

N R V R C . O R G

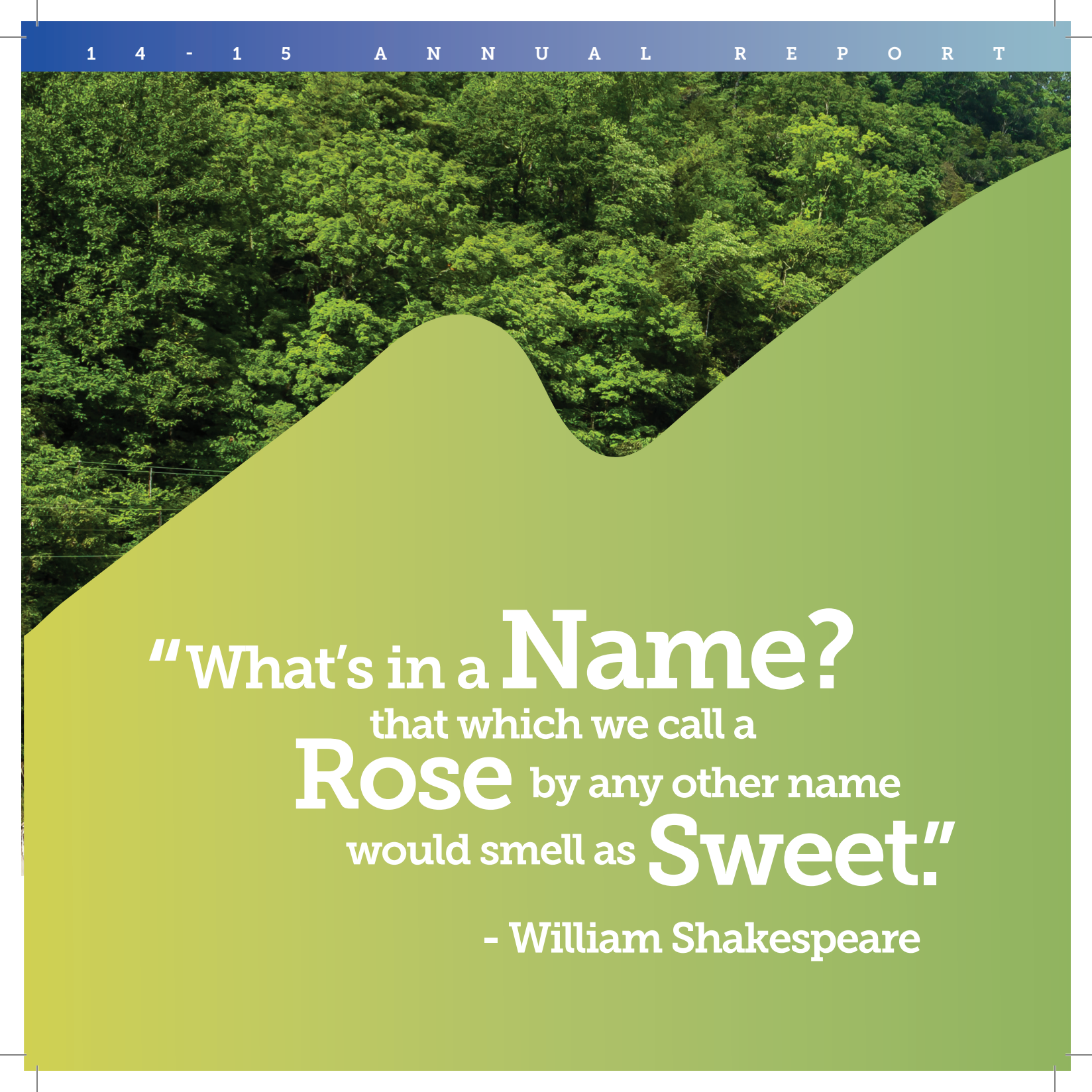
ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015



NRVRC

new river valley regional commission



“What’s in a **Name?**
that which we call a
Rose by any other name
would smell as **Sweet.**”

- William Shakespeare



With great deference to Mr. Shakespeare, I believe that a name has great importance and meaning. A name is a chance to make a first impression, to put your best foot forward in your community. As many of you know, we changed our name to the New River Valley Regional Commission. We saw this as an opportunity for our organization to better reflect its larger mission to the communities we serve. We do not simply provide planning services. We put ideas into action that impact and benefit the entire region. We serve to bring the towns, counties, cities and universities of the New River Valley together to collaborate on a collectively brighter future. This name change allows us to further demonstrate our dedication to assisting in the regional nature of economic and community development within the New River Valley. Our current projects are ambitious, but the New River Valley Regional Commission is up to the task and will continue to serve our region with the same commitment to professionalism and excellence as you have always come to expect.

Kevin Sullivan, Chair

FY2014-2015 Commissioners

Floyd County

Ms. Evelyn Janney
Mr. Fred Gerald

Giles County

Mr. Richard McCoy
Mr. Leon Law

Montgomery County

Ms. Annette Perkins
Mr. Michael Harvey

Pulaski County

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Mr. William Kantsios

Radford University

Mr. Joe Carpenter

Virginia Tech

Mr. Kevin Sullivan, Chair
Mr. Jason Soileau

Regional

Regional Convening



NRVRC Annual Dinner

The New River Valley Regional Commission board of directors hosted a dinner event modeled after a food truck rodeo at the Hotel Floyd to honor their annual award recipients. Approximately 100 local government elected officials, state and federal representatives, and planning commission chairs were in attendance.

Mr. Ken Anderson, founder and CEO of Anderson and Associates in Blacksburg, VA, received the Citizen of the Valley award, given to a citizen within the New River Valley who has made significant contributions to the betterment of the region. He established the engineering firm Anderson and Associates in 1968. Countless engineering projects for infrastructure such as public water and sewer, industrial parks, roads, and railways conducted by Anderson and Associates have directly shaped economic opportunities for the region. Mr. Anderson has also served the region in numerous economic development leadership roles as Chair for the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance,

Cooperation

Co-Vice Chair for the New Century Council, Vice-President of Economic Development for the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and Chair of the Montgomery County Industrial Development Authority. Mr. Rick Boucher, 9th Congressional District Representative from 1983-2011, received the Champion of the Valley award, given to an elected official within or representing the New River Valley who has greatly assisted communities and residents during their service to the public. During Mr. Boucher's 28 years of service to the 9th District the region benefited significantly from his representation in Washington, DC. He actively shaped legislation and programs which established the Internet and greatly assisted communities in Southwest Virginia in gaining access to the critical infrastructure. In the New River Valley, his office helped the region obtain approximately \$11 million in grant funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to deploy world-class broadband fiber. He was a tireless champion of the region when meeting with business prospects and encouraging their location in the region.

New River Valley Agriculture & Agritourism Strategic Plan



For Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Floyd Counties, agritourism and agribusiness are vehicles for increasing community wealth, providing a broader market base for locally produced products, and diversifying the mix of products and services available to visitors. The purpose of the New River Valley Agriculture and Agritourism Strategic Plan is two-fold: 1) gain a better understanding of what the current agriculture assets are in the community, and 2) develop a plan of work that will support and enhance agriculture and agritourism in the region.

The Commission supported the tri-county effort by coordinating and facilitating meetings, monitoring project expenditures, reporting to funding partners, and ensuring the completion of specific deliverables. Next steps involve developing a brand for agritourism in the region. Additionally, planning an agriculture & agritourism summit for southwest Virginia in September 2015.

Regional Cooperation (cont'd)

New River Valley Livability Initiative



This past year was the first full year of the Livability Initiative following completion of the planning effort and the program transition to the Community Foundation of the New River Valley. The Foundation provided stability during the transition period and supported several activities which fostered partnerships and documented progress. The project leadership team continues to meet monthly to discuss collaborations taking place across the region and help publish the bi-annual Livability in Action newsletter. The great work in communities that ties back into the Livability Initiative four key theme areas is being collected and compiled into a database for the region to observe progress. The database will be made available on the soon-to-be released reformatted Livability Initiative website. The Foundation was also instrumental in convening

the region in February to review progress in communities over the past year. The regional meeting was well attended with over 100 people from all four counties and the city to hear a lighting round of project updates followed by topic-specific table discussion and concluded with networking time. Over the next several months the Commission will work with the Foundation to publish a data dashboard. This will be a highly useful tool for local governments, businesses and non-profits to cite data when making decisions and help inform future needs within the region.

New River Valley HOME Consortium

Since 2007 when the New River Valley started receiving HOME funds, it has expended \$4,366,884 of HOME funds to leverage an additional \$29,523,651 of additional funds, a ratio of 6.76 dollars for every HOME dollar. Those funds have created almost 350 units of long-term affordable housing and have helped spark several comprehensive neighborhood improvement projects in the region.



The Consortium has seen an increase in demand for affordable senior housing options, and in the past year, has finished construction on two noteworthy projects specifically for seniors.

First, in partnership with Community Housing Partners, construction was completed on Grissom Lane Apartments, eight cottage-style apartments for persons 55 and older. Each cottage was built to EARTHCRAFT Net-Zero standards, meaning each home produces as much or more energy than it uses. The apartments were also designed using Universal Design features, allowing the residents to safely age in their homes.

Secondly, Summit Place, located in the Town of Rich Creek in Giles County is the Virginia's first and only affordable assisted living facility. Designed and constructed by Community Housing Partners, the building boasts of highly efficient structurally insulated panels, solar hot water heaters, and hardiplank siding.

Summit Place will serve 23 low-to-moderate income persons, providing each resident with his or her own private room, a menu of supportive services, a common dining & living area, and an enclosed garden courtyard. Murals painted by local artists line the walls, and food for residents will be provided jointly by local-favorite, Anna's restaurant, and in-house staff. Funding was provided through local and state HOME funds, Community Development Block Grant funds, New River Health Care Complex, a private foundation, and Community Housing Partners. Leaseup for Summit Place is currently underway.

Virginia's First and New River Valley Commerce Park



The New River Valley Commerce Park became the first AEP Quality Site in the Appalachian Power territory in June. Staff worked to complete the certification process over 2014 and 2015 for American Electric Power's (AEP) Quality Site Program. McCallum Sweeney Consulting conducted a thorough analysis of the property, and certified the New River Valley Commerce Park as a Large Park. The Quality Site Program certifies industrial sites and industrial parks as ready for industrial development. This certification should provide additional market exposure for the park and the New River Valley.

Regional Cooperation (cont'd)

New River Valley Passenger Rail Study

In 2017, AMTRAK will begin passenger rail service to Roanoke, with daily trains to Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Northern Virginia, and Washington DC. The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization is partnering with the New River Valley Regional Commission to identify potential passenger rail stops, as well as information about the types of travelers who would use passenger rail service in the region.

The project officially kicked off on February 12, 2015. Over the next several months, potential locations will be thoroughly evaluated to verify consistency with local planning, potential commercial and/or residential displacement, proximity to activity centers, accessibility to transportation systems and utility infrastructure, site capacity and flexibility, potential ridership and performance, economic impacts, and more. As part of these efforts, the Commission is also gathering information about the travel habits of residents in the region, visitors and university



New River Valley
RAIL 2020
Putting Passengers On Track

students, and has developed a survey to collect information from these groups. Originally launched on April 14th, the survey received nearly 3,000 responses in a single week. The survey results will help our regional partners to understand potential passenger rail use, and ensure that a new station would offer the services that travelers want the most.

To stay up to date on the latest project news, visit: www.nrvpassengerrail.org. The project website provides links to the most recent project materials and serves as a portal for public engagement.





Economic Deve & Human

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update

New River Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2015



Every five years, Economic Development Districts are tasked with making a major update to the CEDS, followed by four annual updates. The 2015 New River Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the first annual update since last year's five-year overhaul. The major changes in this year's update include revisions to the ranking criteria the CEDS uses to prioritize proposed projects, and updates to the project package list of economic development projects. The changes work to align these components of the CEDS more closely with regional economic development goals and objectives, and to reflect changing regional conditions.

New projects were solicited from all four counties, the City of Radford, and the towns within the region. The CEDS Committee, which includes public and private sector representatives, proposed new projects and discussed developments over the past year and future economic trends that helped provide input on the revisions to the ranking criteria and updated project list. A summary consumer version of the CEDS will be complete in August. A copy of the 2015 update can be found on our website.

Development Services

Pulaski County Adult Day Service & Fall Prevention Center



Pulaski County has made tremendous progress within the last year to move forward on the design and construction of an adult daycare facility and fall prevention clinic within Pulaski County. The project, funded through a \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant, will provide up to 43 elderly or disabled participants with a safe and engaging environment that currently does not

exist in the County. In late summer of 2014, the County began exploring other site options for the facility after construction estimates for renovation of the former Newbern Elementary School were substantially over budget. The County eventually identified the site of the former Dublin Primary school and has been working with Spectrum Design in order to design a brand new 4,200 square foot facility.

The building will have open space for large activities and dining, small group space, a kitchen to prepare snacks and heat meals, and a fenced-in outdoor garden with walking paths and raised bed planters. The facility will also be home to a fall prevention clinic, which will provide comprehensive fall risk assessments and intervention plans for seniors.

The project is slated for bid out and construction during the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Economic Development & Human Services (cont'd)

Prices Fork Food Initiative

A grass-roots Food Advisory Group began to meet a year ago in order to explore viable options for a local food oriented initiative within the former Prices Fork Elementary School building in Montgomery County. Local developer, Taylor Hollow Construction, recently purchased the former school and will be renovating a portion of the space for affordable senior housing units with HOME funds and other sources. As the project development team began to meet regularly regarding the use for the remainder of the building, the concept of a local-foods related business continued to surface. The Prices Fork Food Advisory Group was eventually founded out of these discussions with representation from both the private and public sectors, local food representatives, and the Regional Commission.

Montgomery County soon joined these discussions and in March of 2015, submitted a Planning Grant request to the Department of Housing and Community Development in order to explore the feasibility and sustainability of several options, including a local foods restaurant, commercial kitchen available for growers expanding into value-added food production, and an on-site market to sell those goods.

Since that time, two public meetings were held in Prices Fork in order to receive input and feedback from the community as well as the procurement of a food business consultant and architectural services. The group anticipates a September 2015 Appalachian Regional Commission application for implementation funds.

Southwest Virginia Local Foods Guide

The Commission established a partnership with Southwest Virginia Fresh (SO Fresh) to develop and maintain an interactive local food directory. SO Fresh will serve as the primary contact and repository for the collection and distribution of local food information contained in the directory. The Commission will maintain the online local food directory map utilizing ESRI's ArcGIS Online software. The Commission and SO Fresh recognize the value of sharing local food information to support agribusiness and agritourism in Virginia. To learn more about the 19-county project, visit SO Fresh's website here: <http://www.swvafresh.org/food-producers/>

Baskerville Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project



Before



After

Within the past year, the Baskerville Neighborhood Rehab project has completed its 13th and 14th rehabilitation within the neighborhood and begun construction on a 15th home. A homeowner is eligible for rehabilitation work through a combination of housing need, income eligibility, and clear title. Once a household is deemed eligible, a scope of work is created and bid out to small, local contractors to complete.

The Baskerville project, which will be complete in January 2016, was funded by a \$1,000,000 Community Development Block Grant through the Department of Housing and Community Development, local HOME funds, the Weatherization program, and local investment.

New River Valley Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund

This year, Regional Commission staff continued to provide staff support for the NRV Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). During FY14-15, Healing Tree Wellness Center in Floyd finished paying back their loan successfully, and Bootleg BBQ continues to grow their business, drawing on their line of credit with the Development Corporation to purchase equipment to increase their smoking and slow cooking capacity. In addition, the Development Corporation extended the terms of an existing loan to Barrel Cave Wines, a gourmet wine and food shop. Currently, the Development Corporation is servicing loans to businesses located within the Town of Blacksburg, Floyd County, Montgomery County, and Pulaski County.



Economic Development & Human Services (cont'd)

Radford University Economic Impact Study



Photo provided by Radford University

As Radford University (RU) continues to expand and the student population moves closer to 10,000 students, the university has been working with NRVRC staff to complete an economic impact study. Radford University provides a strong employment base while supporting many sectors of the regional economy. NRVRC staff met with RU representatives who provided information

regarding new construction activities, alumni distribution, faculty and staff salaries, and other items to project the economic impact on the region. NRVRC partnered with the Roanoke-Allegheny Regional Commission to use IMPLAN economic impact modeling software to calculate economic impacts of this spending by RU. This software allows users to input information such as salaries or capital expenditures, and projects direct and indirect impacts on the regional economy. The final report was submitted to RU in January.

Virginia Tech CAPE II Project

The Regional Commission is working with a team of Virginia Tech researchers to analyze health care records and other data sources related to substance abuse among women of child-bearing age, as part of an effort to reverse recent increases in cases of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in the New River Valley. VT and NRVRC are partnering with the New River Health District and the New River Valley Community Services Board to identify populations that may be at risk for substance abuse, and develop early interventions to ensure that mothers do not use substances during pregnancy. Once the data collection systems are in place, the data can be easily updated each year, helping to track whether regional partners are making progress in addressing this important aspect of healthy child and family development.

New River Valley/ Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (now known as the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board) exists to facilitate and coordinate regional workforce initiatives, enabling economic growth and increasing the standard of living in our region. To that end, here are some initiatives the WDB is involved in:

Skills Gap Analysis

The purpose of this regional study (which began January 2013 and ended September 2014) was to acquire the data necessary to develop a coordinated skills development (“Talent Pipeline”) approach to future workforce training and resource allocation for the region. The processes of the study included: the collection and analysis of public and private statistical data; engagement of economic developers and business/industry leaders through surveys and interviews, to identify regional industry trends and how they impact their current and future workforce skill needs; engagement of regional workforce development stakeholders to identify and catalog existing workforce development resources and initiatives (this included education: pre-school through post graduate levels); research on best practices programs in workforce development in Virginia and nationwide to provide examples specific to addressing WIA 2 skills development needs, and engagement of all regional stakeholders to develop an implementation plan to pursue strategies to



New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area

improve regional initiatives to address workforce skills gaps (the implementation plan will have region wide strategies as well as more localized strategies). This report has a lot of pieces and parts, but they can all be found here:

nrmrwib.org/business-solutions/regional-workforce-data/skills-gap/

Disability Employment Initiative

In the summer of 2014 the NR/MR WIB partnered with the Commonwealth of Virginia Community College System and the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation (who is overseeing a grant from Social Security Administration and Department of Labor) to implement the Ticket to Work program in our area, with funds from the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). The intent of the project is to eliminate employment barriers for Social Security beneficiaries by utilizing two Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in the WIB’s thirteen jurisdiction area. The program is completely voluntary for Social Security

Economic Development & Human Services (cont'd)

New River Valley/ Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board (cont'd)

Beneficiaries that want to return to work full time. Other goals of the DEI Project are to educate and inform businesses about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and increase the Workforce System's ability to serve individuals with disabilities. Some milestones of this project to date:

- The NR/MR WDB is an official Employment Network
- Common Screening Tool implemented at the Radford and Wytheville Workforce Centers
- Fully Accessible Computer installed at the Wytheville Workforce Center (Radford will receive on in August 2015)
- ADA Etiquette Training offered to businesses and organizations (for free)

Roving Computer Lab

The NR/MR WIB was awarded \$50,000 for the project in July 2014 funded through WIA set-aside State funds and awarded through a competitive grant process and was granted permission to expend funds beginning November 1, 2014.

The Roving Computer Labs' (RCLs) main purpose was to establish "remote resource rooms" in small towns throughout our rural region (offering job search assistance and computer literacy). Each RCL

is made up of five laptop computers, a portable printer and a wireless hotspot. Each of the RCL is housed out in the field to cover a smaller regional area and is moved throughout that area as sites are developed. We also have an iPad Lab made up of seven (7) iPads. To date three lab sites have been established (Fairlawn, Saltville and Willis). The WDB is seeking to develop more sites.

A secondary purpose of the RCLs was to provide a "value added" service to businesses. During the Capstone Project, this aspect of the Roving Computer Labs was promoted heavily, allowing the WIB to offer a unique service to the business community, at no cost to them. The Roving Computer Labs have been used in the following ways to serve businesses:

- iPad Lab used to teach touch screen technology to employees of a business that is soon adding touch screens to their production line monitors (in partnership with New River Community College)
- iPad for Business Workshop (in partnership with Virginia Department of Small Business Support; Attachment D)
- Social Media for Business Workshop (in partnership with Pulaski Chamber of Commerce)
- Customized Job Fairs for single businesses (in partnership with Pulaski Dept. of Social Services and Virginia Employment Commission)

- Training and “on-boarding” of new hires for a company whose building was not ready (in partnership with Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, Inc.)

Workforce Investment Act Programs

The Adult and Dislocated Worker Program, under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, is designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding and qualifying for meaningful employment, and to help employers find the skilled workers they need to compete and succeed in business.

The WIA Youth program is to help low income youth attain their high school diploma or GED and pursue postsecondary education or employment. To be eligible, youth must be affected by one or more of the following barriers to success:

- School dropout
- Basic literacy skills deficiency
- Homeless, runaway, or foster child
- Pregnant or parent
- Criminal offender
- Need help completing an educational program or securing and holding a job

Thru June 30, 2015 WDB Program Operators have served the following:

Dislocated Workers – 294

Adults – 243

Youth – 226



Planning / Tech

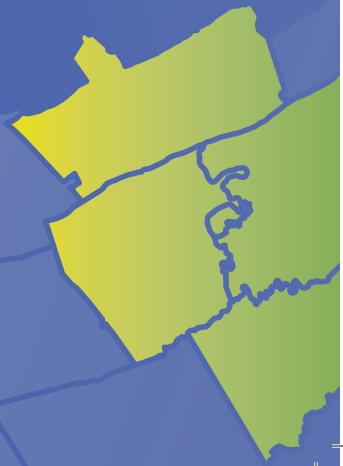
Regional Planning Forum



The Commission supports communication and information exchange between local government planning departments by coordinating a Regional Planning Forum for local planning staff. The Forum meets three to four times a year at a rotating host community to discuss planning issues of common concern in the region.

The Planning Forum organizes an annual training session which is open to all local government Planning Commission members in the region. The Commission hosted the eighth such training session on May 21, 2015, which was attended by more approximately 35 local planning commissioners and staff. The session focused on issues around agriculture and food trucks and featured the following guest speakers:

- **Fred Wydner**, *Agricultural Development Director for Pittsylvania County*, spoke about his County's experience promoting agriculture, creating a forum for discussion of agricultural land use issues, exploring ways to further develop agriculture, and undertaking these activities under the direction of an agriculture development board.
- **Mike Chandler**, *Director of Education for the Land Use Education Program at Virginia Tech*, spoke on the approaches used most often by Virginia localities that allow and regulate food truck uses.



nical Assistance

New River Valley Stormwater Program

In 2014, the Commission assisted participating localities with the development of local storm water programs, prepared draft ordinances and funding plans, presented to local leadership groups, developed a strategy for multi-jurisdictional partnerships, and completed available training. In addition, the Commission facilitated stakeholder group discussions between local partners, State Agency representatives, engineers, and attorneys. Local partners included Montgomery County, Pulaski County, Floyd County, Patrick County, the Town of Pulaski, the Town of Pearisburg, and the Town of Glen Lyn. The Virginia Stormwater Act became effective on July 1, 2014.

Sunset Cemetery Master Plan – Town of Christiansburg

In 2014, the Commission worked with a committee appointed by the Town Council of Christiansburg to prepare a master plan for Sunset Cemetery. Currently, less than 30% of the cemetery property is undeveloped. The Town had a strategy for traditional in-ground burials; however, additional scenarios were evaluated for each of the six planning areas. The scenarios are intended to assist the Advisory Committee with future recommendations to Town Council. In addition

to scenario development, the Commission facilitated committee meetings, reviewed existing conditions, explored potential strategies, developed a conceptual plan, and identified potential costs. The plan is available online here: nrvc.org/what-we-do/community-development/

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Commission provided technical assistance to Montgomery County to develop a 20 year master plan for their Parks and Recreation department (MCPR). This involved meeting with the MCPR Commission, staff, and county administration to develop the scope and content of the plan. Public input is currently being collected through either an online survey or written survey administered at MCPR events. Commission staff has researched current trends in parks and recreation, current and projected county demographic data, and has inventoried all MCPR parks and facilities. Once the survey data is collected, the input from the MCPR Commission, staff, administration, and the residents of Montgomery County will be combined into the master plan to guide what and how the county should move forward with MCPR. A project website was developed to house the online survey, and to provide content about the Master Plan. The website is: nrvc.org/mcpr

Planning/Technical Assistance (cont'd)

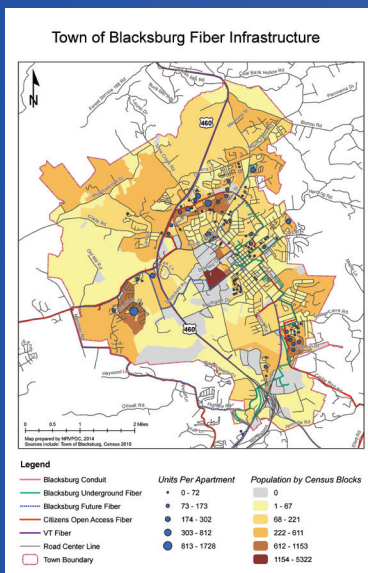
Blacksburg Broadband

In 2014, the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech and the Blacksburg Partnership funded a pilot project to explore the means and determine a path forward for businesses and residents in the Town of Blacksburg to have access to the most robust Internet bandwidth possible. The intention is to establish a last-mile deployment model which allows expansion of high bandwidth service beyond the town and is replicable in other communities. The deployment model should have an infrastructure that allows for future capacity and technological upgrades.

The steering committee has initiated a dialogue with providers through meetings and a request for information to identify how affordable last-mile, high-speed broadband can be delivered. The project team has also mapped the known

fiber network and download/upload speeds to determine current state of service.

The request for information (RFI) process did not reveal a clear and obvious path for bringing high-speed service to residential neighborhoods with respect to private or public sector investment. One clear finding from the RFI is a willingness of service providers to provide new or higher-speed service when the demand is pre-ordered; speculative expansion is not considered a reasonable approach for providers. The work to date has revealed a need to further understand four important issues: (1) how and where broadband deployment is possible in an economically viable method that capitalizes on existing, accessible resources; (2) how is deployment impacted by government policies; (3) how can deployment be facilitated by local government; and (4) what are the customer needs that will increase demand for affordable high-speed broadband.



GIS Partnership – New River Health District

The Commission established a partnership with the New River Health District (NRHD) in 2014. The Commission and NRHD recognize the capabilities of utilizing Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) to convey technical information visually, catalog historical data, and analyze information. By sharing financial resources and technical expertise, the Commission and NRHD can provide GIS services on a broader platform. The Commission utilized GIS to map a variety of information for administrative use in FY15. Additionally, the Commission supported graduate student interns with capstone projects. Based on the success of the initial trial phase, the partnership will continue into FY16.

Gatewood Park Master Plan



The Commission is working with the Town of Pulaski to develop an Interim Report and Master Plan for Gatewood Park, with a planning horizon of

2035. Through the planning process, the Advisory Committee will identify the existing characteristics of the more than 700-acre property, develop conceptual ideas to improve existing conditions, and create strategies for future development opportunities. The process will be guided by the Gatewood Park Advisory Committee.

Floyd Regional Commerce Center – Market & Feasibility Study

The Commission is working with Floyd County to identify specific infrastructure needs of target businesses and sectors that may locate at the Commerce Center; and identify ways to improve access to Route 8 and Route 221. The first aspect of the study focuses on economic development. Particular emphasis will be given towards identifying the types of infrastructure target industries need, which may have implications for site preparation activities on undeveloped parcels at the Commerce Center. The second aspect of the study focuses on transportation. Study recommendations will focus on existing corridor enhancements that minimally impact the surrounding community. Additionally, new conceptual alignments will be explored with local stakeholders.

Planning/Technical Assistance (cont'd)

Regional Tourism- New River Valley Trail Guide



The NRVRC received a grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation to develop a New River Valley Trail Guide brochure to distribute at Visitor's Centers and other area businesses that serve tourists. The Commission worked with tourism promotion organizations in Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and Radford to develop the brochure, which provides information on over a dozen of the region's most popular hiking and biking trails, such as Cascade Falls,

the Huckleberry Trail, the New River Trail, and Wildwood Park. The brochure includes pictures, driving directions, and information about the features of each trail. In addition to printed brochures for distribution, the Commission produced an on-line version of the trail guide that organizations can include on their websites, including the Explore New River Valley tourism website.

Other Technical Assistance

- Town of Narrows Planning Commission and staff in developing a draft update of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
- Town of Pulaski Planning Commission and staff in developing a draft update of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
- Pulaski County staff in facilitating public input meetings prior to an update and streamline of the County's development-related ordinances.
- Assist Floyd County staff in initiating work to draft an update of the County's Solid Waste Management Plan.
- Assist Pulaski County with a sewer line extension in the Skyview Subdivision.
- Assist the Town of Rich Creek with a VDOT Enhancement Grant to enhance the pedestrian facilities along its downtown transportation corridor.





Transportation

RIDE Solutions



The RIDE Solutions program continues to build visibility within the community through outreach programs to support and recruit Workplace Partners and serve individuals traveling in the NRV. This goal is being met by directly contacting businesses and participating in business expos and other events and developing partnerships with other organizations in the region. Staff participated in the NRV Job Fair Expo as well as the Pulaski Chamber's first Bike Night at The Marketplace. Bike Month and the Clean Commute Challenge were promoted in May and saw participation that will encourage changes in commuters choosing more than only driving alone to reach their destinations.

New River Valley MPO Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) contracted with the Commission to develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The purpose of the plan was to develop a long-range multi-modal transportation system strategy. The planning process was led by a sub-committee of the MPO. Representatives participated from localities within the recently expanded planning area, existing transit providers, universities, and community stakeholders. To complete the plan, the MPO sub-committee utilized the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's (DRPT) Multi-modal System Design Guidelines to create a multi-modal system plan. To complement the plan, an interactive Multi-modal Planning Tool and supporting project website were created. The tool received a 2014 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations. For additional information visit: www.nrrc.org

Portal to Outdoor Family Adventures

Welcome to Narrows! Our community is a portal to outdoor family adventures. Downtown is just a stone's throw away from the New River, Wolf Creek, Mill Creek Nature Park, the Appalachian Trail, and the Great Eastern Trail. You can choose to hike, bike, fish, raft, canoe, or simply enjoy the serenity of the mountains and waterways.

When the world becomes too intrusive with its noisy business and you crave a get-away, visit this Small Town America. We hope you'll enjoy your visit in Narrows, VA...NATURALLY!

Information: www.TheTownofNarrows.org



The Great Eastern Trail

In the 1920s Remond Mackaye envisioned a "braided" network of trails that ran the length of the Appalachian Mountains. Today, volunteers are working on establishing a premier hiking experience that will stretch across nine states, from Alabama to New York. Known as the "GEI," the trail follows Route 649, passes through Camp Success and downtown, and continues along Old Route 100 until it intersects and follows the Appalachian Trail.

Great Eastern Trail: 1,800 miles, difficult, long-distance trail.



The Trails of Mill Creek Nature Park

Within the mountains of Narrows, this nature park spans 145 acres of beautiful landscape. There are trails leading to scenic falls and Jefferson National Forest. Visitors can enjoy hiking, mountain biking, and fishing. In 2013, the park received a silver award in "Best of the Blue Ridge" and was also featured in a national commercial for Barbaric! Shave cream. Some of the trails are shown on this map and described below.

Batterman: 2.83 miles, difficult, steep, rocky switchback climb, on double track to the top of Peans Mountain.
Catwalk (yellow): 0.87 miles, difficult upper half features a technical rock garden, with very challenging steep sections.
Grassy Road: 1.35 miles, easy, smooth, grassy double track to beautiful views overlooking Narrows.
Long Shot: 3.4 miles, easy, very enjoyable, rolling, mixed double and single track.
Mill Branch: 1.06 miles, easy, rolling climb from Merry Branch Creek to Rocky Ridge Trail.
Old Rubber: 1.2 miles, easy, alternates between double track and shock-absorbing gravel.
Piney Road: 0.88 miles, moderate, smooth pine packed single track featuring a creek crossing.
Rocky Ridge: 1.9 miles, easy, rolling descent from the top of Peans Mountain to Merry Branch Creek.
Shoat: 0.33 miles, easy, downhill, pine packed descent - connecting Grassy Road and Piney Road.



The Appalachian Trail

Stretching along the crests and valleys of the Appalachian mountain range, the commonly marked footpath is one of the longest in the world. Known as the "AT," 2-3 million people visit each year and about 2,000 people attempt to thru-hike the entire trail. The trail was originally completed in 1937 and today is a unit of the National Park System that stretches from Georgia to Maine. The segment of trail near Narrows meanders along the ridges of Peans Mountain.

Appalachian Trail: 2,180 miles, difficult, long-distance trail.

Legend

HOSPITAL	VETERINARY	BANK/ATM	FOOD/BEVERAGE	INFORMATION
MEDICAL	LODGING	POINT OF INTEREST	VEHICLE RENTAL	POST OFFICE
PHARMACY	CAMPING	GROCERIES	FREE WIFI	



Appalachian Trail Communities – Towns' of Pearisburg and Narrows

The Commission worked with the Towns of Pearisburg and Narrows in Giles County to develop a Hikers Guide tri-fold brochure and kiosk map for both communities. The designation of an official Appalachian Trail Community is designed to act as a catalyst for enhancing economic development, engaging citizens as trail visitors and stewards, aiding municipalities and regional organizations with conservation planning, and helping community members view the trail as a resource and asset.

New River Valley Trail Counter Program

The Commission partnered with the Virginia Department of Transportation to initiate the trail counter program in 2014. Three infrared trail counters were purchased and deployed between May 31, 2014 – October 20, 2014. The Commission collected trail counts on the New River Trail, Radford Riverway, Huckleberry Trail, and the Dora Trail. Depending on the location of the counters, trail usage ranged from 200 – 6,600 users each week. Once counts were complete, the data was shared with local representatives and partners at VDOT. Counts were launched in June 2015 along the Appalachian Trail and Mill Creek Trail.

Transportation (cont'd)

NRV Mapping of Vulnerable Roadways and Bridges Campaign



The goal of the New River Valley Mapping of Vulnerable Roadways and Outreach Campaign was to identify vulnerable roadways, driveways, bridges, and culverts within the 100-year floodplain and flash flood prone areas. The Commission partnered with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to develop an interactive map for two purposes: 1) verify locations within the existing GIS database, and 2) add locations based on local knowledge.

This project incorporates the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Turn Around – Don't Drown program, which targets citizens who rely on vulnerable transportation infrastructure. Next

steps involve purchasing and erecting signage to encourage drivers to avoid areas that are flooded, especially if water is flowing fast. To learn more about the project, visit the website here: nrvc.org/what-we-do/community-development/

New River Valley Regional Transit Study

The Commission is working with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transit Coordinating Council to investigate potential enhancements at overlapping service and high-volume bus stop locations. Particular focus will be on the physical appearance and accessibility of information at existing bus stops. The plan recommendations will outline potential partnerships, investments, and changes that elevate the presence of public transit. Furthermore, the study will identify strategies to elevate public transit as a preferred transportation choice in the New River Valley region. To stay up to date on the latest project information, visit the project website here: nrvc.org/what-we-do/transportation

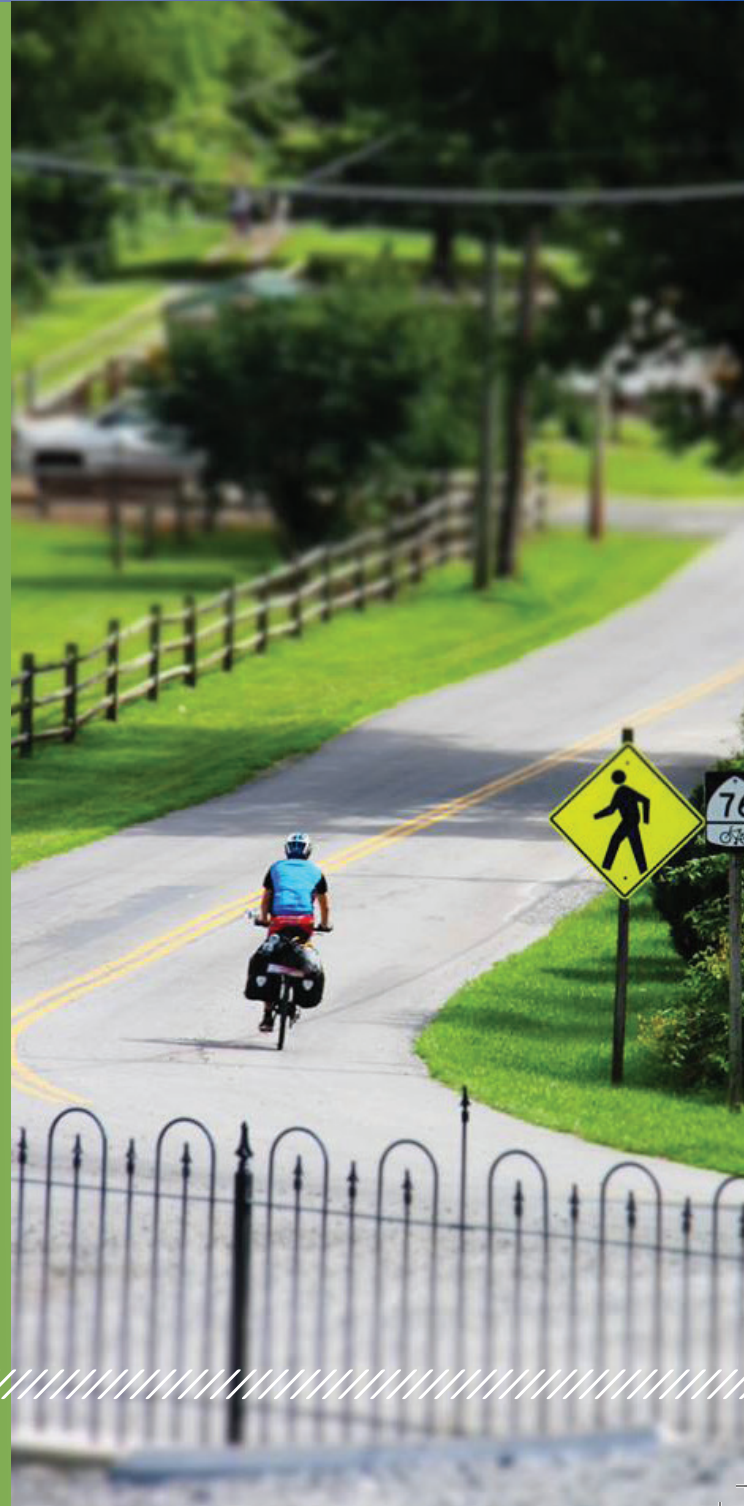


NRV Cycling Guide

The Commission is working with the New River Valley Bicycle Association to update the Cycling in the New River Valley Guidebook. The original document was completed nearly 20 years ago and it is still used on a regular basis today. The existing guide provides route descriptions, turn-by-turn instructions, and overhead maps for more than 30 road rides and nearly a dozen off-road rides.

The purpose of the Commission's project is to ground-truth existing routes and build onto this exciting and resourceful tool. The final product will feature a new website and interactive route maps. Easily printable materials will also be available for people on the go.

The project will be completed in three phases: 1) review the existing guide, 2) add new routes, and 3) create a new chapter that focuses on traveling between communities. The project is anticipated to be complete in the Fall 2015.



Financial & Personnel



Director's Message

The 2014-2105 fiscal year will be one known as a point of transition in the history of this organization. In May the Commission formally announced the name change from the New River Valley Planning District Commission to the New River Valley Regional Commission. The idea for the change derived from our members in an agency assessment conducted in 2012. The assessment process identified eight goals for the organization and the Commission board of directors prioritized them with the name change being the final goal. After receiving resolutions of support from all 14 members of the Commission, the board saw fit to amend the agency charter and implement the name change. The new name is complimented by a new brand found in this report which we are very excited to use and represent the work of the Commission and the region.

Shifting gears to the region, it is without question an exceptional place and there are numerous projects and programs underway that will directly increase the economic opportunity and quality of life for residents across the region. A great example of a

community taking the initiative for local economic development is the small business development program launched by the Floyd County Economic Development Authority called Floyd C4: Creators, Curriculum, Coaching and Challenge. The Commission was pleased to participate in the program serving as one of the business plan judges in the final stage while also providing a supporting role in the five business development sessions leading up to the finale. The approach, as NPR called, "Floyd's Kinder, Gentler Shark Tank," helped to identify promising businesses in the community, offered them business counseling and culminated in a competition with the winner taking home \$5,000 to grow their business in Floyd County. This unique model is often referred to as economic gardening whereby a community supports their own and assists them to grow their business locally. Across the region there are examples of communities 'growing their own', utilizing their assets to maximize their economic opportunity and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Two communities in Giles County, Pembroke and Narrows, are in the early stages of 'growing their own'. Since last year both towns were searching for ways to reorient their economy based on

the amazing natural resources unique to their communities. Late this year the towns received a joint planning grant to engage in a multi-faceted program to identify community and business needs then determine strategies to accomplish the goals for reorienting their economy and ultimately revitalizing their downtowns. Given their common goals and challenges, it is impressive to observe the high level of collaboration between the communities to make the revitalization possible. Perhaps one of the largest regional collaboration efforts currently underway is the pursuit of passenger rail service for the New River Valley. The project steering committee, facilitated by the Blacksburg Partnership, is routinely attended by chief elected and administrative officials in local government, state and federal elected officials, university leadership, business owners and non-profit leaders. The Commission is leading the demand study scheduled to be complete in December 2015. It is highly rewarding to serve a project with such strong public and private support across the region.

The level of collaboration among community leaders found in these projects ranging from a

regional infrastructure such as passenger rail to growing small businesses certainly bodes well for any challenges or opportunities on the horizon for the region. The Regional Commission looks forward to continuing to foster the vital relationships and generating success stories which keep our communities thriving well into the future.



Kevin Byrd, AICP
Executive Director



Finance Report

Year Ended June 30, 2015

Revenues

Grants and Appropriations

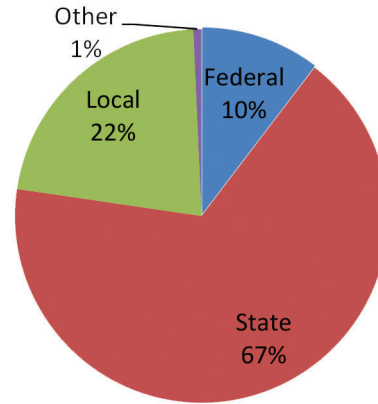
Federal	166,436
State	1,074,087
Local	352,678
Other	11,356
Total	1,604,557

Expenditures

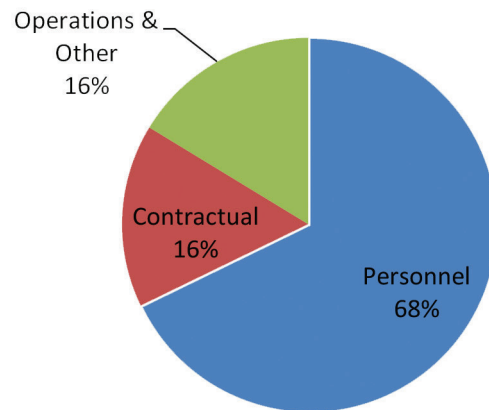
Personnel	1,033,375
Contractual	242,334
Operations & Other	248,509
Total	1,524,217

Funds Carried Forward 80,340

Grants and Appropriations



Expenditures







NRVRC
new river valley regional commission

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nrvrc.org