



APPALACHIAN R&D COUNCIL

2025 IMPACT REPORT

Connecting people to the land, agriculture, food and each other to foster healthy, thriving and resilient communities in our part of Appalachia and beyond.





ROY SETTLE
2025 CHAIR

“As I reflect on 2025, I am most proud of the quick response we made to assist farmers impacted by the ravages of Hurricane Helene in our region. We were able to focus on those producers whose needs fell through the cracks in the state and federal responses. Even today we are working on some of the long term damages to the soil.

In 2026 and years to come I am excited about our efforts to slow the rate of farmland disappearing in Northeast Tennessee. Staff and Board Members worked closely with the State Legislature to help pass the Governor's Farmland Preservation Program. We strongly support the voluntary protection of our agricultural and natural lands.

“In 2025 ARC&D demonstrated how grounded it is, in its mission and in its service area, by not only responding to the natural disaster of Helene with steady support but also by maintaining a steadfast focus on key issues like the Governor's Farmland Preservation Program, through mentorship of local FFA members participating in conservation advocacy, programs and by direct contact with Nashville legislators.

2026 holds promise for stewardship, as a continuation of what's at the root of ARC&D — strong training, programming, education, and outreach — and also encouragement for growth by recognizing and developing support systems that offer stability in what is often a rapidly changing environment.



ALLYSON WILKINSON
2026 CHAIR

“The word ‘*inheritance*’ keeps coming up for me. We all step into worlds not of our own making but the result of behaviors, decisions, actions (and non-actions) taken by those who have gone before us - for good, bad or both. When I think of the successes I am able to achieve, I often remember that I stand on the shoulders of the people who came before me. If you farm, you probably realize this every day as you deal with the condition of soils, equipment, barns and other things. It's an issue applicable to all of us, but lately I've been asking myself what I can do today to leave a nice inheritance for those who come after me. That's a big question with lots of options and my answers at this current stage of life might be different from when I was younger.

Yet from childhood to now, I have always treasured intact rural landscapes and healthy, vitally-alive communities. I am grateful that everyone here at the ARC&D shares these values and wants to nurture, build, protect and pass on these assets to the next generations.

Many of our fertile bottomlands and adjacent river systems still need to be put back together after Helene, and we are doing it. A lot of people are moving here, and while everyone needs housing, we want to grow in a way that ensures our ability to produce our own food while protecting the rural scenery that attracts us all here in the first place. The average age of a farmer in Tennessee is 59 years. There are lots of young people, veterans and mid-life career changers who want to farm. We

are facilitating this transition by connecting them with the knowledge, skills and wisdom to make a successful go of it - while advocating for and building a strong market environment that makes farming financially worthwhile. And we still think we can do a better job interrupting intergenerational hunger and poor nutrition that has so many dire consequences on families and our communities. This report lays out our progress last year.

I invite you to join our community of other like-minded individuals, businesses, and private foundations who share these same values around food, farms, rural landscapes and our people. Have fun at our annual farm tour or another one of our events. Enroll in one of our programs. Become a Cultivators Club member. Whatever you decide, your participation is integral to our work preparing the ground, restoring and stewarding well the extraordinary agri-cultural landscape that makes northeast Tennessee so special. And you will be in good company!



ANDY BROWN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Appalachian RC&D's Four Core Programs

AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE

**60 Attendees,
17 Graduates**

from our Farmer Field School

16 Sessions

of Winter & Summer
Field School for New
and Emerging Farmers

Opening of

**Appalachian
Producers
Cooperative Meat
Processing Facility**
in Telford, TN

**1,647 Veterans
and Transitioning
Service Members
Introduced**

to Careers in Agriculture
Through our

TN AgVols Program

NUTRITION & FOOD ACCESS

1,069 Clients
participating in
**10 Community
Gardens**

50 Families

Learning How to Grow Their Own
Food Through our 11 Year Old

**'Build It Up' Backyard
Gardening Program**

**10 Pop-Up
Farmers Markets**

Held in our Region's Food Deserts

**Connecting 1,000
New Customers
with Local Growers**

and their Fresh Fruits and Veggies

160 Clients

Served Through Produce
Prescription program,
improving food security,
ability to afford balanced
meals, and improved mental
and physical health

FARMLAND CONSERVATION

**\$250,000
invested in
23 Gateway
Communities**

to the National Forests & Great
Smokies National Park to Help

**Better Prepare and
Mitigate for Wildfire**

**Volunteer Based
Tennessee
Stream Team
Established**

Assisting Farmland Owners with

**Streambank
Stabilization**

and Riparian Tree Planting
after Helene

ARC&D's Advocacy Efforts
Helped Secure

**Passage of
TN Farmland
Preservation Bill**

Providing

**Dedicated Funds to
Protect Agricultural
Lands from
Development**

LOCAL FOOD & MARKET SUPPORT

Marketing and Promotional
Support for

**298 Farm
Vendors**

supplying

**12 Weekly
Farmers Markets**

in Northeast TN

Promotions for

**312 Farmers
Market Days**

generating an estimated

\$2 Million

in Vendor Sales

**2,500
Historically
Underserved
Customers**

Generated at

**Local Farmers
Markets**

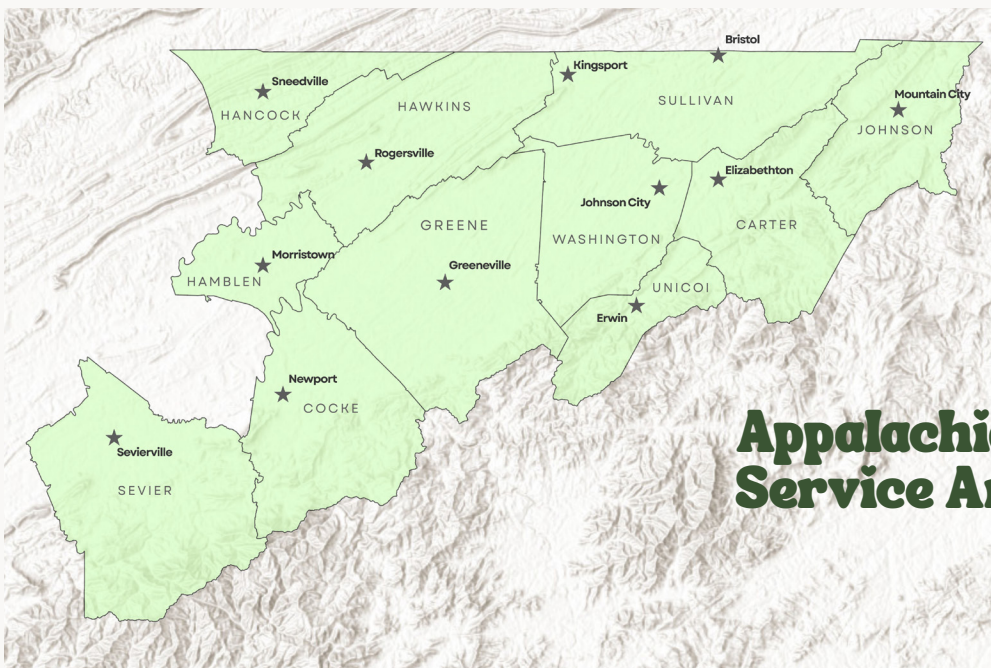
Through Farmacy Fit, Build It
Up Bucks, and Double Up Food
Bucks Financial Incentives

**First Farmers
Market Ever**

in Hancock County generating

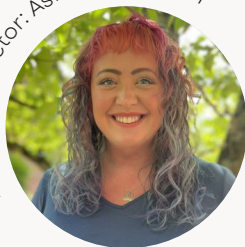
500 Customers

Purchasing Locally Grown
Foods from 5 Farm Vendors



**Appalachian RC&D Council
Service Area**

Program Director: Ashley Cavender



Nutrition and Food Access

Project Feature: Popup Markets

THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT:

ARCD's Pop-Up Farmers Markets bring fresh, local food into the heart of communities where access is limited. Set up in familiar, trusted spaces, these markets are places where neighbors can gather and try something new and take home recipes, meet a farmer and shop for local produce with financial incentives provided by ARC&D.

WE DO IT BECAUSE:

Access to good whole local foods should never depend on zip code, income, or transportation. We also know how hard farmers work to stay afloat. Pop-up markets honor the basic dignity of feeding oneself and one's family well while generating an income stream for local growers.

A 2025 IMPACT THAT STICKS WITH ME:

For a few hours, people felt supported and seen. Neighbors greeted one another. People went home that night fully equipped to make a fresh meal with their families.

MOVING FORWARD, WE ENVISION:

We are committed to growing these markets in ways that deepen trust and stability for customers and farmers. We plan to reach more communities, strengthen farmer participation, and expand to other local products, not just fruits and vegetables.

Special shout-out to the Johnson City Housing Authority's **Cheryl Stewart** who gave us our pilot location to start up our Pop Up Farmers Market series and to the **Washington County Community Foundation** for two years of financial support to expand this popular and impactful program countywide.



Agricultural Enterprise

Project Feature: Field School

THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT:

Teaching aspiring new and beginning farmers about a variety of crop and value-added possibilities, small farm production practices, bookkeeping, marketing and business planning over our summer workshop series and our winter business intensive. Classes are taught by experienced farmers, UT Extension agents, and other agricultural professionals.

WE DO IT BECAUSE:

Our region is rapidly losing both farmers and farmland, yet we all need food every day. We want to set up the next generation of farmers for success.

A 2025 IMPACT THAT STICKS WITH ME:

In 2025, we interviewed and filmed a variety of farmers and ag professionals in the region for a series of videos that we will integrate into our Field School. It was inspiring to hear from a diverse range of voices, highlighting that there is no single approach to farming successfully.

MOVING FORWARD, WE ENVISION:

A new and improved version of this popular program. We are surveying field school alumni from the past 10 years to learn of their current farming status, benefits they gained from our school, and suggestions for improving it over the next decade and beyond.

Program Director: Rachel Kinard



Special shout-out to **Dana Ensor** for sharing her decades-long agricultural experience and knowledge to our region's new and emerging farmers exploring potential careers in agriculture and to **Chroma Creative** and **Graham Yelton** for their videographic design expertise as we employ instructional video learning opportunities into our new field school curriculum.



Farmland Conservation

Project Feature: Streambank Stabilization
and Tennessee Stream Team

THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT:

Recruiting, training and deploying a volunteer-based Tennessee Stream Team throughout Northeast TN waterways damaged by Hurricane Helene to install erosion control practices and plant trees to restore lost riparian habitat and protect our water quality.

WE DO IT BECAUSE:

Helene left farm landowners with an overwhelming task of putting their soils and streambanks back together. Restoring these riparian systems helps these property owners protect against future land loss while keeping our rivers clean and providing habitat for fish and wildlife.

A 2025 IMPACT THAT STICKS WITH ME:

I've seen many people gain practical, hands-on experience in streambank stabilization that has transformed concern into action - building knowledge, confidence, and a sense of collective responsibility for healing these flood-impacted streams. It has marked a meaningful turning point in our long term recovery efforts.

MOVING FORWARD, WE ENVISION:

A lasting recovery that restores waterways, protects farmland, and empowers communities to steward their land with a spirit of resilience. Our well-trained, locally- rooted volunteer Tennessee Stream Team is a model that can be replicated across the region.



Special shout-out to the University of TN Institute of Agriculture's **Andrea Ludwig** and **Forbes Walker** for their untiring dedication in helping teach soil and streambank restoration techniques to our rural communities as we heal the land together after Hurricane Helene and to our volunteer **Tennessee Stream Team Members** who are getting the work done!



Special shout-out to **Daytime Tri-Cities** production team and hosts **Amy Lynn** and **Chris McIntosh** and Radio Bristol's **Kris Truelson** of Farm & Funtime Radio Show for going above and beyond to tell farmer stories that we all need to hear for inspiration and to really know where our food comes from.

Local Food & Market Support

THIS PROJECT IS ABOUT:

Driving up farm product sales locally. With nearly 500,000 residents of northeast Tennessee eating three meals a day, there are 1.5 million meals every day that could be sourced, even partially, at the local level. This benefits customers, local growers and food vendors alike.

WE DO IT BECAUSE:

We need to eat.

A 2025 IMPACT THAT RESONATED WITH ME:

Being floored by the fact that we now have 12 farmers markets in northeast Tennessee where, during peak summer season, you can find locally grown food from ~400 vendors selling in the Tricities region 6 days a week. We estimate last year's impact at \$2 Million!

MOVING FORWARD, WE ENVISION:

More collaboration across the farmers markets, allied together for the good of local farms and food businesses. And - the beloved Farmacy Fit walking program at farmers markets back in full force in 2026 and 2027 where for every mile walked, customers get tokens to spend on fresh locally grown produce, increasing their purchasing power and rewarding good fitness habits.



SPECIAL PROJECT

Resilient Farmer Fund

Immediately after 2024's Hurricane Helene, the ARC&D established a Resilient Farmer Fund exclusively for impacted farmers and ranchers in Northeast Tennessee. By January 31, 2025 we had raised enough private funding from three foundations, seven Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Tennessee, two RC&D Councils, three farms, and 30 individuals to grant out a little over \$121,500 in cash awards to 44 different farmers. Simultaneously, we served as Tractor Supply's conduit to distribute ~\$100,000 worth of donated fencing, feed and warm coats.



TO DATE:

- 29 farmers received \$350 - \$500 immediate assistance checks
- 15 farmers received \$2,000 - \$10,000 microgrants to help pay costs of barn/storage shed repairs, equipment repairs or replacement and soil restoration
- 30 local farms received feed to help get through the winter
- 81 farmers received fencing supplies
- Farmers served in Johnson, Carter, Washington, Greene, Cocke and Hamblen Counties

This kind of recovery takes a long time. There is no quick fix to the level of impact we experienced on once fertile and productive bottomlands, formerly shady and protected river banks and farm infrastructure. In the fall, we were awarded \$443k from the **TN Governor's Response and Recovery Fund** and \$100k from the **Tennessee Valley Authority** to work with farmers to address these long term recovery needs. We are working with partners at UT's Institute of Agriculture, Tennessee Department of Forestry, and fellow nonprofits Green Interchange and Nolichucky Outdoor Recreation Association to teach soil and streambank restoration techniques to farmland owners, train a volunteer team of restoration specialists and employ them regionwide to do the ground work involved in this restoration. We've held 3 workshops thus far and have a pipeline of over 20 farmland owners (and counting) that we are scheduling for this work. This work will be a high priority of ours for the next several years.

We will distribute a third and likely final round of microgrants to 15 or so farmers by May 2026. Thanks to the 250+ attendees at the Resilient Farmer Benefit Concert we hosted in November 2025 and contributions from the **East TN Foundation**, **Farm Aid**, and Governor's Recovery Fund we have raised approximately \$75k toward our \$100,000 goal for cash assistance to farmers still in Helene recovery. Please consider contributing one more time to Northeast Tennessee farmland recovery. It's working!



Cultivators Club

ARC&D's Cultivators Club is a group of supporters who give at least \$25 on a recurring monthly basis, providing foundational private funding that is essential to our operations and ability to match other grants. Club members receive a handmade travel mug from Shy Valley Pottery, a package of heirloom vegetable seeds annually, and invitations and discounts to ARC&D's special events.

Cultivators Club Members:

Tyler Chittum	Alissa Lange
Leeann Crumley	Whitney Hodges
Kate Beatty & Sam Pettyjohn	Sherry Cockerham
Karen & George Cross	Linda & Roy Doan
Leigh Johnson & Abraham McIntyre	Anthony DeLucia
Catherine McCusker	Megan Tewell
Shelby Mitchinson	Jean Barker
Kim Sheffey	Liesa Jenkins
James Elliott	Jessica Chittum
Nancy Fischman & David Close	Michael & Amanda Lopez
Mary Gavlik	Roy Settle
	Wayne Hughes

Donors and Sponsors

Contributed Goods & Services

Boone Street Market
Johnny's Seeds
Natural Foods Market
Royal Red Stew
Genera Compostables
Holston Distributing
Tennessee Hills Brewery
Johnson City Brewing
TN Woodcarvers Guild
Trey Moore
Nolichucky Outdoor Recreation Association
University of Tennessee
Institute of Agriculture

Orchardgrass Level: \$25 - \$299

Marcia Depolo
Kevin Eldridge
Scott Geltemeyer
Margie & Tom Kendall
Susie Morrison
Jill O'Dell
Penny Snyder
Sharon Wegner
STRONG Accountable Care Community
Y Not Flower Farm
Michaela Bloodsworth
Alexis Close & Buddy Turnquist
Donna Fowler
Judy & Fred Tudiver
Julia Brunell
Mary Nelle Dotson

Lucinda Bowman
Deanna Carey
Aubrey Dueweke
Angie Edwards
Janice Hornburg
Jodi Jones
Anne Francis Martin
Denee Matioli
Carolyn Nash
Megan Quinn
Marjorie Richardson
Harold & Patricia Stern
Jeff Wright
Maisy Yeager
Laura Kelly
Kinsey Holiday
Kimberly Schneider
Unicoi County SCD
Joe DeLoach
Gene & Jennifer Chumley
Deborah Wilkinson
Marianne Huff
David Turner
Emily Bidgood
Tim Rosebrock
Morgan County SWCD

Heirloom Apple Level: \$300 - \$999

Betty Loving
Jessica Chittum & Family
First Bank & Trust
Edwards Ragan & Associates
Will Runion

Sue Granger
Linda Good
Mary Faulkner
Hunter, Smith, Davis, LLP
Anne & Steve Darden
Rob O'Halloran

Burley Tobacco Level: \$1,000 - \$4,999

Dana & Bob Ensor
Eastman Credit Union
Anonymous
First Horizon Foundation
Meade Tractor
Brunk Auctions
BWXT
Clark Nexen
Roy & Amy Settle
Equinox Environmental
Farm Bureau: Gray Office - Wayne Hughes
Chee-Chee Tassone
Aptima Inc. - Sylvan Bruni
Creag Creek Farm - Andy and Joyce Brown
West Hills Tractor
Blackburn, Childers & Steagall, CPAs
Wolfe Development
Farm Credit Mid America - Rural 1st
Lee Clements
Conner Family Fund

Green Bean Level: \$5,000 - \$24,999

Farm Aid
Serenity Knoll Farm - David Wiley
Washington County

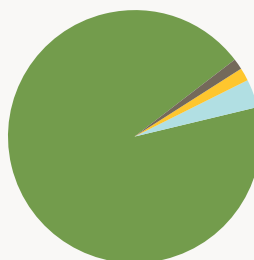
Sugar Maple Level: \$25,000 - \$99,999

Tennessee State University
Berea College Grow Appalachia
Kentucky Center for Agricultural & Rural Development
Washington County Affiliate - East Tennessee Foundation
Appalachian Sustainable Development

Fraser Fir Level: \$100,000+

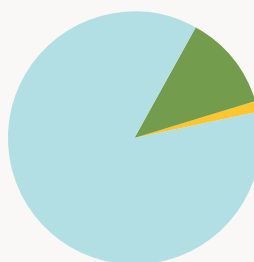
East Tennessee Foundation
Tennessee Valley Authority
Tractor Supply Company
TN Governor's Response & Recovery Fund
US Department of Agriculture
Tennessee Department of Agriculture - Division of Forestry
Tennessee Department of Health

Financial Summary



Grants	\$1,757,809.02
Earned Revenue	\$70,754.10
Sponsorships	\$32,350.00
Donations	\$27,467.36

Total : **\$1,888,380.48**



Program Cost	\$1,309,662.71
Administrative	\$183,968.76
Marketing & Fundraising ...	\$20,525.36

Total : **\$1,514,156.83**

Thank You to Our 2025 Government & Corporate Donors



TEMA



APPALACHIAN
sustainable
DEVELOPMENT



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