

2016
2017

ANNUAL REPORT



NRVRC

new river valley regional commission

N R V R C . O R G



As we put the finishing touches on this edition of the New River Valley Regional Commission annual report, I am reminded of the many and varied accomplishments on behalf of our communities throughout the region.

Highlights of a busy and productive year include:

- Re-launched Smart Beginnings NRV under the Regional Commission umbrella
- Completed three downtown community visioning projects for Community Development Block Grants in Pulaski, Narrows and Pembroke
- County-wide planning in Giles County orienting toward outdoor recreation economic opportunities
- Secured over \$3 million in grant funds for the Prices Fork Elementary School Reuse project
- Coordinated the first regional clean-up event for the New River
- Organized the Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo - over 100 vendors and 2,000 attendees
- Completed an assessment of regional tourism collaboration
- Coordinated a broadband users survey in Montgomery County and shared findings with 13 internet service providers
- Updated the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan to help ensure preparedness for communities across the region
- Continued support to NRV Rail 2020, advocating expansion of passenger rail service to the NRV



These accomplishments, many of which are detailed in this report, are excellent examples of your Commission fulfilling its goal of “Strengthening the Region through Collaboration.” This spirit of cooperation is making a powerful and positive difference for citizens of the NRV.

Your Commission looks with excitement to the prospects and opportunities of a new year, and we ask you to share with us how we can collaborate even more to enable the New River Valley to realize an even more promising, rewarding and fulfilling future.

L. Joe Carpenter, Chair

FY2016-2017 Commissioners

Floyd County

Mr. Michael Maslaney
Mr. Fred Gerald

Giles County

Mr. Richard McCoy
Mr. Leon Law, *Treasurer*

Montgomery County

Ms. Annette Perkins
Mr. Michael Harvey, *Vice-Chair*

Pulaski County

Mr. Charles Bopp
Dr. Doug Warren

City of Radford

Mr. Keith Marshall
Dr. Helen Harvey

Town of Blacksburg

Ms. Holly Lesko
Ms. Cecile Newcomb

Town of Christiansburg

Mr. Harry Collins
Mr. Henry Showalter
Mr. Hil Johnson

Town of Floyd

Mr. Michael Patton

Town of Narrows

Mr. Tom Garrett

Town of Pearisburg

Ms. Susie Journell

Town of Pulaski

Mr. Larry Clevinger
Mr. Greg East

Town of Rich Creek

Mr. William Kantsios

Radford University

Mr. Joe Carpenter, *Chair*

Virginia Tech

Mr. Kevin Sullivan, *Past-Chair*
Mr. Chris Kiwus



Regional Convening

NRVRC Annual Dinner

The New River Valley Regional Commission board of directors hosted a dinner event at Doe Creek Farm in Pembroke, VA to honor their award recipients. Over 100 local government elected officials, state and federal representatives, and planning commission chairs were in attendance.

Mr. Bill Shelton, Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), received the Friend of the Valley award. This award is given to an individual or organization outside of the New River Valley that has made significant contributions to the betterment of the region. For the past 19 years Mr. Shelton has led the department which provides community development and housing program support to communities across the Commonwealth. Mr. Shelton is a top advocate



among state agency leadership for Regional Commission's in Virginia. He perpetually supports partnerships with regional commissions through programs offered by DHCD in housing and community development that lead to job creation and economic opportunities across the Commonwealth.

Woody Crenshaw, an entrepreneur in Floyd, received the Citizen of the Valley award. This award is given to a citizen within the New River Valley who has made significant contributions to the betterment of the region. Mr. Crenshaw's tireless hands-on support, leadership and advocacy for 'Round the Mountain, Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network; the Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail; and Heartwood all contributed to these organizations being part of a successful creative economy initiative which significantly benefits the region and all of Southwest Virginia. Mr. Crenshaw is persistent, willing to advocate anytime, anywhere and has put a substantial amount of time and resources behind his efforts to support the creative economy, community sustainability and quality of life improvements in the region.

Mr. Chris McKlarney, the Giles County Administrator, received the Champion of the Valley award. This award is given to an appointed or elected official within, or representing, the New River Valley who has greatly assisted communities and residents in their service to the public. Mr. McKlarney is described by staff, community leaders and citizens as being a highly creative visionary. Under his leadership impactful programs have not only launched, but continue to expand which include the Giles County Access to Community College Education program, Giles County Drug Court and Day Report, and ReNew the New River clean-up.

(pictured L to R: Joe Carpenter, Bill Shelton, Woody Crenshaw, Chris McKlarney, and Kevin Byrd)



New River Valley HOME Consortium



As of August 2, 2016, the New River Valley HOME Consortium now has a non-profit arm, NRV Home, in which to better serve the needs of the region. Currently the HOME Consortium Board is comprised of two representatives from each of the five member localities and a non-voting member from both Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), Community Housing Partners and Habitat for Humanity NRV. While this board helps to guide HOME Staff regarding policy and implementation activities for its HOME Program funding, it is not a legal entity.

Establishing a non-profit allows for the entity to supplement housing funding above and beyond its annual allocation or to help serve in areas tangential to housing, but not eligible under the HOME program. An important distinction to note is that NRV Home will never pursue funding in competition with any of its local housing developers.

The first program under “NRV Home” has been the creation of the New River Valley Timebank. The Timebank is a neighbor to neighbor network where people exchange skills and services using time rather than dollars. A second program, the Tools of Time Community Art Project was recently funded through an Enterprise Community Partners Collaborative Action Grant for the Old Prices Fork School Revitalization Project. Community members will be invited to participate in an interactive series of events that will capture their families' contributions to local history and culture, resulting in a permanent art installation within the old school building: a three-dimensional sculpture with a millstone at its center representing occupations such as coal mining, stone carving, farming, quilting and food preparation.

Virginia's First and New River Valley Commerce Park

Prospects continue to show interest in the Commerce Park with staff fielding requests for information and site visits in FY2017. Staff have been supporting these development efforts in partnership with the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance. Numerous other administrative and planning activities initiated during the year continue to position the Commerce Park for more effective marketing, such as updating the property's covenants for tenants, and renewing leases that ensure stewardship of parcels until industrial tenant development. During FY2017, the site became a certified Virginia Economic Development Partnership Business Ready Site. An agreement was signed with Radford University to allow professors and their students to use the property as a "living lab" for scientific investigations. The image below shows a Radford University professor using the Commerce Park living lab to train students in Ground Penetrating Radar.



New River Watershed Roundtable

The Regional Commission continues to provide leadership and facilitation on regional watershed issues through the reestablished New River Watershed Roundtable. In August 2016, the Watershed Roundtable, coordinated the New River Valley's first regional river clean-up at Bisset Park. 450 people attended the event and removed four tons of trash and hundreds of tires from the New River. Participants included Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties, and the City of Radford, along with multiple business, student, and advocacy organizations. The event garnered the National Association of Development Organization's 2016 Innovation Award and the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Society's 2016 Merit Award.

Through the New River Watershed Roundtable, additional regional water quality improvement and river enhancement projects are underway. Projects include the coordination of future clean-up events and the expansion of the New River Water Trail. The Watershed Roundtable continues to provide a forum for all parties interested in the New River to convene and engage in open discussion. The Commission partners with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to provide administrative support for the Watershed Roundtable.



2017 Livability Information Exchange

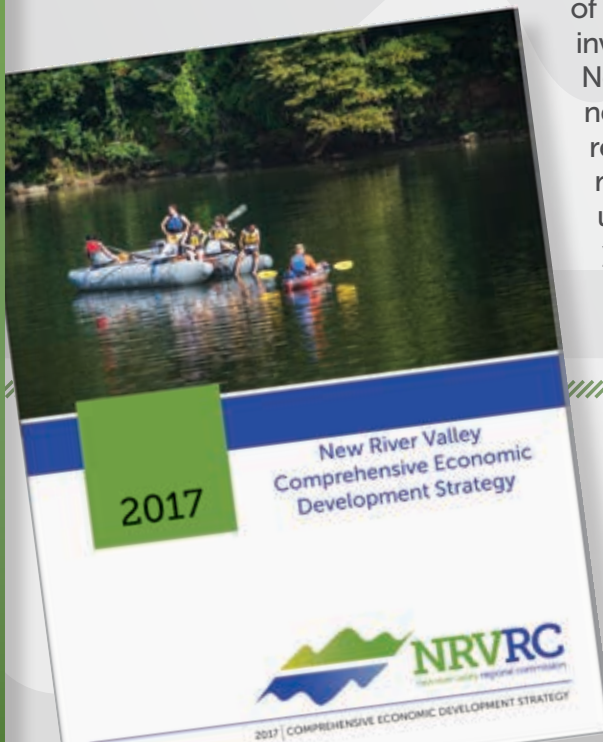


The Livability Leadership Team hosted the third annual Livability in Action Regional Exchange. A panel of 12 lightning round speakers presented on a wide variety of projects in progress around the region: Aging In Place, Opioid Addiction, Childcare, Outdoor Recreation as an Economic Development Driver, The Appalachian Herb Growers Association, Renew The New Cleanup Event, Launch Something Pulaski, The Outdoor Expo, Hazard Mitigation Planning, The 16 Frogs Art Installation in Blacksburg, NRV Timebank, and The Old Prices Fork Elementary Revitalization Project. With nearly 150 participants this year, the highest attendance to date, the event provided partners across the region an opportunity to come together, share about their own projects, and learn about new and exciting work underway across the region.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update

Every five years, Economic Development Districts are tasked with making a major update to the CEDS followed by four annual updates. The 2016 New River Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the third annual update since the last five-year overhaul. The major changes in this year's update include revisions to the ranking criteria used to prioritize projects, as well as 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 this year.

As part of this year's CEDS process, Regional Commission staff solicited new or updated economic development projects for inclusion in the CEDS, requesting projects from the counties, cities, and towns in the New River Valley. In addition, the Regional Commission convenes the CEDS Committee several times each year during the update process, which includes public and private sector representatives of businesses and government organizations involved in economic development in the New River Valley. The committee proposes new projects for the CEDS project list, reviews CEDS report content like the project ranking criteria, and provides input and updates on developments over the past year, and future economic trends that may have implications for the CEDS economic development goals and strategies.



A summary 'consumer version' of the CEDS and a copy of the full document of the 2016 update is online at: nrvrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CEDS2017Report.pdf.

Pulaski County Adult Day Service & Fall Prevention Center

The Pulaski County Adult Day Service & Fall Prevention Center opened its doors to serve clients in early November of 2016. The 4,200 square foot facility was funded through a partnership between Pulaski County, the Pulaski Adult Day Service & Fall Prevention Center Inc., and a \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant provided by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The facility is licensed to serve up to 30 elderly or disabled participants, providing a safe and engaging environment that did not previously exist in the county. The facility also houses a fall prevention clinic, which provides comprehensive fall risk assessments and intervention plans for seniors. Referrals from primary care physicians are a critical component of the success of the clinic. The agency is working to educate and create awareness for this need within the community. For more information, please visit pulaskiadultdayservice.org.



Old Prices Fork School Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project

The Old Prices Fork School Community Revitalization Project has continued moving forward with planning efforts towards the implementation of over \$4 million in grant funds. The project's first phase, which will be complete in early fall, converts the former classrooms of the old Prices Fork Elementary School into 16 two-bedroom apartments, with 10 affordable and six market-rate units for people 55 and older. Phase I is funded in part with state and local HOME funds.

The second phase, which includes \$3 million in grant funding from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Vibrant Communities Initiative funding as well as Appalachian Regional Commission funding, includes two components: (1) the Old School Food Center, which will provide innovative economic development opportunities for new or expanding local food-based entrepreneurs through the creation of a commercial incubator kitchen, farm-to-table restaurant, retail market, craft brewery and business competition with support services, and (2) 16 new apartments with a mix of affordable and market rate units.

The Leadership Team, made up of a diverse group of partners within the region, has focused much of its efforts this past year working closely with funders to execute project contracts and on building a solid foundation for operations, both through grant-making and establishing a strong volunteer base. Many standalone incubator kitchens struggle to remain viable long-term, so the Leadership Team has worked diligently to structure the Food Center in a way that supports the kitchen for long-term sustainability.



Smart Beginnings NRV



Smart Beginnings is a systems building program focused on improving kindergarten readiness in the region. By convening area leaders from both the public and private sector, collecting and sharing data, fostering public awareness, and improving investment in early childhood infrastructure, Smart Beginnings aims to support schools, the community, and families in preparing children for success in school.

While there is no perfect measure of kindergarten readiness, according to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, school readiness describes the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities, that will best promote student success in kindergarten and beyond. It is an issue that affects economic and community development for years into the future, as children who enter school unprepared are more likely to read below grade-level by third grade, are more likely to drop out of high school, and are more likely to be incarcerated and be reliant on public assistance later in life. Smart Beginnings works to support the community in preparing children for school, helping to create healthy, educated, successful community members in the future.

Smart Beginnings is also home to Reading Hour, a volunteer based program designed to support childhood literacy and school readiness by bringing adult volunteers and children from local childcare centers together for a one-on-one reading session, once per week for eight weeks. The Reading Hour program operates throughout the New River Valley, and has a proven track record of helping children to improve skills such as listening comprehension and broadening vocabularies.

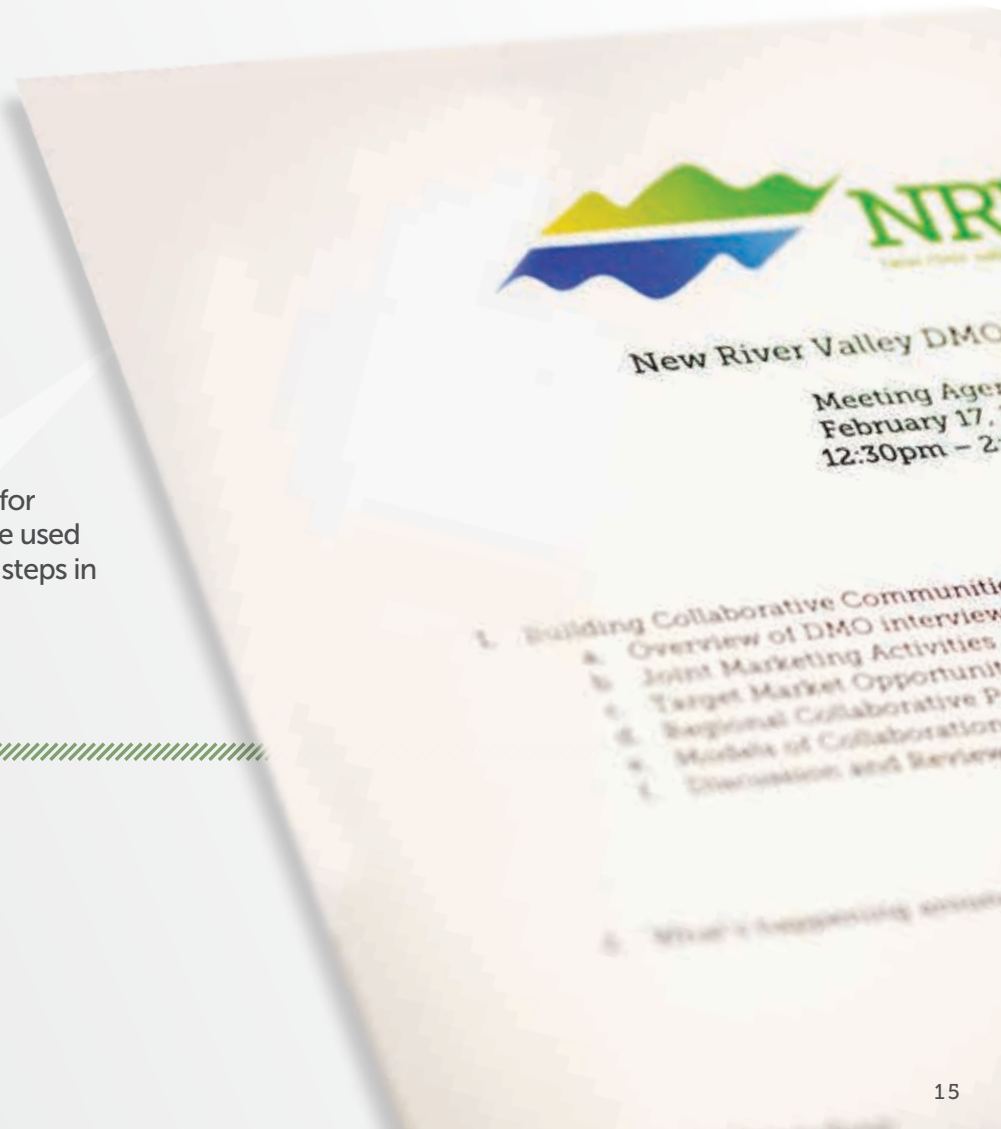
Virginia's Outdoor Lovers Expo

The Virginia's Outdoor Lovers Expo was held April 22, 2017 at Bisset Park in Radford. Nearly 2,000 people were in attendance to learn about outdoor recreation opportunities in Southwest Virginia. Attendees could try out paddle boarding in the demo pool or relax and listen to music from one of the three bands performing throughout the day. The thrill-seeking visitors could even take a ride on the 300' zip-line sponsored by Mountain Lake Lodge. Nearly 100 outdoor related vendors were on hand and were accompanied by several food trucks and vendors. The event was supported through donations from various businesses and organizations. Nearly \$10,000 was raised in sponsorships, along with nearly \$20,000 in in-kind donations. This was the third annual outdoor expo with the two previous events being held in Abingdon. The Regional Commission led the planning and coordinating efforts, with strong support from the Destination Marketing Organizations (tourism offices) in the New River Valley, along with Friends of Southwest Virginia providing both funding and coordinating assistance.



Building Collaborative Communities

Regional Commission staff and local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO's) have been working on a project that explores different models of regional tourism collaboration. The purpose of the project is to evaluate tourism models to increase collaboration and enhance the New River Valley as a visitor destination. Extensive research was conducted on other regional tourism entities across the state including an evaluation of their pros, cons, and costs. The outcome of this project is to have a report that details the findings of the research performed on the different models of collaboration, joint marketing opportunities, regional collaborative projects, and recommendations moving forward for regional tourism. The findings will be used by local governments to guide next steps in building regional tourism capacity.



Economic Development & Human Services

Radford University Economic Impact Study

As Radford University continues to expand and the student population moves closer to 10,000 students, the University has been working with Regional Commission staff to complete an economic impact study. Radford University provides a strong employment base while supporting many sectors of the regional economy. Regional Commission staff met with Radford University 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. The Regional Commission partnered with the Roanoke-Alleghany 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 Radford University in December 2016.



Southwest Virginia Local Foods Guide

The Commission partners with Southwest Virginia Fresh (SO Fresh) to maintain an interactive local food directory for southwest Virginia. SO Fresh serves as the primary contact and repository for the collection and distribution of local food information contained in the directory. The Commission maintains the online local food directory map utilizing ESRI's ArcGIS Online software. To learn more about the 19-county project, visit SO Fresh's website here: www.swvafresh.org/food-producers/



New River Valley Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund

Regional Commission staff provides staff support for the NRV Development Corporation Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The loan fund received several inquiries this year from businesses in the counties of Montgomery, Floyd, and Giles along with the city of Radford. Several loan recipients successfully completed paying off their loans this year, including TechPad in Blacksburg and 3 Birds Berry Farm in Montgomery County. Currently, the Development Corporation is servicing loans to businesses located in Floyd County, including Riverstone Organic Farm and Bootleg BBQ.



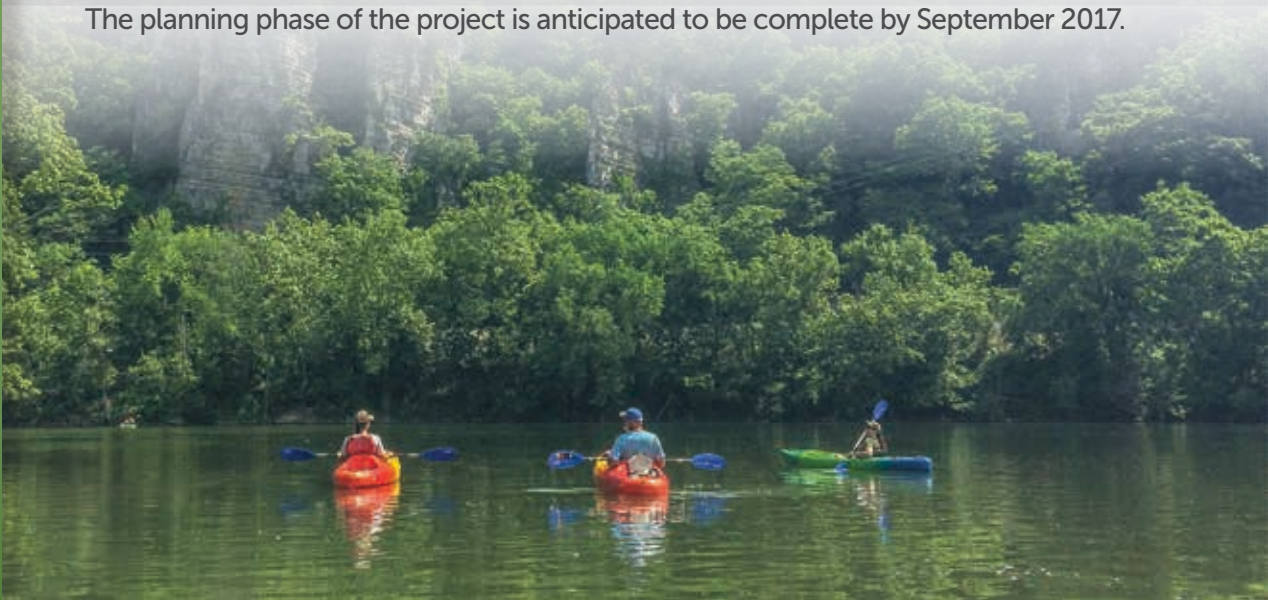
POWER Grant

A recent study completed by the Appalachian Regional Commission identified that coal production peaked in the Appalachia region in 1990 and has been declining ever since. The changes in America's energy production have placed significant economic challenges on coal reliant communities. As a result, the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) initiative was launched by the Federal government.

Giles County, home to a recently closed coal-fired power plant in Glen Lyn, partnered with the Friends of Southwest Virginia to build on initiatives to develop its tourism and recreation clusters, while also providing training for entrepreneurship and emerging in-demand occupations. The Regional Commission is working with Giles County partners to develop an action oriented plan to establish destination centers that connect river users to communities.

POWER funding will also be utilized to prepare preliminary engineering reports suitable for future construction funding requests; engagement opportunities with external experts on river-based community development and investments; and open source marketing packages that highlight potential investment opportunities.

The planning phase of the project is anticipated to be complete by September 2017.



Giles Downtown Revitalization Projects

The Regional Commission is assisting the five towns in Giles County to conduct downtown revitalization planning projects aimed at encouraging downtown redevelopment of commercial properties and attracting new businesses to serve visitors and local shoppers. The project focuses on connecting the towns' businesses to visitors who visit the many outdoor recreation assets in Giles County, including the New River, hiking trails, sports and camping. Giles County has several ongoing efforts to increase tourism and ensure Giles County businesses capture more spending by visitors at stores, restaurants and hotels while they are in the area. The downtown revitalization planning projects work toward this goal, identifying investments in town infrastructure, upgrades to key retail properties, and support services for local entrepreneurs in the towns, with the goal of helping local businesses to maximize the economic benefits they receive from visitors to the natural beauty of the region.

The project is part of two Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 'Downtown Revitalization' Planning grants, which provides funding to develop a plan for downtown redevelopment and economic restructuring, focused on developing businesses in target sectors related to the outdoor recreation and tourism economy. The towns will use this plan as a basis for securing a DHCD Community Improvement Grant (CIG), which would provide several hundred thousand dollars to make investments in top priority projects to improve infrastructure and provide repairs to key properties in the towns. The towns have contracted with Hill Studio of Roanoke to develop design concepts and a master plan that prioritizes downtown redevelopment projects. The towns of Narrows and Pembroke completed their planning process this past spring, with the both towns applying for CIG grant funding in Spring 2017. The towns of Glen Lyn, Pearisburg, and Rich Creek are currently refining design concepts and plan to submit grant applications in the Spring 2018 grant cycle.





Economic Development & Human Services



New River Valley/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board (NR/MR WDB) is the regional convener of the workforce system. They facilitate, support, and coordinate regional workforce initiatives that enable economic growth and increase the standard of living in the region. To that end, here are some WDB initiatives:



Regionalism

It is the intent of the NR/MR WDB to be a leader in the region in developing an “on-going, comprehensive” workforce system in which the processes of regional engagement, program alignment, and communication will be agile and flexible, enabling the region to adjust and/or respond to economic disturbances and shifts.

Regional Rapid Response Initiative (March 2016 through August 2017)

The NR/MR WDB was awarded \$1.2 million in State Rapid Response funds to coordinate and oversee a Regional Rapid Response initiative to serve individuals and supply chain companies impacted by the large number of plant layoffs and closures throughout the region. This initiative covered three Workforce Areas; New River/Mount Rogers, Southwest Virginia and Western Virginia, which includes 29 jurisdictions in southwest and western Virginia (Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

The purpose of Rapid Response is to promote economic recovery and vitality by developing an ongoing, comprehensive approach to identifying, planning for, or responding to layoffs and dislocations, and preventing or minimizing their impacts on workers, businesses and communities.

A successful Rapid Response system must include:

- informational and direct reemployment services for workers
- delivery of solutions to address the needs of businesses in transition
- convening, brokering and facilitating connections, networks and partners
- strategic planning, data gathering and analysis

Service levels for the Rapid Response Initiative are:

- individuals who received basic career services: **828**
- individuals who received individualized career services: **180**
- individuals who received (or are still in) training: **91**
- individuals placed in employment (from individualized career services): **62**
- businesses that received a business-related service (job fairs, workshops, interns, OJTs, etc.): **344**

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

Pathways to the American Dream Project

(January 2017 through December 2020)

The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area Consortium Board was awarded \$6 million in H-1B Job Training Grant funds from the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to coordinate and manage a multi-partner/multi-jurisdictional collaborative. The project covers four Workforce Areas; New River/Mount Rogers, Southwest Virginia, Western Piedmont and Western Virginia which includes 34 jurisdictions in western, southwest and southern Virginia (*Planning Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12*).

Pathways to the American Dream will:

- create a regional workforce strategy for sector partnerships in manufacturing, healthcare and information technology (IT) industries.
- increase opportunities for un- and underemployed adults and incumbent workers to earn skills or credentials in middle- to high-skilled occupations.
- develop a "credit for prior learning" system and process.
- develop a portal for information about the three industries, their needed occupations, skill requirements and available training programs (traditional and non-traditional).
- provide evidence-based design data and outcomes so Virginia legislators can adopt policies.

This grant plans to serve 1,100 individuals by December 2020.

Meeting the needs of Businesses

As the region's designated Workforce System Convener, the WDB provides businesses easy access to solutions to meet workforce needs without having to navigate the bureaucracy of dozens of program providers. Besides acting as a central point of contact for businesses seeking specific assistance, the WDB has also supported, with staff and financial assistance, a variety of activities/events that support businesses such as:

- partnered in five industry specific job fairs (serving 83 companies and over 900 job seekers)
- partnered in six industry sector discussions/partnerships events
- hosted/partnered in five business workshop/networking events

Disability Employment Initiative *(July 2014 through July 2017)*

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 13 jurisdiction areas. The program is completely voluntary for Social Security 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 this year:

- one-on-one intensive services to job-seekers with disabilities: 208
- benefits analysis and work incentive planning to 25 Social Security beneficiaries
- partnered in bringing Mental Health First training to staff of regional organizations: 29 trained
- provided Disability Awareness and Etiquette Training to department managers in Smith County
- developed and implemented Digital Literacy training for residents of a low income apartment building (a majority of the residents have disabilities)
- worked with town government to correct an accessibility issue at public library
- co-enrolled clients with multiple resource providers including DARS, People Inc, Virginia Cares and multiple departments of Social Services

Resource Full POWER Initiative *(May 2016 through April 2018)*

The Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative is a consortium approach to workforce and economic development in Southwest Virginia. This project is covering 21 jurisdictions in two workforce areas, New River/Mount Rogers and Southwest (and four planning districts; 1, 2, 3 & 4) presenting a holistic initiative to address the negative impacts of the decline of the coal industry on the region. The POWER National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) is a grant funded by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and awarded to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

Outcomes from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 for the NR/MR WDA:

- individuals who received individualized career services: 52
- individuals who received (or are still in) training: 24
- individuals placed in employment (from individualized career services): 13

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

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs (WIOA)

The Adult and Dislocated Worker Program, under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, is designed to provide quality employment and training services to assist eligible individuals in finding and qualifying for meaningful employment, and to help businesses find the skilled workers they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace.

Outcomes from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 are:

Dislocated Workers

- individuals who received individualized career services: **353**
- placement rate: **86%**
- avg. wage at placement: **\$15.50**

Adult Program

- individuals who received individualized career services: **268**
- placement rate: **83%**
- avg. wage at placement: **\$12.94**

WIOA youth funds are targeted at young people who are both in and out-of-school to assist them in their career and educational development, though the new law moves the focus from "in-school" to "out-of-school" youth.

What are the eligibility criteria for out-of school youth services?

- Age 16 to 24 and not attending school
- Fall within one or more of the following categories:
 - individual with a disability
 - school dropout
 - not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter.
 - a high school graduate who is: basic skills deficient; or an English language learner.
 - offender
 - homeless, runaway, or foster child
 - pregnant or parenting
 - a low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

Outcomes from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 are:

- individuals that received individualized career services: **226**
- placement rate: **78%**
- numeracy/literacy gains: **43%**
- attained certificate/degrees: **64%**



Local Planning Commissioner Training

The Regional Commission hosted the 2017 Local Planning Commissioners' Training on Thursday evening, April 20th. The evening began with dinner provided by Hethwood Market and a scrolling slideshow highlighting key projects each Planning Commission had been addressing recently. The training focused on implementing recent legislation, including wireless facility siting, proffer laws, and a recent ruling on sign ordinances. Blacksburg Town Attorney, Larry Spencer, and VACo Director of Local Government Policy, Joe Lerch, presented to the group on these topics, followed by an open question and answer time to discuss further details. The event was well attended with 40 staff members and Planning Commissioners from across the region.



Rich Creek Downtown Enhancement

The Town of Rich Creek continues to revitalize their downtown through enhanced public infrastructure on Main Street. During FY 2017, the Regional Commission managed the third phase of Rich Creek's Downtown Transportation Alternatives project. As part of this project, the Town contracted the Regional Commission in Fall 2016 to prepare and submit a \$225,000 grant application to the Virginia Department of Transportation. The Town was awarded this grant in June 2017. Since 2011, the Regional Commission has helped the town of Rich Creek secure \$2.2 million in federal grants, improving the downtown through new stormwater infrastructure, accessible sidewalks, lighting, seating, landscaping, parking, and crosswalks.

Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Commission kicked off the five-year update to the regional hazard mitigation plan in September with a stakeholders’ steering committee meeting. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires every locality to maintain a hazard mitigation plan that examines the risk and impact of natural disasters and provides strategies for reducing impacts to people and property. Every five years this plan must be updated to ensure continued access to FEMA’s grant funds for mitigation projects with the latest available data.

The plan addresses natural hazards affecting the region, including flooding, severe weather, and geological hazards such as rockfall. The region includes four counties Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski and the city of Radford. The steering committee is composed of representatives from participating localities as well as regional, state, and federal agencies who have expertise to offer in hazard mitigation. Working groups for each of the hazards met during this process to more fully evaluate the data and develop the plan details.

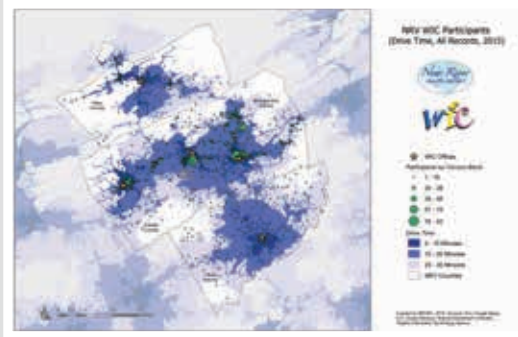
The plan rates hazards’ relative impact on the region, evaluates risks to human life and property, and develop goals for reducing these risks, which will be supported by mitigation strategies and projects in every participating locality and at the regional level. The table below lists the natural hazards evaluated for impact in the New River Valley based on their ranking.

NRV Regional Assessment of Relative Risk of Natural Hazards

High	Medium	Low
Freezing Temperatures	Drought	Landslides
Flooding	Snowfall	Wildfires
High Winds	Human-caused	Earthquake
<i>(Non-rotational)</i>	Ice Storms	Rockfall
		Karst
		Tornados

To follow the plan progress and participate through the public comment process, a website, nrvc.org/hazardmitigation/, was created for the steering committee and public alike. This will remain available until the next plan update. The Commission hosted five open houses where information about the region’s natural hazards, including mapping and plan drafts were on display. Citizens who attended were encouraged to review them, ask questions and add their comments to the review process. The plan is currently in review by Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and FEMA, with final adoption by localities anticipated in the first quarter of FY2018.

GIS Partnership – New River Health District



The Regional Commission and the New River Health District (NRHD) continued their partnership for a third year. The collaboration revolves around the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and data analysis to improve public health outcomes in the region. This long-term and unique relationship allows for the partners to pool available information, financial resources, and technical expertise.

Blacksburg Broadband

Staff continued to support the Blacksburg broadband project, investigating how local government can facilitate broadband deployment through availability of data critical for planning and decision-making, evaluating potential to make town assets that could reduce barriers to entry in the market, and identifying opportunities to improve policy and process. The broadband committee, with the addition of the town of Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Blacksburg Partnership, Virginia Tech, and the Montgomery County Chamber, released a user survey to find out what residents and businesses in Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Montgomery County think of their current internet service and what improvements would benefit the community.

At a series of presentations, local councils and boards learned the key findings about users' behaviors, experience and needs for internet access. Of the 1,800 people who completed the survey, most were full-time residents who believe internet access is critically important. About half of the respondents use their internet connection for school and job training purposes. With higher speeds, many users would use their connection for voice-over-internet-phone, videoconferencing and hosting a website, along with current popular uses of email, shopping and news. Where customers are not entirely satisfied with their current Internet Service Provider (ISP), the reasons are largely the same, connections are too slow or do not offer enough bandwidth; the price is too high, and/or service is unreliable.

(Blacksburg Broadband, cont'd)

When asked what role local government should play in improving broadband delivery, most respondents want them to encourage more choice and competition among private providers. This finding is encouraging in light of our local leaders' interest and willingness to work with ISPs on improving efficiencies in the permitting process, as well as working on private-public partnerships to deploy broadband in unserved areas and improving speed and reliability in areas currently served.

All stakeholders were engaged in reviewing the results through presentations and discussions, as were internet service providers. Localities also continued the conversation on improving broadband in "one-on-one" meetings with interested providers. While this information is being shared by the participating localities and the Chamber, the Roanoke Times also provided coverage of the survey with context of the broader region.

Floyd Community Park Master Plan



The Warren G. Lineberry Community Park opened in 2006. The park is named in memory of a local "country lawyer" who made significant contributions to the town from 1962 until his death in 2003. The park is maintained by the town of Floyd and is strongly supported by the community.

The existing park is a little more than 2.6 acres and features a combination of level and rolling terrain. The area closest to downtown features the steepest topography; however, the slope creates a natural seating orientation facing the picnic porch and amphitheater. The lower portion of the park is surprisingly level, compared to the visual perception from the town sidewalk.

In 2008, the town completed a substantial downtown project that included a plaza, restrooms, sitting walls, and a parking lot with the help of Community Development Block Grant Funds. Many additional ideas have been shared with the town about other enhancements to the park. The Master Plan documented and prioritized those ideas. In addition, the plan identifies specific roles of involved entities moving forward.

Planning/Technical Assistance

(Floyd Community Park Master Plan, cont'd)

The planning process was led by a Park Committee, consisting of representatives from Town Council, Partnership for Floyd, and town staff. Key recommendations include:

1. Create high-quality seating for the amphitheater.
2. Create parking for 30 more vehicles.
3. Build a natural surface walking trail.
4. Incorporate small play areas for children.
5. Create shaded areas and improve stage visibility.

Establishing a high-quality, terraced, seating area would significantly enhance the accessibility and increase the functionality of the space. The addition of terraced seating would also increase the capacity of visitors that could enjoy local entertainment.

Increasing available parking is also a critical need, not only for the park but for downtown as a whole. Enhancing stage visibility by providing shaded areas would be the final step towards optimizing the amphitheater use. Other improvements will be added in the future.

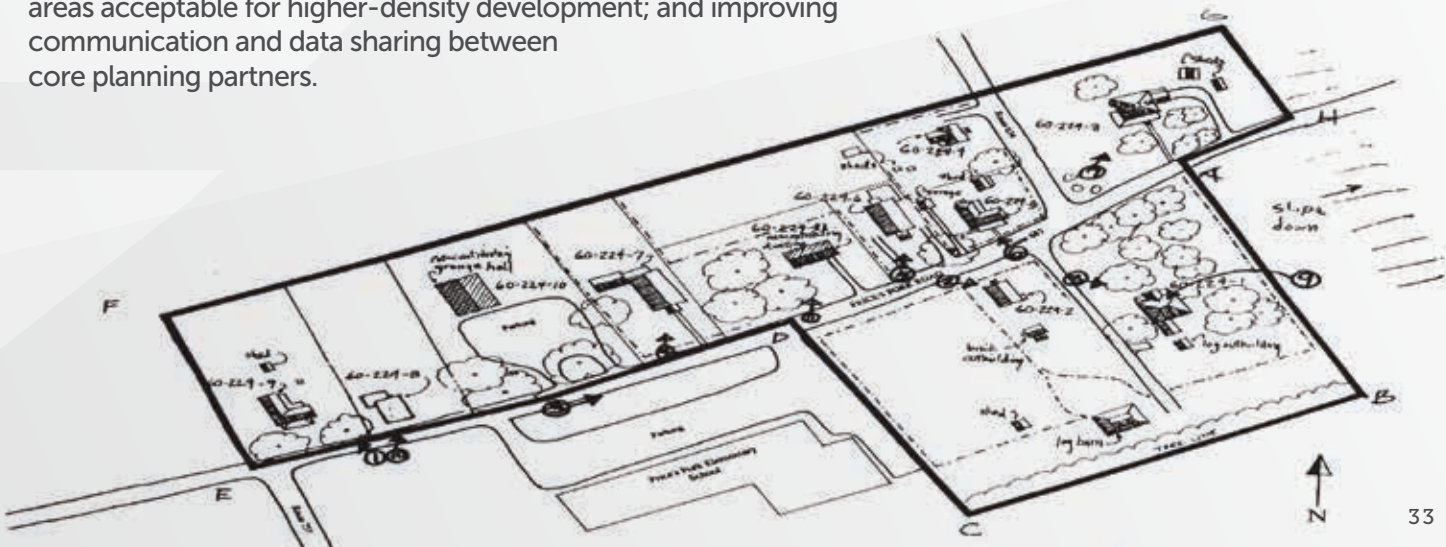


Prices Fork Area Planning Summary

The Village of Prices Fork is a late-nineteenth-century community that is included on both the state and National Historic Register. The village is situated in the center of a broad landscape of rolling hills and fields, between Brush Mountain on the north and Price Mountain to the south. Toms Creek and Stroubles Creek serve as the primary drainage basins. The rich farming area surrounding the village is beginning to be affected by residential and commercial development to the east, as the center of Montgomery County's population continues to move towards the village.

The purpose of the Prices Fork Area Planning Summary was to share planning efforts (completed or underway), between US Route 460 and McCoy Road. This multi-partner effort laid the groundwork for updating the county's Prices Fork Village Plan by engaging representatives from Montgomery County, Town of Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, and the Virginia Tech Foundation. This core group worked together to compile land use, transportation, and infrastructure across jurisdictional boundaries, recognizing that each has a role in influencing development patterns. Local experts worked alongside the core group to accurately capture planning efforts within the project boundary.

Each discussion revealed key information and opportunities, some that were commonly held and others that surfaced through the process. Key takeaways focus on historical and forecasted population and employment growth rates; the impacts on surrounding land uses compared to community vision; and increased access to infrastructure. Key opportunities included exploring mutually beneficial planning agreements; addressing infrastructure needs to support growth in jobs and housing; conducting community outreach to identify areas acceptable for higher-density development; and improving communication and data sharing between core planning partners.



Giles County Water Line Extension

The Regional Commission continues to support local governments to extend safe and clean public services. As an example, the Regional Commission is currently assisting Giles County administer a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Community Services grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The project aims at extending water services to the Eggleston community. This first part of a multi-phase project would provide 54 people in 23 households with clean drinking water. An estimated 13,700 linear feet of service line will be installed, improving the water quality of a majority low-to-moderate-income neighborhood. During FY2017, the Regional Commission engaged with project stakeholders in preliminary activities, and the County expects construction to begin in late summer 2017.



Pulaski County Sewer Improvements

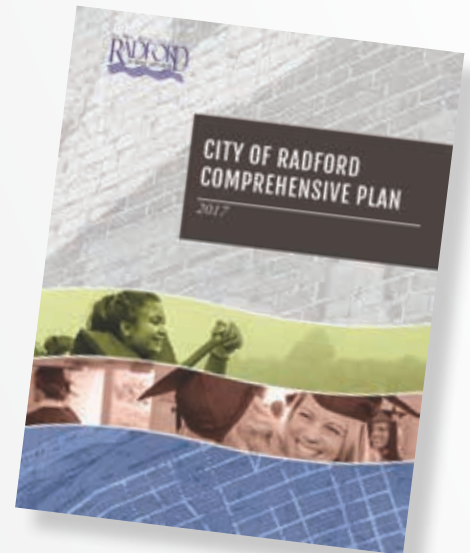
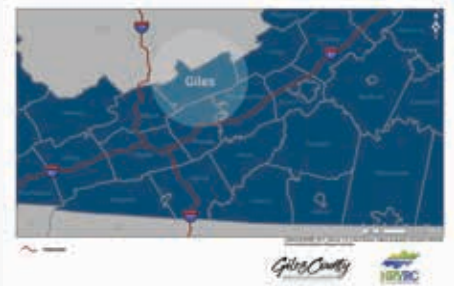
The Regional Commission continues to assist local communities to improve their quality of life through the extension of reliable public services. During FY 2017, the Regional Commission assisted Pulaski County with their Community Sewers Project. Working with county staff, the Regional Commission collected easements for the expansion of sewer services to 77 households in three neighborhoods within Pulaski County.

Other Technical Assistance

Comprehensive Planning

A locality's comprehensive plan serves as a guide for coordinating development in accordance with present and future needs and resources, in a manner that promotes the health, safety, and general welfare of residents. Plan documents identify existing conditions and trends, issues of concern, and local programs and initiatives. Key features of comprehensive plans include future land use maps and the identification of goals and objectives that help guide future land use and planning decisions. The Code of Virginia requires that local planning commissions review comprehensive plans at least once every five years.

- Giles County Comprehensive Plan:** Giles County is in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan. The Regional Commission is assisting Giles County staff and Planning Commission to accomplish this task. So far, the Planning Commission has worked through the following topics: Economic Development, Future Land Use, Natural and Historic Resources, and Housing. The plan is scheduled to be completed by November.
- City of Radford Comprehensive Plan:** The city's Planning Commission is developing policies, goals, and implementation strategies designed to address a wide-range of issues for the next 20 years. Specific strategies are developed for historical and natural resources, economic development, transportation, public services and facilities, parks and recreation, housing, and land use. The strategies reflect ideas shared by members of the surrounding community and build on the positive efforts the city has completed over the last five years. Continuously building a high-quality sense of place for all to enjoy is the primary vision of this plan update.
- Town of Pulaski Zoning Ordinance:** The Town of Pulaski Planning Commission and staff are revising the town's Zoning Ordinance. The overall purpose of the revision is to enhance the character and vitality of the town and to make the ordinance easy to navigate and administer. Focus is also on updating sign ordinances to comply with new Federal requirements regarding the regulation of sign content.



Transportation

RIDE Solutions

RIDE Solutions continues to promote transportation options available in the New River Valley. It was an eventful year for RIDE Solutions outreach. Early in August, RIDE Solutions set up a booth at the VTCRC's Annual Tenant Picnic and had the opportunity to speak with commuters to the CRC and cyclists of all ages about safe cycling, carpooling and transit options. RIDE Solutions also exhibited at the Active Commute Celebration on Virginia Tech's campus and the Montgomery County Chamber's annual business expo in the fall as well as the NRV Job Fair in April.

RIDE Solution's keystone event, the Ride Smart Challenge (formerly known as the Clean Commute Challenge), wrapped up at the end of May and recorded a big impact in alternative transportation.

A few key notes from the event include

- 4,369 trips logged taking a total of 73,283 miles off the road
- the Extraordinary Bike Professional Award winner - Mackenzie Jarvis of Virginia Tech
- the Ride Smart Challenger of the Year - Kali Casper of Blacksburg
- the Bike Shorts Film Festival with the Blacksburg Audience Choice Award going to a local film: *Build it, Ride it* by Sarah Mezzy of Blacksburg, VA



Bus Stop Safety and Accessibility Studies

The Regional Commission continues to work with regional partners to improve the New River Valley's transportation network. In FY 2017, the Regional Commission partnered with the New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization to study bus stop safety and accessibility in the Radford Transit and Pulaski Area Transit service areas. Working with local partners in each service area, the Regional Commission used a data-driven prioritization tool to provide recommendations for high-priority bus stops. The intent of these recommendations is to assist transit providers with justification for future resource allocation. Examples of some of the improvements recommended include improved signage, lighting, waiting areas, and shelters at multiple stops within each service area.



These studies are funded through a partnership between the New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Regional Commission, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. The studies are anticipated to be complete in September 2017.

Montgomery County's Auburn Safe Routes Pedestrian Safety

Montgomery County continues to work with a local engineering firm to complete design on improving student access to the Auburn school campus. The improvements will include walking paths to improve safety for students who walk to school with new and upgraded infrastructure. The Commission has been providing grant administration for the project. Construction is expected to occur in the next fiscal year.

Director's Message

As a region, the New River Valley has a tremendous amount to offer. We feel the same way about projects underway at the Regional Commission; there is a lot to offer our communities that reflect the dynamic nature of the region. Based on the projects highlighted within this report, I hope you are able to get a glimpse of the vibrancy in the region and how our communities are preparing themselves for the future.

The staff at the Regional Commission takes great pride in fostering collaborations that deliver services in alignment with the needs of our members. An example of building collaborations that result in service delivery can be observed through the transition of Smart Beginnings NRV, a program focused on early childhood readiness. This past fiscal year the Commission was asked to become the host agency for the program which entailed reestablishing the leadership council, hiring a staff member, developing a program focus, then ultimately carving out services the program needed to deliver in the region. With the help of several committed partners in the region, the program successfully moved through each of those steps this past year. As a result, there is now an active leadership

council comprised of members across the region, a relaunch of the Reading Hour volunteer program will take place soon, and data to track progress on early childhood readiness is being gathered to help inform policy and practices in the region.

I highlight the Smart Beginnings program because it is an excellent use of the Regional Commission as a resource to serve the region. As the region continues to grow and change, the Regional Commission strives to position ourselves to be a key resource for the region, whether it involves hosting programs of need such as Smart Beginnings, or conducting studies that advance issues of regional significance. Do not hesitate to call on the Commission as we stand ready to support our members, our partners and the region moving into the future.

Kevin R. Byrd, AICP
Executive Director





NRVRC
new river valley regional commission

Finance Report

Year Ended June 30, 2017

Revenues

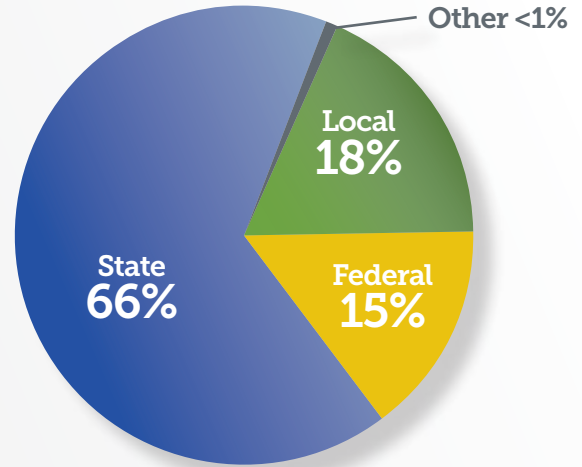
Grants and Appropriations

Federal	274,897
State.....	1,185,537
Local.....	323,345
Other	5,602
Total.....	1,789,381

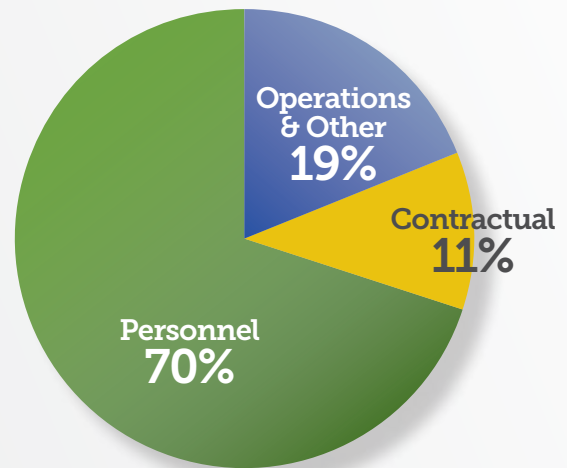
Expenditures

Personnel.....	1,243,646
Contractual	199,590
Operations & Other	324,734
Total.....	1,767,970

Grants and Appropriations



Expenditures





NRVRC
new river valley regional commission

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nrvrc.org

