

**Calendar of RIRDC
Quarterly Board Meeting
dates for 2005:**

Friday, March 25, 2005

Friday, June 24, 2005

Saturday, Sept 24, 2005

Friday, Dec 16, 2005

Contact Executive Director
for locations

RIRDC Calendar

**Executive Board Meetings
held on 4th Thursday of
each month**

Meetings open to the public

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Chairman's Message — Positive Progress for Rhode Island

In 2004, the Rhode Island Rural Development Council had an aggressive agenda to make some positive impacts in rural communities. The first and foremost planned activity was to partner with the Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty's Small Business Advocacy Council and take the message of State and Federal government support to its rural community members. Two successful forums were held to describe the services and programs available to rural businesses. The first presentation occurred in South County with over 50 people in attendance. The second Lt. Governor's program

held in March, 2004 was co-sponsored by RIRDC and the Northern RI Chamber of Commerce. Both events were successful in bringing a unified message to businesses that their local interests are being heard and shared by state and federal government. Funds and other resources are available now to support business within a positive business climate. These two events set the tone for a renewed recognition and positive outlook for the State's natural resources, and agricultural industry.

The RI Rural Development Council has since

made other positive strides in opening dialogs with groups that had previously worked independently but now are openly sharing ideas on business interests and ways to find resources needed to bring ideas to fruition. It is truly a window of opportunity and optimism for rural business ventures. One small step taken by RI Rural Development Council has been to facilitate the application of the Central RI Development Corporation as a USDA small business loan officer for RI rural funds. The town of Smithfield Town Planner also has USDA authorization for loans offerings for its town businesses.

*continued page 2—
Chairman's Message*

Lt Governor Charles J. Fogarty Rural Forums



Lt. Governor Charles J. Fogarty

Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty's Small Business Advocacy Council and the Rhode Island Rural Development Council held two rural regional collaborative forums during March and May of 2004. The purpose of the events was to openly dis-

cuss the issues, mounting pressures and concerns of the RI rural community as outlined in a survey conducted by the RI Rural Development Council in August, 2003. The survey was the focal point for the progress meetings as a means *continued page 2 —Lt. Gov's Rural Forums*

Chairman's Message—*continued*

Our current Executive Director, Jerry Bertrand, has gained some successes with grants this year. The RI Rural Development Council has earned a \$35,167 Champlin Foundations grant on behalf of the Washington County Fairgrounds, Richmond Pomona Grange, for the rehabilitation of the 4H/FFA building at the Fairgrounds.

Another success story in Rhode Island is the new RI Dairy Farms Cooperative selling its own branded milk products under the name of "Rhody Fresh". It has been an instant success in the supermarkets. Our Executive Director serves as an Associate Director and has been credited with linking the dairy farmers to the advertising agency of Cote and D'Ambrosio. The Rhody Fresh marketing campaign has propelled the milk sales of its new products to one that outsells 4 to 1 over most other name brand milk products. In early 2004, The RIRDC received a \$5,000 grant from The Rhode Island Foundation to the RI Dairy Farms Cooperative to produce the marketing sales kits and store window display signs of "Save the Farms—buy Rhody Fresh". Just recently, the Rhode Island Foundation awarded a \$25,000 grant to RIRDC for its Rural Communities Strategies.

The grant will be used for the Rhode Island Dairy Farms Cooperative recruitment of other state dairy farmers and, to design the introductions of the next phase of dairy and farm products under the Rhody Fresh label.



**Jeffrey A. Gofton, Chair
RIRDC**

The success of Rhody Fresh has been phenomenal and as already mentioned, has sparked new ideas for more economic ventures from our rural communities.

Continuing into 2005, we will be working with the RI Shellfishermen's Association and with the Eastern RI Conservation District on a project with cattle farmers.

The RI Rural Development Council is ready to mobilize its partnering agencies to assist wherever and whenever possible in providing resources for the success of new burgeoning ventures.

Signs of encouragement and support come from Governor Carcieri's Office and the RI Economic Development Corporation. They have signaled new interests and support for farm viability initiatives, funding for small businesses, and a potential increased visibility for agricultural and natural resource agritourism initiatives.

While the measures of success of our rural communities have increased in business growth, there is still much work to be done in rural communities on health care, infrastructure upgrades, transportation issues, and affordable housing for our Rhode Island residents. It is hoped our new business visibility successes will focus further attention on rural communities in providing positive solutions to these problems of the utmost importance to Rhode Island.

Lt. Governor's Rural Forums—*continued*

to highlight rural issues and present guidance by RIRDC and our state government and partnering agencies in providing information, resources, and funding means for rural businesses and/or its communities. (*see Survey Results—page 7*)

Over 100 people attended one of the two sessions held either in March 2004 in the Southern region or in May 2004 in the Northern RI territory. The Northern RI Chamber of Commerce co-sponsored the Northern RI territory meeting event and were guest participants.

The Northern RI Chamber is the second largest chamber in the State

and maintains a constant and continuing lead partnership with RIRDC on rural initiatives in the Northern RI territory.

The honorable Lieutenant Governor Charles Fogarty was the invited main speaker, and at the Northern RI forum, John Gregory, President and CEO of the Northern RI Chamber spoke about the varied rural businesses in the area and importance of each to its Chamber. John Gregory also elaborated on the historical rural perspectives and presently favorable rural business climate in Northern RI.

The core agenda portion of each forum was based on panel discussions from invited partnering agencies. They included: Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, RI Resource Conservation and Development Council, US Small Business Administration, RI Small Business Development Center, Town of Smithfield Planner and Town Economic Development Director.

The remaining time was made available to audience guests to ask questions. The interactive question and answer periods were quite lively and informative, leading to good ideas for future initiatives.

RIRDC Partners for High School Bioscience Academy Initiative

In July 2003, the Rhode Island Rural Development Council (RIRDC) partnered with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island School-to-Career Office (RISTC) and its Region I and II affiliates to file a funding application with the Amgen Foundation to offer bioscience academy training in RI school districts. The Rhode Island Department of Education solicited letters of interest from all school superintendents to establish or upgrade their science programs to include a proposed bioscience academy in each high school. By 2004, 16 school systems (including those with national affiliation with Project Lead the Way) in Rhode Island have contacted RIDE with a letter of interest in establishing bioscience academies.

This effort was initially undertaken in response to the situation of hundreds of job openings at a biotech manufacturing facility that local Rhode Island workers lacked skills to fill. This facility owned by Amgen, the world's largest biotechnology company, is located in the rural town

of West Greenwich, RI -- population 5,085. Upon startup, over 1,150 positions were available at the new plant but clearly the workforce requirements demanded by the company were not compatible with the existing know-how and skills of Rhode Island's rural labor force. In 2004, Amgen further expanded its workforce by hiring over 200 new employees. The RI Economic Policy Council and the University of Rhode Island quickly moved to establish a new College of Environment and Life Sciences with baccalaureate program offerings for biotechnology. In similar support for science education, the RIRDC with its partners moved towards establishing bioscience academies in RI high schools.

The aim of the high school bioscience academy program is two-fold (1) to produce a skilled and ready future workforce in Rhode Island eligible for the next series of biotechnology job opportunities; and, (2) to increase the awareness of high school students in career choices in agri-science and bio-

technology in Rhode Island. When RIRDC and its partnering organizations did not receive an Amgen Foundation grant in 2004, they quickly searched for other funding sources that could develop the bioscience academy models. The RIRDC, in partnership with "life.edu.org", a non-profit educational organization affiliated with the University of Rhode Island, received a \$25,000 grant from the Rhode Island School-to-Career Office, Region II and additional funding from Hybrigene, Inc., an agri-science lab in South Kingstown, RI to conduct a high school agri-science training initiative at Hybrigene, Inc.

Nineteen high school students, and 10 science teachers from South Kingstown, Chariho Regional, Exeter/West Greenwich Regional and Ponagansett High Schools participated in this real-world research/agri-science experience. High school students and science

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RI Rural Development Council—Grant Successes in 2004

In 2004, the Rhode Island Rural Development Council was busy with several initiatives that successfully yielded funds for the Council as well as for the many associations that worked together with RIRDC in obtaining grant funds for their projects.

For the record, the Rhode Island Rural Development Council RIRDC receives the bulk of its operating funds for FY 2004-2005 from three sources.

The primary source was the USDA Office of Community Development, National Rural Development Partnership, Washington, DC. The local matching funds for USDA were received from RI DLT School to Career Office, and RI Economic Development Corporation.

Overall, the Rhode Island Rural Development Council earned \$113,600 for its operations through both cash and in-kind contributions for FY 2004-05. And, the RIRDC earned grants within this year amounting to \$90,167 for various organizations within Rhode Island.

Thank you

RIRDC wishes to acknowledge and thank the local funding agencies for the grant awards in support of local organizations. They are: The Rhode Island Foundation, The Champlin Foundations, RIDLT School to Career Region II, lifeedu.org, and Hybrigene, Inc.

RIRDC also wishes to acknowledge the

grant assistance and partnership support received from RI Department of Education, RIDLT, School to Career Office, Regions I and II, University of Rhode Island Environment and Life Sciences, URI Aquaculture Project, Community College of Rhode Island, RI Economic Development Corporation, RI State Grange and Richmond Pomona Grange, and members of the House and Senate in the Rhode Island General Assembly.

RIRDC remains dedicated to improving the quality of life in rural RI and supports the efforts of organizations within the rural communities in preserving the unique rural character of Rhode Island.

BioScience in RI high schools—Continued

teachers met evenings at Hybrigene, Inc. to perform college-level scientific research on turf grass specimens. Dr. Albert Kausch, PhD, Professor, URI Department of Cell and Molecular Biology, and President and Founder of “lifeedu.org” along with URI PhD candidate Chip Longo developed a plant molecular biology research course, typically only encountered at a college level, for these high school students and teachers. This unique training course entitled “Modern Techniques in Genetic Engineering” is designed to enhance interest in bioscience. Knowledgeable sources say it may become the model format for RI high school bioscience academy programs. In the meantime, the science teachers involved will use

the course experience to develop higher-level high school classroom lesson plans.

While this course focused on agricultural biotech, it included a general survey class in genetics, forensics, medical, pharmaceuticals, DNA, ethics, genomics, proteomics and marine science. The eventual bioscience academy model will include all of these disciplines of biotechnology and involve partnerships with numerous RI higher education institutions and the biotechnology industry.

Concurrent to the agri-science training program, the RIRDC formed an Education Committee with statewide membership, negotiated the Com-

mittee’s agenda and provided logistic support for its meetings. At its first meeting in July, 2004, the Chair, Thomas Sandham, RIRDC Board Member and Executive Director of the Eastern RI Conservation District, called upon participating partners to use their expertise collaboratively to move RI’s initiative for bioscience academies forward. All partners were briefed on the progress of the bioscience academy model and the recent grant funded by RI School to Career Office for the training at Hybrigene, Inc. At the second meeting, Dr. Albert Kausch discussed grant funding by Amgen Foundation for video recording his 15-week biotechnology class that could become a teaching tool for teachers interested in the planned bioscience academies. The Amgen grant offered up to 100

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RIRDC 2nd Annual Rural Forum—Education and Housing

The Rhode Island Rural Development Council held its 2nd annual RI Rural Forum at the UCLUB, URI Kingston Campus, 95 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI on Thursday September 30, 2004. This half day event highlighted the RIRDC initiatives during 2004 both completed and those still underway with its participating partner agencies regarding the topics of agriscience, a high school bioscience academy science model, (see also bioscience in high schools article in this annual report), agritourism, gardens in elementary schools, the new RI Farmways program. Highlights on housing included the latest update on state regulations on affordable housing plans from RIHMFC, issues and recent study from Washington County Regional Planning Council on Southern RI affordable housing. The event was open to the public to those interested in participative dialog on these emerging workforce issues, agritourism and rural housing issues.



Dr. Albert Kausch
URI Environment
and Life Sciences



Stu Nunnery
Executive Director
RICAPE



Amy Rainone
RI Housing Mortgage
Finance Corporation



Henry Oppenheimer
Washington County
Regional Planning
Council



BioScience in RI high schools—Continued

RI High School science teachers free admission to Dr. Kausch's class. Each series of the class was video recorded for future use. Teachers who attend the class were eligible to receive graduate level credit from URI and also receive, at no cost, copies of the developed videos upon successful completion of the 15-week course. The participating teachers will develop lesson plans for their schools based on the topics discussed in the lecture series.

At the third RIRDC Education Committee meeting led by Thomas Sandham (RIRDC) and Linda Jzyk, (RIDE), the discussion centered on the next steps needed to establish the bioscience academies. It was agreed that a standardized curriculum and teacher lesson plans were needed for each RI School system planning to start a bioscience academy. To achieve this goal, the RIRDC relinquished its lead on this project to Linda Jzyk of RI Dept of Education. From this point forward, the RI Dept of Education will lead the Bioscience Academy initiative with the RI Rural Development Council remaining as a participating partner member of the committee.

Among the outcomes from the RIRDC's work to add bio-science education and training programs in rural Rhode Island are:

1. Linda Jzyk, High School Reform Specialist, RI Dept of Education (RIDE), stated that the initiative started by the RI Rural Development Council and "life edu.org" at Hybrigene, Inc was the template for an EPSCoR national grant application of \$13MM for the State of Rhode Island led by
2. The Community College of Rhode Island has established a biotechnology certificate program at the junior college. All courses will be directly transferable credits to the University of Rhode Island.
3. The involvement of partnering agencies with RIRDC's Education Committee led to national connections for collaboration with "Project Lead the Way", use of the URI training program as a template concept for a larger national grant application with EPSCoR.
4. RIDE, the Tech Collective and other institutions are leading the way for industry partnerships. RIDE is also collaborating with National Academy Foundation for outside linkages for the advancement of bioscience academies.

Agriscience Grant—Recognition Awards



Awards Presentation at the RI Rural Forum September, 2004

Kingston, RI—At the 2nd Annual RI Rural Forum, Dr. Albert Kausch presented an overview of the RIRDC/lifeedu.org bioscience education initiative. Immediately following, RIRDC and lifeedu.org thanked Lizann Gibson and Linda Soderberg for funding support, and presented each with a framed poster of agri-science students' white papers on experiments conducted in clinical research labs at Hybrigene, Inc.

L-R: Gerard Bertrand, RIRDC Executive Director; Lizann Gibson, Executive Director, Southern RI Collaborative/STC Region II; Dr. Albert Kausch, URI Professor, College of Environment and Life Sciences; Linda Soderberg, Director, DLT School to Career Office; Thomas Sandham, RIRDC Education Committee Chair and Executive Director, Eastern RI Conservation District.

Veneman Begins Formation of National Rural Development Coordinating Committee

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced that USDA has begun the process for identifying and selecting members for the National Rural Development Coordinating Committee (NRDCC) that will incorporate the goals and vision of state, local, federal, non-profit and private for-profit sectors into one overarching national rural strategy. The Bush Administration is working to ensure that rural communities are given the opportunity to have their voices heard in the creation of rural policies.

"President Bush's leadership in establishing this committee underscores his

commitment to the future of rural communities," said Veneman. "In addition to the \$50 billion the Bush Administration has invested in rural areas, the establishing of this committee supports the development of rural policies with the assurance that the voice of rural America will be heard."

In a letter today to 15 federal agencies, Veneman requested their assistance by nominating federal representatives to serve on the Committee (NRDCC). Veneman will also seek in the near future, private and public sector members to serve on the Committee through

public solicitation in the Federal Register. The NRDCC will provide input on the formation of national rural strategy, incorporating the goals and vision of State, local, federal, non-profit, and private for-profit sectors into one overarching national rural strategy, and providing overall leadership on policies affecting rural America.

The NRDCC was authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill and signed into law by President Bush. Veneman has been tapped to chair the Committee due to the Department of Agriculture's extensive role in supporting rural businesses, families and communities.

Bush nominates Johanns as Agriculture Secretary

By Richard Benedetto and Elizabeth Weise, USA TODAY

President Bush on Thursday December 2,nd, 2004 named Nebraska Republican Gov. Mike Johanns to be his next Agriculture secretary, succeeding Ann Veneman, who resigned last month. Johanns, 54, at the midpoint of his second four-year term as governor, would vacate that post if confirmed by the Senate. So far, no major opposition to the nomination has surfaced. Farm and cattle groups praised Johanns' selection.

"He has served six years as governor of one of our nation's largest cattle-producing states, and we're enthusiastic about working with him," said

Jan Lyons, president of the National Cattle-men's Beef Association.

Some advocates of family farming, such as the



Sierra Club have criticized Johanns for being too friendly to corporate agribusiness. Johanns has suggested studying whether Nebraska should alter a state constitutional amendment passed in the 1980s that restricts corporations from owning farms in the state. He has said the law hurts the Nebraska economy.

Bush described Johanns as "a faithful friend to America's farmers and ranchers."

If his nomination is confirmed, Johanns will head the \$78-billion-a-year U.S. Department of Agriculture which has 113,000 employees. The USDA oversees and regulates farm, forest and food programs.

As governor, he has been a leading advocate of ethanol and biodiesel production as a substitute for fossil fuels, a Bush administration priority. About 10% of the U.S. corn crop is distilled to make ethanol.

He has also been a major promoter of the

sale of American agriculture products overseas. He has taken trade delegations to Japan, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Australia, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Brazil and Chile. Johanns also fought for federal assistance to Nebraska farmers during recent years of severe drought that parched crops and forced ranchers to sell off cattle.

Johanns thanked Bush, saying, "I look forward to advancing your rural agenda for the 21st century."

Jacobson encouraged Johanns to get junk food out of schools and provide incentives to lower the fat content of meat and dairy products.

Johanns grew up on an Iowa dairy farm. He started in politics in 1981 as a Democrat, becoming Republican in 1988. "Those years on that dairy farm did much to define who I am as a person," he said.

2004 NRDP OK Annual Conference

Congratulations and thanks to the Oklahoma Rural Development Council, and all the people and organizations involved in the 2004 NRDP Annual Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma August 29th-September 2nd. The event brought together the leadership of 38 State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs) with rural development experts from across the nation. Attendees were treated to various workshops and presentations on different rural development issues and initiatives. They also were treated

to several pleasant and interesting sites and performances from local Oklahoma groups and individuals.

Ranging from music performances, to winery visits, to policy consultations, to learning stations, to downtown beautification, the conference was a steady parade of interesting and relevant discussion and work on rural development issues. Thanks again to all those involved in making this conference informative and relevant to rural America.

Federal Recognition for RIRDC

As of January 8, 2004, seventeen states had fully-recognized State RD Councils: Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

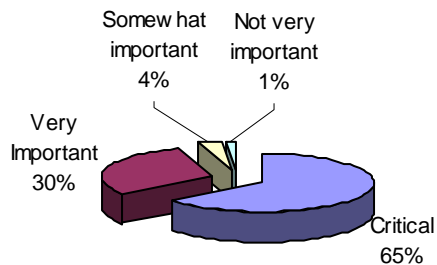
Sixteen State RD Councils were *provisionally*-recognized and eligible for full recognition if they complete their requirements. These states include: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

State Council applications were also under review for Arizona, Idaho, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

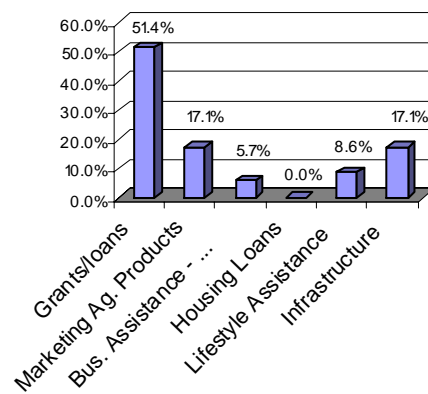
After modifications to its bylaws and approval by its Board of Directors, Rhode Island returned to full recognition status with USDA OCD/Rural Development as of June 30, 2004 through 2007.

RIRDC Survey Results—Lt. Governor's Rural Forums—2004

Maintain the rural character of rural RI



Most critical activity



RI Rural Development Council - Rural Survey—Key points

As defined by very concerned, the top concerns included:

- Environmental degradation
- Development, changing population density
- Resource constraints (water, etc.)
- Infrastructure
- Taxes

More specifically:

When asked if they had any other concerns, the respondents mentioned:

- Farm preservation
- Over regulation of forestry and agriculture
- Sprawl
- Water conservation

When asked what the top threats to rural Rhode Island were, the most frequently cited responses included:

29.5% changing population density; 10.5% development outside town centers; 9% environmental degradation; 7.7% negative architectural impacts; 7.7% increasing taxes; 7.7% resource constraints; 3.8% new resident complaints about agriculture; 3.8% infrastructure.

RIRDC

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The Rhode Island Rural Development Council is dedicated to improving the quality of life in rural Rhode Island, while preserving the characteristics that give rural communities their unique sense of place

We're on the Web
www.RuralRI.org

RIRDC Executive Committee

Jeffrey A. Gofton - Chair, RIRDC - RI Department of Administration
R. Larry Aker, Town Council, Exeter
Edward T. Baker, Jr. - USDA RC & D
Ralph P. Boragine - RI Seafood Council
Raymond M. Goff - Town Planner, Gloucester
Geoffrey A. Marchant - E.G. Community Development Consortium
Devon D. Preston - Washington County Regional Planning Council
Carolyn G. Weymouth - No. RI Conservation District

Council Members

Kenneth D. Ayars - RIDEM Div of Agriculture
Jeffrey Bowie - Business leader, Chepachet
Lisa W. Bryer - Town Planner, Jamestown
Richard J. Burke - USDA Rural Development
Robert G. Driscoll - Town Administrator, Portsmouth
Harriet Powell - Southern RI Conservation District
Richard C. Rhodes III, Assoc. Dean for Research and Outreach,
Assoc. Dir, URI College of Environment and Life Sciences
Raymond P. Robinson - Rural Resident, West Kingston
Wayne L. Salisbury - Local Official, Scituate
Thomas Sandham - Eastern RI Conservation District
Milton Schumacher - Rural Resident
Robert S. Swanson - USDA/Farm Service Agency
Matthew Thomas - Chief Sachem, Narragansett Tribe



The Rhode Island Rural Development Council

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