

**PDC # 1 ANNUAL REPORT**  
**July 1, 2004– June 30, 2005**

**Element #1: Strategic Planning:**

Document progress in developing and implementing strategic planning in the planning district.

**Strategic Plan Development Activities**

Please indicate the current status of your regional strategic planning activities. Provide information on the process used to produce the plan, persons and organizations, involved in producing the plan, and the key recommendations and activities that were identified. Discuss how priorities for action were established.

In previous years, LENOWISCO has participated in various separate strategic planning initiatives. Since we are a member of the Virginia Coalfield Coalition, we chose to utilize the strategic planning the Virginia Coalfield Coalition completed as part of the re-qualification process for the Virginia Competitiveness Program. We have also participated with the [Region 2020](#) process including the greater Tri-Cities region of Tennessee and Virginia. However, those activities, in spite of our attempts, have not been able to ensure quality participation from LENOWISCO area residents. Although we continue to participate in activities because of the important networking opportunities, as well as the fact that our regional economy is so intertwined with upper East Tennessee, we feel that this is still an important activity for the Commission. The Executive Summary of the Regional Vision can be accessed via the [Region 2020](#) hyperlink.

The staff of the LENOWISCO PDC, in conjunction with the Board of Directors and local leaders, has identified economic development (including entrepreneurial development), water and sewer infrastructure, telecommunications services and infrastructure and transportation as important strategic issues for the commission.

In order to work towards improving the delivery of services and infrastructure these issues represent, there are a number of regional plans that have been completed. The [Virginia Coalfields Regional Water Study](#) was completed in 1998 has been the guiding vision for our water planning efforts over the last 12 months. We continue to make excellent strides in implementing this plan with nearly 80 % of the projects either in process or complete.

Also used for other issues include the [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) and the Commission continues to assist the Mountain Empire Regional Business Incubator (MERBI), Inc. with the [Pioneer Center for Business Opportunity](#), the regional entrepreneurial development program for the region. Additionally, we continue to work with the [Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority](#) to implement its priorities for economic development in the region.

Additionally, work is ongoing for the [Regional Master Technology Plan](#) which includes the following statement of beliefs:

The LENOWISCO region believes the following are important and critical issues that must be addressed to make the area competitive in the global Knowledge Economy, to keep it a great place to live, and to ensure that it is a great place to work.

- Affordable access to wired and wireless broadband services throughout the region for all residents, businesses, institutional and local government entities.
- Competitive choice for broadband access, content, and services equal to any other region in the world.
- A regional broadband infrastructure that provides redundant data paths to ensure that broadband users have reliable and robust access.
- Infrastructure, access, and services that support and encourage entrepreneurship and economic development initiatives throughout the region.

### **Strategic Plan Implementation Activities**

What is the current status of your plan s implementation? What has been accomplished to date? What are the next projects or activities that will be undertaken? Who is involved with and responsible for the implementation of the plan?

- < Because of recent interest in both Brownfield development and hazard mitigation planning, the Commission is presently looking at both of these items for work program activities.
- < To date, there have been \$40 million in fully funded water projects either under construction or completed that was proposed in the study. These projects represent 2,329 homes or 5,823 persons served for the first time with public water. Additionally we have achieved regional water system interconnectivity between several systems with this effort. Project implementation is ongoing, but the Commission has begun planning for a similar effort looking at regional wastewater issues for the area.
- < Within the Economic Development activities, we continue to work with the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority and support its marketing efforts. Although put in place the previous years, we continue to try to understand the needs of the local industries though the existing industry visitation program, and the seed capital program for entrepreneurs and a tourism funding program that capitalizes on the unique tourism venues we have. As in previous years, LENOWISCO has a staff person who works with all of the local economic development personnel to put together proposal packages and assists with the local economic development efforts.

- < During the course of this report, approximately 29 miles of a regional fiber-optic backbone has been put in place. This brings our total amount of completed line to 84 miles that are operational and “lit.” We continue to seek opportunities to construct additional extensions and loops where practical.

**Element #2: Duties Performed:**

Provide a concise description of all activities accomplished under the duties assigned under the Regional Cooperation Act.

Duties:

- < Conduct studies with regional significance (initiated and/or completed).
  1. Completed Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) FY2005 update.
  2. Continued work on a regional Comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan.
  3. As a complement to the regional cluster analysis completed and outlined in the previous report, we worked in cooperation with the local Workforce Investment Board for a internet enabled Community Audit with data updated routinely via various sources of data, including the Virginia Employment Commission and the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although a password protected site. The outline of what is included can be found at:  
<http://www.jobsequilibrium.com/Jobsequilibrium/>
  4. Submitted our Request for Requalification in partnership with the Virginia Coalfield Coalition. Our request was subsequently approved.
  5. Continued work on the Regional Wastewater Study. This study will be the wastewater equivalent of the above mentioned water study. The study will be used as the “playbook” for subsequent future wastewater projects throughout the Region.

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- < Identify and study opportunities for local cost savings and staff efficiencies through coordinated local efforts.
  1. The Regional Jail Task Force has had a productive year by continuing construction on it’s three facilities serving the Southwest Virginia area. The LENOWISCO PDC was a strategic player in getting officials from Lee, Scott, and Wise to the table. The facilities are now open.
  2. The Planning District continues to act as the fiscal agent for the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Investment Board.

3. Regional GIS database maintenance services. Additionally, a significant number of overlays were shared with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership for its prospect identification system.
4. Continued to provide project management for twenty-five major water and sewer projects totaling nearly \$40 million.
5. Continued to host water plant certification renewal courses for the area's water plant technicians.
6. Activities of the Virginia Coalfield Coalition.
7. Discussed ways that the regional fiber optic network could be used to share data services among the various localities, possibly with the new PPEA (Public Private Education Act) program being implemented by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA).

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< Identify mechanisms for coordinating local interests on a regional basis.

1. Dissemination of periodicals and other materials outlining best management or innovative strategies for particular problems being experienced in communities.
2. Regional managers' monthly meetings
3. Hosting of bi-monthly meetings of the LENOWISCO Board of Directors.
4. Virginia Coalfield Coalition meetings.
5. Beginning to hold semiannual meetings with local PSA Directors and Town Water Operators
6. Maintenance of [LENOWISCO website](#).

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< Implement services upon request of local governments.

1. During the course of the fiscal year, provided project management assistance to local jurisdictions for 25 active projects. A complete project list can be found in the LENOWISCO Annual Work Program for FY06 included as a companion to this report.
2. Assist in packaging economic development incentive packages for the local units of government.
3. Assist in packaging water and wastewater projects where financially feasible for the district. A map showing the projects currently under development is attached.
4. Completed the Town of Pound Comprehensive Plan update.
5. Completed the Town of Wise Comprehensive Plan update.
6. Completion of the Stony Creek Acquisition Project assistance.
7. Assisting with the Town of Pennington Gap Comprehensive Plan update.
8. Completion of mapping for the Scott County Zoning Ordinance.
9. Assisted with Wise County Zoning Map Update.
10. Assisted with Big Stone Gap Business Assistance Program.
11. Assisted the Towns of Pound, Gate City, Wise and St. Paul with downtown renewal project effort.

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< Provide technical assistance to local governments.

1. Assistance with three counties and one city in the development of “virtual building” projects to be used for economic development recruitment.
2. Professional Development Workshops for water treatment plant operators for professional education credits.
3. Completion of applications for DHCD funds for localities.
4. Town of Wise Bear Creek Water Extension Preliminary Study
5. Continue to work and assist on the Big Stone Gap Community Network.
6. Project Management for projects outlined in the LENOWISCO work program attached and included in the work program.
7. Staff assistance to Virginia Coalfield Coalition
8. General technical assistance to three county and one city planning commissions.
9. General technical assistance to three county and one city industrial development authorities.
10. General technical assistance to three county public service authorities and municipal water and sewer providers.
11. Assist the Towns of Gate City and Weber City in the Regional effort that was spearheaded by the Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization to redesignate I-181- to I-26 to the Virginia State Line.

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< Serve as liaison between local governments and state agencies as requested.

1. Continued to provide on request GIS overlay and attribute data to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.
2. Provided CDBG management assistance to the localities of Wise County, Lee County, Scott County, St. Paul, Jonesville, Pound, Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Wise, Norton and Jonesville to comply with DHCD guidelines.
3. Provided management assistance to four (4) projects funded under the TEA-21 program operated by VDOT. Additionally, we provided assistance to the other nine outstanding projects as well.
4. Provided management assistance to water projects funded by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy’s AML water program on behalf of Wise and Lee County.
5. Reviewed local government aid applications.
6. Development regional functional plans upon request.
7. Continued participation in statewide Geographic Information System.

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< Review local government aid applications.

1. Occontia Loop Water Project
2. Sticklelyville Water Project
3. Robbins Chapel Water Project
4. Possum Creek Water Project
5. Boozy Creek Phase II Water Project
6. Natural Tunnel Water Project
7. Holston Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion & Gate City/Weber City Interconnection
8. Route 614 Water Project
9. Town of Pound Downtown Revitalization Project
10. Town of Gate City Downtown Revitalization Project
11. Town of Pound Downtown Revitalization Project
12. Town of Wise Downtown Revitalization project
13. Lee County Rose Hill Sewer Project
14. Scott County Yuma Sewer Project
15. Town of Coeburn Flatwoods Water Project
16. Wise County Tacoma School Building Project
17. Appalachian Heritage Trail RV Project
18. Bear Creek Sewer Project
19. Constitutional Oakes Industrial Development Project
20. Regional Virtual Building Project
21. Wise County Country Cabin Project
22. City of Norton Storm Drainage Project
23. Town of Big Stone Gap Dam Replacement Project.

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< Develop regional functional plans upon request.

1. Virginia Coalfield Coalition Re-Qualification – Revised Strategic Economic Development Plan.
2. LENOWISCO Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.
3. Nearing completion on regional wastewater plan to serve PD's 1, 2 & 3.

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< Assist state agencies, upon request, in developing sub-state plans.

1. Support local government efforts to implement GIS.
2. Support the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority with its database of sites,

- prospect presentations, marketing materials, and special studies that have a spatial analysis.
3. Assist the Virginia Economic Development Partnership with the Prospect Decision Support System.
  4. Regional Competitiveness Program – Virginia Coalfield Coalition

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< Participate in statewide geographic information system.

1. Assist VEDP with its GIS system.
2. Broadband mapping.
3. Various requests by individuals for mapping.
4. Industrial Site plans.
5. Mapping of water and sewer projects under development, completed or under construction.
6. Mapping of possible future alternative transportation corridors

Note: LENOWISCO is continuing to investigate potential sources for funds to support an additional GIS position. The demand for these services is such that we currently have a backlog of GIS related requests that we are unable to fulfill. If DHCD personnel have thoughts on this, we would look forward to a discussion of such.

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< Serve as an affiliate of the State data center and collect and maintain demographic, economic, and related data for the region and member governments.

1. Respond to approximately 5,000 requests per year for demographic information and data, either by mail or via LENOWISCO's Web site.
2. Publish community profiles for most communities in the district.
3. Provide technical assistance as a "trainer" of how to navigate the Internet to those individuals seeking web related data. Most of our data requests can be completed through an Internet search.

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**Element #3: Highlight successes and achievements of special note with regional efforts in cooperation.**

**Highlight #1**

*The Crooked Road*

“[The Crooked Road](#)” is Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, a driving route through the Appalachian Mountains from the western slopes of the Blue Ridge to the Coalfields region of the state. The trail connects major heritage music venues in the Appalachian region such as the Blue Ridge Music Center, Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, and the Carter Family Fold. The traditional gospel, bluegrass, and mountain music heard today was passed down from generation to generation and lives on through a wealth of musicians and instrument makers along the trail. Annual festivals, weekly concerts, live radio shows, and informal jam sessions abound throughout the region. In addition, this region is also rich in other cultural and natural assets, particularly crafts and outdoor recreation. A wide variety of traditional handcrafted woodwork, weaving, and pottery can be found along the trail in country stores and small workshops. The lush valleys and rugged mountains offer numerous opportunities for outdoor activities, from hiking and biking to fishing and boating. Through heritage tourism, “The Crooked Road” strives to promote economic development in the region by drawing attention to the abundance of heritage resources available in Appalachian Southwest Virginia.

LENOWISCO has taken an active role in putting this program in place by providing leadership to the committee charged with this project and acting as a fiscal agent for various improvements being made or planned along the proposed route. Active venues include the Carter Fold and the Country Cabin, as well as plans being made for other amenities. Our cultural attractions have gained international fame and this program is intended to take advantage of our natural and unique assets.

At the time of the submission of this report, the Crooked Road has just hired a full time Director and the project is moving forward quicker than anyone had expected. LENOWISCO is still serving as the projects fiscal grant agent, however it is anticipated that this project will become completely self managed and sufficient during the next fiscal year making this project an overwhelming success.

**Highlight #2**

LENOWISCO Rural Area Network (RAN)

In December of 2001, the LENOWISCO Board of Directors gave permission to the staff to pursue planning and funding for a major infrastructure initiative for the district to install fiber-optic lines to support broadband communication between the communities of the District and beyond to the commodity Internet. This state of the art system will use the Ethernet protocol developed for local area networks and will support gig-Ethernet speeds (1,000) MPBS

During the report year, an additional 29 miles have been added to last years reported 55 miles of complete line bringing the total of completed line up to 84 miles. When complete, this effort will drastically change the economic and community development opportunities for the region. In order to assist in this effort, LENOWISCO has embarked upon completion of a [Master Technology Plan](#) for the region. Begun in early spring, it is expected to be completed near the end of the calendar year. As an enhancement to the usual planning process, we are employing an innovative on-line forum as well.

### **Highlight #3**

#### LENOWISCO Regional Wastewater Study

At the time of this report, the LENOWISCO Planning District along with PDC's 2 and 3 are nearing completion of this Study. Monthly meetings have been held over the last year to help guide the professional firm(s) that are working on this project in a direction that will best suit and benefit each PDC. Funding from Rural Development, the Virginia Tobacco Commission and DHCD have allowed this project to move forward and as with the previously complete Regional Water Study, this Wastewater Study will become a valuable document in guiding regional projects to completion.

### **Highlight #4**

#### Scott County Expo Center

Scott County, through their local IDA, has taken the leadership role in the development of a 22 million dollar regional Expo Center that, at the time of this report, is planned to be located in the Duffield area. Mountain Empire Community College has accepted the role of management and administration for this project upon it's completion. The project was just recently awarded \$2.5 million in funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation and numerous other funding agencies are expressing interest in participating in this project. The project has been designed to be implemented in phases as funding becomes available. A management team has been established and has met over the last year to discuss the options and needs for this project. A business plan is nearing completion for the facility.

### **Highlight #5**

#### Regional Downtown Initiative

Through the cooperation of DHCD, the Planning District has taken the lead in establishing a Regional Downtown Initiative Team. Members of this team include the Towns of Pound, Wise, Gate City and St. Paul. Each of these localities, on their own, has begun the steps necessary for downtown renewal. The Regional group is made up of two members of each of these localities. The purpose of this group is to let each of the localities realize that working as a regional group, made up of each locality, can help more, than if each locality went on their own to begin a downtown renewal project. The Towns have pooled their resources together in order to hire a professional facilitator to complete visioning and

economic development plans for each locality. It is the hope of each of these localities to access future downtown renewal funding from DHCD.

**Element #4: Submit a work program for the coming year that includes a budget and lists of member jurisdictions and commission members:**

Check the appropriate responses for items that are to be included in this report.

< Work Program: YES X NO \_\_\_\_\_

< Budget: YES X NO \_\_\_\_\_

< List of Commission members: YES X NO \_\_\_\_\_