



# Top of the Ozarks

Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.  
6726D Highway 63  
Houston, Missouri 65483  
(417) 967-2028

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Historical Background: The Resource Conservation and Development program was initiated by Congress in response to President Kennedy’s Peace Corp initiative. Congress believed that the rural areas of the United States also could benefit from assistance in economic development, community support, education and natural resource management. The Top of the Ozarks Rivers RC&D was formally authorized in November 1965, the first in Missouri. Initially composed of the five counties of Dent, Howell, Oregon, Shannon and Texas, it has now grown to include the five additional counties of Douglas, Laclede, Ozark, Pulaski and Wright. It was incorporated as a 501©3 not-for-profit in 1986 as Top of the Ozarks RC&D.

Structure: The Top of the Ozarks RC&D is sponsored by the County Commissions, Soil & Water Conservation District Boards, and University of Missouri Extension Service Councils, in addition to one optional at-large member from each county. Technical Advisors to the Council include USDA—Rural Development, US. Forest Service, USDA-Farm Services Agency, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department of Transportation, Intercounty Electric Cooperative, and The Nature Conservancy.

Operations: Through the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Council is provided a federal coordinator, to assist the Council in its operations. The Council Members, all volunteers, meet quarterly to conduct official business. Projects and ideas are brought to the Council meeting through the members, where they are discussed, evaluated, and voted on for adoption. Every five years a long-range is developed with sponsor/public input, to provide a framework and focus. Funds for project implementation are secured through grants and donations.

Leadership: Council elections are held bi-annually. The current officers are: Chair – Richard Stricklin (Howell Co.); Vice Chair – Larry Ferguson (Wright Co); Secretary – Connie Holland (Shannon Co); and Treasurer – Sandy Wooten (Texas Co). The Council is recognized nationally in the “Circle of Diamonds”, sponsored by the National Association of RC&D Councils, for exemplification of public accountability.



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Project Highlights

1990-Present

FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT:

- Energy Conversion Specialist (1993) – a technician provided assistance to public and private buildings in converting to sawdust fired heating/cooling systems.
- Forestry Survey (1997) – using property lists, out-of-state landowners were surveyed to determine their interests and priorities.
- Specialty Forest Products Guide (1997) – a ‘how-to’ guide for Missouri forestry owners on marketing and uses of non-typical forestry products.
- Forestry Consultant (2201) – a forester provided free technical assistance to small acreaged landowners.
- “Woodland Resource Guide” (2003) – a publication for landowners tht have minimal forestry knowledge.
- “Our Ozarks” (2004) – a pilot TV program that aired locally, focused on woodlot management.
- “Power for Wildlife” (2004) – provided financial assistance to improve wildlife habitat under electric power lines.
- “Best Management Practices for Woody Biomass Harvest” (200\*) – developed to address forestry issues in alternative energy production.
- EQIP Forestry Stewardship (2008) – management of stewardship plan development on forested acres.

WATER QUALITY:

- Homebuilders Environmental Stewardship (1997) – a specialist provided technical support and financial assistance to new home development.
- Jacks Fork Canoe Map (2003) – provided information on restroom location within the watershed.
- Jacks Fork Sinkhole Mapping (2004) – over 300 sinkholes were mapped and evaluated.
- Riparian Buffer Initiative (2005) – ten communities received technical assistance and financial incentives to install buffers along public waterways.
- Jacks Fork Septic Demonstration (2007) – a specialist provides education and financial incentives for septic pumping within the watershed.



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2008 Annual Report  
Projects and Activities

*Sustainable Agriculture:*

- The STRAWBALE HOUSING project is now underway. In partnership with Douglas County Extension Service, we currently have nine participants in this \$459,327 project funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Technical assistance and financial incentives were offered through this effort.
- The Council secured \$70,150 in funding from USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service to hire a part time specialist to provide assistance to the FARMERS MARKETS across our ten counties. This 18 month project will assess needs; provide training and networking opportunities, and increase visibility.
- The Council continues to provide organizational support to the ADVANCED GRAZIERS GROUP, an informal network of experienced grazing management producers.

*Natural Resources:*

- Our SEPTIC PUMPING project, in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, is underway. Focused on sites along the JACKS FORK RIVER, participants will be required to attend an educational workshop to receive 50% cost sharing for their septic pump out. The funding level is \$300,394, and a technical specialist has been hired for the position.
- In partnership with the Bootheel and Big Springs RC&Ds, the University of Missouri Extension Service, MDC and others, the Council is completing a \$108,034 U.S. Forest Service Grant to develop a BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WOODY BIOMASS HARVEST. In addition, incentives for sustainable harvest are being investigated and evaluated for Missouri usage.
- An application to provide technical support to campgrounds and others in the JACKS FORK WATERSHED to upgrade from primitive latrines has been approved. As part of the \$379,369 grant, a coalition will be formed including all levels of government and the private sector to focus on trail design and location in the watershed.
- In partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Council is administering forest stewardship plan development for all landowners enrolled in USDA's EQIP program. This \$190,000 effort will result in management plans on more than 10,000 acres across Missouri.



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*Community Support:*

- Funds were secured from the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in St. James to provide support to the Envirothon, a national high school competition focused on the environment.
- Funds from the National Park Service have been secured to print our BIRDING SITE BROCHURE. Designed to attract bird watchers to the area to generate tourism dollars, this project is in partnership with Big Springs RC&D.

*Council Development:*

- The Council has secured provided support to the OZARKS REGIONAL FOUNDATION AND AFFILIATED TRUSTS. An Executive Director has been hired, established an office, and three VISTA employees hired.
- A LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE has been organized to develop and implement strategies to increase council sustainability. The committee has updated our mission statement and strategies, and will be seeking input into our long range plan in 2009.

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*Serving Dent, Douglas, Howell, Laclede, Oregon, Ozark, Pulaski, Shannon, Texas, and Wright Counties*

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2007 Annual Report  
Projects and Activities

*Sustainable Agriculture:*

- The STRAWBALE HOUSING project is now underway. In partnership with Douglas County Extension Service, applications are being accepted to participate in the \$459,327 project funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Technical Assistance and financial incentives are offered through this effort. This program is available in Ozark, Douglas, Wright, Howell, Texas and Shannon counties.
- The Council sponsored a 'SHEEP and GOAT WORKSHOP' for those interested in learning more about their animals and received FAMACHA certification. Over 100 people attended.
- The Council secured \$70,150 in funding from USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service to hire a part time specialist to provide assistance to the FARMERS MARKETS across our ten counties. This 18-month project will assess needs, provide training and networking opportunities and increase visibility.
- Producers interested in marketing their natural products to WHOLE FOODS in St. Louis were invited to hear representatives discuss packaging, product needs and pertinent information during two different INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS sponsored by the Council.
- The Council continues to provide organizational support to the ADVANCED GRAZIERS GROUP, an informal network of experienced grazing management producers.

*Natural Resources:*

- The Jacks Fork River ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DAY was successfully completed in September 2007. Fourth and fifth graders from five school districts (Eminence, Summersville, Raymondville, Liberty and Winona) enjoyed the eight different stations covering various topics about the watershed. A website [www.jacksforkwatershed.com](http://www.jacksforkwatershed.com) about the Jacks Fork is under construction. The project is funded by EPA.
- An application to provide technical support to campgrounds and others in the JACKS FORK WATERSHED to upgrade from primitive latrines has been submitted. As part of the \$379,369 grant, a coalition will be formed including all levels of government and the private sector to focus on trail design and location in the watershed.



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- AMERICORP funding has been secured to hire a full time staff person to work 50% of the work week on Stream Team activities, as overseen by MCD, and to utilize the other 50% time for RC&D time for RC&D watershed projects.
- In 2008 we will begin our SEPTIC PUMPING project, in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Focused on sites along the JACKS FORK RIVER, participants will be required to attend an educational workshop to receive 50% cost sharing their septic pump out. The anticipated 319 funding level is \$300,394.
- In partnership with the Bootheel and Big Springs RC&Ds the University of Missouri Extension Service, MDC and others, the Council secured \$108,034 U.S. Forest Service grant to develop a BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WOODY BIOMASS HARVEST. In addition, incentives for sustainable harvest will also be investigated and evaluated for Missouri usage.
- Eight newspapers with a circulation of over 20,000 are printing articles developed by the FORESTRY WRITERS GUILD, sponsored by the Council. Articles are written by a variety of professionals from both government agencies and the private sector.

*Community Support:*

- Grant writing assistance was provided to Texas County Rural Area Information Network to secure a \$727,388 grant from USDA-Rural Utilities Services to provide FIBER OPTICS to the Village of Raymondville. Every building in the Village will be connected and a community center established.
- Funds from the National Park Service have been secured to print our BIRDING SITE BROCHURE. Designed to attract bird watchers to the area to generate tourism dollars, this project is in partnership with Big Springs RC&D.



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*Council Development:*

- The Council has secured \$153,570 in funding from Wright County Industrial Development Authority for our OZARKS REGIONAL FOUNDATION AND AFFILIATED TRUSTS. Funds will be used to hire an Executive Director, establish an office in Wright County, oversee VISTA employees, and to develop programs and strategies focusing on rural economic development sustainability.
- A LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE has been organized to develop and implement strategies to increase council sustainability.

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*Serving Dent, Douglas, Howell, Laclede, Oregon, Ozark, Pulaski, Shannon, Texas, and Wright Counties*

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2006 Annual Report  
Projects and Activities

*Sustainable Agriculture:*

- The STRAWBALE HOUSING project is now underway. In partnership with Douglas County Extension Service, applications are being accepted to participate in the \$459,327 project funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Technical Assistance and financial incentives are offered through this effort.
- The Council sponsored several SCHOLARSHIPS this year including the Beginning Farmer Workshop workshops offered by Howell County Extension, the Dairy Grazing Conference held at the MU's Southwest Center, the Missouri Forage & Grassland evaluation conference, Annie's Project offered by Douglas County Extension and Farm Safety Day offered by Douglas and Wright County Extension.
- The Council continues to provide organizational support to the ADVANCED GRAZIERS GROUP, an informal network of experienced grazing management producers.

*Natural Resources:*

- The RIPARIAN BUFFER effort completed project in Richland, Eminence and Mountain View. The project provides free technical advice and 50% and cost share on materials. Four more sites are scheduled for completion in spring of 2007.
- The Jacks Fork River SINKHOLE INVESTIGATION project is complete. Over 300 sinkholes were mapped and evaluated, and five dye tracings completed. Approximately 13 sites were found in need of trash clean-up.
- Funding for the Jacks Fork River ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DAY has been secured from EPA. This will provide for a website and a field day at Alley Springs for the fourth and fifth graders in the five school districts in the watershed (Eminence, Summersville, Liberty, Willow Springs and Winona).
- An application to provide for homeowner SEPTIC SYSTEM education, the pumping of septic tanks and a limited number of septic tank replacement has been successfully submitted for DNR 319 funding for the Jacks Fork River Watershed.
- A DNR mini-grant for a RESTROOM MAP and SIGNAGE has been completed, in cooperation with canoe concessionaires, Stream Team #713, and the National Park Service in the Jacks Fork River Watershed.



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- A FEE – LEASE HUNTING WORKSHOP was sponsored in Licking to provide potential leasors with vital information regarding leases, insurance and tax issues.
- The Forestry and Wildlife committee sponsored a tent at the Pioneer Days in Mountain View. Speakers and a variety of booths provided relevant and timely information on FORESTRY topics.
- Our ecotourism effort, MORE, in partnership with Big Springs RC&D, has completed a preliminary BIRDING SITE map and is in the process of securing funding to print copies for general public distribution. In addition, a GEO-CACHE virtual tour is under development.
- Funding for the ENVIROTHON, a national high school environment contest, was secured from Wal Mart for the regional level contest in southwest Missouri.
- The POWER FOR WILDLIFE project, a joint effort with MCD and Intercounty Electric Coop has been completed. Four sites were finalized this year in Texas County to provide wildlife habitat under power lines.

*Community Support:*

- Assistance in securing not-for-profit status was provided to the VOLLMAR COMMUNITY CENTER in Texas County, the YOUNG COMMUNITY CENTER in Annutt in Dent County, and the EMINENCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE in Shannon County.
- FIRE DEPARTMENT support was provided through the distribution of maps delineating dry hydrant locations and water refill sites in Texas County; through the installation of four dry hydrants in Wright County with funding from a U.S. Forest Service grant; and through the grant writeup/review for DHS for three departments.



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*Council Development:*

- Council members were participants and presenters at the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of RC&D COUNCILS NATIONAL CONFERENCE held in Savannah, GA. The Council was recognized for achieving CIRCLE OF DIAMONDS status, the highest level of recognition within the RC&D structure.
- A LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE has been organized to develop and implement strategies to increase council sustainability.

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2005 Annual Report  
Projects and Activities

*Sustainable Agriculture:*

- Funding has been secured to build ten STRAWBALE HOMES in Douglas and Ozark counties over the next three years. In partnership with Douglas County Extension, technical assistance and financial incentives will be provided in an effort to provide housing as well as a possible market for locally grown fescue hay. This \$459,327 project will be funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Rural Housing and Economic Development program and local match.
- The Council continues to provide organizational support to the ADVANCED GRAZIERS group, an informal association of experienced grazing management producers.
- A proposal, in collaboration with the nine other RC&D Councils across Missouri and USDA agencies, has been submitted by the Council to provide OUTREACH and INFORMATION to socially disadvantaged and beginning producers. Staggered over three years, this \$298,600 grant would sponsor 68 workshops and 52 field days on USDA programs.
- The Council continues to explore the feasibility of DEAD ANIMAL incineration/energy generation. In partnership with Missouri Business Enterprise, potential project solutions are under development.

*Natural Resources:*

- The RIPARIAN BUFFER project, funded by the U.S. Forest Service, has provided plans to five communities this year, with the goal of installing two acres of buffer in each of these communities by next summer. Funding provides free technical assistance and a 50% cost share on materials for these sites on public lands.
- Supported by the National Park Service, our ECOTOURISM initiative successfully undertook several projects this year, including sponsoring a regional workshop and developing a website [www.ozarkexplorers.org](http://www.ozarkexplorers.org). Work continues on developing a



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driving tour birding map prototype for future production and distribution. This effort is in partnership with Big Springs RC&D.

- The JACKS FORK RIVER SINKHOLE project is nearing completion with over 200 sinkholes investigated to date and dye tracings underway. Funded by EPA, a report detailing the sites and conclusions will be completed in early 2006.
- Preliminary investigation into the feasibility of establishing a WOOD BIOMASS electric generation site continues by the Council.
- POWER FOR WILDLIFE, sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation, Intercounty Electric Cooperative and MDC, as administered by the Council providing funds for 48 acres of wildlife habitat establishment under electric power lines this year, as well as a contribution to Wright County SWCD for a warm season drill.

*Community Support:*

- Grants were written or reviewed for local fire departments for Department of Homeland Security funding, of which two were funding for new vehicles. The Council also coordinated a meeting between the Plato Rural Fire Protective Association and FIREWISE representatives from the National Park Service.
- The CITY OF WINONA STORMWATER DETENTION BASIN is complete, with funds from the Delta Regional Authority secured by the Council.
- The Council continues to provide scholarships to NxLEVEL, a business plan training course sponsored by the University of Missouri Extension Service.
- The Council provided support to the Ozark County Commission for energy efficient windows for the Ozark County Courthouse. Funds were made available through an application to the MO Department of Energy.



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*Council Development:*

- SUNSHINE LAW TRAINING was provided to all RC&D Councils in Missouri and was organized by the Top of the Ozarks.
- Executive board members received BOARD DEVELOPMENT training sponsored by the University of Missouri – St. Louis School of Nonprofit Management and Leadership and provided by tele-distance through the Salem TCRC.

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