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## West Virginia NRCS News and Views

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 February 2012

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[..More Info](#)

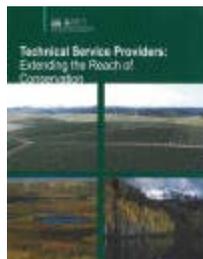
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#### [Featured Photos](#)



Before and after covered feed pad photos submitted by Rodney Sites. Cold weather photo tips.

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To submit news items for the May *News and Views*, please send an e-mail message to [Carol Lagodich](#).

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment.

NRCS West Virginia State Office  
Suite 200  
1550 Earl Core Road, Morgantown, WV 26505  
304-284-7540 | fax 304-284-4839  
<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Kevin Wickey, West Virginia State Conservationist

NRCS field offices are located throughout West Virginia  
Visit <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/> for addresses and phone numbers.

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## Message from Kevin Wickey

USDA and NRCS are entering a time of great change compared to our past. There are numerous internal groups preparing strategies that will ultimately help us continue to meet our mission in an era of shrinking resources. The current office closures are a taste of changes to our agency structure that will allow us to scale up or down to best fit the resources provided. While our sister agencies have been hit hard with recent office closings, we have also suffered with the closure of our (375) RC&D offices last year in addition to the current closures (24).

Some time ago I heard a speaker talk about some research describing what motivates employees. We tend to think that money is what motivates employees. So the study examined money as a motivator and found that for the test they had set up, the larger the monetary incentive, the measured performance was worse. That's correct – worse. The results were so startling that they decided to repeat the test – this time in India rather than USA and with rewards of a substantial size (like a year's income amount). They found the same results – less performance for the larger monetary incentive. After further study, they proposed that monetary rewards only motivate when the task is simple and repetitive. When tasks are complex and varied, then once a basic income need level is met, money no longer motivates very well. What does? The study's authors found three things: 1) Autonomy, 2) Challenge or Mastery, and 3) Purpose.

Autonomy is not something that we typically associate with employment in the government; and to be sure, we have lots of policy – OK shelves of policy – even policy about policy. But then think about those of you in offices where you don't see your supervisor every day; where you have the opportunity to work with individuals helping them design and tailor a conservation plan for their land. The view changes a bit. Certainly there are side boards, but within those sideboards, there is a lot of room for autonomy.

Challenge or mastery is why people spend hours trying to play a musical instrument when they know they will never be paid for those hours. It is what motivates software engineers who have spent their entire day being paid to write software to come home and write software for free (e.g. Linux). Hopefully, you find the motivation to continue to learn about new technology, techniques, and ideas and to become a master at your task.

Purpose is what NRCS has in Spades. I suppose there are parts of government service that equal or exceed our purpose (firemen, police, defense, etc.), but I can't think of very many. Helping private landowners preserve our natural resources for future generations in a voluntary, incentive based way is a great mission. If you don't feel that way, you're in the wrong place. Some have said that NRCS and the things we do are the things that make people want to have a government.

So what does all this mean for us? Yes, we are short-staffed with more work, we are experiencing change and there are likely more changes ahead. However, we have meaningful work, we are well paid, we are respected leaders in our communities and NRCS has the respect of USDA and others in government for the conservation we are achieving on the ground. Thank you for the part you play in making conservation happen in West Virginia.

Kevin Wickey  
 State Conservationist  
 West Virginia



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## From the Field



### Ecological Sites: Understanding the Landscape

Submitted by Jason Teets

**Overview:** As you look across a pasture, woodland, or any landscape, it's easy to recognize that some parts of the landscape differ from other parts in the kinds and amount of vegetation. To understand this variation across the landscape, NRCS classifies ecological sites. These site delineations are utilized as the basic subdivision for inventory and analysis of landscapes. Any land inventory, analysis of that inventory, and resulting management decisions require the knowledge of these individual sites and their interrelationships to one another on the landscape.

**Description:** An ecological site is defined as a distinctive kind of land with specific physical characteristics that differ from other kinds of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind and amount of vegetation. Ecological site descriptions provide information to:

- Assess condition of current resources.
- Assess management opportunities.
- Predict the outcome of management decisions.

**Features:** Ecological site description information is presented as:

- Site Characteristics – Identifies the site and describes the physiographic, climate, soil, and water features associated with the site.
- Plant Communities – Describes the ecological dynamics and the common plant communities comprising the various vegetation states. The circumstances that cause a shift from one state to another are described.
- Site Interpretations – Interpretive information for the use and management of the site.
- Supporting Information – Provides sources of information and data utilized in developing the site description and the relationship of the site to other sites.



Today, land managers are challenged with synthesizing an overwhelming amount of scientific information, including soils, hydrology, ecology, management, and other resource information. Ecological site descriptions provide information describing the interactions among soils, vegetation, and land management.

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## New Creek Site 14, Grant County, WV

### Dam Rehabilitation Project

Submitted by Andy Deichert

The first construction year for the New Creek Site 14 Dam rehabilitation project has recently ended. In September 2010 the rehabilitation contract was awarded by USDA-NRCS-WV to Heeter Construction, Inc., from Spencer, WV. The Notice to Proceed was issued in January 2011. Federal funding (65%) for the project was provided to NRCS through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Local funding (35%) was provided by the state and local sponsors—the West Virginia State Conservation Committee and the Potomac Valley Conservation District. The city of Keyser assisted NRCS with the reservoir drawdown prior to the start of construction.

New Creek Site 14 is located approximately 14 miles upstream of the City of Keyser on Linton Creek, a tributary to New Creek, in the northeastern portion of Grant County, WV. The stream flows in a northeasterly direction along State Route 93 and US Routes 50 and 220, through the City of Keyser in Mineral County, where it joins the North Branch of the Potomac River. The dam provides flood control for downstream areas and water supply to the City of Keyser.

The major items of work in the rehabilitation of the dam include replacement of the reinforced concrete riser intake structure, realignment and reinforcement of the auxiliary spillway utilizing roller compacted concrete, installation of a downstream toe and chimney drainage system, and flattening of the upstream and downstream slopes. The contract value to complete the rehabilitation work is approximately \$10 million.

To date the contractor has installed erosion and sediment control measures, surface and subsurface dewatering measures, the majority of the downstream toe and chimney drainage system, flattened the downstream slope, extended the downstream end of the principal spillway pipe 60 feet, completed the subsurface grouting in the auxiliary spillway location, completed a significant portion of the required excavation for the auxiliary spillway improvements, removed most of the existing intake riser structure, and placed two pours on the new intake riser structure.

It is anticipated that the contractor will complete the flattening of the upstream slope of the embankment early in 2012 and place the roller compacted concrete stepped chute auxiliary spillway in the spring. Construction is estimated to be completed late in 2012 or early 2013.

Rehabilitation provides continued protection for downstream houses, businesses, utilities, and other infrastructure in the floodplain that has been constructed since the structure was first built. WV State Route 93 and US Routes 50 and 220 receive protection from flooding because of this dam.

The site provides wildlife habitat, wildlife viewing, scenery, and is a popular hiking area. It maintains existing stream habitat downstream of the dam by augmenting flows during dry weather conditions. The project retains the existing fish and wildlife habitat associated with the lake and the recreation benefits for anglers.

The watershed is situated in the headwater region of the Potomac River Basin. The dam traps 1.6 acre feet of sediment annually, thereby improving downstream water quality.



The reinforced concrete riser in-take structure is under construction in the foreground with the old riser in the background.



This aerial view shows the chimney drain and downstream fill.



Contractor employees are drilling and grouting in the auxiliary spillway.



This photo shows the drained reservoir with erosion and sediment control and surface diversion measures.



A view of the excavation for the downstream toe drainage system.



The contractor is working on principal spillway extension and plunge pool construction. The downstream end of the principal spillway pipe was extended 60 feet.



A landscape view of the principal spillway and toe drain installation.



Much progress was made on the principal spillway plunge pool.

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## What are you doing for others?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, *Life's most persistent and urgent question is: "What are you doing for others?"*

On January 12, 2012 Secretary Vilsack recognized and celebrated Martin Luther King's birthday by declaring a National Service Day for all USDA employees. Domenick Alessi, Business Management Leaders Program (BMLP) Intern, organized a week long clothing drive so West Virginia State Office employees could easily participate in a service project. Each day had a special theme to encourage donations, and at the end of each day donations were sorted and delivered to the program serving the demographics in most need.

"Even busy professionals could contribute easily with a minimum time commitment by donating their no longer needed clothing," said Alessi. "We are in the season where homeless children, adults, and families need clean warm clothing the most. State Office employee's from NRCS, FSA, and RD contributed old school clothes, unused coats, cold weather accessories, shoes, and even professional clothing to help those in need succeed in job interviews."

- January 17th, Day One: Coats and clothes were donated to "Warm Up WV," a new local nonprofit aimed at helping the "the working people in need" who are struggling to maintain their households.
- January 18th, Day Two: Professional clothing for men and women donations were brought to Christian Help, Inc. (United Way member), a local non-denominational non-profit helping people get back on their feet.
- January 19th, Day Three: Donations were intended for the local cancer center and hospital, however they had already received overwhelming support so additional clothing was sorted and donated again to both Warm Up WV and Christian Help Inc.
- January 20th, Day Four: To support our Vets, donations were picked up by AmVets, who help veterans and active military members procure the entitlements they have rightly earned as well as providing many other community services. Nearly 40% of adult homeless are veterans, with more returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I'd like to thank the entire USDA family here at the Morgantown State Office for their support and contributions to the clothing drive benefiting local communities in need," said Alessi. "During the week we reflected on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s contributions to civil and human rights and commemorated his birthday by putting service to others in the forefront of our minds. You all have exceeded my expectations tremendously and have made this effort a huge success. Over 448 garment items were donated, as well as blankets, towels, pillows, sleeping bags, and hand warmers. Items donated included socks, gloves, belts, ties, suits, dresses, sweaters, jeans, women's dress/work shoes, kids clothing, heavy coats, boots and winter hats."

The president of Warm Up, WV Inc., James Burton, added "we have made the beginning of 2012 a bright and hopeful outlook for the oncoming year. You could only imagine how much we appreciate what you all are doing for us and the communities we serve."

"I hope those words resonate with you and you carry the same spirit of community involvement and philanthropy throughout the year," said Alessi. Obviously these concepts must be important to you, and you do contribute significantly already, as a working member of USDA."



Domenick Alessi, Heather Kiser, and James Burton of Warm Up WV, Inc. sort donated clothing.



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## Featured Photos

The saying a picture is worth a thousand words refers to the idea that a complex idea may be conveyed with just a single still image. It also characterizes one of the main goals of visualization, namely making it possible to absorb large amounts of data quickly.

Photos may be used to demonstrate our work and programs. Photos are used in success stories, reports, fact sheets, displays, and for frequent Headquarters requests. **Before and after** (see link for more details) **photos are especially helpful** in showing the benefits of the work we do.

Many requests have a short deadline so having photos on file will be less inactive on your time during crunch periods. Chesapeake Bay and EWP photos are high priority. The Chief recently requested before and after photos for a testimony before Congress and WV was not well represented.

A West Virginia photo gallery is started in SharePoint:

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/east/wv/layouts/viewlists.aspx?BaseType=1&ListTemplate=109>

Each quarter, outstanding photos will be featured in the News and Views. One photographer each quarter will receive a Keepsake award.

### February First Place Photo Series

#### Feed Pad photos submitted by Rodney Sites



Before: A feed pad without a roof in Jackson County allowed animal waste to go into a stream.



After: The dryer waste is stockpiled in the waste storage facility after roofing.

### Tips for Shooting in Cold Weather

When shooting in below-freezing weather, it is critical to have a fully charged set of batteries, since the cold temperatures can quickly drain them. Should your battery discharge too early, you can extend its life by placing it in a warm pocket, close to your body, to warm it up. for more tips, go to

<http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-tips/cold-weather-photo-tips-coulson-brimberg/>

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## Bits and Pieces

### Microsoft Home Use Program

**Who qualifies for the Home Use Program (HUP)?**

The Home Use Program is a Software Assurance benefit available to Microsoft volume licensing customers with active Software Assurance coverage on their Office applications. Employees who use the covered licenses at work are eligible to purchase these Office applications for use on a home PC during the term of their employment. This temporary license expires with the employers Software Assurance coverage, or upon termination of employment with the covered customer.

**How many products can I purchase?**

Eligible customers are allowed to purchase either Office Professional Plus 2010 or Office for Mac 2011 but not both. Additionally, customers can purchase one each of the other products available from the online store.

**Why do I have to provide my work email address and program code?**

To validate you are an eligible employee, we must verify your email domain and program code is from an eligible, participating Microsoft customer.

**Can I purchase Office 2010 if I have purchased Office 2007 from HUP?**

Yes. If you have purchased Office Enterprise 2007 from HUP, you will now be able to purchase Office Professional Plus 2010.

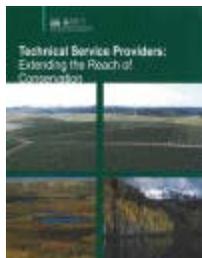
**Where do I get my eligible program code?**

The process for requesting the software is using the Service Request Module. (Accessed by the icon on lower right bottom of computer screen or go to NRCS Today, Remedy Self-Service Help link in Employee Resources [bottom right column]0.

Go to Procurement page, then Purchase Home Use Software.

Employee will receive email notification from Digital River Online Store (hup.us@digitalriver.com). Employee clicks on 'Buy Now' button and will begin the order process. Employee will be able to download software requested for \$9.95 – the software however cannot be downloaded to the employee's government workstation - only to their home PC. Employees do have the option to purchase a DVD for an additional \$12. Employee is responsible for completing order within 30 days and must inform their supervisor that they are receiving this software. They will have to surrender it to their supervisor when their employment with USDA ends.

For more information, go to <http://www.microsoft.com/hupus/chooser.aspx?culture=en-US>



### NRCS Distribution Center Updates

**New Publications**

"Conservation Planning: Productive Lands, Healthy Environment", is a tri-fold brochure that describes the elements and benefits of a conservation plan and the process of managing natural

resources. It provides a short overview of the conservation planning process. (Revised December 2011 PA-2088) This is available as a hard copy or a pdf.

The "Technical Service Providers: Extending the Reach of Conservation" pocket folder provides information about the TSP program for current or potential TSPs, and producers. It has information about how the program works, how a person can become a TSP, how a producer/landowner can find a TSP, and how a TSP can acquire more training. (December 2011 PA-2100)

Accompanying the pocket folder are 16 inserts, one for each conservation activity plan and it explains what each particular plan encompasses. These pdf inserts are available online: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?&cid=STELPRDB1046458> and also on our publication web site. Sorry, no hard copies are available! The inserts can be printed out by field and state offices as needed, making the pocket folders customizable by clients/TSP's interests and by state (since each state has different CAPs). They were designed to print in color or black and white. For best appearance, print them on medium-weight glossy paper.



The new Water Cycle poster is now available for ordering. The poster measure 40"x35" and is 2-sided. This is a beautiful poster and they are in boxes of 100.

You can order these and other items through the NRCS Distribution Center by phone at (888) 526-3227, email [nrcsdistributioncenter@ia.usda.gov](mailto:nrcsdistributioncenter@ia.usda.gov) or order online, at <http://nrcspad.sc.egov.usda.gov/DistributionCenter>. You can find these by clicking "View New Items".

### Exhibits

The busy exhibit season is coming; don't forget to place your reservations early for your exhibit needs. To view and schedule an exhibit, please visit our SharePoint site at <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/directory/exhibits/default.aspx>. Remember, these are reserved on a "First come, first served" basis. Any questions, please contact our Exhibit Manager Chris Radley at 515-270-4864 ext. 101 or by email [christopher.radley@ia.usda.gov](mailto:christopher.radley@ia.usda.gov).

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## Useful Links

### A Dirty War We Can't Win

Submitted by Jeff McClure

The article addresses how important our core mission is.

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/history-of-geology/2011/12/05/a-dirty-war-we-cant-win/>

### Twitter

Twitter is a social media tool used to impart short (140 or fewer characters) bits (tweets) of news, items of interest, and links to websites. It's often called a "micro-blog." Like other forms of social media, it is characterized by the swiftness which information is posted and spreads. Someone with a Twitter account "follows" other accounts, which means you have access to their posts. People also "follow" your account, which means they can read your posts. Anyone can "retweet," or repost, posts from accounts they follow.

The executive branch, under the current administration, strongly supports social media under its Open Government Directive. As a result, departments and agencies throughout the government are pursuing opportunities in social media as a way to tell their story without intermediaries. It's important that government tries to reach people through the channels they (the public) actually use so that they understand how government already serves them—as well as how we can serve them further.

Currently, Twitter is the only social media tool available to State NRCS offices. Through Twitter, you can reach traditional audiences like farmers, ranchers, and partners who are already looking for our information, as well as new audiences like consumers interested in organic agriculture and peer organizations. Twitter also provides an opportunity to reach out to underserved and minority farmers and ranchers who may not have accessed our services and programs before. If you have a twitter account, add NRCS\_WV.

### A Smartphone App Provides New Way to Access Soil Survey Information

A new smartphone application, or "app," is available as a free download for both iPhone and Android users to access soil survey information. The app, SoilWeb, combines online soil survey information with the GPS capabilities of smartphones.

The SoilWeb app is a portable version of the UC Davis California Soil Resource Lab's Web-based interface to digital soil survey data from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Because the app provides soil survey information in a mobile form, it is particularly useful for those working in the field.

<http://blogs.usda.gov/2012/02/03/a-smartphone-app-provides-new-way-to-access-soil-survey-information/>

### USDA at 150 Factoid Series

To commemorate and celebrate the 150th anniversary of USDA's founding in 1862, USDA will begin sharing interesting facts and photos that tell the story of the Department's history. Sign up for the

'USDA at 150 Factoid Series'—you will receive a fun fact and historic photo delivered to your inbox several times a week—at [www.usda.gov/USDA150](http://www.usda.gov/USDA150). In addition to the Factoid Series, USDA will share with subscribers news and blog posts about USDA at 150 activities throughout the year.

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#### WV NRCS Fact Sheet

The following document requires [Adobe Acrobat](#).  
[WV NRCS Fact Sheet](#) (2775 KB) Updated Feb, 2012.

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## West Virginia's Civil Rights

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### Gap Between Military and Civilians Widening

According to a Pew Research Study at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/11/23/the-military-civilian-gap-fewer-family-connections/?src=prc-headline>:

Fewer civilians, since the peace time era between World Wars I and II, have family ties to the military. Researchers noted a gap; with more than 75% of adults age 50 and older saying they had an immediate family member who has served in the military, compared to 39% of adults under the age of 30 saying the same. One of potentially many reasons could be the shrinking size of the military.

The survey also found that veterans are more likely than non-veterans to have a close relative in the military. Half of the veterans had a parent that served compared to 41% of civilians, and 43% of veterans had a sibling that served compared to 27% of civilians. Moreover, 21% of veterans are likely to have a child serve in the military compared to just 9% of civilians.

Despite the gap in service, veterans and non-veterans share similar views on some aspects of the military. Roughly half of both groups believe the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are not worth fighting. Similarly, 94% of those with and 87% of those without relatives in the military, say that since the two wars began, they felt proud of the soldiers who are serving.

Jared Beard

Veterans Special Emphasis Program Manager

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### What LGBT Professionals Want You to Know:

- Don't pretend we don't exist here. Just because sexual orientation is not a visible trait, that does not mean gay professionals don't exist at the Firm. By most estimates, the percentage of the population that is gay is 6%.
- Understand that I am probably looking for signs that you will be accepting of who I am. These important "cultural cues" are often subtle—it could be a visible book on a shelf, telling a positive anecdote that would indicate support, or using inclusive language (i.e., when you invite the team to an event, say "partners/spouses/significant others" are invited).
- If someone tells a homophobic joke in your presence, don't ignore it without saying something. It could be as simple as someone saying, "That's so gay." By ignoring this or, worse, by laughing, I might believe you endorse those sentiments. Hurtful speech can be cleverly disguised, and often innocently proffered, but it usually enforces a particularly negative aspect of a stereotype.
- If I trust you enough to let you know I'm gay, please don't then avoid the topic as if I never told you....no matter how awkward you may feel. Not knowing what to say shouldn't be an excuse. I'd rather you fumble and really show your inclusiveness.
- Please try to put aside your stereotypes about being gay. We are all unique, with interests, hobbies, schooling, family and background that might be very similar or different from yours. Explore our similarities as you would with anyone. I'm sure we'll find something we have in common.
- Just because I tell you that I'm gay, it may not completely define me. I am still a professional. I may be a parent or a spouse. Or there may be a multitude of other characteristics I would use to define myself.
- We're allowed to make fun of ourselves, and if we do, it shouldn't be perceived as an

invitation for you to do the same.

- If you think you've crossed the line or said something that might be perceived as offensive, immediately speak up and ask me. It will usually be okay.
- Understand that having to tell people that I'm gay is not easy. It takes significant energy. Also, if I choose to tell you that I'm gay, it's not because I want to "rub it in your face." Although "coming out" is a very personal decision, and it's different for everyone, I'm more likely sharing this fact with you because I think it will help in building our professional relationship. And remember, it actually takes even more energy to hide it.
- I will probably assume when I'm surrounded by other thinking, intelligent people that they haven't bought into the following myths: 1) that we choose to be gay; 2) that we want to recruit others; and 3) that we prey on the innocent. So please, if you hear others who have bought into these damaging notions, be prepared to speak up.

Kathy Lombardi  
Utah NRCS Civil Rights Committee

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## Meet . . .



### **Domenick V. Alessi**

Business Management Leaders Program (BMLP) Intern  
 Procurement Specialist Trainee

Greetings West Virginia! My name is Domenick Alessi, and I am very excited to be here from November through January learning as much as possible from the talented staff in your state office. I've almost completed my first year with the NRCS as part of the Business Management Leaders Program, cross-training in financial management, human resources, and procurement. I am from Washington State and graduated with a degree in Atmospheric Sciences from the University of Washington in Seattle. Inspired by the technical work our agency accomplishes, I'm currently pursuing other educational opportunities in Soil Science and GIS to broaden my horizons and to supplement the administrative training I am receiving now. From the first day I met my fellow BMLP colleagues, to the first moment I got my hands dirty working alongside Soil Conservationists in the field, I knew I finally found my niche and I look forward to a long rewarding career serving NRCS and its clientele. I'm excited to explore your communities through civic engagement as I've strived to in each location I've been fortunate to visit; my trail has led me from participating in Feds Feed Families in California, on to picking up waste alongside Forest Service members in New Mexico, and now to initiating a [clothing drive here in Morgantown](#) to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. I am very fortunate to be able to continue serving our country through federal service. Prior to this position I served several years in our Navy, and I feel privileged to be working now with the tight-knit NRCS family which has an incredible sense of tradition and ethos rivaling our military.



### **Christi Hicks**

District Conservationist for Grant/Hardy Counties  
 Moorefield and Petersburg Service Center

Christi Hicks started her career with NRCS in June of 2001 as a student trainee in the Ranson Field Office. One of the highlights of that summer job was meeting the landowner and farm manager of Harewood Marsh, where she later conducted research and co-wrote a published paper on soil and hydrologic conditions at this unique marl wetland. Prior to graduating from Shepherd College (now University) in 2002 with a B.S. in Resource Management, Christi interned several years with the National Park Service. She accepted a position with WV NRCS upon graduation because she enjoyed the technical aspects of the work with agricultural producers more than leading interpretive walks for visitors at parks. She transferred to the Romney Field Office, where a cooperator and district employee introduced her to his brother (and she married him!). With a few temporary details thrown in here and there, Christi served as the Soil Conservationist in Moorefield from 2005 until August of 2011, when she accepted the position of District Conservationist for Grant/Hardy Counties. She looks forward to continuing conservation work in the Potomac Valley in her new role and helping producers meet the environmental challenges that lie ahead.



**Kevin A. Shuey**

Business Management Leaders Program (BMLP) Intern  
Financial Management Trainee

I joined NRCS as a Business Management Leaders Program (BMLP) Intern in April of 2011, a future Human Resources Specialist. I am assigned to the Morgantown, West Virginia State office for Financial Management training.

I grew up on US Air Force bases all over the country (and Japan), but graduated from High School in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I served in the US Air Force for 25 years, mostly working in Logistics Plans, and spent the last four years teaching leadership and management at the Air Force Senior NCO Academy. After leaving the service I taught job skills and stress management for four years at L.I.F.E. Tech, in Wetumpka, Alabama, an in-residence transition center run by the State of Alabama for women leaving prison.

I have associate degrees in Administrative Management and Logistics Management and a BAS in Business from Excelsior College, New York.

My home these days, when not on the road, is in Pittsboro, North Carolina, which I share with my wife Carmen Moa Rivera, two dogs and two cats. My four daughters are raising their own families all over the world.



**Mark A. Metz**

NRCS Contribution Cost-Share Agreements Forester  
Cross Lanes Service Center

Mark A. Metz is the new NRCS Forester working out of the Cross Lanes service center.

Most recently Mark was the owner and operator of Mountaineer Forestry Services serving clients in WV, southern OH and eastern KY from 1990 to 2012. For the 5 years prior to that, he was employed by the WV Division of Forestry as Service Forester for Kanawha and Boone Counties.

Mark earned a B.S. degree in Forest Resource Management in 1982 and a M.S. in Forestry in 1985, both from West Virginia University. Mark is a member of the West Virginia Forestry Association and has served on its Board of Directors. He is active with the American Tree Farm System as an inspector and member of the West Virginia State Tree Farm Committee. Mark has also served on the Board of Directors for the Woodland Owners Association of WV, Inc.

Mark has been married to his lovely wife, Becky, for 21 years. Becky is a veterinarian working at a small animal practice in the Charleston area. They have two beautiful daughters -- Clara and Sarah. Clara is currently a Junior at Marshall University majoring in Elementary Education with a specialty in Special Ed. She is also a member of the Marching Thunder, the Marshall University marching band. Their youngest daughter Sarah is a Junior at Cabell Midland High School and is a member of the school choir.

In his spare time Mark enjoys deer and turkey hunting, fishing, and improving the wildlife habitat on his 75 acre Jackson County farm.

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**Matthew Ware**

Soil Conservationist  
Point Pleasant Service Center



I was raised in Flatwoods, WV. After graduating high school, I attended college at WVU where I received my bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. I worked for a PhD student at the University of Kentucky after college collecting data on bats and their food sources in different types of timber treatments. I also worked for the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission managing tracts of state owned land known to have instances of threatened or endangered species.

I first worked for the NRCS in 2008 as a WAE in the Huntington Field office. That position lasted for 8 months and I received a very good understanding of the agency and what was expected of the people that work for us. Funding for the position ran out and I had to seek employment elsewhere, but I knew that if I ever got the opportunity to work for NRCS again, I wouldn't hesitate in the least. In the fall of 2010, several shared positions between NRCS and DNR opened up in WV. I applied for all 3, but with Huntington being one of the locations, it was definitely going to be my first choice, given the option. I was offered the job in Huntington and worked there until the end of 2011. January 3 of 2012 I started as a Soil Conservationist at the Point Pleasant office. I look forward to furthering my knowledge of the agency and getting to know all the great people that work here in WV.



**Jeremy Bennett**  
Soil Conservationist  
Elkins Service Center

Hello everybody, I must say it's nice to be back home. I am sure many of you will remember me, and I look forward to catching up with you. For those of you who don't remember me, I started out as a soil conservationist and worked in the Weston FO, Elkins FO, Northern Panhandle, and Buckeye FO. Then I moved to Virginia, where I was a district conservationist on Virginia's Middle Peninsula. This was a nice area. One of my favorite projects there was initiating Virginia's first WHIP contract for an oyster reef. However, I wanted to see the mid-west so I moved again, to Illinois, as a DC. Some things I worked with in IL were wetland creation/restoration, terrace systems, confinement operations, irrigation, and numerous things concerning farm bill compliance. I am married now, and we wanted to return home to be closer to our families. I am very grateful to be back in West Virginia and look forward to meeting and working with you again. I also serve on our Civil Rights Advisory Committee as the American Indian/Alaska Native SEPM. If you want to learn more about that or have questions please call or e-mail me.

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## Personnel Updates

(Submitted by Karen Fitchett as of January 17, 2012)

Name	Action	Location	Effective Date
Shannon Smith	Promotion from NGCU	Morgantown State Office	11/05/2011
Chad Lee	New Hire	Parkersburg FO	11/06/2011
Sam Ware	Temporary Promotion	Morgantown State Office	11/6/2011
Dave Kingsbury	Promotion	Soil Section Morgantown SO	11/20/2011
Greg Purdy	Reassignment	Elkins FO	12/04/2011
Jamey Darlington	Reassignment	Whitehall FO	12/04/2011
Luis Marin	New Hire	Keyser FO	12/18/2011
Roger Powell	Retirement	Pt. Pleasant FO	12/31/2011
Gary Ely	Retirement	Whitehall FO	12/31/2011
Marvin Kerr	Retirement	Parkersburg FO	12/31/2011
Ron Perkins	Retirement	Spencer FO	12/31/2011
Charles Delp	Retirement	Summersville SSO	12/31/2011
Katie Buckland	Reassignment from New Jersey	Morgantown FO	01/01/2012
Matt Ware	New Hire	Pt. Pleasant FO	01/01/2012
Robert Burken	New Hire	Whitehall	01/15/2012
Michelle Tennant	Promotion	Morgantown State Office	1/15/2012
Timothy Hastings	Promotion	Morgantown State Office	1/29/2012
Adriana Jimenez Lopez	Reassignment	Ranson	1/30/2012



### HR Minute

Submitted by Domenick V. Alessi

### Tax Season

It's that time of year again! In preparation for tax season, don't forget to log into your Employee Personal Page (found through the WV-NRCS homepage, click on the **information for employees** link on the right of the screen) and ensure your address is up-to-date for your W-2 forms. After logging in, click on **residence address** under **personal information**. If your address needs to be updated click on the **self service** button in the upper right corner of the screen and you will be guided through the process.

Also be aware, due to security reasons, NFC and *EmpowHR* Help Desk will not accept or process telephone, e-mail, or faxed requests for W-2s. NFC should only be contacted to request a reprint if an employee does not receive a mailed W-2 by Monday, February 6, 2012 or cannot successfully retrieve their W-2 through EPP.

### Have benefits questions?

A good place to visit with a wealth of useful information is located at [www.sharmansite.com](http://www.sharmansite.com). Click

on the FAQ's link on the left to explore topics from Disability, FEGLI, and FEHB to Retirements, Social Security, and Thrift Saving Plans. This is not to promote the associated training this business offers, employees should only look at the FAQ's link for a lot of good information. If you have questions about what you read contact the Human Resources office at 304-284-7599.

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## Safe Winter Driving

As the weather has finally changed it's time to revisit tips for safe winter driving:

- Know your route and keep abreast of weather conditions.
- Pack a winter travel safety kit: ice scraper, tow rope, sand/litter, blankets, flashlight, food and water. These are essentials in the event you get stuck somewhere and have a long wait for assistance to arrive, don't forget those blankets!
- Slow down; give yourself extra time to get to your location.
- Keep a light touch on the controls to avoid skids, and review proper procedures to recover from skids should one happen.
- Keep your tires properly inflated and in good condition.
- If you get stuck, wait in your vehicle for assistance, but make sure nothing is blocking your exhaust pipe otherwise carbon monoxide could build up inside your vehicle.

If you are operating a government owned vehicle and have an accident, remember to follow the operating procedures as outlined in [120-GM, WV Amendment #24 dated January 2004](#).

If someone is seriously injured or property damage is in excess of \$2,500 the investigating officer will contact the ASTC-Operations.

The below information will be submitted to your Area Office. State Office employees will provide this information to the Local Fleet Program Coordinator (LFPC):

- Contact your Supervisor immediately by phone or email
- Form SF-91: Operator's Report of Motor Vehicle Accident, Form SF-94: Statement of Witness if applicable, and police report and copy of tickets if issued
- SF-95: Claim for damage, Injury or Death
- Form AD-112: Report of Unserviceable, Lost, Stolen, Damaged or Destroyed Property
- Written estimate of repair (minimum of two—three when damages exceed \$3,000)
- Photos or other documentation available

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Keep up-to-date with the *Strengthening Service Initiative* through the USDA Connect website: <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/strengtheningservice>. Spread the word on this little-known but important website that allows you to engage by sharing thoughts, concerns, and be better connected to updates such as audio postings from important listening sessions. Once subscribed you can even have updates e-mailed to your account so you will always have the latest news.

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