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West Virginia NRCS News and Views

USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service
 November 2011

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[Barbara McWhorter Receive Prestigious Partnership Award for Conservation Work](#)



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Forester Barbara McWhorter received the USDA Two Chiefs' Partnership Award. Award winners are selected by the Chiefs of the U.S. Forest Service and NRCS.

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Find out what these former RC&D coordinators are doing now: Norm Bailey, Steve Ritz, and Nicole Viars.

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To submit news items for the February *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

We recently finished fiscal year 2011, which is a good time for us to look back and reflect on what we've done this year and assess the impact we've made for natural resource conservation. FY2010 was record year for obligations in WV because of ARRA. FY2011 has been a much different year—a much more difficult year. But I can still say—a very successful year.

- We achieved 90% or better of all our required progress goals—one of eight states in the 23 state east region to do so—one of 19 states in the country (51 “states”).
- Record year for Farm Bill obligations—\$18.7 million
- 869 new contracts (CSP, EQIP, WHIP, CBWI, AMA)
- 27 new easements closed (excluding Dunloup)
- 10,017 acres currently closed under easement in WV (that's about 15.7 square miles)
- Great progress on our ARRA activities

Together we've accomplished a lot and I want to thank you for your continued commitment.

This is also a time when we look to what's ahead. And I'm sure you're interested getting an update on the coming budget climate and what that means for our work. FY2012 is going to be another difficult year. I don't have to tell you these are difficult financial times for American families and the nation—and that's being reflected in legislation and budgets. The reality is, we'll have to do more with less. But the good news is NRCS has been preparing for this time for the last couple of years. NRCS is continuing to position itself to be the most efficient we can be. We will see some change this year—some change may affect you. As always, the agency will proceed in as employee friendly manor as is possible.

But just because the funding will be less, doesn't mean the need is any less—or that NRCS is any less committed to the core mission we've been dedicated to for more than 75 years.

Kevin Wickey
 State Conservationist
 West Virginia

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From the Field

Pasture Walk: Tall Ironweed Control Demonstration for Control of Broadleaf Weeds

The West Fork Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (Mount Clare Service Center), and WVU Cooperative Extension Service sponsored a pasture walk on September 26, 2011 near Jane Lew, WV. The farm is operated by Robert Starkey. Recently, Mr. Starkey treated a large field with a broadleaf weed herbicide to control tall ironweed. Areas treated with a boomless sprayer and control areas were viewed. NRCS provided Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).



Field of tall ironweed.



Photo of area treated with a broadleaf weed herbicide.



The same field, in a control area that did not receive treatment.

For more information, contact [Jeff Griffith](#), District Conservatinitist, at 304-624-9232 ext. 110.



The 2013 National Boy Scout Jamboree will be in Mount Hope, WV

Submitted by Pat Bowen, State Resource Conservationist.

NRCS staff toured the Summit Bechtel National Boy Scout Reserve, in Mount Hope, WV (known as the Summit Bechtel Scout Reserve, or SBR for short). The purpose of the tour was to give members of the committee an appreciation of the site, some of the already planned activities and infrastructure being developed for the 2013 National Boy Scout Jamboree which will be held July 15-24, 2013 at the SBR. The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) National Conservation Committee developed the conservation theme activities and sites that are used at the national jamborees as well as the conservation theme resources used in scouting nationally. National Geologist Jerry Bernard serves as the NRCS member on this committee. The group learned that the 2013 Jamboree on the 10,000 acres reserve next to the 100,000 New River Gorge National River (U.S. National Park Service) will be full of outdoor action including hiking, rock climbing, bmx bicycling, zip lines and tree canopy tours and will be utilizing technology in the form of smart phones, computers, and gps/gis technologies.

Gary Redden is working with the SBR decision makers on a conservation plan. Greg Stone, Pat

Bowen, and Greg Kist have been appointed as a state level committee to help gather the resources needed by NRCS to do our part supporting the conservation theme activities at the SBR and for the Jamboree in 2013. Mark your calendars as there will be opportunities to serve as agency volunteers.

Since 1981, the Jamboree was held on a rented Air Force base in Virginia where the conservation agencies and districts developed a conservation trail along which there were agency manned activities and challenges for the scouts during the jamboree.



Conservationist Gary Redden participated in a tour of the site held by the BSA National Conservation Committee.

For more information, go to <http://www.summitblog.org/1-big-reason-the-summit-will-be-ready-in-2013/>



Farm Field Day Held in Marshall County

A farm field day was held in Marshall County at the Sam Fankhouser farm. There were fifty seven folks in attendance traveling from as far south as Wetzel County and as far north as Hancock County. Attendees received information on Farm Bill Programs as well as programs provided by the Northern Panhandle Conservation District.

The day started with a fence demonstration and talk by Eric Miller of Stay Tuff Fence. After lunch Tom Basden, WVU Extension, spoke on the benefits of multi species grazing and the use of temporary fence. The day ended with Steve Casto and Kent Greenleaf from the West Virginia Department of Agriculture educating participants on making their livestock herds more profitable. The Field Day was well attended and numerous positive comments were made!

For more information, contact [Katie Fitzsimmons](#), District Conservationist, at 304-242-0576 Ext. 108.



Clover Cover Crop Benefit Pollinators and Replaces Fertilizer

A Ripley farmer, Mitsy Hunter, had a beautiful crimson clover cover crop for her five acre crop field as part of a CSP contract. The clover was planted last fall to substitute for spring fertilizer. It was plowed under on the May 19, 2011 and corn planted on June 1, 2011.

A cover crop provides for erosion control, added tillage for the future crop, stores readily available nutrients, assist in a sustainable farm management and many more benefits. Mitsy normally applies 120 lbs/ac of nitrogen to the field. By using the cover crop she was able to cut that in half—she only had to apply 60 lbs/ac. Nitrogen is the most costly unit of fertilizer and by using this cover crop she was able to save money.

For more information, contact [Rodney Sites](#), Civil Engineering Technician at 304-372-8164 or [Jackie Byars](#), District Conservationist, at 304-776-5256.



The clover was replaced by a summer corn crop.



Bees and other pollinators benefit from the flowers.

The Elkwater Fork Dam

Most Americans take drinking water for granted—turn on the faucet and water flows out. But residents in West Virginia’s southern Randolph County don’t have a reliable source of drinking water. They soon will because of a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Public Law-566 project (75%). The Elkwater Fork Dam, in the Upper Tygarts Valley River Watershed, is a project to supply safe drinking water to 21,500 residents.

The Elkwater Fork Dam, in the Upper Tygarts Valley River Watershed, is in its last 30 day holding period. Construction has started on Shaver’s Fork offsite mitigation.



Elkwater Fork Dam on October 13, 2011.



Pool behind dam.

Landowner Assistance Public Meetings Held

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with local, state, and federal government agencies, offered a series of 12 public meetings. The meetings showcased NRCS assistance and activities available to landowners and communities to improve soil, water, air, plants, wildlife, and energy use. NRCS program specialists were available to provide information, answer questions, and sign-up applicants.

Fayette, Raleigh, Wyoming, Braxton, Clay, Nicholas, Webster, Mineral, Pocahontas, Monroe, Greenbrier, Calhoun, Roane, Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio, Pleasant, Tyler, Wetzel, Ritchie, Wirt, Wood, Berkeley, Putnam, Mason, Jackson, Barbour, Randolph, Taylor, Tucker, and Upshur county residents were encouraged to attend.

For more information contact [Charlotte Elliott-Friend](#), Assistant State Conservationist–Civil Rights/Outreach, at 304-284-4247.

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Barbara McWhorter Receive Prestigious Partnership Award for Conservation Work

The USDA Two Chiefs' Partnership Award was presented to three recipients: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Forester Barbara McWhorter, West Virginia State Forester Randy Dye, and retired Monongahela National Forest Silviculturist Glen Juergens. The awardees have worked together as part of the West Virginia Forest Stewardship Partnership.

The Two Chiefs' Partnership Award recognizes people and teams that work collaboratively to support conservation and forest stewardship. The award recognizes the West Virginia Forest Stewardship Partnership for its teamwork to protect and manage West Virginia forest resources. Award winners are selected by the Chiefs of the Forest Service and NRCS.

The partnership was chosen in the group award category because of the critical role it played in managing vegetation and soil on State and private lands as well as providing assistance to the Monongahela National Forest. The three agencies capitalized on each other's expertise to promote forest stewardship and maximize benefits from forests.

McWhorter has served as the State Forester for NRCS since 1996. She grew up in Verona, PA, and graduated from West Virginia University with a Bachelor of Science degree in forest management in 1983. After graduation, McWhorter worked for West Virginia University as a Forest Research Technologist for one year. She then accepted a position with the West Virginia Division of Forestry and worked as a Service Forester and Assistant District Forester. In 1988, McWhorter began work with the NRCS as a Soil Conservationist in Georgia. She returned to West Virginia with the NRCS in 1993. McWhorter is a member of the Society of American Foresters, West Virginia Forestry Association, and the West Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. She has also served as the Secretary/Treasurer of the West Virginia Tree Farm Committee. McWhorter lives in Horner, WV, with her husband Ralph. They have three sons—Tyler (19), Hunter (18), and Bryce (11).

Dye has served as West Virginia's State Forester for the past 12 years. He is a native of Parkersburg, WV, and graduated from West Virginia University with a Bachelor of Science degree in forest management in 1974. Dye began his forestry career in Lumberton, NC, with the Federal Paper Board. He then joined Georgia-Pacific Corporation in 1978 and worked in every State throughout the Southeastern United States before returning to West Virginia 1999.

Juergens recently retired as the Forest Silviculturist of the Monongahela National Forest. He graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1976 with a Bachelor's degree in forestry. He served in the U.S. Army from 1969–1972 and is a Vietnam veteran. Juergens also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1977–1979 in Honduras. Juergens worked for the Forest Service for 30 years. In addition to working on the Monongahela National Forest, he worked on the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky and the Klamath National Forest in California. Juergens currently works as an independent forest management consultant in tropical forest management.



Bob Lueckel (U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Morgantown Field Representative) and Louis Aspey (Assistant State Conservationist—Operations) presented Natural Resources Conservation Service State Forester Barbara McWhorter, West Virginia State Forester Randy Dye, and retired Monongahela National Forest Silviculturist Glen Juergens with the USDA Two Chiefs' Partnership Award.

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Soil

Soil Survey Information Guiding Ecosystem Restoration

Submitted by S. Jason Teets, WV Ecological Site Inventory Specialist

Soils that underlie the spruce-northern hardwoods forest ecosystem have been altered by extensive logging of the primary forest that started around 1880. Some spruce areas were severely burned from logging-associated fires and these soils were severely eroded or burned away.

Intact soils have been found in pockets of spruce forest that were not impacted by intense fires. These are unique remnants of the historic forest and provide an important resource for restoration planning. Increment cores taken at some of these locations have documented rhododendrons and hemlocks that are hundreds of years old. Soils in these remnant pockets have thick organic surface horizons (folistic epipedons) and spodic soil properties (deeper horizons with iron oxide and organic matter moving down through them).

In theory, the thick organic horizons that may establish under currently maturing spruce stands will serve as potential future sinks of carbon. Similarly, these soils serve as a sink for excessive nitrogen as well, which is important in a region that receives high levels of nitrogen deposition.

The West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus fuscus*) (WVNFS) exhibits a strong association and positive correlation with the red spruce ecosystem. Soil fungi provide a food source for the WVNFS, and deep organic horizons may enhance the growth of these fungi. The affiliation of the federally threatened Cheat Mountain Salamander (*Plethodon nettingi*) with deep organic horizons needs further investigation, but such soils may also provide a specialized niche for this species. Soils inventory data for the high elevation landscape of the Central Appalachians is undergoing maintenance, but the inventory data that exist helps land managers better understand historic forest habitat conditions and present population dynamics of these specialized and habitat-sensitive animals.

Soil Survey data collection on high elevation soil map units within the Monongahela National Forest lead to hypothesis that spruce forests once existed on currently existing northern hardwood sites as evidenced by the appearance of spodic soil properties. Further soils map unit observation is needed to confirm this hypothesis, but for now the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI) is tentatively using this data to assist in targeting areas CASRI believes will be most conducive to spruce forest conservation and restoration.



Landscape view of a red spruce (*Picea rubrens*)–yellow birch–(*Betula alleghaniensis* var *alleghaniensis*) liverwort (*Bazzania trilobata*) forest located off the Highland Scenic Highway in Pocahontas County, WV.



Large standing red spruce (*Picea rubrens*) surrounded by abundant woody debris. Located off the Highland Scenic Highway Pocahontas County, WV in a red spruce-yellow birch- (*Betula alleghaniensis* var *alleghaniensis*)/liverwort (*Bazzania trilobata*) forest.

Wetland Condition Rapid Assessment Methodology Developed

Submitted by Jared Beard, Resource Soil Scientist, Moorefield, WV

West Virginia University (WVU) has recently developed a wetland condition rapid assessment methodology for use in evaluating natural and constructed wetlands statewide. They are now engaged in intensive assessment methods with the results being used to verify the usefulness of the rapid assessment procedure. A critical first step for this wetland research project was selection of field study sites that would meet hydric criteria. Therefore, site selection required the use of the soils spatial layer retrieved from the Soil Data Mart and viewed with the aerial photography in a GIS system. Review of the soil survey map unit descriptions enabled WVU personnel to determine drainage class of specific soil types in order to find those with the potential to be hydric. Somewhat poorly to very poorly drained soil map units were then viewed for their extent and distribution across the research area resulting in 18 sites being selected where necessary. Future intentions are that this method will be employed across the remainder of the state requiring the use of soil survey data in those areas.

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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 inductive 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>

November First Place Photo Series**Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Photos by Jeff Griffith**

See story at [From the Field](#)



Field of tall ironweed.



Photo of area treated with a broadleaf weed herbicide.



The same field, in a control area that did not receive treatment.



Interesting photo composition.

Runner Ups**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Public Law-566 Project photos by TJ Burr**

The reservoir filling process for the Elkwater Fork Water Supply Dam in Randolph County is again

progressing. The filling process includes closure of the primary gate to allow water to fill the pool area at a controlled rate. The second and last 30-day holding period ended at approximately 80 feet of water on November 13, 2011.

"All measured parameters are normal for this stage in the filling process," said TJ Burr, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Civil Engineer. "Based on volume of water, the reservoir is 63% full".

The reservoir is expected to reach permanent pool with water flowing over the dam sometime this winter. The depth of water at permanent pool is 98 feet. Depending on precipitation, it could be as early as sometime in December. The filling process started on June 16, 2011. The first 30 day hold period was from July 27 to August 26, 2011.

For more informaiton, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/news/release/2011/11nov15upTygart.html>



Excavation of left embankment on June 19, 2007



Elkwater Fork Dam on June 14, 2011.



Elkwater Fork Dam on October 13, 2011



Pool behind dam

CSP Cover Crop photos by Rodney Sites

See story at [From the Field](#)



Clover Cover Crop Benefit Pollinators and Replaces Fertilizer



The clover was replaced by a summer corn crop.

Romney Spring Development by Steve Ritz



Steve Ritz provided beginning to end spring Development photos. Go to <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/east/wv/Water/Forms/AllItems.aspx> to see the series.

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Bits and Pieces**WVDOF Tree Seedlings Sale**

Submitted by Dan Kincaid, Assistant State Forester, WV Division of Forestry

The West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOF) has tree seedlings for sale from its Clements State Tree Nursery to meet any of your Spring planting needs. There is species information, a price list, and ordering information on the Division of Forestry website at <http://www.wvforestry.com/>. If you have specific questions, contact the Nursery at 304-675-1820.

Fed Fed Families

USDA agencies in West Virginia worked together to raise more than 6,730 pounds of non-perishable food items and over 1,079 pounds of fresh produce to donate to local food banks/pantries/organizations across the Mountain State. "Feds Feed Families" is a national food drive led by USDA, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and other federal agencies to raise food for Americans struggling with hunger across the country. This is the third annual food drive and the donations have continued to grow with each passing year.



The USDA Service Center in Philippi WV, had a very successful food drive this summer thanks to their new marketing campaign and early Halloween spirit. East Area Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Herb Andrick, encouraged everyone to help "feds feed on families". Total donations extracted in 2011 were 243 pounds. See the poster that inspired everyone to sink their teeth into this project.

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Useful Links**[2012 Pay Period Calendar](#)****[Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act \(RCA\) Data Viewer](#)**

There's a new on-line tool that provides information about USDA conservation efforts across the Nation. The USDA Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) Data Viewer is an interactive website that allows anyone with a web connection to view and download a variety of conservation-related information. With just a few clicks of the mouse, the RCA Data Viewer provides information on how natural resource conservation program dollars have been obligated, data on applied conservation by program and by resource concern, National Resource Inventory (NRI) and Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) reports, and state-level Census of Agriculture data summaries. Users can tailor the information available on the RCA Data Viewer to their own needs and interests—data is available at the State, Regional (Farm Production Region, or CEAP Region), and National levels.

The RCA website can currently be reached from the NRCS homepage scrolling down the page to under "Features," but employees are encouraged to bookmark this site for easy future reference.



View the new interactive RCA Data Viewer that offers data from a variety of sources, including data on the status and trends of natural resources, conservation efforts (funding and conservation practices applied), and the agricultural sector.

Data reports are available at the State, Regional (either USDA Farm Production Region, or CEAP Region), and National levels.

[Click here to view the RCA Data](#)

Apple Government Purchase Program for Personal Use

If you are interested in purchasing an Apple product (including computers, ipod, ipad, and software) for your personal use, you may get a discounted price for being a federal employee.

The Military/Government Purchase Program ("Program") is a benefit provided by Apple Inc. ("Apple") to current and retired employees, contractors, and family members of participating government entities, and current, former, and retired members and family members of the US Military, National Guard and Reserve ("Employer"). The program is intended for personal use or for the use of family members and friends.

Contact the Apple Store sales team at 1-877-EPP-MEMBER (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). You may also purchase at any Apple Retail Store.

For more information, go to http://store.apple.com/us_epp_55499 or http://store.apple.com/Catalog/US/Images/beppolicies_gov.html

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West Virginia's Civil Rights

Are You An Ally?

By Chandra Neils, WA LGBT Program Manager

What is An Ally?

An ally is someone who supports a group or cause. A quick search at Dictionary.com tells you the definition of an ally is:

- 1.) to enter into an alliance; join; unite.
- 2.) a person who associates or cooperates with another; supporter.

In the context of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexuals and Transgender (LGBT) community an ally is anyone who supports someone in the community or the community as a whole. The definition taken from the Ally Training program at WSU says it is "a person who supports and respects sexual diversity, acts accordingly to challenge homophobic and heterosexist remarks and behaviors, and is willing to explore and understand these forms of bias within him or herself."

It's a Journey

While there are many definitions of an ally, it is important to remember that being an ally is a journey. We all start somewhere and work our way along a continuum. Many people begin their journey as silent supporters. They don't speak up, but feel that their own 'live and let live' attitude is enough. At some point circumstances might propel someone to go beyond that. Then they are likely to take an interest in the community and those issues that are important to it. This is also the time they might begin to speak up, asking people not to use derogatory language or tell jokes that enforce stereotypes. And some will go beyond that to join and serve in organizations that work for change.

What Does An Ally Do?

Being an ally is an important job. Within our Agency and our communities they help create welcoming and inclusive space. Ally's help change the language and tone surrounding the community to a more positive one. They can help others see that they can support the LGBT community in a variety of ways. They can be a friend and listener; someone who is open-minded, willing to talk and learn.

In NRCS the role of an ally to the LGBT community is virtually the same as being an ally to any other group. It really is about treating all people fairly and creating an inclusive workspace for our customers and employees alike. In that environment we can all be who we are; which means we can capitalize on our diversity to create the best outcomes. That's good for our customers, teams, communities, the state, the Agency and the Nation.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Whether or not you consider yourself an ally, think about where you are on the journey. Look for ways you might be able to help create an inclusive space. Remember that it's for everyone.

If you want more information on being an ally, there are many sources available on the internet. Some links are listed below.

Straight for Equality

<http://community.pflag.org/Page.aspx?pid=565>

Human Rights Campaign

<http://www.hrc.org/issues/workplace.asp>

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Meet . . .**Norm Bailey**

Resource Conservationist

Norm was raised on an Angus farm in Lewis County, WV, and worked on various other farm operations including a 1,000 acre produce operation near Pittsburgh, PA before moving to the Wheeling area. He graduated from WVU with a BS in Resource Management in Agriculture.

His first job with WV Conservation Agency (WVCA) was in the Moundsville Field Office for five years as a technician working on farm planning and water quality projects. Norm worked for the WVCA for 16 years prior to coming to work for NRCS as the RC&D Coordinator for the Little Kanawha RC&D. Currently, Norm works in the State Office in Morgantown, WV, assisting with the easement programs.

Norm's hobbies include coaching and organizing sports as well as playing. He coaches soccer, basketball, and hockey. He also plays in an adult hockey league and enjoys hunting with his son. Norm spends a lot of time with family traveling in their antique cars across WV.

**Steve Ritz**

Plant Materials Specialist

Steve Ritz has recently been reassigned to the WV Plant Materials Specialist position at the Morgantown, WV State Office. Formerly he was the Project Coordinator with the Potomac Headwaters RC&D Council located in eastern West Virginia.

Steve is a native of Marshall County WV, and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from West Liberty State College (now University). He started his conservation career with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and worked in the eastern panhandle for over three years before being hired as a Soil Conservation Technician with the Soil Conservation Service in Marysville, Ohio, in 1983. He next worked as a Soil Conservationist in two locations in Ohio before serving as a Soil Conservationist in the Moundsville, WV, field office. He was assigned to the District Conservationist position in Romney, WV, in 1989 and worked there for nearly 22 years.

Steve and his wife Cindy have two daughters. Kate, a WVU graduate, has recently married and is an Occupational Therapist in Charlotte, NC. Julie is a senior elementary education major at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV.

His hobbies and interests include hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, canoeing, riding bicycles and motorcycles, playing Appalachian old time string music, and plant materials.

Nicole Viars



Management Analyst

This is my second time being featured in News and Views. The [first time](#) was in 2005 after moving back to WV upon accepting the District Conservationist position in McMechen, WV. In 2008, I became the RC&D Coordinator for the Northern Panhandle RC&D. I had the opportunity to assist the RC&D in providing many different resources to the local community. With the loss of funding for the RC&D program in April 2011, my career path took an unexpected turn. In September, I was reassigned to the position of Management Analyst on the Operations staff in Morgantown, WV. This is a new position in WV and I look forward to expanding my skill set in this endeavor.

My children are now teenagers, ages 15 and 17, and attend Wheeling Park High School where they are involved in music and art programs. My husband is no longer a stay-at-home dad, but a maintenance supervisor for a pipeline company north of Pittsburgh. We travel each day in opposite directions. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, shopping, and reading. I also play keyboard and piano for our church worship team.

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Personnel Updates

(Submitted by Karen Fitchett as of November 3, 2010)

Name	Action	Location	Effective Date
Heather Hinson	Temporary Promotion, NTE 8/6/2011	Parkersburg AO	07/07/2011
Christie Hicks	Temporary Promotion, To Permanent Promotion	Moorefield/Romney FO	08/28/2011
Jessica Ball	Temporary Promotion, NTE 8/27/2011	Romney FO	08/27/2011
Norm Bailey	Reassignment	State Office	10/01/2011
Pat LaRocco	Retirement	Beckley AO	09/30/2011
Sarah Fitzwater	Promotion/Reassignment	New York	08/28/2011
Chris Carrico	New Hire – Transfer from Dept. of Treasury	State Office	08/28/2011
Tim Canfield	Promotion	Romney FO	09/11//2011
Cathy Jefferson	Retirement	McMechen FO	09/30/2011
Sam Ware	Temporary Promotion NTE	State Office	10/04/2011
Steve Ritz	Reassignment	State Office	10/01/2011
Nicole Viars	Reassignment To Management Analyst	State Office	10/01/2011
Jason Teets	Reassignment	State Office	10/01/2011
Jared Nestor	Reassignment	Mount Clare	10/09/2011
Eileen Klein	Reassignment to Soil Conservationist	Lewisburg FO	10/09/2011
Tim Dilliplane	Reassignment	Morgantown FO	10/23/2011
Jeremy Bennett	Reassignment From Illinois	Elkins/Philipp FO	10/23/2011
Jeff Lewis	Promotion	State Office	10/23/2011

**HR Minute**

Submitted by Diana Bokoch, Human Resources Manager

Federal Benefits Open Season is November 14–December 12, 2011

Get the latest information from OPM on the Federal Benefits Open Season by “Liking” OPM’s Facebook page.

OPM will post reminders, breaking information, and items of interest about the health, dental, vision, and flexible spending accounts during the Open Season.

To view the Open Season Facebook page, go to www.facebook.com/fedbenefits.

We encourage you to become a fan by clicking on the “Like” link once you are on the Federal Benefits Open Season Facebook page. To become a fan, you must have a Facebook account. If you don’t have an account, you can sign up by clicking the *Sign Up* graphic on OPM’s Federal Benefits

Open Season Facebook page.

Even though Facebook may be blocked at your work location, employees are able to access it from other locations. You don't have to join Facebook to view the page.

The below webcasts explain the benefit programs:

The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)	Tuesday, November 8th 1:30-2:30pm Eastern
The Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)	Thursday, November 10th 1:30-2:30pm Eastern
The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB): Do I Have the Right Health Plan?	Tuesday, November 15th 1:30-2:30pm Eastern
Medicare and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)	Thursday, November 17th 1:30-2:30pm Eastern

Webcast: <http://pointers.audiovideoweb.com/stcasx/il83winlive3146/play.aspx>

(Be sure to test the link 24 hours before the webcast)

Captioning: <http://textcast.peoplesupport.com/textcast.asp?stream=usopm>

A recording of each webcast will be posted to www.opm.gov/insure/openseason/videos.asp the day it is broadcast.

TSP Limits for 2012

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has announced employer plan contribution limits for 2012. These limits affect the amount of contributions participants can make to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) for the year. The annual limit for elective deferrals will increase from \$16,500 in 2011 to \$17,000 in 2012. For TSP purposes, elective deferrals refer to employee/member contributions that are made on a tax deferred basis. The limit for catch-up contributions will remain at \$5,500 in 2012.

A more detailed bulletin addressing the TSP contribution limits for 2012, an updated fact sheet on the annual limit on elective deferrals and a calculator for participant use with the new 2012 elective deferral limit will all be available in the next few weeks on the TSP website at www.tsp.gov.

Use or Lose Leave

Reminder - Employees may carry over to the 2012 leave year a maximum amount of accrued annual leave (**240 hours**). "Use or lose" annual leave is the amount of accrued annual leave that is in excess of 240 hours. Employees must "use" their excess annual leave by the end of a leave year or they will "lose" (forfeit) it.

Employees are required to schedule annual leave by the third pay period prior to the end of the leave year. This year, you must schedule your leave by **November 19, 2011** to avoid forfeiture of your annual leave.

This is extremely important for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and CSRS Offset employees who plan to retire on January 1, 2, or 3 of 2012, to schedule their "use or lose" annual leave to avoid forfeiture. If it is forfeited, it will not be included in the employee's lump-sum payment for annual leave.



Let us be the first to wish you all a happy holiday season!!!

Diana & Karen
Human Resources

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Conservation Education**2011 Freshwater Folk Festival**

submitted by Katy McBride, Soil Conservationist

Tom Vance and Katy McBride of the Lewisburg NRCS Field Office attended the seventh Annual Freshwater Folk Festival on Saturday, October 1 at the White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery (SSNFH). Information was handed out on the Earth Team Volunteer Program, NRCS Farmbill Programs, Educational handouts, Pollinator Posters, Discrimination Claims of Hispanic and Women Farmers, etc.

According to the WSSNFH, that despite the cold weather, they were thrilled and encouraged that over 600 people came to enjoy the Freshwater Folk Festival.

Family Day at the WVU Farm

West Virginia University (WVU) celebrated 150th anniversary of the Land-Grant Act by sponsoring a Family Day at the Farm that included fun, food and fascinating facts on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011 at WVU's Animal Science Farm on Stewartstown Road. Over 1,200 attended.



NRCS was represented with two displays. Carol Lagodich staffed a general information exhibit that featured pollinators. The Geospatial Research Unit (GRU) display presented some of their current national geographic information systems projects including Tropical Storm Lee Maximum 24-hour Rainfall Totals (inches) and Affected NRCS Assisted Dams.

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