRC’s Commuter Services program continues to expand and enhance its offerings as more and more area residents look for ways to cut down on commuting times and costs. This past year saw the unveiling of a new website for the program—www.rrcommute.org—and the awarding of funding by DRPT for the subsidized start-up of a new regional commuter bus service.

While carpool and vanpool matching assistance continue to be very popular among the region’s commuters, RRRC Commuter Services has also looked for new ways to reach out to otherwise single-occupant vehicle drivers, including referenced upcoming new commuter bus service, scheduled to run initially from Warrenton to Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., and an increased outreach to area employers to expand the range of available commuting options.
LAND USE & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEES

The Regional Commission provided the impetus for the development of two regional environmental committees in 2008, one dedicated to policy and planning-related Initiatives, and the other to environmental stewardship.

The RRRC Land Use & Environment Committee first met in late 2007 and provides an opportunity for county and town environmental planners, planning directors and administrators to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss ongoing and upcoming initiatives on the local, state and federal levels. The Committee also reviews proposed state regulations and provides regional, consensus-based feedback to state-level officials. Topics covered in 2008 include a review of Chesapeake Bay data received from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and Chesapeake Bay Program, wetland and stream restoration in the region, green infrastructure development, and Low Impact Design (LID) regulations and planning.

In similar fashion, 2008 saw the formation of the Center for Rappahannock-Rapidan Environmental Stewardship (CRRES), made possible through grant funding from the Virginia Department for Environmental Quality’s Virginia Naturally program. The steering committee for the CRRES initiative is made up of local and regional non-profit and government representatives with a commitment to supporting area environmental education efforts.

Ultimately envisioned, is a collaborative network between agencies and organizations to expand and enhance environmental planning and programming throughout the region.

To date, the Commission has assisted CRRES with development of a series of web pages hosted on the Regional Commission website, including two environmental-related event calendars and a comprehensive set of links to local environmental agencies and organizations.

For information, please visit http://www.rrregion.org/crres
RRRC MAPPING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Among other types of planning-related technical assistance, the Commission provides GIS mapping services to a variety of public and private sector clients throughout the area, as well as for statewide use by the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions.

Projects completed over the past year include planning and zoning updates for the Town of Gordonsville, CDBG maps for the Scrabble School project in Rappahannock County, as well as statewide PDC and MPO boundary maps for use by the VAPDC Transportation Committee.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

In addition, as a state data center affiliate, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission also assembles and monitors statistics on a wide variety of subjects, including population, income, transportation, and housing. Data is obtained from various sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, Virginia Employment Commission, and Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The Commission also assists federal and state agencies in data analysis and review. One such example from the past year was a review of data provided by the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, where the Commission worked with each of the five counties in the region to review the data and provide feedback.

The Regional Commission also disseminates census and other data and analysis as it becomes available to member jurisdictions and other entities, upon request, and dependent on need and project scope. These and other data sets are then annually compiled into a regional Data Summary document that includes estimates and projections, and which are updated on a rolling basis.
RRRC LAUNCHES NEW REGIONAL TOURISM WEBSITE — www.thevirginiapiedmont.org

With the successful launch this past June of its new regional tourism website, accessible via the Web at www.thevirginiapiedmont.org, the RRRC Regional Tourism Committee, comprised of tourism directors and related stakeholders from across the 12 member-jurisdiction R-R region, has begun strategic marketing efforts to promote both the website and enhanced area tourism.

Two attractive ads are currently running in area magazines, each with sizable circulations: one in AAA World- Mid-Atlantic, with a circulation of around 2 million, and one in Blue Ridge Outdoors, with a smaller but strategically regional circulation. A companion print brochure about the region is under development, and an upcoming Spring familiarization, or “fam tour,” that will bring travel writers to the region for a two-day promotional event, is likewise in the process of being planned.

The Regional Tourism Committee is also working to identify additional funding to expand upon these other very promising initial marketing efforts.

PD9 CONTINUUM OF CARE INITIATIVE

In 2008, the Regional Commission received a planning grant from Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to work with the Piedmont Housing Network (PHN) to develop a new strategic plan for the organization. PHN is a consortium of local government agencies, nonprofit service providers, advocacy groups and policy makers with a mission to prevent homelessness, respond to homelessness when it occurs, and assure that the region has a complete “Continuum of Care” plan in place to support individuals and families affected by the lack of affordable housing and homelessness. The planning project will produce an analysis of service gaps, short- and long-term strategies for preventing and responding to homelessness in the region, and an action plan for implementing these strategies. The purpose of the effort is to increase the capacity of PHN and develop opportunities for new funding to support the efforts of member organizations.
RRRC LIVING TOWNS MADISON

The 7th Annual RRRC Living Towns Planning Workshop, held this year in the historic Town of Madison, county seat of Madison County, proved to be yet another information-packed, well-attended, and enjoyable proceeding.

The theme of this year’s workshop, “Madison: Moving Forward, Preserving the Past” featured a broad range of experienced and knowledgeable presenters on topics applicable to community leaders from both the public and private sectors, including keynote speaker Kevin Schmidt, Coordinator of the Office of Farmland Preservation, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services with a presentation entitled: “Planning for Agriculture.” From lunch on the lawn to the after-workshop reception at the historic Kemper Residence, the beauty, history and hospitality for which Madison is known, were all very much evident and on display.

The RRRC Living Towns Planning Workshop series in the past seven years has grown to become a popular annual institution with the purpose of bringing together representatives of the region’s towns with those of public and private sector entities to network and exchange information on planning, revitalization and preservation of towns and their communities as vital economic living centers. Previous workshops to date have been held in the towns of Orange, Warrenton, Remington, Village of Marshall, Gordonsville and Village of Sperryville.

& HUMAN SERVICES PLANNING

DISABILITY SERVICES BOARDS

Lastly, the Commission provides staff support for two of the area’s Disability Services Boards (DSBs) - the Culpeper County Disability Services Board and Rappahannock-Rapidan Disability Services Board, serving Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties.

Both Boards focus their efforts on the following goals:

- Develop and make available for public comment a triennial assessment of needs for the physically and sensory disabled community
- Provide local service providers access to the Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund for development of new services for physically and sensory disabled consumers
- Provide information and resource referral to local governments regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Exchange information with other local boards regarding services to persons with physical and sensory disabilities
### 2008 COMMISSIONERS

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<th>County</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Culpeper County</strong></td>
<td>Sue D. Hansohn, *Ruth B. Updike, At-Large</td>
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<td><strong>Fauquier County</strong></td>
<td>Anthony Hooper, *Chester Stribling, Chair</td>
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<td><strong>Madison County</strong></td>
<td>James L. Arrington, *Robert Miller, Vice Chair</td>
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<td><strong>Orange County</strong></td>
<td>Teri Pace, William C. Rolfe</td>
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<td><strong>Rappahannock County</strong></td>
<td>*Robert P. Anderson, At-Large, John W. McCarthy</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Culpeper</strong></td>
<td>Kenton Dunn, *James Risner, Treasurer</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Gordonsville</strong></td>
<td>Robert Coiner</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Madison</strong></td>
<td>William L. Lamar</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Orange</strong></td>
<td>Cole Hendrix, *Harry Hopkins, Jr., At-Large</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Remington</strong></td>
<td>Callie Kyhl</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Warrenton</strong></td>
<td>W. Hunt Cheatwood, Powell Duggan</td>
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<td><strong>Town of Washington</strong></td>
<td>John Fox Sullivan</td>
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*RRRC Executive Committee Members

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The offices of the RRRC/Planning District 9 are located in Southridge Office Park, S. 106, just off Rt. 29Bus/Madison Road in the Town of Culpeper. Office hours are M-F 8:30-5:00.

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www.theVirginiaPiedmont.org  www.rrRegion.org  www.rrCommute.org