



Top of the Ozarks

Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.
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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.