

AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT FY 21



West Virginia
Conservation Agency

FY21 AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

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Front Cover: Sunflower fields at Martinsburg, WV.

Photo: Aimee Figgatt, WVCA.

Mike Yager, WVCA Conservation Specialist inspects the Potts Creek area for James spiny mussel at the Furrow Farm.

Photo: WVCA Communications

Barbie Elliott, WVCA Conservation Specialist. The sunflower patch idea has been a welcome addition to the Eastern Panhandle area with hundreds flocking to visit! Additionally, the 5 acre field is providing a food source for our native pollinators.

OVERVIEW

"The Agricultural Enhancement Program works to deliver services to West Virginia's agriculture community. These programs, delivered through the 14 conservation districts, encourage use of voluntary best management practices that not only reduce soil erosion and sediment in rivers, but help increase a farmer's bottom line. To ensure the quality of the AgEP program, the staff of WVCA's Conservation Services division provide vital technical assistance to give farmers and others advice on current best management practices."

BRIAN FARKAS

WVCA Executive Director

"The Agricultural Enhancement Program committee members represent West Virginia's 14 conservation districts and work to promote best management practices that fit their regional conservation needs. The AgEP is a flexible program that continues to experience growth and adapts to the changing needs of the communities served."

JENNIFER SKAGGS

WVCA Conservation Services Division Director

"Fiscal Year 2021 brought on challenges, yet through it all the WVCA employees worked hard to ensure that soil and water conservation remained at the forefront of our mission. Not only were expectations met, but greatly exceeded, making FY21 one of the strongest years for the Agricultural Enhancement Program since its inception. We hope to continue this momentum into FY22!"

RUSSELL YOUNG

Conservation Specialist III, AgEP Program Lead

FY 21 AgEP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Capitol
Clyde Bailey

Eastern Panhandle
Floyd Kursey

Elk
Donald Burroughs

Greenbrier Valley
Timothy VanReenen

Guyan
Bill Stewart

Little Kanawha
Sam Sheets

Monongahela
Mark Myers

Northern Panhandle
Mark Fitzsimmons

Potomac Valley
George Leatherman

Southern
Dennis Bailey

Tygarts Valley
James Dean

Upper Ohio
Bill Gellner

West Fork
Bill Coffindaffer

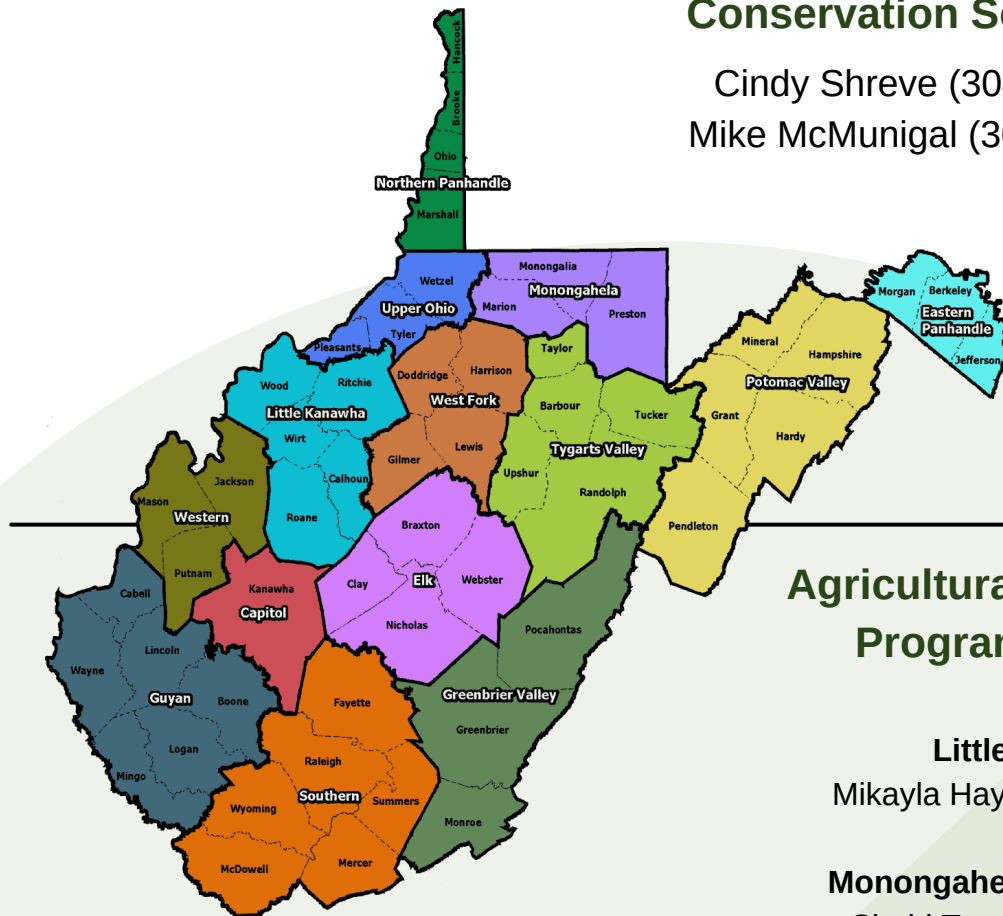
Western
Oscar Harris

DISTRICT MAP AND CONTACTS

Conservation Services Managers

Cindy Shreve (304) 538-7581 (North)

Mike McMunigal (304) 645-6173 (South)



Agricultural Enhancement Program Field Staff

Little Kanawha

Mikayla Hayes (304) 541-5685

Monongahela and West Fork

Sigrid Teets (681) 313-0826

Northern Panhandle & Upper Ohio

Jennifer Kile (304) 238-5649

Potomac Valley

Ben Heavner and Sam Urban
(304) 538-7581

Southern

Kenny Maiolo (304) 253-0261

Tygarts Valley

(304) 457-3026

Western

(304) 675-3054

Capitol

Anthony Winters (304) 807-5256

Eastern Panhandle

Barbie Elliott and Amy Henry
1-681-247-3012

Elk

Russell Young (304) 590-1540

Greenbrier Valley

Barry Level (304) 645-6173

Guyan

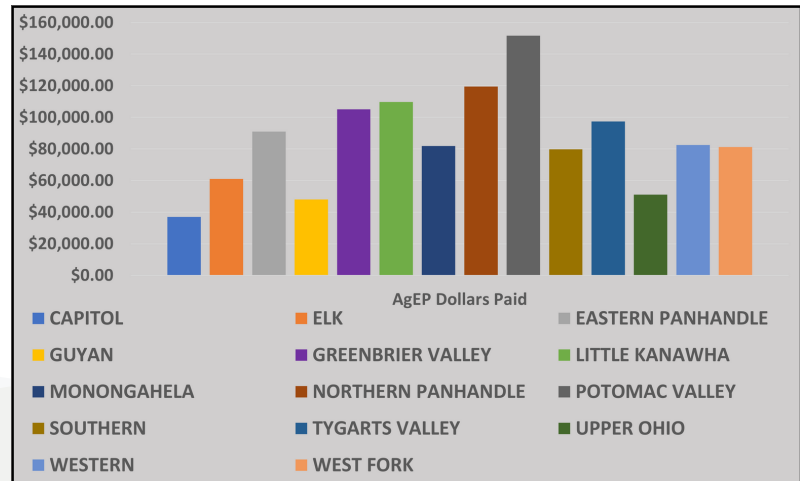
Caitlin Black (304) 549-1739

AgEP APPLICATIONS AT A GLANCE

AgEP staff assisted cooperators with the installation of 905 Best Management Practices (BMPs) in Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21). The completion rate was 74% across the state, which is the highest since 2013.

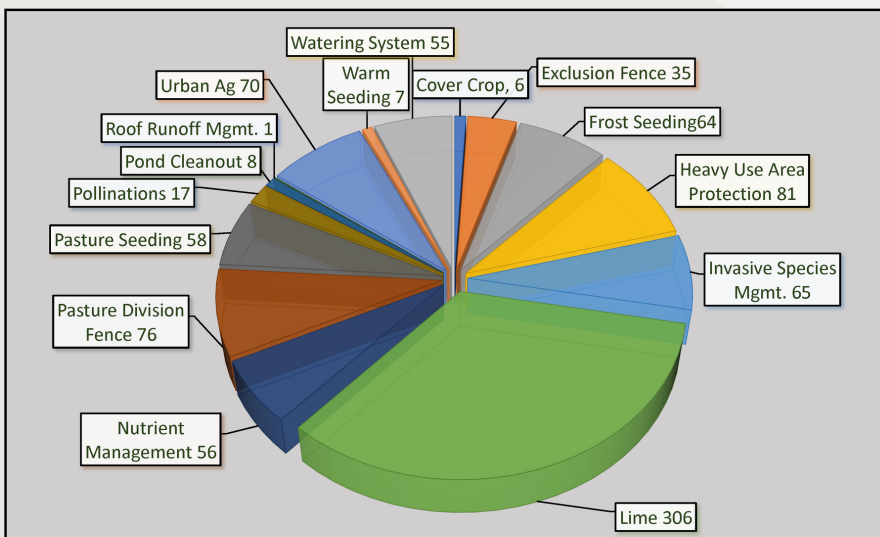
Urban Agriculture was the fastest growing BMP, with an increase from 30 to 98 applications statewide.

APPLICATIONS BY DISTRICT



Between the funding from the AgEP program and the cost-share from cooperators, the West Virginia Conservation Agency, along with local conservation districts, were able to implement \$2.2 million in conservation land-based BMPs, making FY21 the highest cost share paid since 2017.

STATEWIDE PAID APPLICATIONS BY PRACTICE



1,183 Applications Received

Based on AgEP Database, total includes cancelled, paid and unfunded



905 Paid Applications

Based on AgEP database, total includes only paid



\$1,068,212.94 Total Payments



\$2,199,860.64 Total Cost

Cooperators' total cost of implementing practice

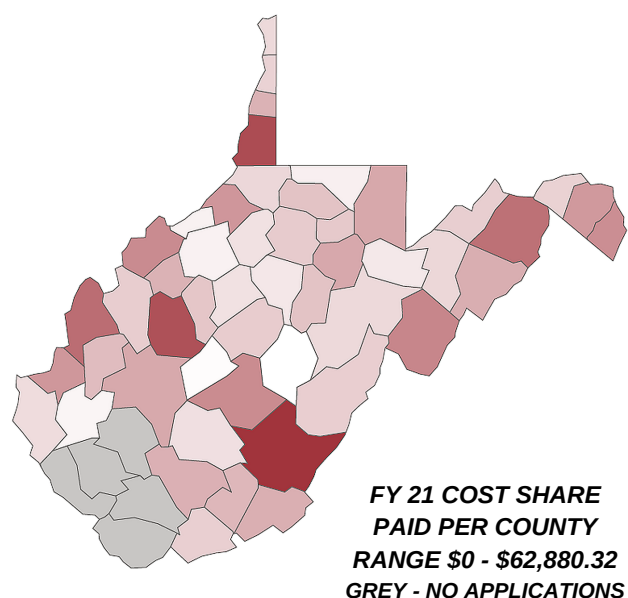
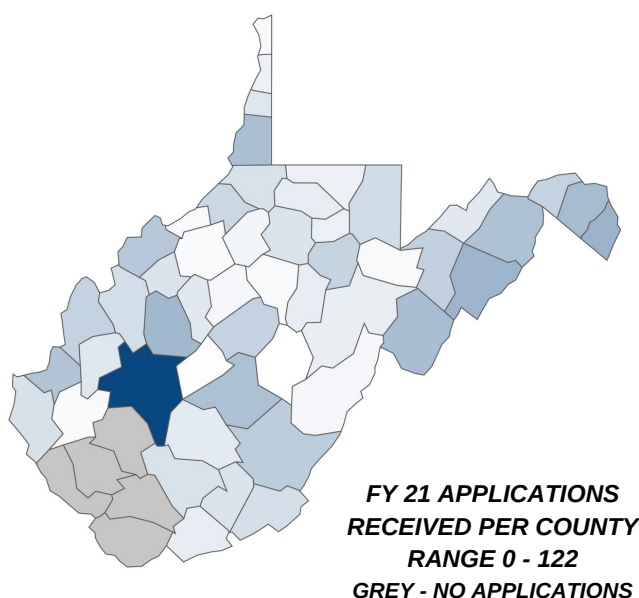


905 Cooperators

Practices Completed in FY21

Practices Completed in FY21	Unit Totals	Number Of Paid Applications
Cover Crop	170.89 Acres	6
Exclusion Fence	60,342 Feet	35
Frost Seeding	3115.92 Acres	64
Heavy Use Area Protection	133,383 Feet	81
Invasive Species Management	1455.73 Acres	65
Lime	9124.487 Acres/18,383.19 Tons	306
Nutrient Management	1362 Acres	56
Pasture Division Fence	117,869 Feet	76
Pasture Seeding	1163.10 Acres	58
Pollinations	17	17
Pond Cleanout	8	8
Roof Runoff Mngmt	1	1
Urban Ag	70	70
Warm Seeding	196.67 Acres	7
Watering System	55	55
	Total	905

FY 21 applications numbered 1183 with 51 of those being unfunded. These were largely in higher agricultural lands. In some areas cost-share assistance is in great demand and the ranking process can be competitive. Application acceptance is based on ranking score and availability of funds. Another benefit to the locally led program is that board supervisors may also seek outside funding sources such as grants to supplement the AgEP program in their districts.



COVID-19 CHALLENGES

"Despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WVCA and the state's 14 conservation districts continued to operate, although at a safer distance and while taking necessary precautions, like wearing masks. Our Conservation Services technicians continued to meet with local farmers and our 114 conservation supervisors continued to meet monthly and provide services and programs to their constituents."

-Brian Farkas
WVCA Executive Director

AgEP Assists Established and Beginning Home Gardeners

The COVID-19 pandemic created supply-chain issues across the globe. This caused many West Virginians to return to their roots and plant home gardens to supplement their diets with fresh fruits and vegetables. Utilizing **AgEP Urban Agriculture programs**, families across the state were learning and implementing conservation-based practices. In return, their hard work rewarded them with bountiful harvests.



Heather Connolly (left) and her son Calvin enjoyed and preserved fresh produce from her urban garden beds (top) throughout 2021 (Capitol District)



March 2020: staff began working safer at home. Thanks to the WVCA IT Team, staff were able to transition easily to a remote working status.

Between March and July 2020: WVCA staff reviewed, verified and processed payments for over

\$540,000.00

To put that in perspective, staff finished

61%

of the yearly AgEP budget during that time!

FY 21 AgEP project completion rate was 74%, which was

20%

higher than FY20

Cost-share reimbursement will cover only allowable expenses. Always read your AgEP Contract carefully.



SPOTLIGHT BMP

FROST SEEDING

Frost seeding is the process of broadcasting seeds in late winter or early spring to allow inter-seeding without disturbing the soils.

Frost seeding relies on the freeze-thaw cycle and early spring precipitation to establish soil contact. As the ground freezes and thaws it will move and cause tiny cracks in the surface, where the seed is deposited.

Purpose: The purpose of frost seeding is to reduce soil erosion, improve forage yield, or maintain livestock nutrition health, improve soil and water quality, and provide incentive for maintenance of agricultural lands. Frost seeding using the recommended legumes provides nitrogen into the grasslands.

When should I frost seed?

Although each conservation district will vary in specified dates, the AgEP practice recommendation is to frost seed between early February and March. Seeding should be completed by March 1st.



FROST SEED

When managed properly, frost seeding can be used as another tool in managed grazing to increase productivity and help stretch the grazing season.

Some practices are paid at a flat rate while others may be cost shared on a percentage basis.

DID YOU KNOW?

What is the recommended Soil pH for frost seeding? A current soil test must be completed prior to applying seed. Your local conservation specialist can provide you with the necessary paperwork and pH specification.

How do I frost seed? Spreaders that mount onto ATV's or tractor three-point hitches are commonly used for broadcasting seed. Smaller land owners may seed using a smaller walk-behind or hand-held broadcast seeder. Your local conservation specialist is available to assist you with seed mixture recommendations.

Frost seeding can be an effective, low-cost method to introduce new forage species into an existing sod or maintain the current forage composition of pastures. To learn more about how frost seeding can improve your pastures, contact your local conservation district.

Frost Seeding on a cold February Day. Rick Rice, Harrison County



Photo courtesy of Dennis Burns, WVCA

AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM COMPLETED PROJECTS



(Left) Heavy Use Area Protection, Wetzel County, (Middle) Urban Agriculture, Raised beds and soil. Tyler County. Upper Ohio Conservation District. (Right) Urban Agriculture Rain Barrel, Brooke County, Northern Panhandle Conservation District. Photo: Jennifer Kile, Conservation Specialist



(Left) Fence installation and (Middle) Lime crop field (Right) Orchard Lime Spreading Berkeley County, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District. Photo: Barbie Elliott, Conservation Specialist



(Left) A monarch caterpillar on Milkweed, Pollination, Capitol Conservation District, Photo: Aimee Figgatt

WVCA (Right) Raised beds placed in a high tunnel for early growing in Monongalia County, Monongahela Conservation District. Photo: Sigrid Teets, Conservation Specialist

Scan here to access the WVCA AgEP Best Management Practice descriptions webpage





West Virginia Conservation Agency
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, WV 25305-0193



West Virginia
Conservation Agency

Mission: To provide for and promote the protection and conservation of West Virginia's soil, land, water and related resources for the health, safety and general welfare of the state's citizens.