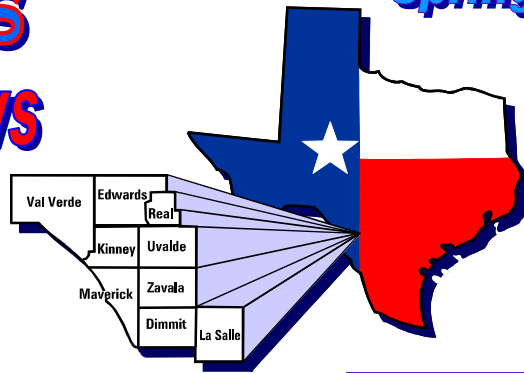


# RIO GRANDE-NUECES RC&D 9 County News

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Spring 2010



Since we are beginning a new year as well as a new decade, it seems a good time to provide a "RC&D Refresher Course." Inside find :

2010-2011 RC&D Council Officers.

What is the Circle of Diamonds?

What is an Area Plan?

Duties and Responsibilities of an RC&D Coordinator.



## President's Message

Greetings to all council members, sponsors and supporters. 2009 has come and gone and we have completed another great year. As we plan our first meeting of 2010 we can already see many things that are being worked on in the

areas of conservation, community need projects including a large component of education thrown in to make living in this great country better for us all. We will be looking forward to bigger and better doings in 2010.

The overall goal of the Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D should continue to be to focus conserving our finite and valuable natural resources in partnership with citizens, business, organizations, governments and individuals to improve the area's economy, environment and living standards. We shall continue to seek to accomplish this goal by working with those who are already deeply invested in the understanding of the region's problems and opportunities, so that our efforts are optimized, rather than duplicative.

My sincere thanks to my 2010 executive board officer team. Without your valuable input my responsibility as your council president would be a very difficult one. My sincere appreciation as well to all council members, sponsors, supporters and organizations that will work tirelessly with our RC&D in hopes of making a positive difference in the counties and communities of our service area. I look forward for a productive and rewarding 2010 program year.

Marcel Valdez, President  
Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D

## Calendar of Events

**RG-N RC&D Council Meeting**  
USDA Service Center, 105  
Weeping Willow, Uvalde, TX -  
March 11, 9:30 AM

**SW States Association of RC&D  
Councils/Texas State Assoc..  
RC&D Councils Conference**  
Fort Worth, TX—  
March 14-17, 2010

Check our website for more  
upcoming events!

Check our  
NEW website!!  
[www.rgnrcd.org](http://www.rgnrcd.org)

## 2010-2011 Council Officers

Marcel Valdez, President  
Eddie Ramirez, Vice President  
Tom Austin, Secretary  
Betty Jo Harris, Treasurer

## RC&D Coordinator

Mario A. Morales

## Admin. Asst.

Leigh Ann Sanderlin

## 2010-2011 RG-N RC&D Council Officers

At the 2009 Annual Meeting last December officer elections were held and our 2010-2011 Council Officers are as follows:

Marcel Valdez, President. Marcel has a long history with RC&D and has held the president and the vice president office in the past. He is a Texas AgriLIFE county extension agent in Zavala County and also serves on the Wintergarden SWCD board. Prior to

this term, Marcel has been serving as vice president.

Eddie Ramirez, Vice President, was our past president and has served as vice president in the past. Eddie is a school administrator in the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District.

Tom Austin will continue to serve as Secretary for the 2010-2011 term. Tom has served on the council for

many years as the representative for the City of Uvalde.

Betty Jo Harris will serve as Treasurer. Betty has also served on the RC&D Council representing the city of Sabin.

We look forward to a successful year with the guidance and direction provided by our new council officers.

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## What is the "Circle of Diamonds?"

The Circle of Diamonds program is designed for RC&D councils to highlight exemplary actions in their own community and to give recognition to those councils for the good work they do in their local communities. The program also recognizes good stewardship of the local non-profit council in "Making Things Happen." The program is set up to be a proactive approach for Councils to simply demonstrate that they are complying with the basic requirements of the RC&D statute (Public Law 107-171, Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Sections 1528-1537), the council responsibilities outlined in the NRCS manual (NRCS publication 440-V-CPM,) Amended. 9, May 2002; and best non-profit management practices. This program is a three-tiered program.

Circle of Diamond councils exemplify positive impacts in the quality of life within their local areas. Circle mem-

bers are publicly accountable and realize that their accountability directly relates to the council's structure, process, and outcomes each member of the Circle attains. The program will highlight Councils that have produced quality programs within their local communities. Primarily, membership in NARC&DC's Circle of Diamonds will show the honesty, integrity and strong commitment of their Councils to the National RC&D mission.

In June of 2003, the NARC&DC's Circle of Diamonds Program came into being with a single tier. On June 9, 2007, the Board of Directors unanimously agreed to make the Circle of Diamonds a national priority. This was done to ensure the accountability of RC&D councils nationwide. As such, the Board set a goal of 100 percent of all Councils become members of the Circle of Diamonds.

Membership is based upon a calendar year (January 1 – December 31). On

November 1 each year a letter will be sent to all current member councils (regardless of their level) reminding them that it is time to apply for recertification as a member of the Circle of Diamonds. To be recertified a Recertification Application must be submitted certifying that they are continuing with the requirements set forth in their initial application. In addition, members will be asked to submit an example of their communication efforts and a copy of their Annual Plan of Work, and Area Plan if updated within the past year.

Rio Grande Nueces RC&D was certified as a 2008-2009 member of the Circle of Diamonds and have been approved for recertification. We will be receiving the 2010-2011 certificate of excellence soon.

We are proud to be recognized as a part of this group and continue to endeavor to serve our communities to our fullest abilities.

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## What is an RC&D Area Plan?

In general, an Area Plan is a planning and implementation document and it establishes the central framework for the NRCS and RC&D Council partnership. The Area Plan serves as a strategic plan for the RC&D Area for a five-year period and may be modified on approval by the RC&D Council, NRCS State Conservationist, and the national NRCS RC&D Office. The five-year period for the Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D ends in December of 2010.

The Area Plan documents the goals

an RC&D Council wants to accomplish through the RC&D Program for the five-year time period based on well-defined needs and opportunities. The Area Plan will contain goals, objectives, and strategies that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART). Area Plans must describe the needs and opportunities facing the Area as they relate to each of the program elements: land conservation, water management, community development, and land manage-

ment. Goals, objectives, and strategies to address the described needs must be established for at least two of the four program elements. Each RC&D Council is required to maintain a current Area Plan as a basis for assistance under Public Law 107-171, Section 1530.

Effective RC&D Area planning requires that an RC&D Council and NRCS have a consistent understanding of strategic planning, regional development, and the planning terms used in the

program. RC&D planning participants must also develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues, trends conditions of natural and human resources within the designated Area. RC&D Councils and RC&D Coordinators are to seek out and document information on the RC&D Area's environmental, economic, and social resources in order to develop a comprehensive knowledge base that can be used to develop attainable goals for the RC&D Area. An annual review of the RC&D Area Plan is required during the development of the Annual Plan of Work and annual report by the RC&D Council and NRCS to ensure that it continues to enhance the opportunities and address problems and concerns of the people living in the Area.

The USDA-NRCS State Conservation-

ists must ensure that goals, objectives, and strategies in the Area Plan are consistent with RC&D Program purposes and long-term goals, comply with Federal RC&D Program requirements, will effectively meet the documented needs of the RC&D Area and are sufficient in scope to justify the obligation of RC&D Program funds. Failure to maintain a current RC&D Area Plan can be cause for withdrawal of RC&D Program assistance. Continued funding for RC&D technical assistance is contingent upon satisfactory progress being made toward the goals in the current Area Plan.

The RC&D Area Plan serves as the agreement between the RC&D Council and NRCS State Conservationist for the use of public funds to support the Area during the time period that it covers. The Council must provide a final draft to the State Conservationist for review before final adoption. This may be accomplished through the

RC&D Coordinator assigned to work with the RC&D Council. Review is necessary to ensure compliance with applicable administrative policy and RC&D Program requirements, and to maintain a high level of coordination among the USDA agencies that work with the RC&D Council. Activities carried out in support of the RC&D Area Plan are the official business of the employees assigned to work with the RC&D Council. Federally owned equipment may be used in its implementation consistent with all other administrative requirements, rules, and regulations.

The Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D Council is currently working on updating its Area Plan. We hope to have our draft Area Plan by September of this year. If you are interested in commenting on the draft Area Plan or participating in the updating process, please contact Mario A. Morales, RC&D Coordinator at 830-279-0164.

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## The Duties and Responsibilities of an RC&D Coordinator

As a result of the Quality Assurance Review of the Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D Office, that was held in September of 2009, we felt it would be beneficial for information on the duties and responsibilities of our RC&D Coordinator be presented. The RC&D Coordinator is the designated USDA representative to the RC&D Area under the administration of NRCS. The Coordinator serves as the liaison between USDA and the RC&D Council and is responsible for supervising all USDA staff assigned to the RC&D Office. The Coordinator ensures that all federally assisted activities are carried out in accordance with applicable USDA program statutes in support of the RC&D Area Plan. As a Federal employee, the Coordinator must be aware of limitations regarding certain activities, ensuring that the appropriate division of responsibilities between USDA and the RC&D Council is clearly understood and observed. Specific responsibilities are:

- Helping the Council revise, update and implement the RC&D Area Plan and ensuring that it complies with the RC&D Program policy. Helping the Council prepare and implement its Annual Plan of Work and informing the RC&D Council of progress, problems, and opportunities associated with all aspects of the RC&D Program within the Area.
- Helping the RC&D Council develop an inventory of projects worthy of receiving technical or financial assistance.

- Helping with the grant writing process including project scope, budget, contracts, project follow-up, etc.
- Helping the Council identify prospective Federal and non-Federal funding sources.
- Overseeing and performing planning activities required of specific projects.
- Researching and compiling information needed to apply for various grant programs.
- Ensuring that project implementation proceeds according to approved plans.
- Providing day-to-day direction for the implementation of the Council's Area Plan and Annual Plan of Work.

*Federally employed RC&D Coordinators are specifically prohibited from the following::*

- Directly managing the human or financial resources of an RC&D Council.
- Lobbying any form of government on behalf of the RC&D Council.
- Committing the RC&D Council to any action or agreement regardless of the intent by the RC&D Council.
- Personally engaging in fundraising on behalf of the Council.

## New Director Announced

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Inc. is pleased to announce our new Executive Director, John Haugen. Mr. Haugen brings thirty years of Capitol Hill experience in all facets of the legislative process with particular emphasis on agriculture, energy and the environment to his new job. Twenty-six of those thirty years on Capitol Hill were spent working for Congressman Charlie Stenholm (D-TX). The last two years were spent working for Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA). John has served as Communications Director and Deputy Chief of Staff/Press Secretary to the House Committee on Agriculture, which is one of the most bipartisan committees in Congress. In addition, he brings experience in press and media relations, leadership and fundraising.



## Our Mission

“A local volunteer council helping people along the Texas-Mexico border, to care for their rural resources in a way that improves the economy, environment and living standards of the community.”

Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D

### Council Meeting Agenda

March 11, 2010, 9:30 AM,

USDA Service Center  
105 Weeping Willow, Uvalde TX

830- 279-0164

1. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Establish Quorum.
3. Public Comments (limit 3 minutes per person).
4. Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes.
5. Approval of January 5, 2010 Special Board of Directors Meeting Minutes.
6. Discussion and Possible Approval of Treasurer's Report and Accounts Payable.
7. Review 2009 Audit.
8. Review and Approve 2010 Proposed Budget.
9. Approval of Bylaws Revision to Meet Legislation Changes.
10. Coordinator's Report.
11. Next Meeting Date (June 10, 2010).
12. Adjournment.

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