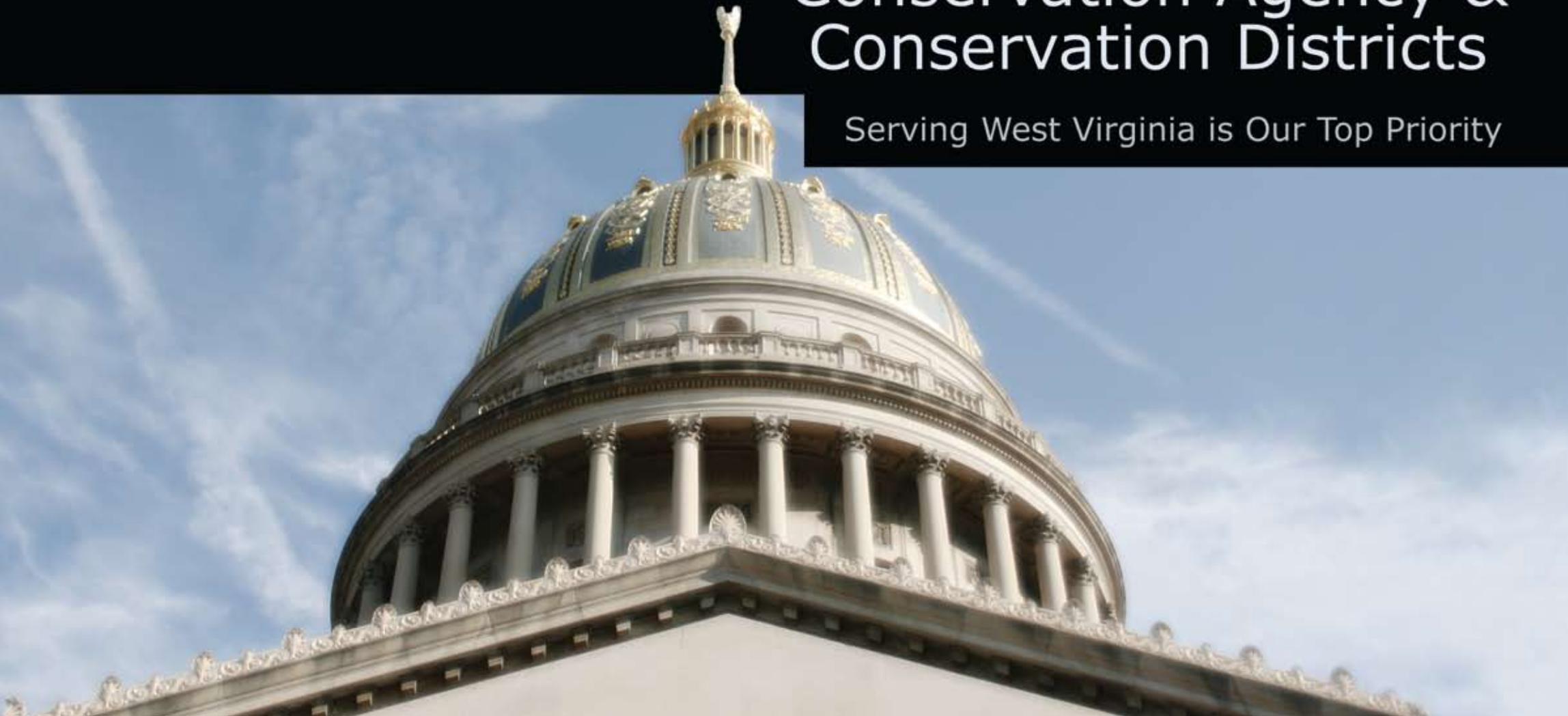




West Virginia Conservation Agency & Conservation Districts

Serving West Virginia is Our Top Priority



West Virginia Conservation Agency & Conservation Districts: Our Mission To Serve



- To secure the assistance of various federal government agencies for cost share programs.
- To provide state funding for conservation programs, education and support activities.
- To provide administrative technical and financial assistance to the citizens of West Virginia through the 14 Conservation Districts.
- To coordinate with state and federal agencies in emergency events.
- To assure proper operation and maintenance of flood control structures and properties.

West Virginia Conservation Agency & Conservation Districts: Director's Message



Truman R. Wolfe
Executive Director

Serving the citizens of West Virginia to the best of our abilities is the driving force behind the success of West Virginia Conservation Districts and the West Virginia Conservation Agency. Whether we are working with farmers on environmentally friendly practices or with watershed groups on water quality improvement projects, we are thinking about how we can improve the life and well-being of the men, women and children living in the state.

When the severe rain and flooding hit Logan County in April 2007, we worked with partnering agencies to remove resulting stream blockages in a quick and efficient manner. Even beyond that service, we were able to restore floodplains at five sites, so that there was a greater capacity to hold extra water. Consequently, when heavy rains came again, the floodplain held the extra water and minimized flooding at the sites. The Logan County Commission and residents were very pleased with the improvement.

Our commitment to excellence in service was instrumental in enhancing the stream program with staff that has the knowledge and expertise to use

the modern and proven methods of stream naturalization and floodplain restoration to the human and financial benefit of West Virginia.

Too many of our citizens have been the victims of repeat flooding! They have endured the physical, emotional and financial trauma that accompanies it. Now in some instances with appropriate funding, we have the skills and expertise to decrease the likelihood of that repetitive flooding.

Our safety record for the 170 watershed structures that Conservation Districts and the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) monitor and maintain is excellent. People rely on these structures for flood protection, water supply and recreation. Not only do we have a yearly inspection, we also have a system of quarterly inspections, so that we may quickly identify and correct any problems that may occur. Emergency action plans are regularly updated and monitoring staff are trained.

We are very excited to see the 170th structure, the Elkwater Dam, getting close to completion. Having begun some 20 years ago as an idea, this impressive structure will not only

meet the current water supply needs, but the future needs as the Randolph County area continues to develop and grow. West Virginia has an abundant water supply, but that water supply needs to be managed and cared for by its citizens and government.

We can say with confidence that our watershed operation and maintenance program as well as our stream program are on or above par with the equivalent programs in other states. We have invested heavily in our staff and their training, and are committed to continual improvement and growth.

As many of you may have heard on the radio or read in the newspapers, Conservation District Supervisors will be elected on the regular ballot in November 2008. Formerly, the elections were "shoe box" style elections at local businesses as described in the original Code written in the 1930s.

This important update is our opportunity to educate more people about the important services that Conservation Districts perform each day. We look forward to the infusion of new faces and new energy into our projects!

West Virginia Conservation Agency & Conservation Districts: Our Service To West Virginia

As the executive director of the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA), I have the greatest respect and appreciation for the men and women who generously offer their time to serve their counties and districts as Supervisors.

They do much more than attend a monthly meeting. Often they work as members of several project committees spending many hours and many miles away from jobs and family. These fine folks receive no salary, just per diem for their expenses. Their only wage is knowing they made a positive difference in their community and in their state.



A WVCA staff member teaches some middle school children about measuring water pollution at a school conservation day cosponsored by a conservation district.

Conservation Outreach and Education

West Virginia Conservation Districts continue to promote conservation education through a variety of programs and events. Several conservation districts annually sponsor and or organize a number of field days within their geographical area. These field days are attended by students and adults from across the state and work to enlighten citizens about their role in conserving West Virginia's natural resources. Districts also sponsor a variety of programs including conservation poster and photo contests to bring awareness to the conservation ethic.

Along with other partnering organizations, Conservation Districts and the WVCA continue to support



High school students at the 2007 West Virginia Envirothon examines animal skull bones and furs to answer question on the wildlife section of their competition examination.

and organize the West Virginia Envirothon. This annual event reaches out to high school students across the state in the spirit of competition. The 2007 event was held at Canaan Valley and saw the participation of more than 30 teams from across the state. The top 5 teams received a share of scholarships totaling \$13,000 and the winning team went on to represent the state at the National Canon Envirothon in New York.

The WVCA and the districts continue to work with federal and state agencies as well as citizen organizations in an effort to promote conservation education. Many districts serve as a resource by providing financial support and technical expertise to local citizen groups concerned with erosion control and water quality for their local streams.

Flood Response Summary



After the flooding in Logan County, the WVCA and Conservation Districts worked with other agencies to remove debris blockages and to restore floodplains to a more natural state that would allow the streams to hold more water.

In response to the April 2007 severe storms and flooding in southern West Virginia, the affected Conservation Districts and West Virginia Conservation Agency worked with partnering agencies to remove stream blockages and to restore floodplains in areas with repeated flooding.

The purpose of floodplain excavation is to restore the ability of a stream to carry a larger quantity of water while minimizing future flood potential and erosion. Restoration projects have been completed at five Logan County locations: Cherry Tree; Armory Drive at Monaville; Monitor Park behind Cheap Charlies; Yuma Road; and Micco.



Grassland Programs

Approximately 49,000 cubic yards of material were removed along Island Creek to restore floodplains, or the flat land adjacent to a stream that catches the water when the stream overflows its banks. The result was that the newly reconstructed floodplains can hold nearly 11 million more gallons of flood water.

Also, more than 23,085 cubic yards of flood debris were removed from streams in Logan, Mingo and Lincoln counties.

The construction costs for the five completed sites of the floodplain restoration project totaled \$222,593. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection contributed \$185,000 cost share from mitigation funds towards restoration work. The WVCA contributed the remaining funds.

"With this program, we - the local and state partnering agencies - have been able to reduce the likelihood of future flood damages and economic losses from flooding in work areas," Russell Campbell, WVCA Division Director said.

Jimmy Gianato, Director of the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management said, "The restoration projects are an effective means of protecting West Virginians during severe storms. The projects can reduce water damage to homes, property and life and help West Virginians to feel

safe and secure in their own homes." The restoration program has been successful, because of the dedication of the sponsor and partnering agencies. The Logan County Commission sponsored the program.

The other partnering agencies were the Guyan Conservation District, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, West Virginia Department of Transportation, West Virginia Division of Highways and the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

The Logan County Commission obtained all land rights necessary to allow access to the floodplain areas. It has committed to providing long term security to prevent future dumping in restored areas.

"Flooding hurts families, businesses and communities. This was our opportunity to be proactive in trying to reduce future losses from flooding," Logan County Commission President Art Kirkendoll said.

"We know from past experience that this type of work is very beneficial. A recent floodplain and stream restoration site at Garretts Fork had a past history of chronic flooding, but the area had no material damages from the April flooding. It worked!"

"The five sites that were worked on in the Island Creek area reinforced our thinking about how effective this type of stream work was. The streams flow better, look so much more beautiful, and allow residents to have more of a secure feeling, because they know that flooding is a lot less likely to happen again."

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways contributed personnel hours and tandem axle dump trucks to haul away materials removed from the floodplains.

Upon request from the Logan County Commission, restoration work has been planned for two more Logan County watersheds: Cooperas Mine Fork and Mud Fork.

The most common type of agriculture in West Virginia is grassland farming with cattle being the most common grazing animal.

The 14 Conservation Districts and the WVCA work with many partners on the improvement of pastures in West Virginia. By improving the percent vegetative cover and overall quality of pastures, erosion rates can be dramatically reduced thus reducing the amount of sediment reaching our streams.

The agency works closely with the Conservation Districts, West Virginia Grazing Lands Steering Committee, West Virginia University Extension, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on a wide variety of programs effecting grasslands in West Virginia.

Administered locally by the Conservation Districts, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) protects water quality, fish habitat and stream stability. This program is an enhancement of the Conservation Reserve Program.

By offering rental payments and technical assistance, this unique state and federal partnership program encourages eligible farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other



Popular presenter, Kit Pharo from Cheyenne Wells Colorado talks to the attendees of the 2007 Appalachian Grazing conference.



This cow is near a water trough that a farmer installed using information from the local Conservation District.



The first photo features a multiflora rose bush in bloom. The middle photo shows a pasture that has been sprayed to kill this invasive species. The last photo shows a field with several healthy multiflora rose shrub and one dying shrub.

environmentally sensitive acreage to appropriate vegetative cover.

In FY07, West Virginia had 205 CREP contracts covering a total of 2,599 acres.

In 2007 the Agency was one of the sponsors for the Appalachian Grazing Conference held in Morgantown attended by over 200 participants. Speakers from across the county and local experts shared their knowledge and experience regarding management of pastureland.

The conference provided training on solar watering systems, precision agriculture using GPS systems, soil fertility, controlling invasive species, and managing multi-species on a grazing system. The conference provided valuable information to West Virginia farmers managing grassland.

The West Virginia Conservation Districts and the WVCA along with our conservation partners sponsored the annual West Virginia Grassland Evaluation Contest. The purpose of

the contest is to improve participant's knowledge of grassland management in West Virginia.

High school level students are tested in grassland condition, soil interpretation, wildlife, and plant identification. Each of these factors are used in the evaluation process to better utilize the resources and help make useful management decisions.

Ten teams from across the state competed in 2007 and the 1st place team, Cabell Midland Future Farmers of America went onto the Mid America contest and emerged as the 2007 champions. The contest provides an excellent educational opportunity and valuable scholarships. The next contest will be April 11, 2008.

Invasive Species Management Program

The Invasive Species Management Program cost shares with farmers to encourage them to treat multiflora rose, so that productive pasture or grazing land can be reclaimed.

First introduced to the eastern United States in 1866 as rootstock for ornamental roses, Multiflora rose is an invasive species that decreases access to livestock forage in pasture land throughout the United States and the Mountain State.

Because of its tolerance to a wide range of soil, moisture and light conditions, this species can invade fields, forests, prairies, some wetlands and many other habitats.

Dense thickets of this plant prevent native shrubs and herbs from growing. As a result farmers may be unable to

sustain the same number of cattle or livestock on the same number of acres. This can cause financial hardships for affected farmers.

In the spring of 2007, program guidelines were restructured to allow individuals who hold a private applicators license the opportunity to participate in the program.

This change sparked a renewed interest with more than 300 landowners completing applications for the program. Some landowners have expressed intent to utilize basal (stem) application this fall and winter with the majority using a foliar (leaf) application beginning in the spring of 2008.

This truck is spreading agricultural lime on a field.



This stream project was completed by a private citizen with assistance from the Stream Access Permit Program.



Lime Incentive Program

The Lime Incentive program has evolved into one of the most requested programs available from West Virginia Conservation Districts. This Legislature funded program has completed its second full year. It allows producers to be reimbursed for a portion of their lime purchase.

Lime application not only provides benefits to producers by enriching the nutrient quality and growth of grasslands, but it also aids in the reduction of soil erosion. \$1.2 Million has been granted into the program with almost \$700,000 paid back to over 800 producers, allowing more than 65,000 tons of lime being applied to 25,000 acres.

More than 300 additional producers have been approved for the program within the Districts and are in the process of applying lime. The reimbursement amount has been averaging slightly less than 50% of the liming cost and program guidelines limit the producer to 50 acres or less per farm. This has, in many cases, encouraged the producer to go ahead and invest more of his or her own money to liming the entire farm which gives us both an economical and environmental benefit.

Stream Access Permit Program

Water quality is protected and the likelihood of flooding is reduced when people use proper techniques and materials to prevent or decrease erosion along streams as well as to remove debris or deposits in streams on their property. For these reasons, the Landowner Stream Access Permitting Program is very important.

The Permitting Program helps individuals by coordinating stream access permitting activities with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and by providing follow-up technical assistance.

The program is designed to help landowners follow an approved stream plan to remove debris and rock or silt deposits from established stream channels. The program also allows landowners to manage stream bank erosion in a way that protects the overall integrity of the stream.

In FY07 Conservation Districts and the Agency processed 560 applications in the Stream Access Permit Program.

Water Quality Implementation

Locally lead conservation has long been the mantra of the Conservation Partnership in West Virginia and partnering with watershed associations throughout the state is providing more opportunities for project identification, planning and implementation.

One example of this is in the Buckhannon River Watershed where the local watershed association has brought every state and federal agency involved with water quality together to address the many water quality issues there.

The Agency's role in the Upper Buckhannon Project brought a 319 Grant cost share grant to agricultural producers for land conservation programs and addressed sedimentation from natural gas extraction activities.

Participation in the voluntary program was championed by the local Conservation District and \$12,000 of cost share monies were distributed to farmers in the watershed for various best management practices. Local cost share contributions of \$19,000 went towards stabilizing abandoned gas well roads and pipelines reducing the impacts sediment was causing in the river.

Stream stabilization projects to reduce stream bank erosion and sediment loads were administered by the WVCA Conservation Services with federal 319 Grant cost share dollars on the Little Sandy - \$40,232., Spring Creek - \$20,250, Cabin Creek - \$100,000, Lost River - \$50,000, and War Memorial Park - \$5,000. State funding of over \$152,000 was contributed for similar work completed at Turkey Creek, Little Grave Creek and Reedsville. All of these projects were successful because of support received from various local partners.

The WVCA in partnership with the Conservation District provides technical assistance in the proper installation and maintenance of best management practices (BMPs) to landowners who have questions or concerns about their agricultural operation, as well as support for education and outreach efforts. Educating the agricultural community can bring positive change.

Through educational activities and workshops, landowners are offered education concerning sediment and water quality best management practices to enhance their land as well their surrounding environment.

Water Resource Development

The Conservation Districts and the WVCA remain committed to assisting local county governments with water resource planning. Detailed resource assessments and plans are designed to address the complex and interrelated issues involved with population growth and the need for adequate water supply.

Essential for maintaining citizen health and for improving economic development, these projects create plans specific to the county. They serve as a roadmap to develop clean, safe water supplies, improved fire and water protection as well as water-related recreation. These plans enable the local government to plan for population growth and development in a manner that supports the citizens.

County wide water resource plans have been completed for Berkeley and Morgan Counties. Contract development for Doddridge County is under way, while Barbour, Greenbrier, Hampshire and Jefferson county plans will be addressed next.



Watershed Structures Update

West Virginia relies on watershed structures to help minimize potential flood damage, provide clean water supplies and water recreation opportunities to its citizens. Conservation Districts and the West Virginia Conservation Agency inspect and maintain 170 watershed structures and 23 channels. These structures are inspected and repaired on a regular basis for safety reasons.

The 2007 annual Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Inspections included each of the 170 watershed structures and 23 channels. Upon completion of these inspections, work plans were developed and implemented with Conservation Districts and sponsors to address maintenance issues. Additional inspections of all dams and channels are being performed on a quarterly basis to ensure the safe operation and to identify possible easement violations.

Maintenance contracts for items identified on annual inspections are underway and ongoing in all Conservation Districts and associated watershed project areas. All identified major maintenance needs were completed on these structures by the end of the construction season of 2007.

Emergency Action Plans are being updated and put into place for each structure. A training program for watershed structure monitors has been developed. Monitors are being trained on a one on-one basis or in small groups on a project site. This training provides monitors with valuable knowledge to be used during an emergency situation. Training is available to all monitors. Certificates of training and ID cards are being presented to each trainee to insure access to structures during emergency situations.



The Elkwater Fork Dam in Randolph County will help provide a safe clean water supply as well as recreational opportunities.

Construction on the Elkwater Fork Structure in Randolph County is well underway. The estimated completion date is December 2008. The structure is 123 feet high, 700 feet wide, roller compacted concrete (RCC) dam with an integrated spillway system. It has a reservoir size of 54 acres and a water supply pool storage of 14 000 acre feet.

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