

**VIRGIN ISLANDS RESOURCE CONSERVATION
& DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.**

ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

I. FISCAL YEAR 2006

Prepared by:
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**VIRGIN ISLANDS
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL, INC.**



VISION

Balancing Growth and Development with a Quality Environment

MISSION

**To enhance the quality of life for the people of the
Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development Area
through the conservation of natural and cultural resources and the stimulation of growth
and development.**

FOREWORD

The VI RC&D views this annual business plan as an extension of its Area Plan. The goals and objectives are taken from, and referenced to, the Area Plan to allow for tracking of long term progress toward attaining area goals. The annual business plan specifically identifies thirty-three (33) action items that will be carried out this fiscal year to help reach our area goals. Ten (10) or 30% of these action items are ongoing projects from previous years that will be completed at the end of fiscal year 2006. Eighteen or 55% are new projects to be funded and completed by the end fiscal year 2006, and five (5) or 15% are projects for which planning was initiated the previous fiscal year, but funding has not yet been secured. Specific details involved in carrying out these action items are identified in the work plan for each project.

MEMBERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

Louis E. Petersen, Jr., Ph.D. – President (St. Thomas)
Errol Chichester – Vice President (St. Croix)
Carol Cramer-Burke – Treasurer (St. Croix)
Cordell Jacobs – Secretary (St. Thomas)
Charles Deyalsingh – VI Conservation District (St. John)
Marcia Taylor – At-Large Member (St. Croix)
Elizabeth Ban – At-Large Member (St. Thomas)

ST. CROIX RC&D ISLAND COMMITTEE OFFICERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

Errol Chichester – Chairperson
Marcia Taylor – Vice Chairperson
Carol Cramer-Burke – Secretary

ST. THOMAS RC&D ISLAND COMMITTEE OFFICERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr. – Chairperson
Elizabeth Ban – Vice Chairperson
Cordell Jacobs – Secretary

USDA-NRCS STAFF

Julie Wright – RC&D Coordinator
Faye Williams – Secretary
Rudy G. O'Reilly, Jr. – District Conservationist
Guillermo Melendez – Soil Conservationist

COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Build committee membership
- Direct project measures/ideas to the committee
- Attend meetings
- Assist in delivering presentations to the Board

STANDING COMMITTEES

Membership – Angela Ramos-Michael, Algem Petersen

Public Relations/Publicity – Charles Deyalsingh, Geraldine Smith

Fundraising – Angela Ramos-Michael, Benita Martin-Samuel, Charles Deyalsingh, Corine Matthias, Cedrick Lewis

Area Planning – Elizabeth Ban

AD-HOC COMMITTEES

By-Laws

Nominating

• WHAT IS RC&D?

The Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development program is sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and locally directed and managed.

The Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. (VI RC&D) is an independent, nonprofit, non-partisan, community-based group whose primary concerns are the prudent use of natural and human resources in the U.S. Virgin Islands. It was authorized by Congress in February 1971, incorporated in June 1990, and received its nonprofit status [501(c)(3)] in January 1994.

VI RC&D activities are directed by its Board of Directors, and the VI RC&D Council is comprised of volunteer membership. In order to receive federal assistance through USDA-NRCS, local RC&Ds must develop an Area Plan (also called a Long Range Plan) that is the basis of the local RC&D program. This plan identifies potential projects based on community-determined concerns, needs, goals & objectives. Once identified, the VI RC&D Council can begin to explore and recruit broad-based support for these projects. Since RC&D is a hybrid private and public entity, it can receive both private and public financial support for Council projects.

The VI RC&D Council has been charged with delivering not only on our local goals, but to ensure that our 2006 Annual Business Plan projects align with the USDA-NRCS Caribbean Area FY 2006 Business Plan. The role of the VI RC&D Council is to provide local leadership in addressing natural resource and community development problems and opportunities, while ultimately assisting NRCS in achieving its mission of “Providing leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.”

Throughout the project listings in the VI RC&D 2006 Annual Business Plan, a column has been included to identify what goals of the NRCS Business Plan are being met. The Mission Goals of the NRCS Business Plan for FY 2006 are:

1. High quality, productive soils
2. Clean and abundant water
3. Healthy plant and animal communities
4. Air quality
5. An adequate energy supply
6. Land fragmentation

Whenever possible, VI RC&D projects aim to integrate local area goals with national mission goals. Some projects, however, are geared at increasing effectiveness and efficiency of VI RC&D Council members and building capacity for the Council to become leaders in partnership to conserve, maintain and improve the natural resources and environment of the U.S. Virgin Islands. In these cases, specific NRCS mission goals may not be explicit, but the stronger the Council becomes, the greater role it can play in achieving NRCS goals.

Additionally, the VI RC&D Annual Business Plan also addresses the national RC&D Performance Measures of:

- Number of Local Business Created in Rural Communities: **0**
- Number of Local Jobs created in Rural Communities: **11**

In order to effectively implement projects to meet VI RC&D’s goals and objectives, the Council works with a

number of local and federal partners to “Make Things Happen.” Those partners are listed for each action item and include, but are not limited to:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS),
- USDA Forest Service/Institute of Tropical Forestry (USDA-FS/IITF),
- USDA Cooperative State Research, Extension & Education Service (CSREES),
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Coastal Services Center (NOAA-CSC)
- National Association of RC&D Councils (NARC&DC)
- Future Farmers of America (FFA),
- North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension (NCSU-CE),
- St. Croix Central High School (CHS),
- St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA),
- St. Croix Farmers in Action (FIA),
- St. Thomas Fisherman’s Association (STT Fishermen),
- University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) Conservation Data Center (CDC),
- UVI Cooperative Extension Service (CES),
- UVI Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS),
- V.I. Department of Agriculture (VIDA),
- V.I. Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR) Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM),
- V.I. DPNR Division of Environmental Protection (DEP),
- V.I. Nonpoint Source Committee (VINPSC),
- V.I. Urban & Community Forestry Council (U&CFC), and
- We Grow Food, Inc.

Additionally, the following is a key to abbreviations of Council members’ names (with their respective organizations), that are project managers / sponsors for this year’s action items in the following tables:

AP	Algem Petersen – DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program
ARM	Angela Ramos-Michael
BM	Benita Martin, We Grow Food, Inc.
BR	Bill Rohring, DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program
CB	Carol Cramer Burke – St. Croix Environmental Association
CK	Conrad Knowles DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program
DB	DeBorah Bellony
DC	Diane Capehart, DPNR Environmental Protection Division
DO	Dee Osinski – VI Waste Management Authority
EB	Elizabeth Ban – University of the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service
EC	Errol Chichester - VI Department of Agriculture
LP	Louis "Akil" Petersen, PhD - University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service
MT	Marcia Taylor - University of the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service
MTM	Michelle Thurland-Martinez, USDA Farm Service Agency
OD	Olasee Davis - University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service
RH	Roy Hamilton
SC	Susan Curtis – DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program
SM	Lillian Moolenaar (this should probably be LM), DPNR Coastal Zone Management Program

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY: sustainable agriculture practice promotion; promotion of sustainable agriculture concepts & practices in food production; protection of agricultural & forest land as appropriate from conversion to other uses; energy crops production; and productivity & marketability improvement for local agricultural & forestry products.

GOAL 1: Increase awareness of agricultural/forestry business opportunities for at least 500 youth & adults by 2010.

Objective 1.1: Participate in at least 10 community events to raise awareness of agricultural/forestry business opportunities for at least 500 youth & adults.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Display info on RC&D and NRCS conservation projects/programs at the annual St. Thomas – St. John Agriculture and Food Fair	RC&D NRCS	1,2	10/05	11/05	ARM	cancelled
2. Display info on RC&D and NRCS conservation Projects/programs to approx. 150 attendees at the 9 th VI Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference on St. John	RC&D NRCS	1,2	10/05	12/05	LP, AP MTM, ARM MT	completed
3. Display info on RC&D and NRCS conservation projects/programs to approx. 1000 attendees at the annual St. Croix AgriFest.	RC&D NRCS	1,2	1/06	2/06	MTM, EC	display in development; no funds needed

Objective 1.2: Provide agriculture & forestry career / business education to 500 youth & adults by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Educate 25 farmers about marketing & productivity.	RCD, VIDA	1	06/06	12/06	EC, LP	training programs being developed; SARE funding identified
2. Educate 25 fishermen about Food Safety Standards/ Practices & Marketing	RC&D, VIMAS, STT Fishermen's Assoc.		10/05	6/06	EB	have materials, no funding needed

Objective 1.3: Provide support for at least 10 local artisans to network with regional & national colleagues and receive training at 4 regional &/or national woodturners/forestry conferences by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Provide a learning and networking experience for 7 local woodturners to showcase their forest-based products (travel to National Woodturners Conf., July, 2006).	USDA-FS, RC&D		10/05	08/06	EC	seek funding from USDA-FS

GOAL 2: Provide sustainable agriculture & forestry training to 30% of VI farmers & foresters by 2010.

Objective 2.1: Provide sustainable agriculture practice training to 100 active / potential farmers by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Partner with a U.S. mainland agricultural university to sponsor a residential training program for 10 young USVI farmers.	RC&D, FS, CES, NRCS	1	10/04	08/06	LP ARM	Akil to lead committee to reapply for funds

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION: erosion & sediment control; water conservation & use, including irrigation & rural water supplies; flood & high water table mitigation; reservoir repair & improvement; and agricultural water management improvement.

GOAL 3: Increase use of recommended soil & water conservation practices (BMPs) by 20% by 2010.

Objective 3.1: Install 5 Erosion & Sediment Control (ESC) BMP demonstration projects by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Implement soil & water conservation practices for demonstration purposes on 1 local farm (Torres)	RC&D, DPNR VICD, NRCS	1,2	04/01	12/05	EC	project completed 12/31/05. Awaiting disbursement of remaining funds from DPNR
2. Administer \$50,000 in funding for CZM to design & install NPS BMPs at East End Bay in the St. Croix East End Marine Park [stabilize ~1760 trail-feet (1/3 mile)]	DPNR RC&D	1,2,3	06/02	09/05	CK, OD	Funding secured. Contract executed. Designs completed.

Objective 3.2: Provide sediment, erosion & stormwater control training to at least 100 farmers, contractors, regulators & inspectors by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Host satellite downlink of National Stormwater Management Conference for 12 participants	VIRC&D, SEA, CSREES	2	09/05	10/05	CB	free downlink. completed

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY: water quality improvement; pollution prevention; energy conservation; protection of fish & wildlife habitats & other environmentally sensitive areas / park establishment; environmental enhancement & beautification; and environmental education.

GOAL 4: Increase use of recommended beautification, pollution prevention & water quality protection practices by 20% by 2010.

Objective 4.1: Improve/restore/replant 3 miles of shoreline/streams by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Secure funding to demonstrate stream restoration in conjunction with technical 3-day training in Southgate Watershed [stabilize 250 stream-feet]	RC&D, SEA, CZM Schuster, NCSU	1,2,3	09/04	06/07	CB, BR	seeking USDA-NRCS/FS \$; NOAA Habitat Rest.

2.	Secure funding to conduct stream restoration demonstration in Catherine's Rest Gut & stabilize ~150 stream-feet	RC&D, SEA, DPNR NCSU	1,2	02/05	06/07	CB, OD EC, RH	submitted 319 grant for \$45,530 – rejected to apply for EWP \$
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Objective 4.2: Establish / improve 3 miles of nature trail by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
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1.	Secure funding for Phase II of Estate Adventure Nature Trail Project. Develop trail master plan, reveg & expand	RC&D, CES, DOA, CHS, U&CFC	3,5	03/04	09/05	OD, SC, EC	\$10,000 UCFAP (FY 05) funding request denied; seeking funding from FWS; USDA WHIP
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Objective 4.3: Conduct 5 environmental enhancement & beautification projects by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
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1.	Develop an urban management plan to enhance the long-term aesthetics and usefulness of the parking area at the UVI-St. Thomas Sports and Fitness Center	UVI RC&D U&CF	1,3	04/03	10/05	LP	Secured \$6,825.00 in UCFAP funding. completed
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Objective 4.4: Assist / participate in at least 3 environmental steering committees providing recommendations to local government agencies, yearly.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
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1.	Actively participate in 4 VI NPS Committee meetings	RC&D, CES, VINPSC, DPNR	2	02/04	02/10	MT, DC OD, EB, SM	ongoing; no funds needed
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GOAL 5: Increase awareness about VI environmental issues of 20% of VI population by 2010.

Objective 5.1: Provide environmental / natural resource education to 1000 youth by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
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1.	Secure funding to send at least 7 VI youth to GA 2006 Natural Resources Conservation Workshop	RC&D, CES FFA, FIA, We Grow Food	1,2	04/06	09/06	LP, BM, OD	to seek funding from USDA-FS
2.	Secure funding to purchase environmental education materials for at least 500 public and private school students.	U&CF UVI, RC&D	1,2,3	10/04	12/05	ARM, MTM OD, MT	Received funding from NRCS; Continue materials distribution
3.	Secure funding to support VI Network of Env. Educators (VINE) outreach efforts.	RCD, VIWMA VIMAS, CZM	2,3	11/04	07/07	EB, DO, SC	Re-submitted EPA Env. Ed. proposal for \$10,000

Objective 5.2: Distribute local environmental information / data to 1000 youth & adults by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
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1.	Develop a physical and Web-based St. Croix Environmental Information Repository for U.S.EPA.	RC&D, CES, SEA, CDC, EPA	1,2,3,4	03/04	01/06	SC, CB, OD RH	\$60,000 in funding from EPA secured; project on-going
2.	Produce 8 quarterly Newsletters for NPS Committee Over a 2-year period.	RC&D, DPNR NPS Committee	1,2	12/04	02/07	MT, DC, BR	Secured \$7540 in DPNR 319 funds from UVI-CES; project on-going

3.	Assist with education & outreach for new rules and regulations for the St. Croix East End Marine Park.	RC&D DNR	2,3	02/03	09/05	OD, CK, EB, MT	CZM developing rules & regs in-house. RC&D assisting in sign design, public outreach
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Objective 5.3: Deliver environmental education / pollution prevention training to 600 adults by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Work with the NPS Committee to plan & hold a territory wide 9 th Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference for at least 150 attendees.	RC&D, UVI DNR, EPA NPS Committee	2,3,5	09/03	12/05	DC, OD, LM SC, EB, MT	\$20,000 in 319 funding secured. \$20,000 CZM funds committed directly. Conference completed; closing out expenditures

Objective 5.4: Deliver environmental information on at least 3 topics to public via 10 local media outlets yearly.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Secure funding for VI NPS Committee operating budget FY 2005 to promote Committee activities.	RC&D, CES, VINPSC, DNR	2,3	12/04	12/05	MT	Secured \$6,000 in DNR 319 funds from UVI-CES; completed.
2. Publish 2005 RC&D Annual Accomplishment Report	RC&D	1,2,3	07/05	11/05	EB	draft completed; print in-house; no funds needed

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: enhancement of community leadership; development of resource-based industries; protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards; development of adequate rural water & waste disposal systems; improvement of education & recreation facilities; improvement of rural housing & transportation; provision of adequate health & communication needs; expansion of tourism; preservation of cultural resources; and promotion of food security, economic development, and education.

GOAL 6: Improve leadership capabilities of at least 500 Virgin Islanders through training workshops & seminars by 2010.

Objective 6.1: Train at least 50 Council members on Council capacity building topics by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Conduct Capacity Building II Training (fundraising, etc.) for at least 30 Council members & partners.	RC&D NRCS, NARC&DC		10/04	09/05	LP, AP, DB, CB	to request funding from NRCS Outreach
2. Recruit & train at least five (5) new members of the VI RC&D Council, Inc.			10/04	09/05	all members	ongoing; no funds needed
3. Plan and organize the FY 2005 VI RC&D Business Meeting for Dec. 1, 2005, St. John.	RC&D NRCS		07/05	12/05	LP	completed
4. Develop a marketing plan for RC&D to boost membership, increase projects / funds by 10%	RC&D		10/05	09/06	EB	in development

Objective 6.2: Train at least 200 youth and adults on leadership development topics by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Conduct Project Design & Evaluation Training for at least 40 Council members & partners	RC&D NOAA-CSC				AP	

Objective 6.3: Provide support for at least 10 Council members to network with regional & national colleagues and receive training at regional & national RC&D conferences by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Send at least 1 Council member representative to 2006 National RC&D Conference in Savannah, GA	RC&D		04/06	9/06	LP, EC	

Objective 6.4: Conduct at least 3 grant-writing trainings to improve the fund-raising skills of at least 150 Virgin Islanders.

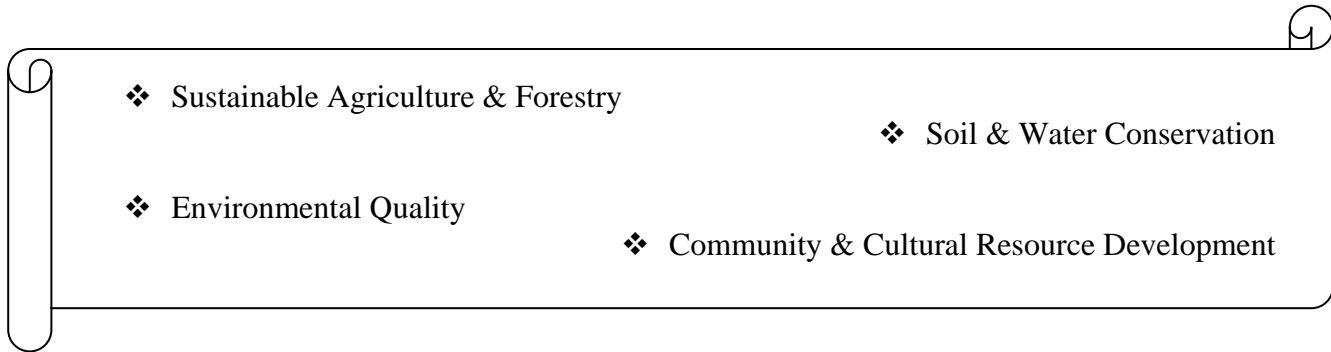
ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Conduct Grant-writing training for at least 50 Professionals.	RC&D, NRCS		10/04	04/06	DO, LP	Project planning initiated

Objective 6.5: Provide/ supplement library materials and services to at least 2 educational facilities, 2 libraries and 2 entrepreneurs to broaden access to available funding information by 2010.

ACTION ITEMS	PARTNERS	NRCS Goal	START	END	PROJ MGR	REMARKS
1. Update Grant Resource Library materials by 3 books at the UVI libraries; local high school & public libraries	RC&D, UVI		3/06	9/06	LP	to be funded with profits from grantwriting training
2. Secure funds to establish Internet access for grant research & info to VI RC&D members/clients at the RC&D office.	RC&D USDA-S		06/04	06/06	CB	\$1,000 in funding secured from USDA-FS; project on-going

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOUR RC&D RESOURCE AREAS

The following section provides a “birds-eye view” of the Virgin Islands environmental, economic and social conditions. In considering the environmental, economic and social conditions, we examine four areas of concern. The four areas of concern are:



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

The agriculture industry of the VI has declined almost to the point of non-existence. The VI imports approximately 90 percent of the meats, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, and spices that are marketed in local stores. Some of the fruits, vegetables and spices that are grown locally include avocados, bananas, coconuts, grapefruits, limes, mangoes, papayas, passion fruit, plantains, thyme, rosemary, basil, and sage. These are largely produced in small orchards and in gardens for home consumption. In addition, lands that were once used for agrarian purposes, or held as forest lands, are increasingly being converted to residential, commercial, and industrial uses. This continues to limit the USVI’s potential to be agriculturally and economically self-sufficient.

The potential exists for the VI to become more self-sufficient and increase its exporting capacity. Products such as fresh vegetables, fruits, beef, mutton and pork could be exportable, along with specialty items such as seasonings, teas, hot sauces and other condiments. Beef and some seasonings and condiments are the only agricultural product presently being exported. There is a pressing need to upgrade marketing methods and systems for the VI agricultural industry. To address this need, it is important for VI farmers and local agricultural personnel to come together to develop a formidable marketing co-operation.

VI-grown products must receive maximum prices due to the inherent high costs of doing business in the Virgin Islands, for example:

- Real estate and associated property taxes
- Agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.)
- Transportation and labor.

To overcome inherent difficulties in competing with large volume imports, local producers and distributors must realize that improved marketing and distribution are key components to success in the various territorial, Caribbean, and stateside markets.

Agriculture also preserves open space. The necessity for green space in the USVI cannot be overstated due to the inherent scarcity of land. Increased conversion of forests and agricultural land to residential and commercial development has resulted in numerous environmental and public health problems. Ecosystem degradation has resulted from poor land clearing and landscaping practices that negatively impact plants, wildlife, soil, and water resources. Large-scale removal of vegetation has reduced wildlife habitat, increased soil erosion and sedimentation, and threatens biological diversity. Construction along ridge lines and in guts (intermittent streams) is rapidly depleting moist forest habitat and changing microclimates in the territory. The expansion and maintenance of green open space would contribute significantly to improving Virgin Islander's quality of life, as well as the tourism industry, and is an excellent issue for VI RC&D to address.

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

The U.S. Virgin Islands have a semitropical climate due to orographic precipitation. Rainfall ranges on the average from 35 to 50 inches per year with rapid rates of evaporation. The territory's climate, soils, and agriculture are characterized by large rainfall differences over short distances. Ground water aquifers supply approximately 20% of the potable water in St. Croix and 1% in St. Thomas and St. John. Much of this water is supplied by private haulers and is not tested prior to being delivered. St. Croix aquifers tend to have salt water intrusion problems during the dry season due to limited recharge and over-pumping. The Tutu aquifer on St. Thomas, formerly the largest commercial water-producing aquifer, has been heavily contaminated by petroleum hydrocarbons and is now a U.S. EPA Superfund site.

People living in urban centers are served by municipal water supplies provided by WAPA. However, an estimated 80% of the population is dependent upon rooftop catchments with cisterns as their primary source of water. Cisterns have unusual sanitation and management problems due to debris and dust settling on roofing materials and running into cisterns. Since the U.S. Virgin Islands are semi-arid islands dependent upon rainfall for the majority of potable water supplies, water conservation is an extremely important issue.

Increasing amounts of forest, grass and agricultural lands in the U.S. Virgin Islands are being converted to housing, roads, and commercial and industrial land uses each year. These construction activities take place on many different kinds of topography and soils, each having different properties and limitations. Such activities and land uses alter natural water flow paths and seepage of water into the soil, changing the hydrology and increasing erosion and sedimentation, which not only damages the environment but also impacts public health.

Increased runoff causes severe erosion and more frequent flooding and has created serious problems in many areas of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Eroding road beds and cut slopes (e.g. behind houses or next to roads) cause costly property damage. Sediment and other pollutants run off uphill construction sites, roads, parking lots and other land areas and are deposited along roadways, in guts, on lower-lying property, and in ponds and coastal waters, thereby polluting surface and ground water.

Decreased water seepage into the ground (infiltration) also reduces the islands' critical fresh water supply. As paved areas increase, the amount of rainfall that seeps into the soil and into ground water is decreased. This reduces the water available for plant growth and the ground water available for public consumption. In order to provide fresh water to the growing population of the Virgin Islands, and to ensure healthy terrestrial ecosystems, it is critical to retain as much rainwater as possible within the ground, in guts and in other surface water bodies.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The natural resources of the U.S. Virgin Islands are unique. The USVI's green, forested hills; lush, semi-tropical vegetation; unique plant and animal species; white sand beaches; warm, clear, turquoise waters; diverse coral reefs; and multitudes of colorful fish delight residents and tourists alike. However, all is not well in Paradise. The USVI's marine and terrestrial ecosystems are closely inter-related and are becoming heavily impacted by a population of approximately 110,000 that resides on less than 130 square miles. Population density, particularly in St. Thomas and St. John, is even higher than is indicated by this number due to housing concentrations in urban centers and less steep outlying areas. Urban, suburban, commercial, and tourism-related development are distinctly altering the Islands' fragile watersheds at a rapid rate. The rapid pace of housing, tourism, shopping mall, and road construction is causing a considerable strain on the already inadequate and over-burdened island infrastructure.

The majority of homes in the territory have septic tank/seepage pit sewage disposal systems. Due to USVI's shallow clayey soils, steep slopes, and very limited enforceable regulations on the construction and maintenance of these septic systems, effluent from these systems can greatly impair ground water, cistern water, and coastal water quality, and have an adverse impact on human health. Millions of gallons of inadequately treated sewage are pumped into the ocean and coastal waters daily by way of outfall pipes and failing septic systems, thus increasing human and environmental health threats. For example, there has been a marked decline in the local fishery, due both to pollution and fishing pressures. The destruction of coral reefs and associated marine life near sewage outfall sites has also been documented.

Solid waste is disposed of in unlined landfills lacking leachate collection systems. Improper disposal of toxic, hazardous, and infectious material into these unsanitary landfills allows leachates to contaminate ground water supplies, coastal waters and fisheries. In addition, underground fires are burning at the Bovoni landfill on St. Thomas, and there is widespread concern regarding how ash from these fires may impact the cistern collection systems of residents in the area.

The beauty and health of the Virgin Islands' environment is vital to the well-being of all Virgin Islanders. Many residents enjoy the islands' beaches and coastal waters for swimming, bathing, snorkeling, diving, sailing, and fishing. The Virgin Islands fishing industry depends upon healthy coastal waters and reefs for its livelihood. Many residents also use native plants for cultural or medicinal purposes. These uses, and environmental health in general, are often considered to be of secondary importance to the development process. For example, raw excavation scars normally remain long after land development has been completed. Coastal water quality has been steadily deteriorating due to the influx of sediment, sewage and other pollutants, and the health of coral reefs is correspondingly declining. Many native plants and animals have also become rare, threatened or endangered.

Many destructive practices currently prevalent in the U.S. Virgin Islands are not only damaging the environment but threaten to undermine the islands' number one industry, tourism. Ironically, the tourism industry, on which 90% of the local economy is based, is geared towards the attraction of the natural environment to visitors. People come to the USVI to enjoy clear waters and pristine beaches in a lush, tropical environment. Goal-focused education is needed at all levels of the community as a basis for reducing the destruction of the marine and terrestrial environment and improving ground and coastal water quality. For example, projects could focus on the importance of a healthy ecosystem to sustaining or improving the Virgin Islands' tourism-based economy and local residents' quality of life.

VI RC&D has the unique opportunity to play a critical and lead role in collecting, developing and disseminating information relating to water resources, water quality and watershed management and promoting public awareness of environmental issues, with special emphasis on water resource protection and watershed planning. In addition, VI RC&D is in a position to facilitate the interaction of community groups and local leaders to address these problems.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Virgin Islands has a rich culture that is attributable to the many different nationalities of the people that have inhabited these islands. Traces of the diversity of early inhabitants can still be seen in the architecture of the islands' structures and numerous historic sites, including 114 sugar mills on the island of St. Croix, forts, churches, great houses, etc. Pre-Columbian archeological remains continue to be discovered and studied.

Sensitivity training and education of values are vital in the preservation of the remaining VI resources. The islands' communities need to develop tools, programs and projects that support the preservation of Virgin Islands culture, resources, and values (such as respect for the Earth and one another), and strategies for self-sufficiency / sustainability.

The economic well-being of Virgin Islands' residents depends on the public and private sectors working together to help stimulate the local economy. To combat high unemployment rates, VI residents need to increase their marketable skills for current and future business opportunities. Businesses and local agencies need to develop programs that will encourage entrepreneurship.

Marketable skills have to be nurtured. Hence, the opportunity arises to have a coordinated effort between public and private sectors to initiate training and other programs that will enhance the skills and abilities of VI residents.

The lack of proper maintenance of the public infrastructure by the Virgin Islands' government and residents alike has opened the way for acts of destruction in public facilities and violence in our communities; inadequate health care facilities and basic services; a high rate of dropouts in our schools; and an inefficient public transit system.

The small number of adequate health care facilities and services makes it difficult for VI residents and visitors to obtain low-cost, high-quality medical treatment. General health care is available, but only to those with the ability to pay for services up front. Many types of medical insurance are not accepted by health care providers in the VI. Additionally, a lack of skilled personnel and the inability to provide routine medical testing, procedures, and health care present a serious social problem.

Quality education is a necessity to prepare our youth for the future. Public schools in the Virgin Islands are overcrowded, understaffed and financially mis-managed. Three of the territory's four high schools lost their national accreditation and just recently re-attained it; the fourth is currently in the process of becoming accredited. Private schools, on the other hand, are available only for those who can afford to pay the high tuition costs.

The Territory's transportation problems have increased dramatically over the last decade. There is persistent traffic congestion in urban areas. Air and sea transportation is in need of improved service to the people of the Virgin Islands. There is a need for the VI government to improve and expand its infrastructure to provide for residents, industry and visitors alike.

SCHEDULE OF VIRC&D MEETINGS

Period: 10/1/05-9/30/06

I. Annual Business Meeting – Thursday December 1, 2005

II. Board of Directors Meetings:

- A. October 26, 2005
- B. January 11, 2006
- C. March 22, 2006
- D. May 17, 2006
- E. July 12, 2006
- F. September 13, 2006

III. St. Croix District Committee Meetings:

- A. December 14, 2005
- B. March 8, 2006
- C. June 14, 2006
- D. September 13, 2006

IV. St. Thomas – St. John District Committee Meetings:

- A. January 9, 2006
- B. March 1, 2006
- C. June 7, 2006
- D. September 6, 2006

DECLARATION OF ADOPTION & APPROVAL OF PLAN

"The Virgin Islands RC&D Council, Inc. agrees that the VI RC&D program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age of Discrimination Act of 1075 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture – (7 CFR-15, Subparts A&B) which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial (or technical) assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof."

The Virgin Islands RC&D Council, Inc. agrees that the signing of this document constitutes an agreement to comply with federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free work place, and responsibilities for non-procurement, suspension, and disbarment, and state review.

The Virgin Islands RC&D Council, Inc. hereby adopts the VI RC&D Fiscal Year 2006 Business Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the United States Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

The Virgin Islands RC&D Council, Inc. of the U.S. Virgin Islands

By: Louis E. Petersen Jr.
President

Date: January 19, 2006

Attest: [Signature]
Council Secretary VICE-PRESIDENT

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Virgin Islands RC&D Council, Inc. on this 27th day of September, 2005.

U. S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Approved by: _____
Caribbean Area Director

Date: _____