

West Virginia

Conservation Agency



Conserving West Virginia's Natural Resources

Contents

- 1 Teaming up with fifth-graders to protect the South Branch of the Potomac River
- 3 Helping farmers improve the land and protect their bottom lines
- 5 Working with land owners to improve our streams and rivers
- 7 Restoring our streams and protecting the soil
- 9 Keeping People & Property Safe: Addressing West Virginia's Aging Flood Control Infrastructure
- 11 West Virginia Conservation Districts
- 12 West Virginia State Conservation Committee

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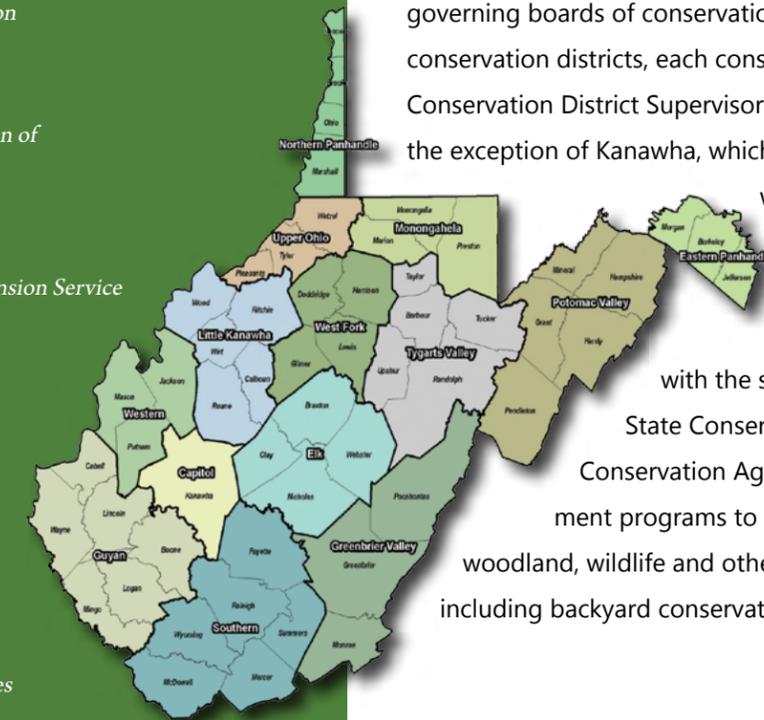


Introduction

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.

In West Virginia, 114 elected officials serve as supervisors on the governing boards of conservation districts. West Virginia has 14 conservation districts, each consisting of one to six counties. Two Conservation District Supervisors are elected per county, with the exception of Kanawha, which has five, and Berkeley County, which has three.

These local boards operate under the guidance and with the support of the West Virginia State Conservation Committee, through the Conservation Agency, and develop and implement programs to protect and conserve soil, water, woodland, wildlife and other renewable natural resources, including backyard conservation in urban areas.



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Teaming up with students to **protect** the South Branch of the Potomac River

Across the country, cities are taking the initiative to label storm water drains with signs to raise awareness about water pollution and what citizens can do to help prevent it. In 2014, the city of Petersburg chose to follow suit with its own water pollution awareness project.

In May 2014, the fifth grade class of Petersburg Elementary School took part in a contest to design the best drain label to protect the South Branch of the Potomac River, which flows through the city, from pollution. Students were asked to draw a picture that would convey the reason why people shouldn't "dump" or pollute near storm water drains in Petersburg.

The competition was the idea of Melissa Merritt, conservation specialist with the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA). Merritt, who works in the Potomac Valley region implementing the Chesapeake Bay Program, enlisted the support of the local water treatment center, city officials and Petersburg Elementary School.

The purpose of the project is to remind residents that anything that's dumped onto streets and lawns can be washed into storm drains when it rains, which lead straight into the South Branch of the Potomac River, and eventually the Chesapeake Bay. Merritt plans to take the contest to the cities of Romney and Moorefield this winter and said that she decided to have the contest geared towards students instead of the general public because it all starts with the kids.

"Obviously the kids are the future and when the kids are involved the parents will probably be involved so we are educating them as well," said Merritt.



The students learned that some of their actions, even though unintentional, could have a negative effect on the environment. They also realized that, like themselves, others in the community may not be aware that their actions can effect the environment. The students knew that by raising awareness they could make a difference in their community.

"They [students] really understand that everything they do, and anyone does, can have an effect on the environment," said Julie Colaw, fifth grade science teacher at Petersburg Elementary. "They realized that they're kids but they could make a

“They realized that they're kids but they could make a difference and raise awareness with their drain signs, they could have an impact on change.”

—Julie Colaw, fifth grade science teacher at Petersburg Elementary School

difference and raise awareness with their drain signs, they could have an impact on change.”

The winning designs were selected by a group of five judges that included a Potomac Valley Conservation District Supervisor, a city council member, the editor of the Grant County Press and the art teacher from Petersburg Elementary. The winners of the contest were announced in June. The first place winner was Isaac Snyder, second place was Isaac Nazelrodt, and third place was Jenna Burgess.

In November, the entire class, now sixth-graders, along with teachers and parents walked the city to install their designs. Sixty-six drains were labeled in Petersburg and each one was marked with the artwork from these students reminding folks to be mindful and help keep our rivers clean.

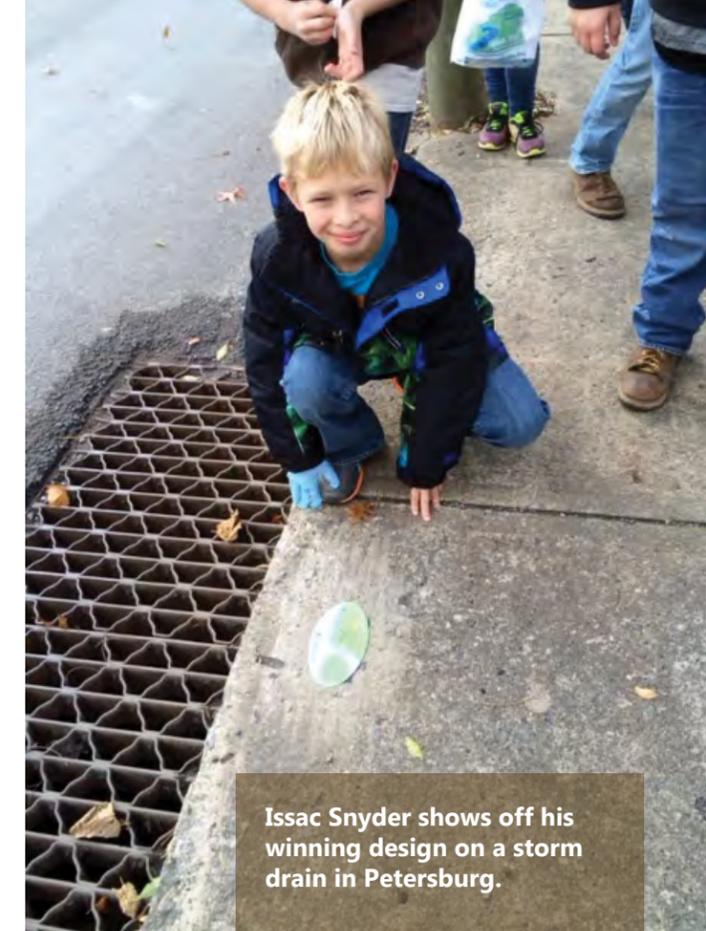
Several drain signs are located at highly visible areas on school property providing each of the 630 students at Petersburg Elementary a chance to see the artwork. Colaw said that the fact that their artwork was highly visible and that they were making a difference in the community really resonated with the students.

"Every time they [students] walk to get picked up by the buses or by their parents they walk over the signs and see their work and that is pretty powerful," said Colaw.

Colaw is just one of many teachers across the state that works with WVCA conservation specialists and conservation districts to provide conservation themed curricula in their classroom. In FY14, the West Virginia Conservation Agency and the state's 14 conservation districts provided a variety of conservation-themed programs to 4,719 West Virginia teachers, students and citizens.

The contest has been highlighted several times in the Grant County Press and through the Chesapeake Bay Program Office in Annapolis, MD. In addition, the contest was showcased in the U.S. Department of Education's Green Strides Best Practices Tour of 2014 to celebrate Petersburg Elementary School's recent acceptance as a Green Ribbon School.

"It [contest] got a great amount of publicity from a lot of different groups and the kids learned something too, which was the goal," said Merritt.



Isaac Snyder shows off his winning design on a storm drain in Petersburg.



By the numbers

1,448
people attended conservation related workshops

4,719
students, citizens and professionals were provided educational programs

584
landowners, businesses and organizations received technical assistance



Larry Grogg (left) stops for a photo with Joe Craft (right). Grogg leases 100 acres from Craft and has used the AgEP to improve the pastures.

down," said Grogg. "That's when I went to the district to see if they could help me."

Grogg contacted the Elk Conservation District (ECD) to see what kind of assistance they could provide. Grogg applied for the ECD Agricultural Enhancement Program (AgEP). The AgEP supports West Virginia's agricultural community through a series of cost-share practices farmers can participate in to reduce soil erosion, provide alternative water for livestock and improve the productivity of their lands. The program is district specific in that each conservation district sets what practices they offer and the cost-share percentage.

In FY14, the state's 14 Conservation Districts processed 1,204 applications, compared to 868 in FY13, and committed more than \$1.4 million in cost-share funding to 862 different landowners.

Conservation Specialist Ben Marcum with the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) implements the Agricultural Enhancement Program (AgEP) in the ECD and has worked with Grogg for the past two years.

"He had a lot of invasive species, autumn olive and stuff like that," said Marcum. "Once he got his invasive species under control he started turning the land into more healthy pastures by spreading lime and fertilizers."

In FY14, with assistance from the ECD AgEP, Grogg treated 50 acres of multiflora rose and autumn olive. He also applied 192 tons of lime on 68 acres and with the use of his nutrient management plan he was able to apply the correct amount of fertilizer on 50 acres. Statewide the most popular AgEP practice was lime spreading. In FY14, 487 applications for lime were paid and 15,007 acres were treated with 35,540 tons of lime.

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.

"For them [farmers] it saves money," said Marcum. "If they know exactly when, how much and what to apply then they aren't buying and spreading more than they need and if they over apply nutrients and then you get a hard rain, it just washes off into the streams and rivers. So, its good for the environment and its beneficial to the farmer."

Grogg said the AgEP program has been tremendously helpful. He said that he was grateful for the help he re-



Helping farmer's improve the land and protect their bottom lines

Larry Grogg purchased his farm on the outskirts of Sutton in 1975. He operates a 118 acre beef cattle operation in Braxton County. Currently, Grogg is a coal miner and does his farming on the side. However, he said that his goal is to retire from the mines and increase his farming operation.

"I've worked in coal mines all my life," said Grogg. "I want to retire and my goal is I want to run somewhere between fifty and a hundred head of cattle."

For Grogg to achieve his goal and increase his operation, he knew he would need more land. So in 2012, he leased 100 acres. Grogg said that, other than being cut with a brush hog, the pastures had not been maintained for pasture and were in poor condition.

"My farm is about 118 acres and I run about 50 head of beef cattle and I needed some more land. So I leased a couple pieces of property and they were kind of run

"If you didn't have these programs you just couldn't afford to do what I've done. It helps the farmer tremendously."

—Larry Grogg, cooperator
Elk Conservation District



ceived from the ECD and WVCA and if this program was not in place the work probably would've been too expensive to complete on his own.

"Those people in that office [Elk Conservation District] have been super in helping me improve the land and help me do what I'm trying to accomplish," said Grogg. "If you didn't have these programs you just couldn't afford to do what I've done. It helps the farmers tremendously."

As a testament to his hard work and dedication, the Elk Conservation District named Grogg their 2014 Grassland Farmer of the Year. The award is meant to recognize a farmer in the Elk Conservation District who is doing the most outstanding job managing their grasslands using conservation management practices.

Over the years, he's learned a lot about what it takes to be a successful farmer. One of the most important lessons he has learned is if you take care of the soil, the soil will take care of you.

"I learned a long time ago," said Grogg. "If you take care of the ground and add fertilizer and lime you can cut as much hay as you want on your own place and you don't have to run all over the place to find it [hay] and it's better quality," said Grogg.

By The Numbers

862

different cooperators paid in FY14

1,204

applications paid in FY14

\$1,459,015

total payments in FY14

\$2,384,905

total cost in FY14

Working with land owners to improve our streams and rivers

In FY14, with the help of local cooperators, watershed associations and the Nonpoint Source Program (NPSP), 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 (CBP) 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.

Since 2008, WVCA NPSP staff have been implementing the Sleepy Creek Watershed Based Plan. The goal of the plan is to reduce nonpoint source pollution, specifically fecal coliform bacteria, in the Sleepy Creek Watershed. A majority of the Sleepy Creek watershed is located in Morgan County (86 percent) with the remaining in Frederick County, Virginia (14 percent). It flows 42 miles north into

the Potomac River, a major tributary of the Chesapeake Bay.

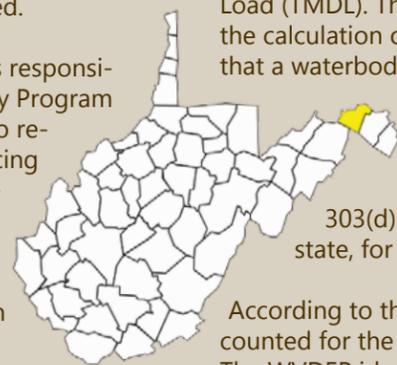
"Every year we have to report to the Chesapeake Bay Program what we have done to reduce sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus levels in our portion of the Chesapeake Bay watershed," said Barbie Elliott, conservation specialist for the WVCA in the Eastern Panhandle. "Sleepy Creek drains directly into the Potomac River so it's very important to the Eastern Panhandle counties to do as much as we can to reduce those levels going into the Potomac and ultimately the [Chesapeake] Bay."

Within the watershed, two streams, Sleepy Creek and Indian Run, are impaired and have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Think of the TMDL as a pollution diet. It is the calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) placed both streams on the West Virginia Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list, which lists impaired waters in the state, for fecal coliform bacteria.

According to the TMDL, leaking septic systems accounted for the majority of the fecal coliform bacteria. The WVDEP identified areas of high population density without access to public sewers. It was estimated that 6,400 homes in the watershed were using septic tanks and approximately 908 were failing.

"One of the big items in Sleepy Creek Watershed is to improve our septic systems," said Jim Michael, Morgan County Supervisor for the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District. "Our rural homes in the area all are on septic. So, working through the analysis of the Sleepy Creek Watershed, with assistance from DEP and others, we were able to obtain a 319 grant to help improve Indian Run and Sleepy Creek."

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 grants also assist the WVCA in imple-



“It’s been great to see how the homeowners joined in the tree planting programs to improve Indian Run and Sleepy Creek.”

—Jim Michael, District supervisor Eastern Panhandle Conservation District



menting its portion of the Chesapeake Bay Program. States are required to provide matching funds to receive federal dollars to implement projects that address nonpoint source pollution.

The grant funds were used to reduce the fecal coliform in Indian Run through a combination of best management practices, such as septic system upgrades and riparian buffers, and community outreach.

In 2012, upon completion of Phase 1 of the project, 69 septic systems were pumped, 43 septic systems were replaced and 722 trees were planted in urban areas. Sixty-eight homeowners helped plant 520 trees in the Cacapon East and South subdivisions along Indian Run.

"It's been great to see how the homeowners joined in the tree planting programs to help improve Indian Run and Sleepy Creek," said Michael, who is also one of the founding members of the Sleepy Creek Watershed Association.

Phase 1 was such a success that, in 2012, the WVDEP removed Indian Run from the 303(d) list, which was one of

the first in the state to be removed. In addition, Indian Run was highlighted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2014.

In FY14, the WVCA began work on Phase 2 and 3 of the Sleepy Creek Project. Phase 2 will focus on reducing stormwater runoff through stormwater management, education and outreach, agriculture field days and urban and riparian tree plantings. The focus of Phase 3 will be to address the remaining 865 homes with failing septic systems.

The total cost of the Sleepy Creek Watershed project to date is \$859,986. The total cost to the state to date is \$182,286.



Watershed Grant Project	319 Funding	State Match	In-kind Funding	Total
Statewide				
WVCA 319 Base Grant	\$216,811	\$144,541	N/A	\$361,352
Back Creek , Monroe County 3rd Congressional District	\$1,938	\$14,993	N/A	\$16,931
Chesapeake Bay , Multiple counties 1st, 2nd & 3rd Congressional Districts	\$155,754	\$103,836	N/A	\$259,590
Elks Run , Jefferson County 2nd Congressional District	\$2,887	\$2,887	N/A	\$5,774
Fourpole Creek , Cabell County 3rd Congressional District	\$3,261	\$4,081	\$2,700	\$10,042
Huntington Rain Garden , Cabell County 3rd Congressional District	\$15,565	\$12,835	\$2,475	\$30,875
Kitchen Creek , Monroe County 3rd Congressional District	\$90,790	\$60,525	N/A	\$151,315
Mill Creek , Grant & Pendleton counties 1st & 2nd Congressional Districts	\$15,024	\$1,950	\$5,474	\$22,448
Milligan Creek , Greenbrier County 3rd Congressional District	\$26,372	\$35,225	N/A	\$61,597
Muddy Creek , Greenbrier County 3rd Congressional District	\$71,518	\$16,485	\$27,608	\$115,611
Second Creek , Morgan County 2nd Congressional District	\$6,294	\$1,574	N/A	\$7,868
Sleepy Creek , Morgan County 2nd Congressional District	\$5,165	\$1,610	\$2,638	\$9,413
TOTAL	\$611,379	\$400,542	\$40,895	\$1,052,816



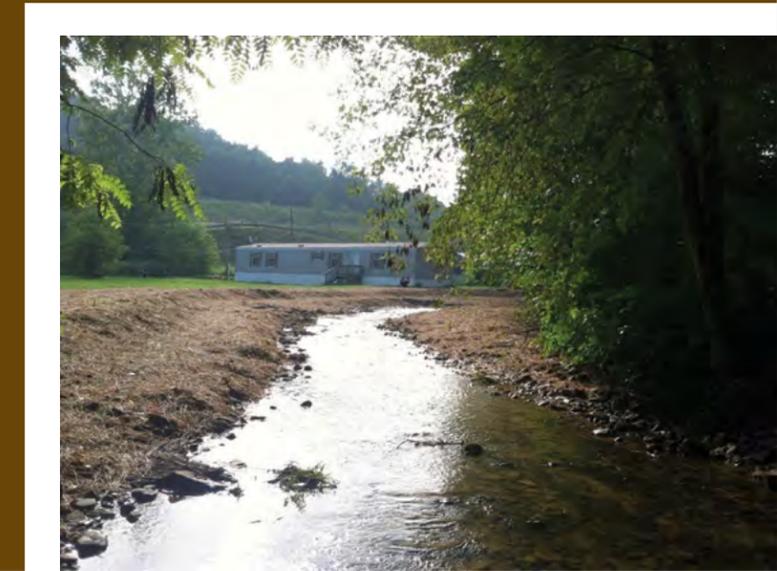
Restoring our streams and protecting the soil

In FY14, the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) began restoring a portion of Aaron's Creek in the Monongahela Conservation District (MCD). The Aaron's Creek project is the first of three planned stream restoration projects that will be performed in Morgantown as mitigation for the impacts of the expansion of the Fort Martin Power Station Landfill Facility in Madsville.

"Since the mitigation work was from the expansion of the Fort Martin Power Plant, which is in Monongalia County, we started looking at streams in the county that were impacted from the expansion," said Mark Myers, District supervisor representing Monongalia County for the MCD. "We wanted to choose a stream where we knew we could have a positive impact."

This 1,857-foot section of Aaron's Creek was suffering from numerous high banks, which were contributing excess sediment into the stream. The build-up of sediment in Aaron's Creek had decimated aquatic habitat and prior land use had created instability in the streams pattern.

"There were some vertical banks that were contributing sediment to the stream," said Justin Tinchler, watershed technician for the WVCA. "The stream had also worked its



way around a culvert and blew it out. So you ended up with an over-wide channel and some odd patterns in the stream that just didn't belong. Some homeowners were losing several feet of their property because the stream was trying to make its own correction through their yard."

The project consists of three phases. Construction of the first two phases began in June 2014 and entailed minor pattern adjustments to the stream, the installation of bankfull benches, 11 rock cross-vanes, a livestock stream crossing and stream exclusion fencing to limit livestock access to the stream.

The rock cross-vanes are used to protect the stream banks. They are comprised of a "throat", which is set at a specific elevation, and two "arms", which attach to either side of the throat and extend out to each side of the stream bank.

Cross-vanes are placed at certain points along the stream to direct the flow into the inner third, accelerate water flow and flush away sediment. This creates sediment free pools where fish and other aquatic habitat can flourish. To stabilize the cross-vanes and reconnect the stream to its floodplain work crews constructed bankfull benches.

Bankfull is the water level, or stage, at which a stream is at the top of its banks and any further rise would result in water moving into the floodplain. The benches are shallow sloped areas above bankfull that slows the velocity of the stream during high water events.

"When you have an impaired stream you'll end up with mid-channel bars and little islands in the stream, said Tinchler. "That in-turn increases stress on the banks and you'll end up with erosion, which then contributes to sediment buildup in the stream."

The Aaron's Creek project is in a highly visible area of Morgantown. It's also a short distance from the MCD office so it can be used as a demonstration project to show potential cooperators and others the benefits of conservation practices and stream restoration techniques. Myers said that the landowner involved in the project has been very receptive to the project and is happy with the results.

"I think that it came out very nice and it's in a very visible spot," said Myers. "The landowner has been very receptive to the project. He knew that he had a problem but didn't have the money to fix it. He

needed some help and we were able to help him."

The final phase of the project, to be completed in 2015, will consist of installing watering troughs and establishing a riparian buffer. The watering troughs coupled with the exclusion fencing will help reduce erosion and improve water quality. The riparian buffer will serve multiple roles including filtering pollutants from storm-water runoff, reducing erosion, providing shade to the stream and acting as a source of organic matter to vertebrate and invertebrate aquatic organisms, which are vital to the health of a stream.

The cost of the first two phases of the Aaron's Creek mitigation project was \$61,249, which was paid for by First Energy, owner of the Fort Martin Power Plant. The Aaron's Creek project is slated for completion in the spring of 2015. The two remaining mitigation sites are located on Cobun Creek and are slated for construction in 2015 and 2016.



In the top picture, an area of Aaron's Creek had been over-widened due to a failed culvert upstream. As a result, a large mid-channel bar formed and divided the stream flow. In the picture on the bottom, it shows the same area with the bar removed and a cross-vane installed. The dirt from the bar was used to construct the bankfull benches on both sides of the stream.

Stream Restoration Projects Completed in FY14

North Fork of the South Branch	Potomac Valley CD	Pendleton County	\$69,778
Tomlinson Run	Northern Panhandle CD	Hancock County	\$28,775
Buffalo Creek	Monongahela CD	Marion County	\$3,890
TOTAL			\$102,443

Stream Blockages Removed in FY14

\$35,595

Stream blockages removed
1st Congressional District

\$81,817

Stream blockages removed
2nd Congressional District

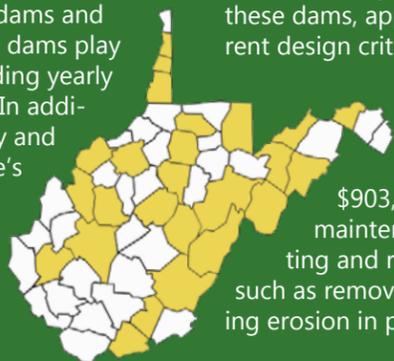
\$50,297

Stream blockages removed
3rd Congressional District

Keeping People & Property Safe: Addressing West Virginia's Aging Flood Control Infrastructure

The West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) and 13 Conservation Districts are responsible for the operation, maintenance and repair (OM&R) of 170 watershed dams and 22 channels throughout West Virginia. These dams play a vital role in the state's infrastructure; providing yearly monetary benefits of more than \$75 million. In addition, they provide flood-control, water supply and recreational benefits to 1,060,655 of the state's 1.8 million residents.

Many of these dams are aging and suffering from deficiencies such as seeps, erosion, deteriorated metals, easement encroachments, broken gates, damaged risers and plugged drains. More than 40 of these dams exceed 50 years of operation and by 2017, 41 more will exceed 50 years. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection



- Dam Safety designated 169 of these dams high hazard; posing threats to life and property. Of these dams, approximately 100 do not meet current design criteria.

In FY14, the WVCA addressed all 170 dams for the first time in WVCA history at a cost of \$903,158. This work included routine maintenance such as mowing, brush cutting and removing trees and minor repairs such as removing debris from risers and addressing erosion in plunge pools.

Take for example Mill Creek Site 9 in Jackson County. During monthly inspections of the dam in April 2014, WVCA inspectors noticed that the water level in the pool had dropped several feet. After looking at the as-built drawings for the structure the inspectors realized that the pool was actually returning to normal level.

"We thought initially that maybe the gate had been opened," said Judith Lyons, WVCA watershed manager for southern West Virginia. "When we looked at the riser we realized that the riser had been partially blocked by debris and the dam was actually returning to normal pool. That's when we realized how much debris was clogging the trash rack on the riser and that it had to be cleaned out."



The dams were designed to hold a certain amount of water in the reservoir. If the riser is clogged with debris and, as a result, the reservoir is above normal pool it may reduce the dams effectiveness to contain the 100-year storm event for which it was designed.

"If the riser has blockages in it and restrictions to it, it [riser] doesn't allow the water to flow into it properly and charge the pipe fully, which allows the pool to fill up prematurely and possibly flow through the auxiliary spillway," said Rodney Sites, Civil Engineering technician with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. "So, it's very important that the obstructions are kept away from the riser so that it can flow properly."

At the time, the WVCA was in the process of preparing a contract for the mowing and brush cutting on Mill Creek Site 9. So, when the issue with the riser arose it was added to the contract. Francis Brothers Excavating out of Ripley was awarded the contract. The total cost of the mowing, brush cutting and debris removal was \$8400.

The goal of the WVCA is to minimize risk and continue to realize dam benefits with a sustainable OM&R program. In FY14, the budget for the OM&R program was \$220,000. 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. To continue annual grass and brush cutting on all dams statewide, the WVCA will need to spend at least \$550,000 per year.

In the past two years, the WVCA has taken steps to address the issue with its aging dams. In FY14, the WVCA consolidated staff and improved training of its inspectors to provide better coverage and more efficient service to the dams. The WVCA also contracted the Lewis, Glasser, Casey & Rollins law firm to review easements and deeds on the watershed dams statewide, which is ongoing. For 2015, the WVCA plans to begin repairs on the highest priority dams. The estimated cost of repairs to 169 watershed dams suffering from deficiencies is \$1.9 million.

The Federal Farm Bill, passed by Congress this year, provided \$15.2 million for 59 rehabilitation assessments, to initiate planning for the rehabilitation of five dams located in Marshall, Mineral and Mercer counties and for design and construction costs associated with the rehabilitation of Upper Deckers Creek Site 1 in Preston County. The WVCA is seeking a \$3 million supplemental request to its budget to match (65/35) federal construction dollars for the rehab of this dam. The rehabilitation is anticipated to cost \$7 million, which could be higher depending on the final design.



\$550,000

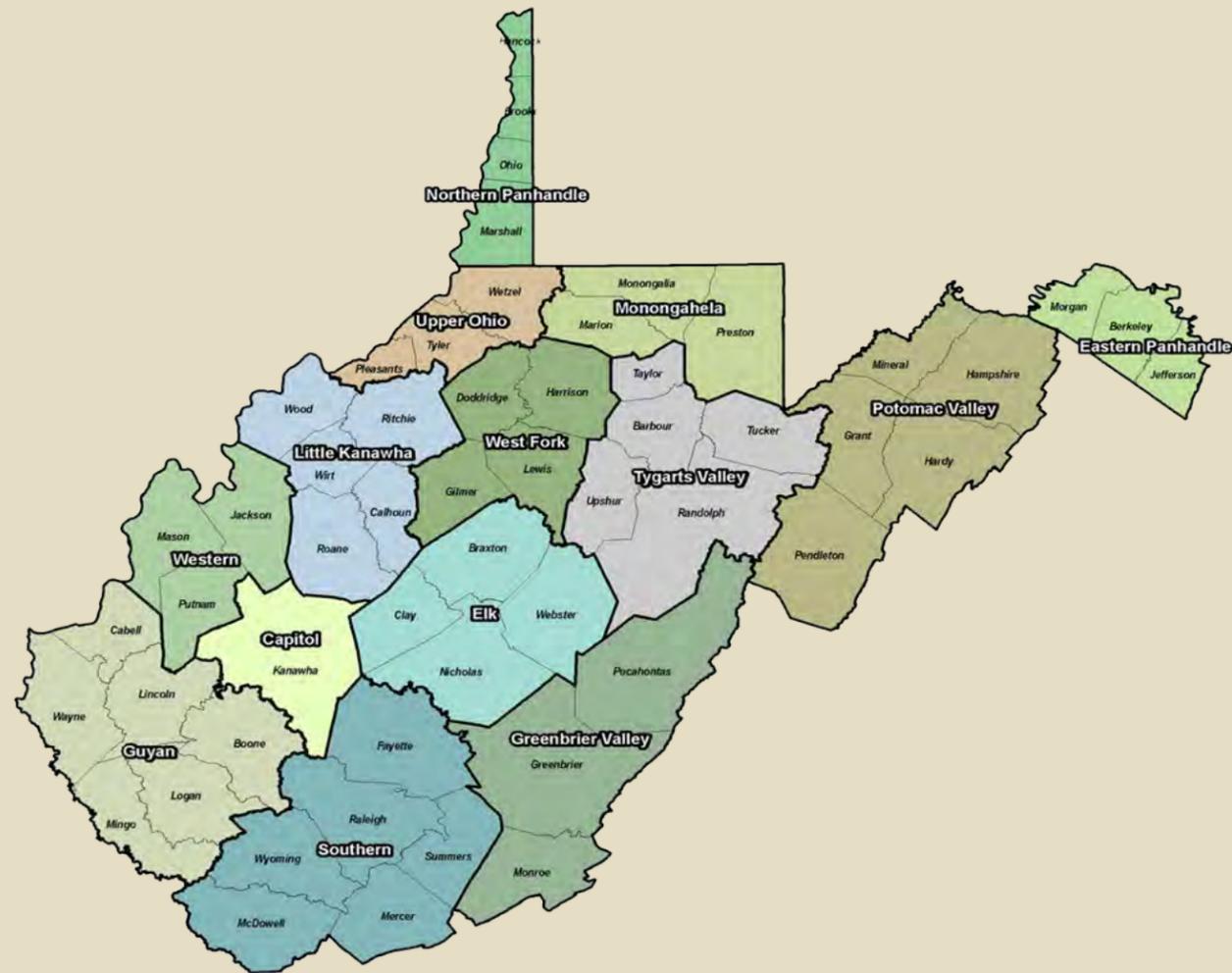
Annual cost to complete routine maintenance on all 170 dams.

\$1.9 million

Estimated cost of repairs to watershed dams suffering from deficiencies such as seeps, slips, etc.



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**For more information about us and our programs
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