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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cook Hired as RC&D Coordinator

Lebanon, VA, December 8, 2009-K.D. Cook is looking forward to using his experience and skills to better the economy and environment of the region when he takes over as the new Coordinator for the Black Diamond Resource Conservation & Development Council.

Cook began work on December 6 in the two-person RC&D office located in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center in Lebanon. He replaces Blaine Delaney who relocated to Richmond. In his new job, Cook will be working with six counties— Buchanan, Dickinson, Lee, Scott, Russell, and Wise, and the City of Norton. He will coordinate the Council's projects which aim to promote conservation through education and to stimulate economic development, particularly in rural areas.

Cook, who grew up on a farm in Russell County and taught agricultural education there, says he wants to support the Council's goal of increasing opportunities for enhancing tourism and expanding energy sources. After leaving secondary education arena to work for Clinchfield Coal Company until 1994, he moved to North Carolina to pursue a career in conservation.

Cook joined the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Duplin, NC, as a soil conservationist and was later promoted to District Conservationist for Clay, Cherokee and Graham counties. One of his principal tasks involved administering a \$2.1 million stream restoration grant from the Clean Water Trust Fund.

“Brasstown Creek had severe erosion problems,” says Cook. In some places water was under cutting into stream banks that were 14-20 feet high and the resulting sediment falling into the stream was being deposited in TVA's Hiwassee Lake. We installed a number of in-stream structures to cut down on the erosion and sediment, and within two years we had raised the stream classification from “not supporting” to “supporting its intended use.”

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Education is of special interest to Cook. He holds a Bachelor and a Master's degree from Virginia Tech in Agricultural Education. While in North Carolina, he became a major supporter of the Envirothon, a national environmental competition for high school students. He also helped design an outdoor classroom to teach students in Clay County about the importance of conserving natural resources.

In August 2001, Cook moved back to Southwest Virginia to become Supervisory District Conservationist for a seven-county area that encompassed nearly the same region as the Black Diamond RC&D. For the past several years he has served as the District Conservationist in the Marion USDA Service Center.

Cook wants to be at the center of making things happen and helping people. You may have seen him driving the back roads to help a farmer with a grazing system, erosion problem, or animal waste management plan.

"RC&D is an organization that gets things done, really reflects community values, and isn't limited to any one type of project." he notes. "They can tackle everything from improving water quality to attract more visitors, to expanding and developing energy resources, to teaching students skills they will need to live and work in an eco-friendly world. What other group has such broad interests?"

Carolyn Baker, the Council's chair, said RC&D's current list of projects which range from water quality improvement to enhancing tourism of the region will benefit from some of the skills and contacts K.D. brings to this job. One of the first projects the council and I will launch together is hosting an Alternate Energy Summit," said Cook.

K.D. can be reached at the RC&D office in Lebanon at 276-889-4180 or by e-mail at kd.cook@va.usda.gov

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