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West Virginia NRCS News and Views

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 May 2011

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April the 28th and 29th marked the days for the 15th annual West Virginia Envirothon. There were 26 teams participating in the competition. As I gathered up my camera to begin the day, I felt a sense of pride as part of the cadre of NRCS employees who were passing down knowledge of the environment and of our state resources to the younger generation. Like the students, I too soon forgot the chill in the morning air.

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Earth Team Volunteers Plant Trees, State Office Earth Team Recognition Day

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U.S. Sees More Female Farmers Cropping Up, Romney USDA Service Center Updates, Federal Legislation affecting LGBT.

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Greg Purdy and Rebecca S. Bowers

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To submit news items for the August *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.

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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

May 2011

I may have told you before about the older DC I once heard describe his job. Others in the meeting (from other agencies) were describing that they were 25% this or half-time doing that job. When his turn came, this DC said his job was to make sure conservation happened in his area. He saw himself as the catalyst for conservation – willing to do whatever it took to see that it got done.

Here we are wrapping up the ROOT review again and it causes me to reflect on what it takes to make conservation happen. We so often like to segregate our duties – and some good comes of that. You may be really good at “reading the landscape” and “seeing” what is needed. Perhaps your strong suit is communicating with people and understanding what are their concerns and priorities. Or perhaps you fit in best designing and overseeing construction activities. These are tasks we usually identify with conservation planning and implementation.

What I want you to think about is how all the tasks we collectively do in NRCS in West Virginia all fit together to make conservation happen. We are all focused on conservation delivery—succeeding at the audit is important because it is part of delivering conservation in WV; contract management is important because it is part of delivering conservation in WV; complying with mandatory government records training is important because it is part of delivering conservation in WV; etc.

So I have a hard time separating work – none of it is necessary except as it relates to getting conservation on the ground – and all of it is necessary if we are to be successful getting conservation on the ground. That means I need all of you to focus on how to make this agency successful with the audit. Our friends at KPMG will be here again next week. We can view this time, and the ROOT reviews, and the contract management activities and the extra scrutiny on access to ProTracts, easement records and on and on as unnecessary distractions; or as another task we need to complete to see conservation happen.

My focus is how to be more efficient and effective in completing all the work necessary to see conservation happen. I need your help.

Kevin Wickey
 State Conservationist
 West Virginia

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From the Field

State-wide Farmers Market EBT Demonstration

Many farmers in West Virginia lack the financial resources to implement conservation practices. By increasing the access to farmers markets for SNAP participants state wide, we can increase the amount of business available to West Virginia farmers. In West Virginia, consumers receive \$314 million in SNAP benefits to purchase food. Currently, a very minimal portion of this is spent on local products. Increasing the amount of SNAP benefits that farmers can access has the potential to greatly increase their income, and the easiest way for farmers to access these markets is through the local farmers market. The first state-wide demonstration of EBT (SNAP Benefits) at a farmers market in West Virginia took place on February 17th, 2011. This was the first time the annual West Virginia Farmers Market Association's Winter Blues Farmers Market featured this service. It was put together in partnership with WesMonTy RC&D, West Virginia Farmers Market Association, and the South Morgantown Farmers Market. Lesa Gay, the market manager of the South Morgantown Farmers Market donated the use of the EBT machine for this event. The income generated at the market is more money that these producers can use toward implementing NRCS conservation programs such as EQIP high tunnel, AMA and the Organic Initiative. This is an example of implementation of USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen A. Merrigan's January 21, 2011 bulletin encouraging Harnessing USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs to Support Local and Regional Food Systems (<http://kyf.blogs.usda.gov/files/2011/01/NRCS-Memo.pdf>).

For more information, contact [Jason Teets](#) at 304-457-4596.

Senior Soil Scientists from 12 States Participated in DSM Training Program

Rick Jones and Wendy Noll participated in participated in a two-week NRCS pilot training program on digital soil mapping (DSM). For more information, go to http://www.arcsie.com/News/News_TrainingSpring2011.htm

For more information, contact [Wendy Noll](#) at 304-284-7590.



Women in Agriculture

On Wednesday, March 30th, the Greenbrier County Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Greenbrier Valley Conservation District (GVCD) hosted their 3rd annual "Women in Agriculture" program at the Lewisburg United Methodist Church. Approximately 75 women were in attendance. There were speakers from the GVCD, West Virginia University (WVU) Extension Service, Monroe County Master Gardner's Chapter, FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and West Virginia Farm Bureau.

Katy McBride, Soil Conservationist with the Lewisburg Field office, was one of the guest speakers and she spoke on the various farmbill programs that NRCS has to offer. She also discussed the numerous outreach and educational programs that NRCS assists with; such as Landjudging Contest, Envirothon, and the Grassland Evaluation Contest.

Some of the other topics that were discussed by the other presenters included home gardening (container gardening), loan programs, a cooking demonstration, and becoming an advocate for agriculture. Everyone who attended became registered to win a door prize, which were donated by

local businesses. They also received a free informational bag containing information about NRCS Farm Bill programs, FSA loan programs and conservation programs, etc.

For more information, contact [Katy McBride](#) at 304-645-6172 x108.

Reducing Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) in Deckers Creek

The last of four acid mine drainage (AMD) sites, Goat 1, in the Deckers Creek area is near completion.

Acid mine drainage (AMD) has degraded the water quality in Deckers Creek by lowering its pH and introducing high concentrations of iron and aluminum. The Deckers Creek Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Remediation Project treats acid mine drainage from mining sites using passive treatment measures such as open limestone channels, limestone ponds, and settling ponds. The project was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).



An open limestone channel is a passive treatment measure to increase the pH of the mine drainage and aerate it as it flows through the limestone. These processes cause the metals in solution to precipitate from the water.



Pam Yost (Economist), and Joseph Seybert (Civil Engineer), look at a settling pond that collects sediment and precipitates before the water enters Deckers Creek.



The Laurel Run Sites 1 and 2 were completed in 2010.

More information on Beulah Site 1 may be seen at http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/news/10aug_nv/beulah.html

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South Area Appraisal

The South Area Appraisal was held April 4 - 7, 2011. The review team consisted of:

- Louis Aspey, Assistant State Conservationist–Operations
- Pat Bowen, State Resource Conservationist
- Charles Delp, Acting State Soil Scientist
- Bill O'Donnell, Assistant State Conservationist–Programs
- Charlotte Elliott-Friend, Assistant State Conservationist–Civil Rights/Outreach
- Angela Greene, State Conservation Engineer
- Greg Kist, Assistant State Conservationist–Field Operations, West Area
- Carol Lagodich, Public Affairs Specialist



The appraisal started at the Beckley Service Center with Louis Aspey and Greg Stone giving an overview of the appraisal process and schedule.



In the afternoon, State Office staff spent time with their Area Office counterparts reviewing area operations. Jerry Brackenrich and Pat Bowen discussed resources (left). Charlotte Elliott-Friend and Debra Murphy looked at office civil rights and outreach materials (right).



On Tuesday and Wednesday, the team members visited the Beckley and Lewisburg field offices. Loren Rice and Angela Greene reviewed Lewisburg engineering files before visiting projects.



Katy McBride shows Angela Greene a Lewisburg Service Center water facility that included a pond with a gravity filled water trough.



Several high tunnels and a water facility near Beckley were visited

The Great Kanawha RC&D was visited on Wednesday.

South Area employees who assisted and/or were interviewed by the appraisal team included:

- Greg Stone, Assistant State Conservationist - Field Operations

- Debbie Dorsey, Administrative Office Assistant
- Debra Murphy, Program Assistant
- Jerry Brackenrich, Resource Conservationist
- Loren Rice, Resource Conservation Engineer
- James Dodson, Civil Engineering Technician
- Gary Redden, District Conservationist
- Ken Haid, Soil Conservationist
- Tom Vance, District Conservationist
- Katy McBride, Soil Conservationist
- Adam Merritt, Soil Conservation Technician
- Rob Pate, Resource Soil Scientist
- Jackie Byars, RC&D Coordinator

The South Area Appraisal final report is being compiled by the review team. It will be available on SharePoint when completed and approved by the State Conservationist.

The West Area is scheduled for an appraisal in 2012.

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2011 Appalachian Grazing Conference



The 2011 Appalachian Grazing Conference was held on March 4-5, 2011, at the Waterfront Place Hotel's conference center in Morgantown, WV. The conference attracted 375 participants. On Friday, March 4th, Kevin Wickey helped kick off the conference and introduce the keynote speaker, Greg Judy from Clark, Missouri.

Greg has given many talks and schools all over the United States on the benefits of Holistic High Density Planned Grazing, multi-species grazing, leasing land and custom grazing. Greg's keynote and concurrent session talks focused on developing a High Density operation and the economics of High Density Grazing.

Kathy Voth from Colorado was the keynote speaker on Saturday. Kathy owns and operates Livestock for Landscapes. She has successfully trained cattle to eat a wide variety of weeds, such as Canada and musk thistle, mustards, yellow toadflax, and spotted, diffuse and Russian knapweed. Kathy's keynote talk was titled, "Making Peace with Weeds: Why Eating Our "Enemies" is a Better Approach". Kathy also spoke during two breakout sessions focusing on her method of teaching animals to eat weeds.



Personnel from West Virginia University organized and presented the program on Friday afternoon. Talks and live animal demonstrations were given on the subjects of beef evaluation, sheep reproductive technology, and poultry. Friday's program concluded with a dinner speaker talking on beef's nutritional benefits.

Both days of the conference included concurrent sessions in which participants could choose one of five different sessions to attend. Topics of these sessions included pasture management and productivity; soil health, quality and function; forage species; invasive weed control; fescue toxicity; high density grazing; low cost cow/calf production; forage-finished beef; multi-species grazing; pasture management for sheep and goats; and finishing lambs and meat goats on pasture.



Ray Archuleta—Conservation Agronomist with Natural Resources Conservation Service in Greensboro, NC spoke on Managed Grazing Systems/Soil Health & Quality at one of the sessions.



In addition to speaking sessions, several vendor breaks and displays were available both days. Twenty vendors and 12 sponsors provided displays of information and equipment.



NRCS was one of the sponsors with a display area. Greg Kist discussed NRCS programs with Mark Reynolds during a break. Charlotte Elliott-Friend and Carol Lagodich also staffed the display. Greg also set-up and staffed the RC&D display.

Several NRCS employees were involved in the planning and implementation of the conference. They were Isaac Wolford, Joe Hatton who led the vendor subcommittee and was a member of the facilities' subcommittee, Barbara Greenleaf who chaired the speakers' subcommittee, and Bruce Skidmore who worked with advertisement. Laura Davis served as webmaster for the conference website. During the conference, Katy McBride, JR Wolfe, Bruce Skidmore, Greg Kist, and Susan Davis served as room monitors and/or introduced and assisted conference speakers.

More information on the conference along with a list of conference sponsors is available on the Appalachian Grazing Conference Website at <http://www.grazeappalachia.org>.

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Bits and Pieces

2011 Small Farm Conference

The Small Farm Conference was February 17-19th, at the Lakeview Conference Center near Morgantown, WV. NRCS featured the Pollinators Exhibit and the *New Be a Friend to Pollinators* brochure along with fact sheets and information on the Organic Initiative and sign up. Farm Bill program and contracts information was also available. Barbara Broxterman had high tunnel information and answered numerous questions about high tunnels and irrigation. Jason Teets facilitated the *Farm to School and Community Food Security* workshop.



Betty Williamson and Becky Bowers read about what they can do to help pollinators.



Barbara Broxterman and Ray Carr look at irrigation equipment.

Organic Farming and Conservation Planning Training Session

Submitted by Pat Bowen

The Ecological Sciences Section and Programs Staff at the state office hosted an Organic Farming and Conservation Planning training session to help field office staff understand the relationships between organic operations and conservation farm planning.



Kevin Wickey, West Virginia State Conservationist, welcomed and thanked the group for the successful EQIP Organic Initiative sign-up.

The National Organic Initiative set the framework for the EQIP program to provide cost sharing for the development of Conservation Plans Supportive of Organic Transition and EQIP Organic Program funds to implement conservation plans on existing organic operations. The workshop keynote speaker, Sarah Brown, from the West Technical Center and a technical specialist from Oregon Tilth, an organic certifying organization gave an excellent treatise on what organic farming is and is not and the USDA Organic Program as well as a great overview of what an Organic System Plan (OSP) is. David Lamm, Organic Farming Specialist from the East Technical Center presented a clear and concise presentation on what a conservation plan in support of organic transmission is and that it is just a conservation plan, developed by a Technical Service Provider for an organic operation which is in transition to organic under its OSP. Both experts indicated that we all did not need to be experts in organic farming but to become familiar with the terms and have a basic understanding of what the Organic Certification is all about. The group had a lot of questions and a spirited exchange on the subject.

In the afternoon the group went to the Organic WVU Farm and heard from Tom Basden, Specialist in Nutrient management and Bill Bryan, Organic



Specialist with WVU Davis College of Agriculture.

Earth Day Green on the Green



Devin Wanner (USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, Morgantown Field Office), Woody Owl, Carol Lagodich (USDA NRCS WV State Office) and Peg Reese (USDA NRCS WV State Office Earth Team Volunteer) helped West Virginia University Students celebrate Earth Day. NRCS provided Earth Team information and encouraged students to volunteer. Students also picked up *Backyard Conservation* booklets and companion information on how to have a healthy yard, home, apartment, and neighborhood.

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Conservation Education

The WV Grassland Evaluation Contest

Submitted by Katy McBride

The 2011 WV Grassland Evaluation Contest was held on Friday, April 8th at Steve Rogers's farm in Lewis County (near Jackson's Mill). The Grassland Evaluation Contest consists of four sections: Grassland Condition, Soil Interpretation, Wildlife Habitat, and Plant Identification. Each of these factors was considered in evaluating the pasture to best utilize the resource and to help make useful management decisions. A scenario with the landowner's goals for livestock and wildlife production was provided along with appropriate soil survey information, aerial photos, maps, scorecards, and other relative information. The contestants first determined the condition of the field then made corrective decisions based on sound agricultural practices compatible with the landowner's goals. The judging site was typical pasture used for livestock grazing.

This year's teams were from Ravenswood, Cabell Midland, Ripley, Clay, Tyler, and Upshur. The top 3 teams included:

1. Ravenswood Green
2. Ravenswood Yellow
3. Cabell Midland #1

Each member of the winning team receives a \$500 scholarship and each member of the second winning team receives a \$250 scholarship. The first and second place teams are eligible to participate in the Mid-America Contest in Missouri. The top scoring individual receives a \$500 scholarship.

Technical support for the WV Grassland Evaluation Contest is provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Sponsors for this year's contest include the 14 Conservation Districts, WV Conservation Agency (WVCA), WV Department of Agriculture (WVDA), WV Association of Professional Soil Scientists (WVAPSS), WV Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (WVSWCS), the West Fork Conservation District, and private donators.

A special thank you goes out to the following: West Fork Conservation District (for providing pizzas for the students, coaches, and everyone involved with the contest); Jim Fedders & Wade Synder with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS Lab) in Beaver, WV and Randall Lester & Warren Haynes with the Appalachian Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Alderson, WV for the plants used in this year's contest.

Individuals attending and/or assisting were (and a BIG thank you goes out to):

- WV NRCS: Rob Pate, Tom Vance, Gary Redden, Barbara Greenleaf, Jared Nestor, Andy Sentz, Greg Stone, Debra Dorsey, Jamey Darlington, and Katy McBride
- WVCA: Jennifer Skaggs, Amy Sine, Andrew Stacy, Josh Peplowski, and Danny Little
- WVACD: Timothy VanReenan, Rex Reeder, Bill Bolenbach, Art Mouser, Carroll Cumberledge, Bill Coffindaffer, Randy Plaughter, Jim Foster, Tim Butler, Richard Bonnett, and Russ Rittenhouse.



The plants came from the Agricultural Research Service in Beaver, WV and the Appalachian Plant Materials Center in Alderson, WV.



Andy Sentz at a plant identification station. Plant Identification is one of the four test section.



Gary Redden explains the contest rules to the students.

Wetlands Field Day

Submitted by Mavin Kerr

The annual Wirt County schools wetland field experience was held May 6, 2011. Wetlands Field Day is a school and community event. Environmental specialists visually demonstrated wetlands activities including: aquatics, water testing, watershed management, and connected them to soils, wildlife, forestry, geology, wild flower identification, entomology, archaeology, and other subjects. The activities take place at a 10 acre wetland on the County Farm.

The wetlands field day provides forth, sixth, and eighth grade students' hands-on experience at eight wetland related sessions. Groups of about 15 students circulate through the sessions. Presentations are tailored to the different grade levels. Students learned the characteristics and benefits of wetlands and their connection to other environmental topics. This annual event is a cooperative effort. Partners include Federal and State agencies and many community sponsors.

The purpose of the field day is to have kids take ownership of the environment and for them to realize how important it is for each individual person to do their part. The wetland is located within the County Park System and provides the general public with wildlife observation and bird watching venues. The wetland viewing area consists of a scenic overlook and over 100 feet of board walk with an observation deck.



Casey Shrader, along with Noah McCoard (McMechen), Lee Haggerty (Moorefield), and Matt Ware (Huntington) staffed an aquatic station.

2011 National Collegiate Soils Contest

Submitted by David Kingsbury

The West Virginia University Soils Team finished seventh in the 2011 National Collegiate Soils Contest. There were 21 teams that participated in the contest, representing colleges and universities from across the country.

Next year, WVU will serve as the host for both the Southeast Regional Soils Contest in October 2011 and then the National Collegiate Soils Contest in April 2012.

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Conservation Education

The 15th Annual WV Envirothon

Submitted by Debra Murphy

April the 28th and 29th marked the days for the 15th annual West Virginia Envirothon. There were 26 teams participating in the competition. The event took place on the grounds of the Day's Inn located in Flatwoods, West Virginia. This quaint community is also famous for the 1952 extraterrestrial sighting of the "Green Monster" also known by locals as the "Braxton County Monster".

When I first arrived at the event, I got the feeling that neither "The Green Monster" nor the chilly weather was going to dampen the spirits of this enthusiastic crowd of an estimated 135 students from schools across the state. As I gathered up my camera to begin the day, I felt a sense of pride as part of the cadre of NRCS employees who were passing down knowledge of the environment and of our state resources to the younger generation. Like the students, I too soon forgot the chill in the morning air.

The first day of the Envirothon has always been considered as "a day of teaching" for the competitors. The teams get a chance to learn more about the subject matter in preparation for the competition on the following day. There are five sections focusing on Forestry, Soils, Aquatics, Wildlife, and a Current Environmental Topic.

Rob Pate, Resource Soil Scientist for NRCS, was the instructor for the soils section of the competition during the teaching day. Rob has been involved with teaching at the Envirothon since 1998. I know from working and conversing with Rob that he takes great pride in passing on his knowledge and skills about Soil Science to future generations. Rob bases what he teaches the students around the current environmental topic. Rob's objective this year was to show the students the change in surface water run-off values due to the disturbance of the soils from urbanization and construction. With the help of our GIS Specialist, Wendy Noll, he provided maps showing the differences in the state of soil from 1939 to 2007. He provided participants with runoff curve numbers for each map unit for the two different years as well as the acres of each map unit in the area of interest. Other tools he provided were map unit descriptions. Rob also provided contestants with the necessary tables needed to figure out the environmental objective. Contestants were also given a hydrology sheet showing the average of precipitation for Braxton County with various frequencies in years. For the contest scenario, contestants were asked to use the 10-year frequency. At the soil pit, Rob instructed the students on how to determine the texture of the soil using the percentages of sand, silt and clay.



The Environmental Topic for this year's competition focused on the Mississippi Delta Estuary. In this part of the competition (which was held on Thursday evening), each team had to give analysis and results of the knowledge of Nitrogen and sediment pollution within the local watershed. They also had to offer methods that would decrease Nitrogen and sediment pollution as well as market their campaign with the following message: "How can the individual landowner reduce Nitrogen and sediment load in the Mississippi Delta estuaries, and how that will help to relieve the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico?" It was very impressive to observe the thought processes and the talents of these young men and women as they came up with a solution for the environmental scenario. The best score for this topic was by the "Ripley Environmental Science team". Way to go!

NRCS employees Greg Kist and Herb Andrick were on one of the oral presentation teams. Greg Stone was on the second team.



While teams were presenting the Environmental Topic, other teams had an opportunity to attend a career fair. Colleges, universities and agencies set up exhibits. Carol Lagodich and Katy McBride set up and staffed the NRCS career display.



Students found out about natural resource careers, the Earth Team, Backyard Conservation, and pollinators at the NRCS table.

The second day of the Envirothon was used for the four remaining competitions. These events took place at the Braxton County Middle School Practice Field. There was a great turnout of NRCS employees to help with the Envirothon competition this year including Rob Pate, Katy Mc Bride, Jamey Darlington, Mike Jones, Barbara McWhorter, Greg Stone, Tyler Putzulu, and Greg Kist. Later in the afternoon, Mr. Kevin Wickey, NRCS State Conservationist, was present for the judging of the final oral presentations and the awards ceremony.

Lets take a look at each of the stations.



The Forestry Station—Students develop basic dendrology skills and, get an understanding of forest ecology and forest management. They acquire a base knowledge and skills of various forestry tools which they use to apply to real world forestry issues. Working the Forestry Station starting from the left are Barbara McWhorter, Andy Sheetz (Division of Forestry), Cinda Francis and Casey Olczak (WV Forestry Association).



The Wildlife Station—Students are expected to identify common wildlife species and their role in the ecosystem, acquire an understanding of habitat requirements and devise plans for managing various wildlife species. There were two wildlife stations. The one above was manned by Art Shomo (WVDNR).



Working the second Wildlife Station are WVDNR employees Mark Clarke (far left) and Karen McClure (far right) and serving as a team buddy is Carl Mullins (Southern Conservation District Supervisor).



The Soils Station—Grading the test scores starting from the left are Mike Jones, Lilly Dennison (Elk Conservation District), Jamey Darlington, Rob Pate, and Katy McBride



The Aquatics Station—Conducting basic water sampling and identifying aquatic insects and microorganisms, students were tested on their knowledge and understanding of watersheds and factors that affect water quality and they developed solutions to common water quality issues. Working this station, starting from the left, are Parea Edwards (US Forest Service), Jennifer Dupree (WVDEP), and Karen Sykes (US Forest Service).

Students anxiously waited for the awards ceremony. Assisting in the presentation of the awards was State Senator Donna Boley. This year, there were five team scholarships awarded. First Place went to the "Shady Spring Enviromongers." They received a \$5,000 scholarship and the opportunity to represent West Virginia at the 2011 Canon Envirothon held July 23 - 24 in Sackville, New Brunswick,

Canada. Coming in second place was the "Ripley Environmental Science" team. They received a \$3,750 scholarship. The third place winning team was "Doddridge County Gold" which received a \$2,500 scholarship. Coming in fourth place was the "Ravenswood FFA" receiving a \$1,750 scholarship. The final and fifth place was presented to "The Doddridge County Green team which received a \$1,250 scholarship.



The winning team "Shady Springs Enviromongers".

For the seventh time in 15 years, Shady Spring High School team will represent West Virginia at the Canon International Envirothon. The team coach is NRCS retiree Kelly Sponaugle.

Mr. Curtis Tate

After the contest, I had a chance to interview one of the winners, Mr. Curtis Tate. I asked Curtis why he got involved with the Envirothon and if he thought it would help him with his future plans.



Curtis responded that this was his first year to participate in the Envirothon and his reason for becoming a part of the team was initially because he thought it would help him in Landjudging. But as he explained, "Once I started the Envirothon, I really liked the idea of the natural resources part of it—the Envirothon is pretty much everything that you learn in VO-AG except here it directly applies to natural resources". Curtis also commented that "you learn how to utilize natural resources so that you don't deplete everything, and how to treat the environment so that future generations can use it for their own productivity." Curtis' plans for the future include majoring in Agronomy in college. He stated that the Envirothon was very instructive and helpful since it covered many topics and demonstrates all the different disciplines that can lead to a career. Curtis stated that he was the "soils specialist" on his team and that he learned a lot from the soils part of the competition.

For more 2011 Envirothon photos, go the West Virginia Conservation Agency website:
<http://gallery.wvca.us/Envirothon2011>

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Earth Team

Earth Team Volunteers Plant Trees

Submitted by Christi Hicks



Thirteen Moorefield High School FFA students and one from Moorefield Middle School donated their time and labor to assist in planting over 1,000 trees in an effort to stabilize an eroding shale hillside on the John Weese property in Fisher on April 14, 2011. U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service staff coordinated the project as part of the Earth Team Volunteer Program and Mr. Dan Junkins, FFA Advisor, provided leadership for his students. Students were able to acquire knowledge about conservation principles and use teamwork to accomplish their goal. Mr. Weese and NRCS staff extends their appreciation to Mr. Junkins and his students for their hard work and interest in the future of farming and wise use of natural resources in Hardy County.

State Office Earth Team Recognition Day, April 14, 2011

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service celebrated National Volunteer week by thanking and honoring its Earth Team volunteers for their service to conservation.

"The time Earth Team volunteers donate benefits our customers and the taxpayers," said Kevin Wickey, West Virginia State Conservationist. "With ever-increasing workloads and declining budgets, Earth Team volunteers make it possible for us to achieve our mission of Helping People Help the Land."



Joe Hatton thanked Matt Oliver for his volunteer time while volunteer Greg Carnill looked on.



"Earth Team Volunteers are a foundation of conservation. They allow us to stretch available resources and help us put conservation practices on the ground." said Charlotte Elliott-Friend, West Virginia Earth Team Coordinator. "I hope National Volunteer Week will motivate volunteers to help NRCS with our conservation mission. Volunteers play an important role in our state's conservation work. "

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**Useful Links****Microsoft Office Picture Manager****How to Crop Photos with Microsoft Office Picture Manager**

http://www.ehow.com/how_5861366_crop-microsoft-office-picture-manager.html

Professional Effectiveness**Planning a Presentation** (1 hour) (AgLearn SkillSoft Resource)

A presentation can be drastically improved if you apply ample time and attention to three key steps - analyzing your audience, organizing your ideas, and selecting an appropriate presentation method. This course describes how to plan effectively for a presentation by carrying out these steps.

[https://aglearn.usda.gov/plateau/user/deeplink.do?](https://aglearn.usda.gov/plateau/user/deeplink.do?linkId=ITEM_DETAIL&componentID=comm%5f33%5fa01%5fbs%5fenu%5fSKILLSOFT&componentTypeID=Web+Based&revisionDate=1303504842000)

[linkId=ITEM_DETAIL&componentID=comm%5f33%5fa01%5fbs%5fenu%5fSKILLSOFT&componentTypeID=Web+Based&revisionDate=1303504842000](https://aglearn.usda.gov/plateau/user/deeplink.do?linkId=ITEM_DETAIL&componentID=comm%5f33%5fa01%5fbs%5fenu%5fSKILLSOFT&componentTypeID=Web+Based&revisionDate=1303504842000)

NRCS Distribution Center

Submitted by Alan Bengé



Let's get buzzing! The new 2011 Pollinator poster, Native Bees, are in!

It's a very colorful poster and it will make a great addition to any office or school. Its size is 12 by 30 inches so it can fit over doors or in non-traditional areas needing a color lift. Order yours by going to our website's "New Items" tab or by searching "Pollinator" in the search field. It is packaged in sets of 50 and will be available May 16th. You and your fellow employees can order as many as you need, but it is restricted to a maximum of 10 copies outside of the NRCS. Attached is a picture of the new poster.

Our good friends at the Pollinator Partnership have created a very helpful .pdf identifying all the variety of bees depicted on the poster. It's a great Native Bees poster companion piece. Download it at: http://pollinator.org/PDFs/Identifying_Native_Bees_PosterFINAL.pdf. This pdf can also be found on our SharePoint.

The NRCS Distribution Center has a new, one-stop shop SharePoint site for NRCS employees, <https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/directory/exhibits/default.aspx>. Use it to order our publications, forms, view and reserve exhibits, and to see other services we have to offer.

We still have our traditional website for publications and forms which can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/distributioncenter.

Later in 2011, possibly August or September, the National Earth Team Office and the Distribution Center will be moving. The new space will allow us to store all of our material in one location. I will provide additional information when there is an exact move date; however, we will not be shipping items for a short period of time. During this move, our web site will still be functional and orders will be processed as soon as we are able to get organized at the new space. We will keep you informed when this will take place and the procedures that will be in place to ensure everyone gets the items they need.

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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 impactful 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://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/east/wv/photos/default.aspx>

Photo Tips, Photo Properties, Photo Gallery, and Contest Guidelines:
<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/east/wv/Shared%20Documents/2011%20Bulletins/260-11-002%20Photographs.pdf>



Ponds
 Submitted by Carol Lagodich
 Open limestone channels and settling pond at Laurel Run.



High Tunnels
 Submitted by Carol Lagodich
 Inside a high tunnel.



Conservation Education
 Submitted by Marvin Kerr
 Casey Shrader, along with Noah McCoard (McMechen), Lee Haggerty (Moorefield), and Matt Ware (Huntington) staffed an aquatic station.



Earth Team
 Submitted by Christi Hicks
 Earth Team volunteers donated their time and labor to assist in planting over 1,000 trees in an effort to stabilize an eroding shale hillside.
 Christi was the first to share photos on SharePoint.

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West Virginia's Civil Rights

WVU Career Fair



Heather Hinson [Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager](#) and Carol Lagodich [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Program Manager](#), represented NRCS at the Spring 2011 WVU Natural Resources Career Fair sponsored by College or the Division of Forestry and Natural Resources. Students were given career, volunteer, USAjobs, and Backyard Conservation information.

U.S. Sees More Female Farmers Cropping Up

Since 2002, there's been a 30 percent increase in female-run farms across the country. Whether it's because they're interested in growing sustainable food, making a side income or contributing to the local food movement, they've brought the total up to about 300,000 farms run by women.

<http://www.npr.org/2011/03/30/134979252/u-s-sees-more-female-farmers-cropping-up>

Romney USDA Service Center Celebrated Cinco de Mayo and Sponsoring a Food Drive

Submitted by Rebecca S. Bowers, Disability Employment Program Manager (DEPM)

The Romney USDA Service Center celebrated on May 6, 2011 by having a luncheon to celebrate Cinco de mayo. The luncheon was great and fun was had by all. Agencies represented include West Virginia Conservation Agency, Rural Development, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency.

The Romney USDA Service Center is once again collecting non-perishable food items for local residents. We have been notified by a local organization that the need is greater than ever. It was stated that families are just trying to make ends meet and can't afford some of the bare necessities that we take for granted. I would like to challenge others to reach out to those in need in their community and provide help to others in any way possible. As a Service Center we plan to distribute our goods ever month and will report what is collected on a quarterly basis.

Federal Legislation Affecting LGBT

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) provides a quick view of federal legislation that affects LGBT. You can find this information at http://www.hrc.org/laws_and_elections/4732.htm.

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Meet . . .

Greg Purdy
 Soil Conservationist Technician
 Franklin Service Center

I grew up in West Virginia and lived on the family farm until my first year in college at Glenville State. After spending a summer working on the Monongahela National Forest I moved to North Carolina. It took me 20 years to make it back home to WV. I began working with the NRCS in December of 2010 as a Soil Conservationist Technician out of the Franklin Field Office in Pendleton County.

While living in North Carolina I worked for the National Park Service, taught science and math at Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, worked for the NC Department of Cultural Resources, and later became a NC State Ranger at Kerr Lake State Park. I earned a BS degree from East Carolina University, and later attended graduate school at ECU. I also spent three summers working for Kodiak Land Surveying as a field technician in Alaska.

I often look back and wonder why it took me so long to make it back to WV. In the past year I have come full circle in my life. I married my wife Michelle, and moved back to where I lived as a child in Montrose. On the job, I work with really good people in the community and professional colleagues. I even became re-acquainted with a good friend that I grew up with from the next farm, whom I haven't seen in 25 years.

I am thankful to be in a position to help the citizens of our country, and to help conserve its great natural resources. I have worn several hats in the field of natural resource protection, but none are as gratifying and rewarding as being an employee of the USDA and NRCS. I look forward to meeting and learning from landowners and my fellow employees from around the state.



Rebecca S. Bowers
 Acting District Conservationist
 Disability Employment Program Manager (DEPM)
 Romney Service Center

She may not be a new name or face to NRCS, but she is the new Acting District Conservationist in the Romney Field Office. Becky has worked with NRCS for nine years, beginning as a Soil Conservationist in the Martinsburg Field Office in July 2002, and then to the Ranson Field Office in December 2003. In the fall of 2005 she was then transferred back to the Romney Field Office. Before joining NRCS, Becky worked for the WV Conservation Agency for three years as a Grassland Technician covering the 16 Area III counties and was stationed in the Romney Field Office.

Becky graduated from West Virginia University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture. She holds a deep passion for flowers and hopes to pursue this later in life. At the present time she is raising meat goats mainly for 4-H members wanting to show them at the local fair. She had a wonderful crop of goats 18 babies out of 8 mothers. She takes pride in raising her animals and hopes that the local kids do great at the County Fair.

Becky is married to Rodney and they reside in Fort Ashby, WV Mineral County with their dog Madison, some chickens, and of course all of the goats.



Roseanne Kennedy Celebrated 45 Years of Service

On February 28, 2011, Roseanne Kennedy was honored for her 45 years of SCS/NRCS Service.

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Personnel Updates

(Submitted by Karen Fitchett as of April 28, 2011)

Name	Action	Location	Effective Date
Eileen Klein	Name Change from Eileen O'Neill	Lewisburg FO	1/16/2011
Tim Hastings, Program Asst	New Hire	State Office (Programs)	1/30/2011
Robert (Bruce) Skidmore, Soil Conserv Tech	New Hire	Spencer FO	2/7/2011
Rebecca Bowers, Acting DC	Temporary Promotion	Romney FO	1/30/2011
LaRae Baker	Reassignment to Ohio	Bellefontaine, OH	3/14/2011
Wendy Noll, NRI GIS	Promotion	State Office	3/27/2011
Alan Moore, Soil Scientist MLRA	Promotion (from Kentucky)	Huntington MLRA Off	3/27/2011
Dave Kingsbury State Soil Sctst/MLRA Ldr	Reassignment/Promotion	State Office	4/24/2011

**HR Minute**

Submitted by Diana Bokoch

Please don't forget:

Mid-year performance reviews are due by May 20th. (see Bulletin WV360-11-014)

Individual Development Plans (IDP's) are due by May 27th. (see Bulletin WV360-11-016)

You should have received your Annual Personal Benefits Statement (as of January 2, 2011) in the mail. If you did not, you can see it on the Employee Personal Page (EPP):

<https://www.nrc.usda.gov/personal/eplogin.aspx>

Once you log in, click on "Personal Info" then "Benefits Statement" then "Pay & Compensation" and then click on "view PDF" to see the entire document.

The 2011 Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program Open Season is now. You have until June 24, 2011 to apply with abbreviated underwriting. The FLTCIP is administered by Long Term Care Partners. It is underwritten by John Hancock Life & Health Insurance Company under a contract with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. If you are interested, call 1-800-582-3337 or apply on line at <http://www.ltcfeds.com/>

Leave – in case you didn't know....



Annual Leave Accrual Rates

Employee Type	Less than 3 years of service*	3 years but less than 15 years of service*	15 or more years of service*
Full-time employees	½ day (4 hours) for each pay period	¾ day (6 hours) for each pay period, except 1¼ day (10 hours) in last pay period	1 day (8 hours) for each pay period
Part-time employees**	1 hour of annual leave for each 20 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 13 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 10 hours in a pay status

Maximum annual leave that may be carried over into the new leave year – 30 days (240 hours)

Sick Leave Accrual Rates

Full-time employees	1/2 day (4 hours) for each biweekly pay period
Part-time employees	1 hour for each 20 hours in a pay status

There is no limitation on the amount of sick leave that can be accumulated.

Sick Leave Usage Limits per Leave Year

- No limitation for an employee's own personal medical needs
- Up to 13 days (104 hours) of sick leave for general family care and bereavement each leave year
- Up to 12 weeks (480 hours) of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition each leave year

If an employee previously has used any portion of the 13 days of sick leave for general family care or bereavement purposes in a leave year, that amount must be subtracted from the 12-week entitlement. If an employee has already used 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, he or she cannot use an additional 13 days in the same leave year for general family care purposes. An employee is entitled to no more than a combined total of 12 weeks of sick leave each leave year for all family care purposes.

Part-time employees and employees are also entitled to use sick leave, and the amount of sick leave which may be granted is pro-rated in proportion to the average number of hours of work in the employee's scheduled tour of duty each week.

For what purposes can leave be taken under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

FMLA provides eligible Federal employees with an entitlement to *12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following purposes:*

- birth of a son or daughter of the employee and care of the newborn; *
- placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care; *
- care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition; and
- a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position.

Employee Assistance Program



What is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)? An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a service available to all employees at no cost. It is staffed by professional counselors who will help you address problems that can adversely affect job performance, reliability, and personal health. A counselor will discuss the problem with you and after helping you assess the problem, provide short-term counseling. If needed, the counselor will also refer you to other professional services and resources within your community for further information and assistance.

What kinds of problems do EAPs help resolve? An EAP counselors will work with you to help resolve a wide variety of problems including alcohol and drug abuse, work and family pressures, legal and financial problems, job stress, and other concerns which can affect your work performance and personal health.

How and when may I contact the EAP? A telephone call is normally all it takes to make an appointment with an EAP counselor. EAP operating hours usually are flexible so the employees can make appointments before, during, and after the workday. Our Employee Assistance Program is administered by The Sand Creek Group, Ltd. And you can call them at 1-888-243-5744. Their website is www.sandcreekeap.com and you can log in by using user name: USDA, password: employee.

Will matters I discuss with the EAP counselor be kept confidential? Yes, your privacy is protected by strict confidentiality laws and regulations and by professional ethical standards for counselors. The details of your discussions with the counselor may not be released to anyone without your written consent.

How successful are EAPs in helping employees? Periodic evaluations conducted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management indicate that the vast majority of the thousands of employees who annually seek assistance from their EAPs are helped in overcoming their problems.

How much will the EAP cost me? There is no cost to employees who receive counseling and other services provided by the agency's EAP. Costs for outside treatment and professional services, which can result in personal expense, may be covered by your Federal Employee Health Benefits plan or private insurance. The EAP counselor will work with you to identify the best available outside treatment program and services in line with your individual finances.

When is the best time to contact the EAP? Don't wait too long! The sooner you seek help, the sooner your problems can be resolved. Problems left unresolved can often lead to more serious situations with a greater risk that your health or job performance will be jeopardized. If you take advantage of the help and support offered through your EAP and address your problems before they become serious, you and your organization will both be winners.

Favorite quotes:



The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another. The difference between them is sometimes as great as a month. ~Henry Van Dyke

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt. ~Margaret Atwood

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. ~Author Unknown

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