



WEST VIRGINIA CONSERVATION AGENCY



2013
Annual Report

For the year ended June 30, 2013



West Virginia

Conservation Agency

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introduction

The mission of the West Virginia Conservation Agency is to provide for and promote the protection and conservation of West Virginia's soil, land, water and related resources for the health, safety and general welfare of the state's citizens. The State Conservation Committee serves as the governing body of the West Virginia Conservation Agency.

Through the guidance of the State Conservation Committee, the West Virginia Conservation Agency assists and works with conservation districts across the state to implement a variety of conservation programs. West Virginia has 14 Conservation Districts, each consisting of one to six counties. Two Conservation District Supervisors are elected in each county, with the exception of Kanawha County which has five and Berkeley County which has three.





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A Day on the Farm

Over 100 people took part in Capitol Conservation Districts Farm Field Day, which featured conservation themed activities.

"I thought that the mulch was a great idea to keep your beds nutrient rich. I've got a lot of information that I can take home."

Amy Tipton
Cabell County Farmer



In FY13, the West Virginia Conservation Agency and the state's 14 conservation districts provided a variety of conservation-themed programs to 4,565 West Virginia teachers, students and citizens.

The programs included rain barrel and agriculture workshops, field days, pasture walks, outdoor classrooms and seedling giveaways.

An excellent example was the Capitol Conservation District (CCD) annual Farm Field Day at Tyler Creek Farm in Cross Lanes. The farm is owned and operated by CCD Supervisor Aimee Figgatt and her husband.

Over 100 people came out to enjoy the activities and to learn about agriculture and conservation. The field day had activities for the children like a straw pit and an animal petting area with goats and potbelly pigs. There was also a high tunnel workshop, goat milk soap making class and local foods like smoked pork and corn on the cob.

One of the primary reasons for the field day was to educate the public about agriculture and conservation and to get people out to a farm.

"The biggest thing is trying to get the children in our area out to a farm. So that they can get an idea of where their food comes from," said Figgatt. "The good thing about the field day is that the people can see these practices working."

Unlike other conservation districts in the state, CCD is comprised of only one county, Kanawha; which has limited traditional farming and is more urban than most counties. As a result, the district tailors its programs and events, such as this field day, to people with limited space and little knowledge of agriculture and conservation.

"With us [CCD] being more urban, we have to introduce them to the animals, introduce them to things like the high tunnel, micro gardening and urban gardening," said Figgatt. "They may only have a half acre or an acre, or a hillside, but they can still use it."

Not all of the people who attended the field day were new to agriculture. Take Amy Tipton and

her husband for example. They have a small farm and were looking to expand to a 200-acre farm in Cabell County.

"We live on a small farm right now," said Tipton. "We raise chickens, donkeys, pigs. So we're expanding that."

They came to the field day to learn primarily about beekeeping. Tipton said they had been thinking about raising bees for a long time, but after attending a high tunnel workshop the couple had some new ideas. They had never even thought of owning a high tunnel before attending the field day and they loved the idea of having vegetables all winter.

That's what the field day is all about. Introducing and teaching people new ideas and more efficient and environmentally friendly ways of doing things.

"I've learned a ton about the bees and I've tasted different kinds of honey. I learned about bed sizes for high tunnels and I thought that the mulch was a great idea to keep your beds nutrient rich. I've got a lot of information I can take home."



Outreach & Education Highlights

.....

4,565

.....
students, citizens and
professionals were provided
educational programs



1,389

.....
people attended
conservation related
workshops

315

.....
landowners, businesses and
organizations received
technical assistance



Restoring our Waters

In FY 2013, the West Virginia Conservation Agency began restoring a 15-mile stretch of the Little Coal River.

“What you all have done down there is really going to enhance the area and what we have been working on.”

Larry Lodato,
Boone County Community & Economic Development Corporation



In FY13, the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) in partnership with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) began restoring a 15-mile stretch of the Little Coal River. The stretch of river, which starts near Danville and ends near McCorkle, is located in Boone County; part of the Guyan Conservation District.

The Coal River Watershed, which includes the Big Coal River, Little Coal River and the Coal River, has been severely impacted over the years from several different factors such as mining and logging. This caused large amounts of sediment to build up in the rivers and destroy aquatic habitat.

“Over the years, the Little Coal River has filled with sediment mainly due to a lack of sound environmental practices in the past,” said Judith Lyons, watershed manager for the WVCA. “The goal of the project is to increase aquatic habitat and improve the quality of the water.”

This is being accomplished by placing a combination of over 100 wood and rock struc-

tures along the existing alignment of the river. The structures are placed at certain points along the river to direct the flow into the inner third, accelerate water flow and flush away silt. This creates sediment free pools where fish and other aquatic habitat can flourish.

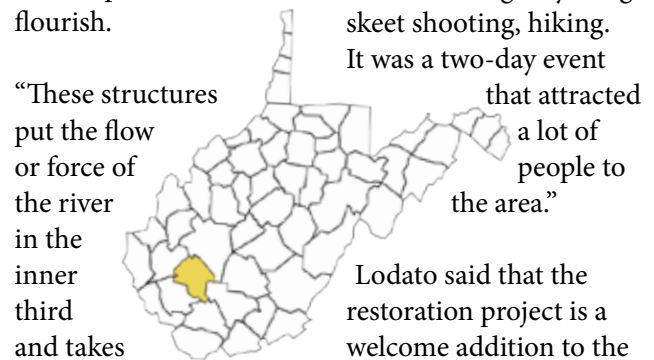
“These structures put the flow or force of the river in the inner third and takes stress off the banks,” said Lyons. “By taking the stress off the banks you reduce erosion.”

The river is very popular with outdoor enthusiasts. Boaters can paddle the Walkhonde River Trail, an 88-mile long river trail that covers the entire length of the Big, Little and main Coal Rivers. In addition, there is a waterpark and several miles of Hatfield and McCoy hiking trails.

This fall, the first ever Rivers and Ridges Adventure Weekend took place. The festival, based in Julian, is an annual outdoor recreation event with the goal of expand-

ing tourism along the Little Coal River.

“The festival attracted a lot of people,” said Larry Lodato, director for the Boone County Community and Economic Development Corporation (BCCEDC). “People were canoeing, kayaking, skeet shooting, hiking. It was a two-day event



that attracted a lot of people to the area.”

Lodato said that the restoration project is a welcome addition to the work his group is doing to improve the area.

“What you all have done down there is really going to enhance the area and what we have been working on,” said Lodato. “We are planning to build an amphitheatre, so it will be a major improvement to look over and see this excellent restoration job.”

The restoration project, slated for completion in the summer of 2014, is being funded by the DEP’s river restoration fund, made up of fines and penalties collected from coal companies. To date, the project has cost \$1,083,810.39.

FY13 Stream Section Key Figures

The Stream Protection and Restoration Program (SPRP) is used to cover non-emergency situations that fall outside of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. The West Virginia Conservation Agency categorizes SPRP projects into two areas: blockage removal from Legislative or Citizen Contact Reports; and planned projects using Natural Stream Restoration designs.



\$22,962

Stream Blockages Removed
1st Congressional District

\$43,200

Stream Blockages Removed
2nd Congressional District

\$124,038

Stream Blockages Removed
3rd Congressional District

Stream Restoration Projects Completed in FY13

Short Creek	Northern Panhandle CD	Ohio County	\$116,591.64
Middle Grave Creek	Northern Panhandle CD	Marshall County	\$93,500.00
Flood Plain	West Fork CD	Gilmer County	\$22,172.00
TOTAL			\$232,263.64



Protecting the Bay

The Agriculture Enhancement Program assists the state in addressing natural resource concerns and meeting goals in the Chesapeake Bay Program.

"I think it's a great program. The bottom line is, these practices help us and it helps the environment."

Elwood Williams
Misty Mountain Farm



In FY13, with the help of local cooperators and the Agriculture Enhancement Program (AgEP), the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) and conservation districts helped the state reduce nutrient and sediment loads from entering the state's streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The WVCA is one of three lead agencies responsible for coordinating the Chesapeake Bay Program within West Virginia. The goal is to restore the Bay's living resources by reducing sediment loads and nutrients, like nitrogen and phosphorus, from entering the watershed.

One local cooperator helping do their part to protect the Bay is Misty Mountain Farm, located in the South Branch Valley in Hardy County. Misty Mountain Farm is owned and operated by Elwood Williams and his son Hunter. They run a beef cattle and poultry operation on 365 acres.

"If we [farmers] didn't have these programs, we probably wouldn't do them," said Elwood Williams. "It helps us financially to get started."

The AgEP offers techni-

cal and cost-share assistance to West Virginia farmers as an incentive to implement selected best management practices (BMPs). The program is district specific in that each conservation district sets what practices they offer and the cost-share percentage.

In FY13, with assistance from the Potomac Valley Conservation District (PVCD) AgEP, several BMPs were implemented on Misty Mountain Farm, which included 50 acres of cover crops, 100 acres of frost seeding and invasive species management.

These practices serve a dual purpose. First, they help restore the land and protect the environment. Second, they increase the land's profitability by improving grasslands and animal health.

"The cover crops are great," said Williams. "They keep down erosion in the fall and provide an insurance for us in the Spring."

Farmers can either bale the cover crop and use

it to feed livestock, like Misty Mountain Farm, or they till the cover crop into the soil to add organic matter. Cover crops are a great way to control erosion, add fertility and organic material to the soil and increase infiltration and aeration of the soil.

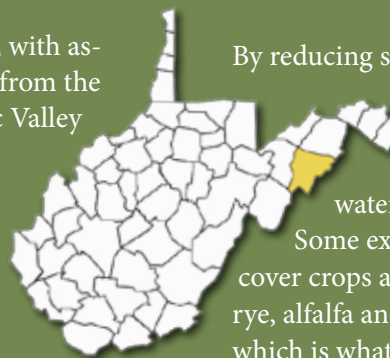
By reducing soil erosion, the practice also helps improve water quality.

Some examples of cover crops are barley, rye, alfalfa and triticale, which is what the Williams used this year.

"A lot of times, farmers will take their corn or beans off and the fields will go fallow or lay bare in the winter," said Carla Hardy, watershed program coordinator for the WVCA. "By putting the cover crop on, it holds the soil on those fields and keeps it out of the streams and rivers."

Williams feels good knowing he is improving his production, while also addressing environmental concerns.

"I think it's a great program," said Williams. "The bottom line is, these practices help us and it helps the environment."



AgEP Key Figures



Conservation District	Applications Paid	Dollars Paid
Capitol CD	19	\$18,156
Elk CD	47	\$64,331
Eastern Panhandle CD	175	\$144,154
Guyan CD	40	\$60,980
Greenbrier Valley CD	47	\$137,336
Little Kanahwa CD	34	\$45,424
Monongahela CD	34	\$50,185
Northern Panhandle CD	37	\$73,896
Potomac Valley CD	83	\$119,693
Southern CD	98	\$135,793
Tygarts Valley CD	106	\$86,346
Upper Ohio CD	13	\$39,015
Western CD	70	\$167,261
West Fork CD	65	\$92,944
TOTAL	868	\$1,235,514

37,761

 feet of exclusion/division fence constructed

28,593

 tons of lime applied to 12,191 acres

2,343

 acres of cover crops planted

Chesapeake Bay Program



In the past year, West Virginia had its Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The WIP lists a defined set of goals to reduce nutrients and sediments from entering local waterways and impacting the Chesapeake Bay.

The West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) is one of three lead state agencies in facilitating the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Along with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the WVCA's Watershed Program Coordinator has been involved in implementing the agricultural plan. By serving as a liason between local, state and federal stakeholders, the WVCA is able to direct funding and technical assistance to the priority practices identified in the Watershed Implementation Plan.



The WVCA also maintains the state's Chesapeake Bay website, which can be found at www.wvca.us/bay and also produces quarterly newsletters that provide program updates and information on upcoming activities.

Managing the Soil

Nutrient Management Plans play a vital role in the WVCA Nonpoint Source Program. These plans improve productivity of the farm and prevent nutrient runoff.

“It takes a lot more planning, we have to use cover crops or spread manure to get the right nutrients in the soil.”

Rem Perkins
Perk Farm Organic Dairy



Every year, farmers apply fertilizer to their fields hoping to maximize the production of their land. Without a Nutrient Management Plan they could be limiting the productivity of their land and polluting local waterways.

For the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) Nonpoint Source Program (NPSP) staff, Nutrient Management Plans serve as the foundation for educating farmers on the importance of soil fertility. It also presents an opportunity for staff to start a dialogue with the farmer on the benefits of conservation land management.

Rem Perkins is a third generation farmer who owns and operates Perk Farm Organic Dairy in Greenbrier County. For Perkins, the Nutrient Management Plan is crucial to his operation.

“Being organic, we can’t apply any synthetic nitrogen and that is our biggest hold up,” said Perkins.

As a part of the Nutrient Management Plan, Perkins conducts regular soil testing. This lets him know how much fertilizer, if any, to apply to his

fields. Without the plan, he could be applying too much or too little.

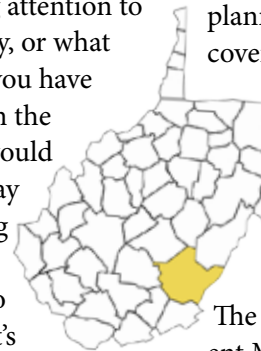
“Without a plan or something to guide them [farmers], more than likely there is going to be some over fertilization that is going to happen,” said Mike McMunigal, conservation specialist with the WVCA. “If you not paying attention to soil fertility, or what nutrients you have available in the soil, you would have no way of knowing how much fertilizer to apply. That’s where the Nutrient Management Plan comes into play.”

McMunigal wrote the Nutrient Management Plan for Perk Farm and has been working with Perkins for the past couple years. McMunigal says that it can be hard for farmers to change management habits that they have been taught their whole life.

“Your thinking, there is no way,” said Perkins. “Every other year, I’ve had to buy 150 pounds of nitrogen to put on my corn to get it to grow. How can I do it with none this year?”

Like most farmers, when Perkins had a conventional operation he was used to buying nitrogen every year from the local supply store and applying it to his fields. He said that now that he is an organic operation with more requirements it takes more planning.

“It takes a lot more planning, we have to use cover crops or spread manure to get the right nutrients in the soil.”



The goal of the Nutrient Management Plan is to provide crops with enough nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, to produce maximum yields, while preventing excess nutrient runoff from entering waterways and groundwater.

That’s why the Nutrient Management Plan plays such a vital role for the WVCA NPSP staff, whose goal is to improve water quality by reducing nonpoint source pollution, such as runoff from excess fertilizers. Not only does the plan improve the productivity of the farm, it also improves the environment.

Nonpoint Source Program Key Figures

15,393

acres covered under nutrient management plans

206

tons of soil saved under sediment and erosion control plans



Section 319 Watershed Grant Projects

The West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) Nonpoint Source Program (NPSP) assesses, develops and manages federal Clean Water Act, Section 319 programs relating to agriculture, construction and urban storm water management. States are required to provide matching funds to receive federal dollars to provide projects that address nonpoint source pollution.

Watershed Project	319 Funding	State Match Funding	Inkind Funding	Total
Statewide WVCA 319 Base Grant	\$270,180	172,081	17,498	\$459,759
Kitchen Creek , Monroe County 3rd Congressional District	\$251,274	\$116,157	189,437	\$556,868
Knapps Creek , Pocahontas County 3rd Congressional District	\$6,695	\$4,464	N/A	\$11,159
Mill Creek , Grant & Pendleton counties 1st & 2nd Congressional Districts	\$39,197	\$8,076	\$17,605	\$64,878
Back Creek , Monroe County 3rd Congressional District	\$40,662	\$3,310	\$33,624	\$77,596
Chesapeake Bay , Multiple counties 1st, 2nd & 3rd Congressional Districts	\$121,455	\$91,155	\$36,126	\$248,736
Milligan Creek , Greenbrier County 3rd Congressional District	\$27,313	\$19,866	N/A	\$47,179
Huntington Stormwater Project , Cabell County 3rd Congressional District	\$4,250	\$2,475	\$12,835	\$19,560
Muddy Creek , Greenbrier County, 3rd Congressional District	\$61,162	\$13,115	\$39,568	\$113,845
TOTAL	\$822,188	\$430,699	\$346,693	\$1,599,580

Clean Water Act Section 319 Watershed Grant Projects provide an opportunity for the WVCA to address water quality resource concerns with a targeted approach. These funds are used to install projects that are designed to decrease sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen from entering local waterways. These grants also assist the WVCA in implementing its portion of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Silent Sentinels

West Virginia has 170 watershed dams located throughout the state. These dams provide more than \$76 million in benefits annually to more than 1 million citizens.

“If the dams were not in place, the public would experience a dramatic increase in the level of flooding everytime we had an appreciable rainfall.”

Brian Long,
WVDEP - Dam Safety



The West Virginia Conservation Agency and 13 Conservation Districts are responsible for the operation, maintenance and repair (OM&R) of 170 watershed dams and 22 channels throughout West Virginia.

The WVCA refers to these dams as silent sentinels. Year-in and year-out they guard citizens downstream against heavy rainfall that, if the dams were not in place, would cause flooding events.

“You never know what you have until it’s gone,” said Brian Long, environmental resources project manager for DEP - Dam Safety. “If the dams were not in place, the public would experience a dramatic increase in the level of flooding everytime we had an appreciable rainfall.”

Long said that these dams were originally built as low hazard structures because there was limited people and property below the dam. Over the years, the dams have done their job so well that people have started building houses and businesses below the dams, which increases the hazard classification.

The dams were designed to contain a 100-year

storm event, which means that each year there is a 1 percent chance for this event to occur.

Many of these dams are showing signs of aging. Currently, 51 dams exceed 50 years of operation and by 2017, 32 more will exceed 50 years.

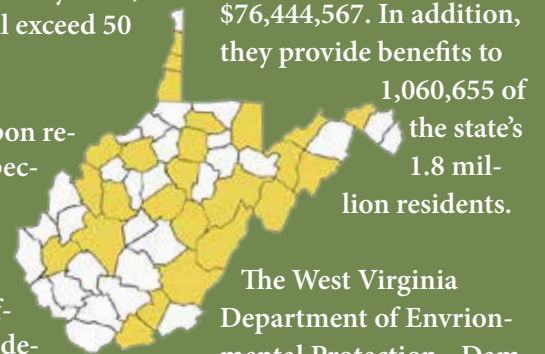
Based upon recent inspections, 37 percent of the dams suffer from deficiencies; such as seeps, erosion, deteriorated metals, easement encroachments, broken gates, plugged drains and damaged risers.

“The biggest issue facing the dams is making necessary repairs that are over and above the normal operation and maintenance issues,” said Gene Saurborn, WVCA assistant division director for Watershed Projects. “It will have to go beyond our current funding.”

The FY13 budget for the OM&R Program was \$250,000. The WVCA provided 50 percent state match with local governments. This equates to less than \$3,000 per dam, which covers routine

maintenance issues such as mowing, painting and debris removal. There are no federal funds available for repairs.

The dams play a vital role in the state’s infrastructure. They provide yearly monetary benefits of \$76,444,567. In addition, they provide benefits to

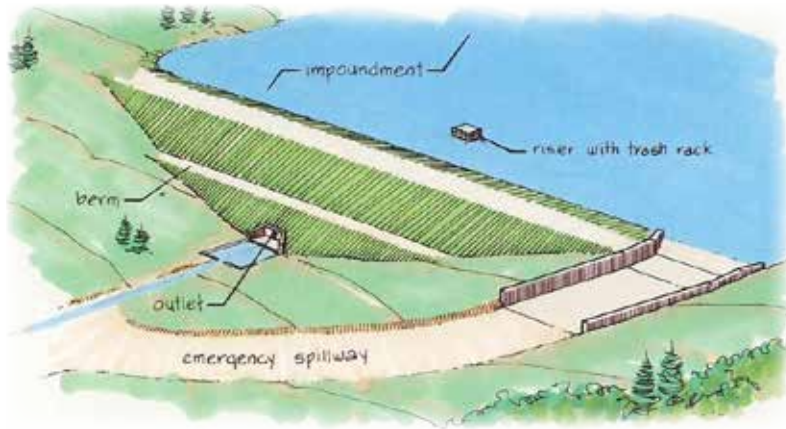


The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection - Dam Safety (DEP) designated 169 of these dams high hazard; posing threats to life and property. Of these dams, 101 do not meet current engineering design criteria.

“A high hazard potential means what are the consequences if the were to fail” said Long. “It is entirely different from the condition of the dam.”

None of the dams are currently at risk of failure. However, the repair issues must be addressed for these structures to work as intended. The longer these issues go unchecked the greater the potential for problems to arise.

Addressing the Issue



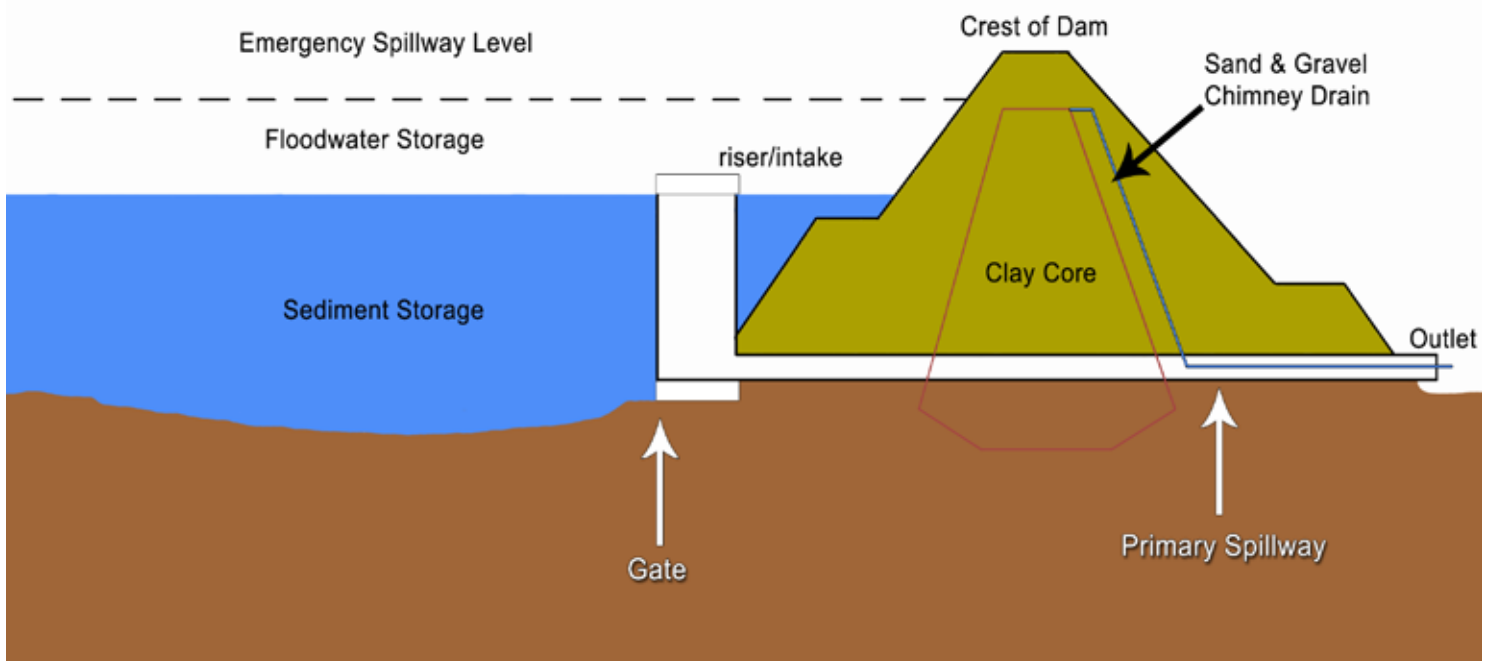
The goal of the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) is to minimize risk and continue to realize dam benefits with a sustainable OM&R program. However, limited conservation district, sponsor and WVCA funding has lead to a diminished program.

The WVCA has begun to take steps to address the issue. In FY13, the WVCA requested the state Legislature conduct an interim study to develop a long-term fix. During interim meetings in June, WVCA staff took members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development on a tour of

the Wheeling Creek watershed to show them first hand some of the issues facing these structures. The purpose of the tour was to educate members on the importance of maintaining these dams.

In addition, the WVCA requested outside counsel to review the easements and deeds on the watershed dams state-wide. When these dams were built several of the written agreements, or easements, may not have been filed properly in the county court where the dam is located. Finding who owns the property where the dams are located will be the responsibility of the Lewis, Glasser, Casey & Rollins law firm, with offices in Charleston and Morgantown.

The job will consist of two phases. The first will be to review all the deed and easement records that are on file at the WVCA's Romney Field Office, where the OM&R records currently reside. The second phase will consist of going to county courthouses across the state to obtain records that are missing or incomplete.



Hurricane Sandy

In FY 2013, Superstorm Sandy brought heavy snow to the area, which wreaked havoc on the landscape, snapping trees and blocking streams.

“They [storms] were not near as severe as Sandy. It looked like a war zone along the highways and streams. It was very dangerous in some places.”

Tom Warner
Tygarts Valley CD Supervisor



On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey. It brought with it a massive storm surge that covered seaside towns and cities in a wall of water.

As the storm moved inland, it combined with a cold front and dumped large amounts of snow across the higher elevations in West Virginia. The heavy, wet snowfall wreaked havoc on the landscape, snapping trees and bringing down power lines.

Just days after the snow stopped falling the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) staff, with the help of local contractors, began the cleanup in the hardest hit areas.

“The worst areas for us were Tucker and Randolph counties,” said Gene Saurborn, assistant division director of Watershed Projects for the WVCA. “This is so different from the damage we see after a flood. Usually, after a flood all the debris [in the streams] is pushed together and is not as scattered, as it was with this storm.”

Throughout Tucker and Randolph counties, downed trees blanketed streams for what seemed like miles. On Chenoweth Creek, in Randolph County, contractors removed around 26 truckloads of debris.

Tom Warner, Tygarts Valley Conservation District Supervisor for Randolph County, said the damage from storms earlier in the year weren't close to the damage Sandy inflicted.

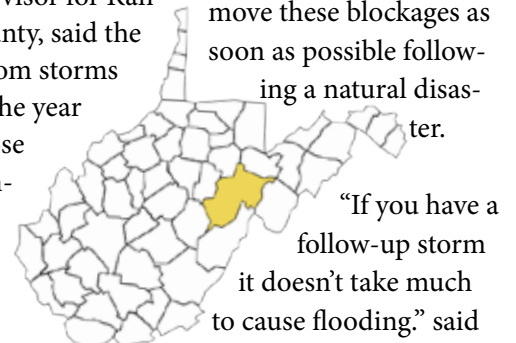
“They [storms] were not near as severe as Sandy,” said Warner. “It looked like a war zone along the highways and streams. It was very dangerous in some places.”

The WVCA EWP staff was charged with finding and removing blockages from streams. In FY13, the WVCA completed work on 21 EWP contracts totaling \$517,344.

As a Conservation District Supervisor, representing Randolph County, Warner helps get EWP work on the ground by notifying WVCA staff of potential blockage sites. These tips

come mainly from citizens in the affected area.

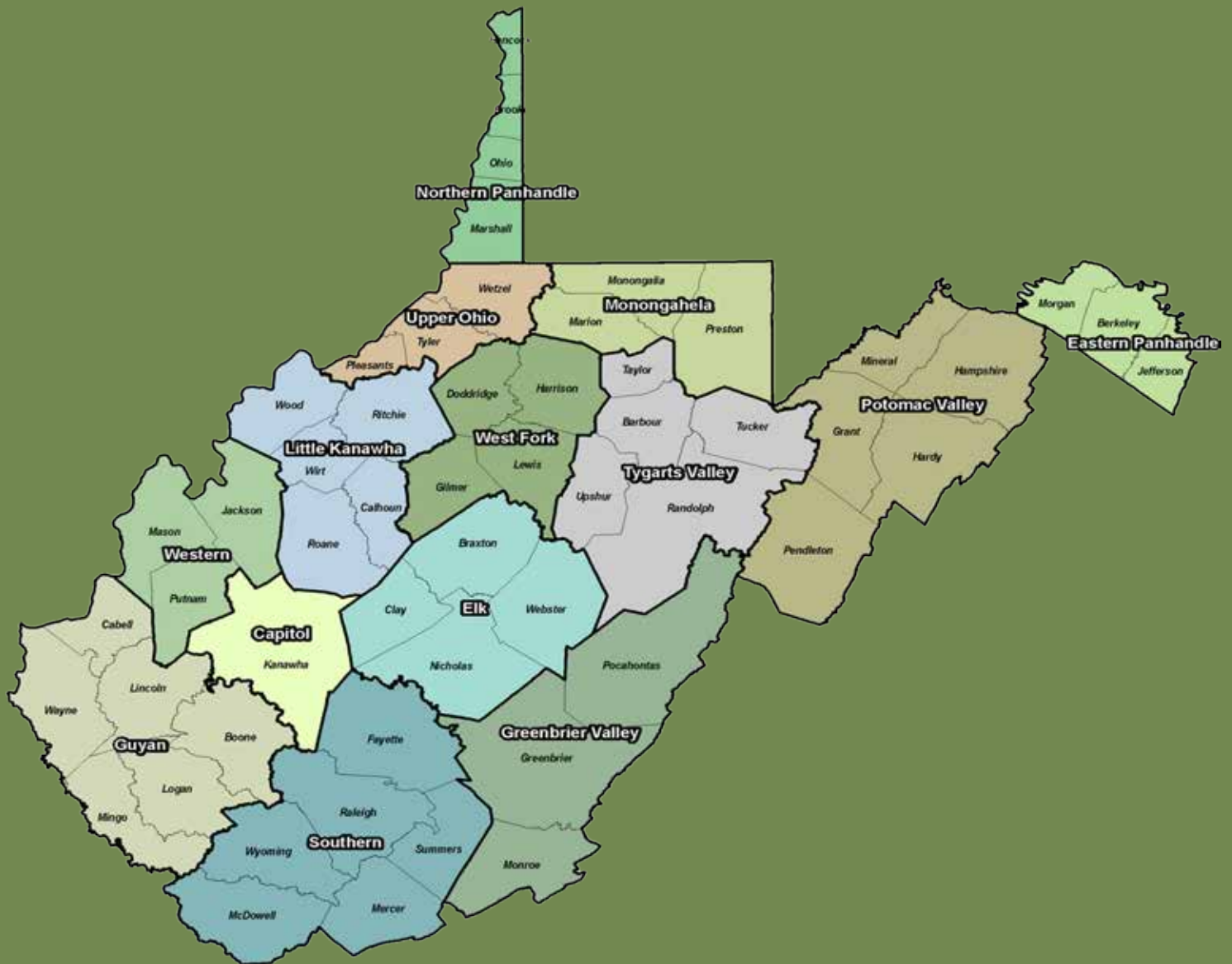
The Tygarts Valley Conservation District Board of Supervisors, which Warner serves on, is the contracting authority and approves the implementation of the EWP work in that district. Warner says it is important to remove these blockages as soon as possible following a natural disaster.



“If you have a follow-up storm it doesn't take much to cause flooding,” said Warner. “Also, we get a lot of heavy rains here in the spring anyway, so it's very important to get these blockages out as soon as possible. If we didn't it could really do a number on these people come springtime.”

On November 27, 2012 President Obama issued a federal disaster declaration for several West Virginia counties including: Barbour, Boone, Braxton, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, Lewis, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Raleigh, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur, Webster and Wyoming counties.

West Virginia Conservation Districts



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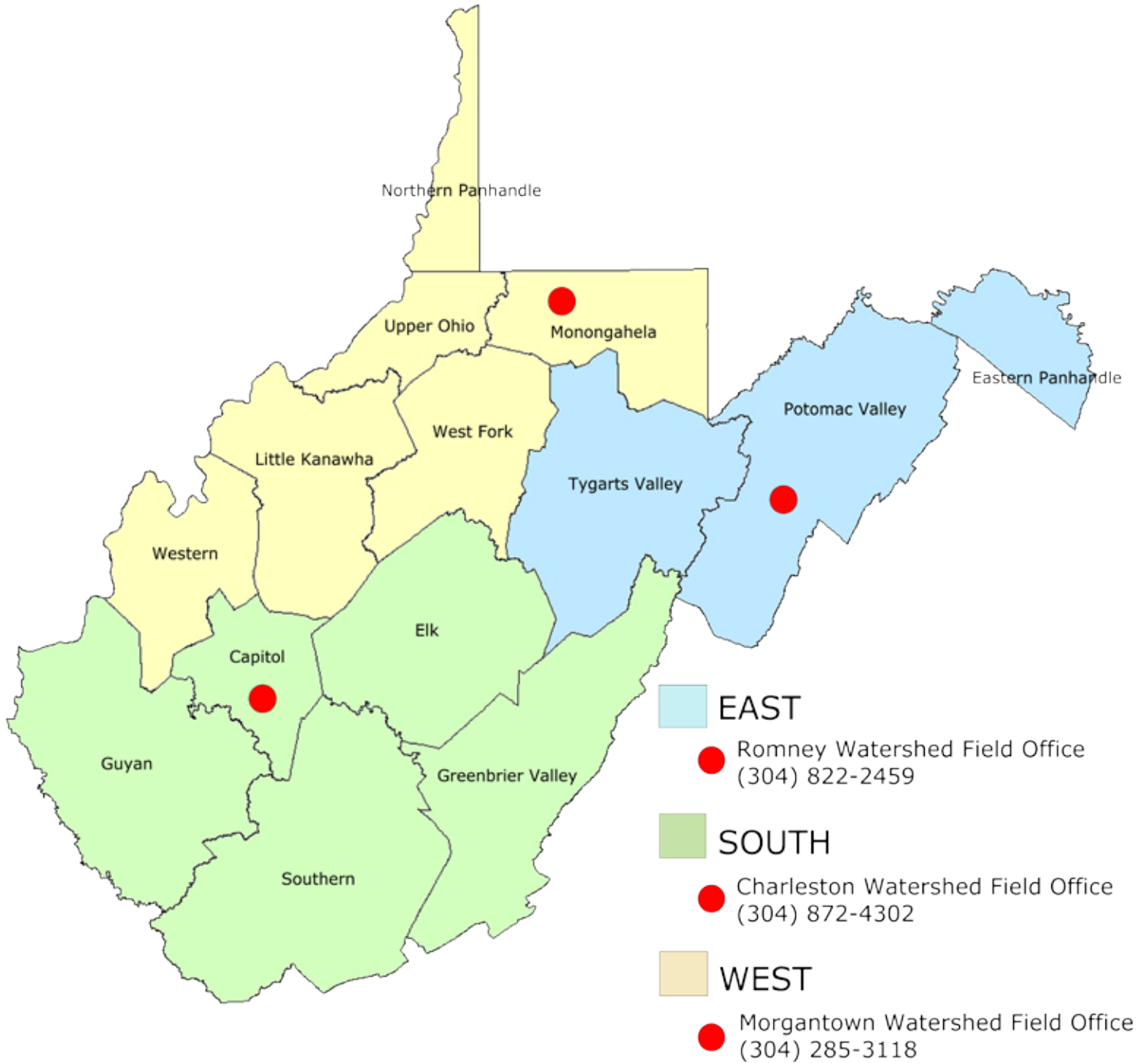
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