



West Virginia
Conservation Agency

2025 Annual Report





West Virginia
Conservation Agency

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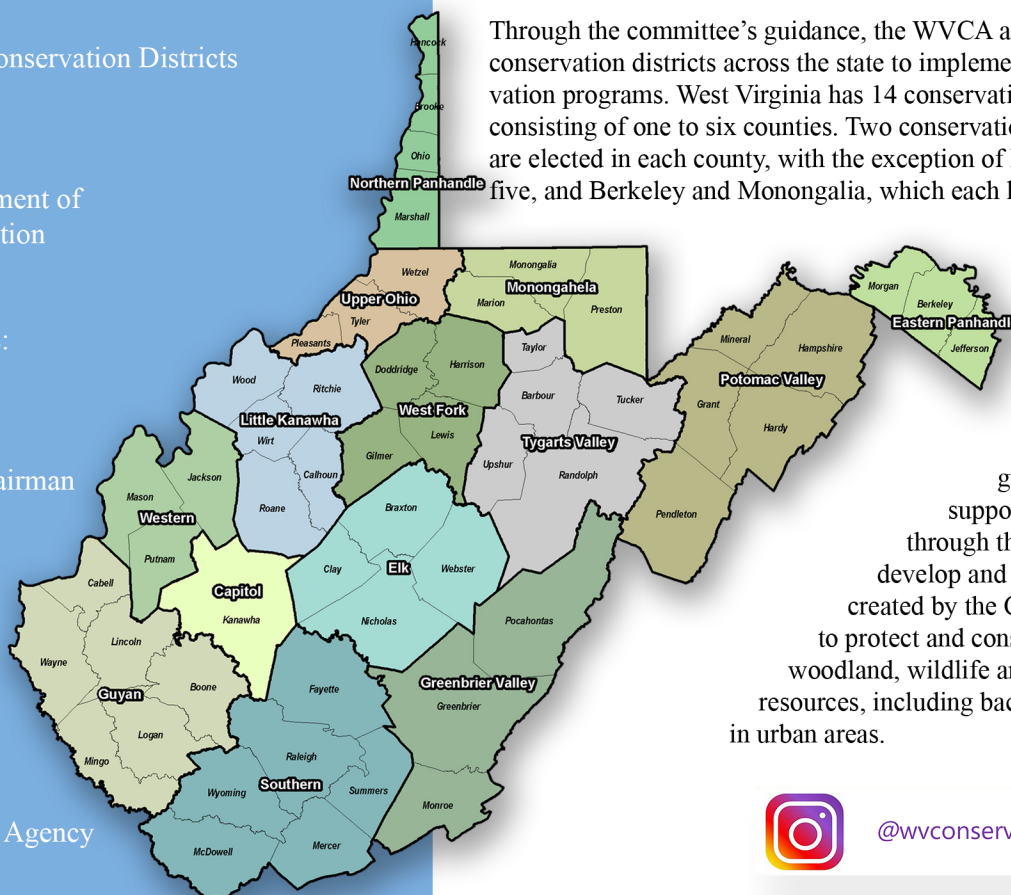
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Introduction

The mission of the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) is to provide for and promote the conservation of West Virginia's soil, land, water and related resources for the health, safety and general welfare of the state's citizens. The State Conservation Committee (SCC) serves as the governing body of the WVCA.

Through the committee's guidance, the WVCA assists and works with conservation districts across the state to implement a variety of conservation programs. West Virginia has 14 conservation districts, each consisting of one to six counties. Two conservation district supervisors are elected in each county, with the exception of Kanawha, which has five, and Berkeley and Monongalia, which each have three.

These local boards operate under the guidance and with the support of the SCC, through the WVCA, and develop and implement programs created by the Conservation Agency to protect and conserve soil, water, woodland, wildlife and other renewable resources, including backyard conservation in urban areas.



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Watershed Maintenance

Key Figures (FY 2025)

\$1,237,726

Cost of regular
maintenance to dams

\$1,116,853

Cost of repairs
to dams

170

Dams considered “high
hazard”

115

Dams are 50 years of
age or older

\$29.2 million

In flood protection
provided to West Virginia
in 2025



*** There are 170 small watershed
flood-control dams and 22
flood-control channels in WV.**

*** “High hazard” means failure
of the dam could result
in loss of human life
and/or property.**

*** Non-flood benefits in 2025,
including municipal water supply
and recreation, totaled \$19.6 million.**

Emergency Watershed Protection work was statewide in 2025 to provide flood relief



Top left: WVCA Watershed Technician Shane Pettrey documents flood debris removal in Ohio County. Top right: This image shows a debris blockage and bridge damage in southern West Virginia. Bottom right: The WVCA's trench burner was used to incinerate woody debris left over from the June flooding.

The West Virginia Conservation Agency's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program went into effect on opposite ends of the state in 2025, as a significant amount of time and effort was dedicated to flood recovery in both the Northern Panhandle and in southern West Virginia.

Flooding in mid-February in McDowell and 12 other southern West Virginia counties caused significant damage and contributed to several deaths. Flooding in mid-June in the Triadelphia and Valley Grove areas of Ohio County led to nine deaths and severe property and infrastructure damage along Little Wheeling Creek and its tributaries.

The WVCA's response to both flooding events was immediate.

"It's a testament to our ability to move people around, and people willing to travel," said WVCA Assistant Director of Watershed Projects Stephen Starcher.

Staff from the north headed south, and staff from the south headed north, with many "away from home, long hours, long weeks," Starcher said.

"We worked weekends, we worked holidays to provide the quickest response to the landowners, to the constituents, that we could," he said.

In Ohio County, two contracts saw a significant amount of woody debris, sediment and trash removed and burned from mid-June through late July. The first "large contract" at 23 sites saw 4,321 cubic yards of debris removed and cost nearly \$175,724.

The "small contract," also undertaken at 23 sites, saw 2,677 cubic yards of woody debris, sediment and trash removed and cost more than \$122,760.

See **WATERSHED PROJECTS** on Page 24

Agricultural Enhancement

Key Figures (FY 2025)

The Agricultural Enhancement Program supports West Virginia's farm community with cost-share practices to reduce soil erosion, provide alternative water for livestock and improve the productivity of farmlands in the state's 14 conservation districts.

The program is administered by the conservation districts with assistance from the West Virginia Conservation Agency. Supported practices are determined at the local level. Financial and technical assistance are offered to implement best management practices.



Totaling district and
cooperator cost-share:

\$154,977
for pasture
division fence

\$226,257
for exclusion fence

\$601,492
for lime

\$187,165
for watering
systems

\$223,509
for heavy use
area protection

GLCI project aims to offer new ideas on grazing

The goal of the WVCA's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) project is to present comprehensive grazing management techniques to new and existing cooperators and offer them new ideas about what may work on their farms.

In 2025, the Agency was implementing a \$240,192 grant from the US-DA-NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative and has developed a series of training videos – led by top-level grazing experts – that address soil health, forages, grazing techniques, nutrient management and weed control.

The videos can be found on both the WVCA YouTube channel and the website grazing-professionals.us.

The grant funding also provides outreach opportunities, including relevant field days hosted by conservation districts, learning stations at district offices, print and digital advertising, and educational booths at agriculture and conservation-related events for both youth and adults, said Erin Coda, WVCA Field Operations Manager–East, who has taken the lead role implementing the GLCI grant.

Coda said the total effort helps to communicate the impact of the Agency's programs and conservation best management practices (BMPs) to an audience that includes both existing and new cooperators or just others with an interest in conservation.

Each BMP is like a piece to the puzzle that forms the bigger picture of conservation in West Virginia, Coda said.

The videos' focus on soil health, forages, grazing tech-

niques, nutrient management and weed control can give farmers ideas about how they can improve their work on their own farm, Coda said.

"Even if it's just trying one new thing," she said.

Farmers looking to improve their yields or forage health may consider a new type of fencing, an alternative shade option or rotational grazing technique, a new watering system or even experiment with forages more tolerant to heat.

"Experimentation is an important thing for farmers," Coda said. "There's definitely science behind what works."

WVCA Assistant Director of Field Operations Jennifer Skaggs said the topics addressed in the GLCI videos are the foundational components, or building blocks, of grazing management.

"When you get all those things in line where they're supposed to be, then you've got successful grazing management," she said.

Skaggs has overseen the administration of the GLCI grant.

The Agency recognizes the importance of developing the series of grazing management trainings and presenting it in a new way for many, through video, Skaggs said.

The videos will benefit farmers, the public and professionals, as specialists need continuing education to stay current on the latest research and trends in conservation.



See **GLCI PROJECT** on Page 25

Chesapeake Bay Program

Encouraging the use of voluntary best management practices to promote cleaner water in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in West Virginia.

Project	Federal	Match	Total
Eastern Panhandle BMPs	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$340,000
Potomac Valley BMPs	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$340,000
Chesapeake Bay Communications and Website	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$12,000
PVCD Most Effective Basin Funding for Ag Best Management Practices Implementation	\$54,681	\$54,681	\$109,362
Equipment and Supplies	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Conservation District Support - PVCD and EPCD	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
Sleepy Creek Implementation	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
Internships	\$10,560	\$10,560	\$21,120
CREP Training and Outreach	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Travel	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$15,000



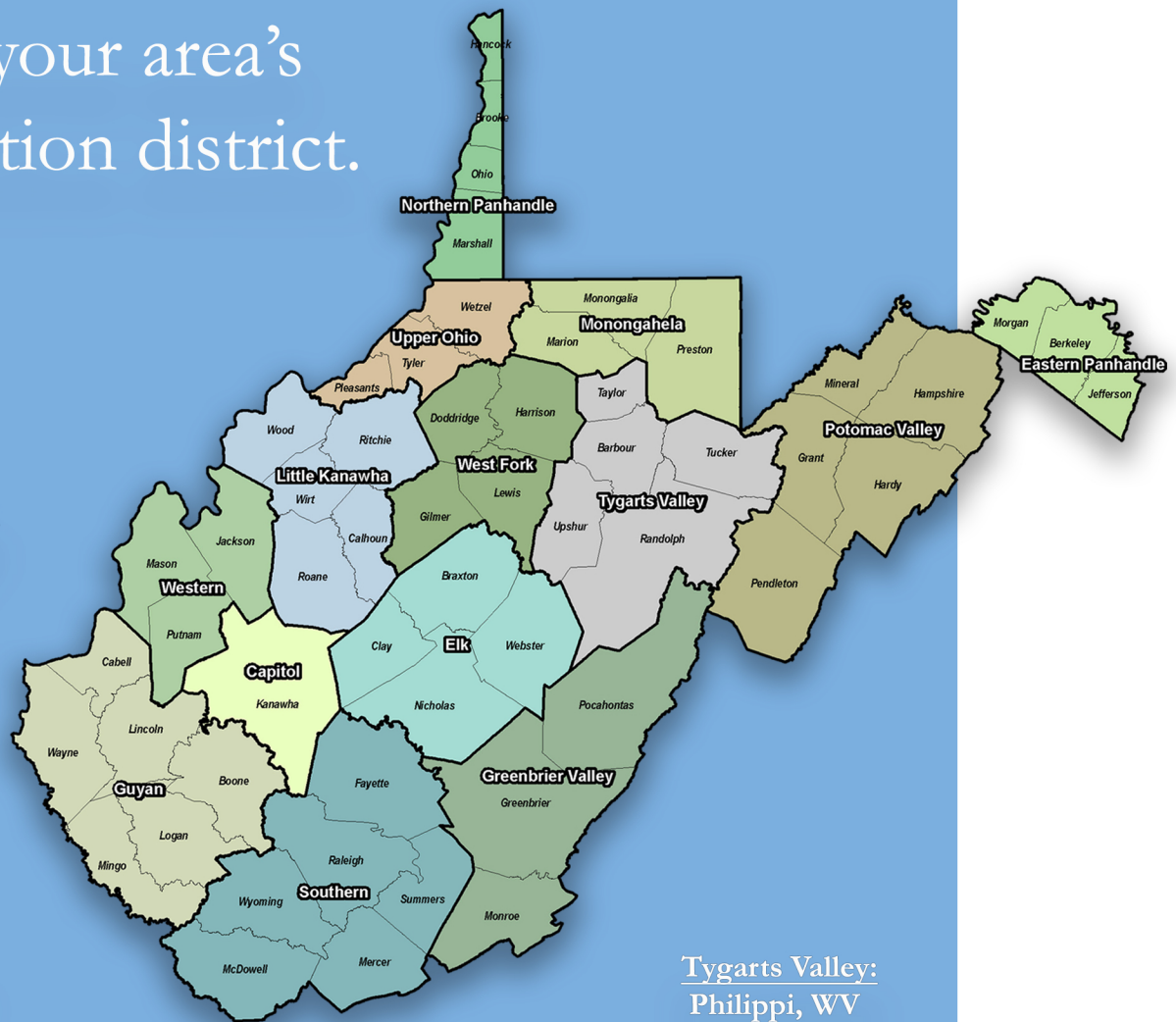
Nonpoint Source Program Key Figures

Nonpoint Source pollution results from land runoff due to rain or snowmelt, and may include pollutants like fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides from agricultural lands and residential areas.

Project	Conservation District	Federal Grant	Match	Total
Anderson Run	Potomac Valley	\$207,970	\$138,647	\$346,617
Cherry Fork	Western	\$135,000	\$90,000	\$225,000
Indian Creek Phase V	Greenbrier Valley	\$86,200	\$55,800	\$142,000
Sleepy Creek Phase VII	Eastern Panhandle	\$82,000	\$58,000	\$140,000
Nonpoint Source Program Base Grant	none - agencywide	\$104,000	\$69,333	\$173,333

Questions?

Contact your area's
conservation district.



Capitol:

Cross Lanes, WV
304.759.0736
ccd@wvca.us

Eastern Panhandle:

Martinsburg, WV
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Elk:

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Greenbrier Valley:

Lewisburg, WV
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Northern Panhandle:

McMechen, WV
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Philippi, WV
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Middlebourne, WV
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Capitol Conservation District



2025 Highlights

The Capitol Conservation District held their second Homesteading-ish Conference in September, and offered 36 sessions and more than 30 speakers over two days. The conference offered on-site demonstrations and hands-on opportunities to small farm owners and homesteaders from across Appalachia.

CCD also held three local meetings in partnership with the Kanawha County Farm Bureau for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative grant (GLCI). Topics at the meetings included drought resiliency, animal husbandry, and extended grazing.

Supervisor Diane Lumadue has spearheaded efforts to study the effects an old dam is having on the Coal River at Tornado. CCD entered into an agreement with an engineering firm and progress on the study had been made in 2025, and a public meeting was held in July.

CCD supervisors held a variety of workshops and field visits during the year that included educational opportunities addressing topics like mushroom foraging, creating bat houses, wildlife habitat houses for pollinators, food preservation, beekeeping, mushroom inoculation, raising chickens, raising quail, sheep and goats, plant propagation, community and backyard gardens, heirloom seeds, saving seeds, and more.

The district hosted the first-ever West Virginia Maple Association maple tapping in early 2025 at the Spring Hill Cemetery Park's Rattie Arboretum. The tree tapping event returned in early 2026.

Capitol district supervisors in July recognized and toured Jordan Ridge Farm, which competed in the Traditional farm category for the 2025 West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year award.

CCD hosted an evening open house at their USDA office with agencies and partners from across the community in attendance. The open house was well attended, and the CCD was able to assist with applications for programs, introduce new cooperators to local partners, and provide opportunities to explore conservation stewardship with the district.

CCD supervisors also provided their southern neighbors with supplies following February flooding in southern counties, and provided much work, volunteer hours and coordination of the WVACD booth at the State Fair of West Virginia in August.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Heavy use area protection, lime, urban agriculture, nutrient management
- District contribution toward practices: \$22,777.20
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$48,307.54

Eastern Panhandle Conservation District



2025 Highlights

The Eastern Panhandle Conservation District put forth two Jefferson County farms to compete for the West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year awards, in both the Traditional farm and Non-Traditional farm categories.

Brown's Farm LLC, which was the Traditional farm participant, competed during the Eastern Area Tour in July. The farm has participated in cover crop, lime, litter and hay reseeding programs, and features 4,000 feet of exclusion fencing, 126 acres of prescribed grazing, 825 feet of buried waterline and a watering facility. Tim and Staci Brown own and operate the farm.

Spring Grove Farm, owned by Terry and Peggy Thornton, competed in the Non-Traditional farm category. They have participated in Urban Ag and Honey-bee Nucleus Ag Enhancement programs, and installed a pollinator habitat plot in 2025 as an agricultural enhancement practice.

The Thorntons converted an old tennis court into a pollinator friendly area where they grow flowers and a variety of vegetables.

EPCD took part in a field day/workshop in August called "Forage to Flight – Building Habitat From The Ground Up." Topics covered included forest invasives and treatments by Herb Petticord and Jarred Kinlein, native warm season grass forage and pollinators, covered by Noah Cable. Participants also saw a timber harvest stand. The conservation district sponsored lunch.

The EPCD and WVCA staffers who work within the district continued their work in 2025 to help clean up the Elks Run watershed.

Recent efforts have included tree plantings at Sam Michaels Park and septic system pumping and repair/replacement programs to manage fecal coliform in the stream. A video detailing the work to improve Elks Run, completed in December 2025, can be found on our WVCA YouTube channel.

The district hosted a Grazing Land Techniques field day in September at Meadow Green Farm in Kearneysville. Topics included grazing techniques, soil health, forages and more. The field day was part of the Conservation Agency's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) project.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, pollinators, frost seeding, urban agriculture
- District contribution toward practices: \$23,312.50
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$44,859.46

Elk Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Elk Conservation District continues to plan for the rehabilitation of the five Saltlick Creek small watershed dams, which would be the first-ever complete rehabilitation of an entire watershed's dams at one time.

The project planning is underway, and in 2025 onsite archaeological and architectural field work was completed and onsite drilling activity/subsurface exploration was completed.

A public meeting was held in February to discuss environmental aspects of the rehabilitation project with the public.

The ECD in 2025 continued their strong commitment to the West Virginia Envirothon, with several supervisors and associate supervisors volunteering their time to the annual high school competition.

And two teams from the district, both from Clay County High School, took the top two awards at the 2025 WV Envirothon.

The Clay County team that included students Skylar Adkins, Hollie Conley, Brooklyn Anderson, Sophia Berberich and Grace Bass took home the top prize, a \$5,000 scholarship to share, and later represented West Virginia at the NCF-Envirothon, which was held July 20-26 at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

The second-place team consisted of Clay County students Parker Taylor, Maddy Morton, Trent Hinkle, Jamie Grose and Kaylah Kennedy.

In 2025 the district participated in drought exigency program funding, helping connect cooperators with cost-

share funding for best management practices to help deal with drought conditions that returned in 2025, although not to the severity of the 2024 drought.



The district held its tree sale in March, and sold a variety of fruit trees, including apple, cherry and peach, and raspberry, blackberry, blueberry and elderberry plants, as well as pine tree and red maple seedlings and more.

Elk CD supervisors welcomed a new WVCA

administrative specialist based in the district in 2025, Barbie Rader.

The district once again held their summer picnic at Supervisor Mike Smalley's farm in Webster County.

WVU Extension Agent Debra Friend, who works closely with the Elk Conservation District, received the prestigious 2025 Member at Large award, which was presented during the WVACD's annual October awards banquet in Sutton. It honors a person who works closely with districts for their contributions to conservation.



Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, exclusion fence, heavy use area protection
- District contribution toward practices: \$34,084.44
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$95,366.91

Greenbrier Valley Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Greenbrier Valley Conservation District had a busy year impacting conservation and benefitting its cooperators in 2025.

More than \$2.64 million in drought recovery/pasture restoration funding was awarded to GVCD cooperators in Monroe, Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties in early 2025. In all, 617 checks were disbursed to cooperators to help deal with the impacts of the devastating 2024 drought.

"I think we had a very good year with drought (response) and equipment rentals," GVCD Chairman Gary Sawyers said.

Sawyers noted that maintenance of the equipment rented out is very important for the district, and that April was a record month for equipment rentals.

"You can't run an equipment program if the equipment doesn't work," he said.

The district's annual legislative and awards banquet in Fairlea saw a significant number of cooperators and elected officials turn out, including West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt, State Conservationist Jon Bourdon with the USDA-NRCS, and delegates Jeff Campbell and Ray Canterbury.

During their legislative and awards banquet, the district also recognized six outstanding grassland farms across the district. The award is given to farmers who focus on conservation best management practices as they balance conservation with increased production efforts.

In Greenbrier County, Jann Holwick of Holwick Farm and Jesse and Anne Ziegler of Rising Sun Ranch received the Outstanding Grassland Farm Awards.

In Monroe County, James McGrady of McGrady Farm and Todd Belcher of Heritage View Farms received the Outstanding Grassland Farm Awards.



And in Pocahontas County, Nathan Dean and family of Tupelo Grove Farm and Jerry and Linda Clifton of Clifton Farm received the Outstanding Grassland Farm Awards.



The district recognized Rick and Renae Wooddell of Arrowhead Farms in Pocahontas County for being a past Bicentennial Farm recipient, and awarded the 2025 Supervisor of the Year award to Gary L. Truex, who had played a key role in 2025 in servicing the district's equipment program and filled in as equipment coordinator during the district's record month of April for equipment rentals.

In 2025, the district finished two Section 319 nonpoint source pollution grants, and saw nearly \$290,000 in combined district and cooperator contributions to agricultural enhancement best management practices in fiscal year 2025. (See details below.)

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Exclusion fence, watering systems, lime, pasture division fence
- District contribution toward practices: \$90,473.30
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$289,374.95

Guyan Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Guyan Conservation District continued their impressive run of community outreach in 2025, as district supervisors held two grassland field days, a high tunnel field day in Boone County and a wildlife field day for the public in Logan County.

The June high tunnel field day at Bill and Marlene Woods' home in Hewett included information about nutrient management/fertilizing vegetable crops, honeybee behavior and management, local growers discussing their high tunnels, and local, state and federal cost-share programs available to gardeners.



The wildlife field day at Chief Logan State Park in September included lessons about hands-on techniques and expert insights into wildlife habitat management, invasive species control, chainsaw safety and more.

The district hosted two pasture walks funded through the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) program in 2025. The first was at Brian Wellman's farm at Prichard in Wayne County in August and the second was at Ricky Coyner's farm in the Milton area of Cabell County on Sept. 9.

Topics at the pasture walks included multi-species grazing, low-stress animal handling, invasive species, fall forage management and more. The West Virginia State University Extension Trailer was also available at both pasture walks.

The district helped establish two community gardens within their district in 2025. One was at Cammack Children's Center in Huntington, a therapeutic home for older youth, and the second was at The Barn in Boone

County, a community center that provides meals and other services to the community.

Some of the services GCD provided for the community gardens were an irrigation system, soil and raised beds for the gardens.

In late August, the district held an open house in Hamlin to connect with potential cooperators and let them know more about fencing, irrigation, soil testing, herbicide calibration, Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans, and signups for

FSA, WVCA and Guyan Conservation District programs.

The district awarded two farm winners that advanced to the 2025 West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year area competition. Tony and Rachell Sigmon with Uneeda Mini Farm and Greenhouse in Uneeda were recognized in the Non-Traditional farm category, while Gary and Linda Jeffers' farm in the West Hamlin area was recognized in the Traditional farm category.

The district recognized a Century Farm in 2025: the Lazy D Ranch.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Heavy use area protection, lime, nutrient management, urban agriculture
- District contribution toward practices: \$43,220.97
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$84,974.71

Little Kanawha Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Little Kanawha Conservation District oversaw the successful installation of a debris boom at the North Fork of the Hughes River dam in Ritchie County in the fall of 2025.

The boom, which has been in the works for many years, is anchored on both sides of North Bend Lake near the structure itself, and is needed to prevent large woody debris from clogging the dam's riser.

Contractors floated sections of the debris boom down North Bend Lake before setting it in place.

Later in the fall, in October, Little Kanawha supervisors attended a dedication at North Bend State Park renaming the dam in honor of the late Samuel J. Ware II, a former USDA-NRCS engineer who was instrumental in the construction of the dam, which was completed in 2002.

LKCD Chairman Bob Buchanan said the district chose to recognize five farmers who had done a tremendous job with conservation on their farms.

Those farmers were: Matthew Painter in Roane County, Tim Schiele in Calhoun County, Norman Law in Ritchie County, Steve Full in Wirt County and John Dennis Terry III in Wood County.

Buchanan noted that a significant benefit the district provided was renting out farming equipment to cooperators for the year, which is valuable because “they’d never

be able to buy the equipment for the price that we provided it for,” he said.

In 2025, the Little Kanawha Conservation District contributed to the annual Wirt County wetlands day event, as well as other youth in agriculture events.

The district supervisors sponsored a team from Parkersburg High School that participated in the West Virginia Envirothon at Cedar Lakes Conference Center in Jackson County.

Buchanan noted that the district’s agricultural enhancement program helps a lot of cooperators in the district’s five counties of Wood, Wirt, Ritchie, Roane and Calhoun.

In 2025, the top best management practices in the district’s AgEP program were lime, invasive species management, watering systems, heavy use area protection and pasture division fence.



Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, invasive species management, watering systems, heavy use area protection
- District contribution toward practices: \$74,755.34
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$179,419.75

Monongahela Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Monongahela Conservation District spent their full allotment of agricultural enhancement program dollars for fiscal year 2025, which shows that cooperators are benefiting from the program and getting more conservation best management practices on the ground.

The district contribution toward practices exceeded \$80,400 and the combined district and cooperator contribution exceeded \$128,000.

The top practices in the district are pasture division fence, heavy use area protection, lime and nutrient management.

The district was also involved with several outreach events in 2025.

On Nov. 8, MCD partnered with WVU Extension (of Monongalia County) to host a shiitake mushroom workshop. Participants learned about caring for their shiitake mushroom log before heading outside to prepare and take home their own log.

In April, the district hosted a farm safety field day, which featured learning about tractor safety and chain-saw safety, in Wadestown.

During its annual banquet in October, the district awarded the Solid Waste Authority Award to supervisor HR Scott and the Outstanding Service Award to associate supervisor Jean Conley.

Supervisor Andrew Price won the Frank Glover award, which is an award presented to a person who has demonstrated “a long-term commitment in the public sphere for community action as a volunteer that

goes above and beyond their job performance.”

The district recognized Century farms, a Sesquicentennial farm and a Bicentennial farm during their banquet.



The Scott and Dean Sisler farm and Spaid Spring Meadows Farm, both established in 1924, were recognized along with the King Rumble Farm, established in 1883. The Sisler Family Farm, established in 1849, was recognized as a Sesquicentennial Farm and the

Morris and Sons Farm, established in 1803, as a Bicentennial Farm. They also recognized a 250-year farm, the Stemple Family Farm.

The district's farms were among those across the state recognized as part of the West Virginia Century Farm Program during the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts' annual awards banquet in Sutton in October.

At the awards banquet, MCD Supervisor Brandon Linton was recognized as the WVACD's 2025 Rookie Supervisor of the Year.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Pasture division fence, heavy use area protection, lime, nutrient management
- District contribution toward practices: \$80,416.54
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$128,042.30

Northern Panhandle Conservation District

2025 Highlights

Educational outreach to both children and adults continues to be a top priority for the Northern Panhandle Conservation District.

The NPCD and its supervisors had another very busy year with educational outreach in 2025, as evidenced by them once again receiving the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts' Education District of the Year award in October.

The district hosted a Youth Beekeeping Program from April through August for middle and high-school age students, thanks to funding from The Bee Cause Project.

In September, they once again hosted Hands-On Ag Day, which brings a wide variety of presenters to the Marshall County Fairgrounds so fifth-grade students can learn about soil and water conservation, agriculture, natural resources, pollinators, growing produce and much more.

NPCD staff and board Chairman Mark Fitzsimmons also presented at an Ohio County Hands On Ag Day in October, where they taught at the "All About Soil" station.

The district hosted its 13th Annual Women in Agriculture Day in June at Sherrard Middle School in Wheeling, a rain barrel workshop in August, and forestry field day and compost barrel workshops in September.

Two elementary schools, Hilltop and Cameron, received pumpkins in October for student experiments that included seed counting and measuring circumference.

Further, they recognized youth poster contest winners, working with the theme "Home is Where the Habitat Is," and adult photo contest winners, competing in a variety of categories, in 2025.

Twelve students at four schools – Moundsville Middle,

Saint Paul School, Linsly School and Our Lady of Peace – were recognized, along with their teachers, for scoring high on the Samara Conservation Test, which challenges students' knowledge and reasoning skills on a wide range of environmental topics.

NPCD continues to sponsor the fifth-place \$1,500 team award for the West Virginia Envirothon competition, and supervisors volunteer their time to the annual event. A team from Oak Glen High School in Hancock County was the highest-scoring rookie team at the 2025 event.

During summer, the district worked closely with the West Virginia Conservation Agency to award contracts and quickly respond to severe flooding in the Triadelphia, Valley Grove and Elm Grove areas. Crews removed debris, sediment and trash from Little Wheeling Creek and its tributaries to restore stream function and reduce future flood risks.

In 2025, DC Lucey Farm in Marshall County, owned by Dan and Colleen Lucey, was a finalist for the West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year award in the Traditional farm category. The Luceys (see bottom left photo) were recognized during an October awards banquet in Sutton.



Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Exclusion fence, pasture division fence, heavy use area protection, lime
- District contribution toward practices: \$30,708.24
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$87,511.19

Potomac Valley Conservation District

2025 Highlights

For the second consecutive year, a farm within the Potomac Valley Conservation District (PVCD) received the 2025 West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year award in the Non-Traditional farm category.

Wilding Woolly Farm in Hardy County won the award during a banquet in Sutton in October.

Hope and Beverly Yankey's farm near Mathias is a sheep farm where wildlife, soil and water conservation practices are also strongly emphasized. (See top photo above; Beverly (left) and Hope at right.)

Wilding Woolly competed against finalist T&T Organics & EDGE Demonstration Research and Training Farm of McDowell County.

The Yankeys' conservation philosophy has evolved into introducing conservation practices on the farm, but then minimal interference after establishing the practices and "allowing Mother Nature to continue the restoration and return to balance," Hope wrote in a farm biography.

Also in October at the awards banquet, PVCD Supervisor Lois Carr won the prestigious Carroll Greene Award. The Greene award is the top award given to a conservation district supervisor in West Virginia each year. Carr is a vice president with the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts and serves the local Farm Bureau, her church ministry and the farmland protection board in Pendleton County. (See bottom photo above.)

On Sept. 15, a field day was held at Lough Farms in Upper Tract and included discussion about grazing principles and extended grazing techniques. WVU Extension also participated in the field day.



The district also sponsored a pasture walk hosted by Woodside Farms, LLC, in Mineral County on July 17.

PVCD supervisors had an impressive turnout of more than 100 people at the annual banquet in October, where they honored several Century Farm recipients, including two Sesquicentennial Farms: Heavner Farms, the John D. Heavner family, est. 1872 and the Rock Island Farm, Doug and Cindy Crites and David and Allie Rohrbaugh, est. 1868; and two Century Farms: the McCauley Back Acre Farm, Don and Betty McCauley, est. 1881 and Little Em Cattle Company, Amy Crites Kile, est. 1924.

The district continues to offer a variety of equipment to cooperators, including seeders, lime spreaders and poultry litter crust-busters.

The district also has three FFA-affiliated youth supervisors, who are gaining valuable experience by working with the district. They are Emily See, Layla Shreve and Kade Suddath.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, frost seeding, pasture seeding, warm seeding
- District contribution toward practices: \$125,547.43
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$202,208.40

Southern Conservation District

2025 Highlights

A new prototype feed pad and manure storage facility (see top photo) was completed at Ron Testerman's farm in Summers County in early 2025.

The Southern Conservation District's work crew constructed the feed pad facility, which was a project of the West Virginia Conservation Agency.

The feed pad and manure storage facility prototype will be smaller than the specifications required for USDA-NRCS cost-assisted feed pads, but will still act as heavy use area protection and reduce erosion and improve water quality on cattle farms with smaller herds.

The idea behind the prototype is to offer a more cost-effective option to many West Virginia farmers with smaller herds.

In November, Testerman welcomed students and teachers from Summers County High School to the farm, where they could see the feed pad, cattle, hogs and chickens and see where their food comes from, he said.

The SCD district work crew in 2025 mowed 68 dams, including in the Western, Capitol, Greenbrier Valley and Potomac Valley conservation districts. They removed blockages on the Bluestone River and did streambank stabilization work within the district, as well.

Following the February flooding in southern West Virginia, the district pledged \$10,000 worth of assistance to help clean up mud from two churches and the basement of a pastor's home. They also donated \$2,500 so West Little League players could play baseball this year, said SCD supervisor Randall Patton.

The district had two farms competing in the West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year competition. Steve and Deborah De-

Hart's Windy Hill Farm in Mercer County competed in the Traditional farm category.

T&T Organics and EDGE Demonstration Research and Training Farm of McDowell County won the area competition and was a finalist in the statewide competition (see bottom left photo) for the

Non-Traditional category. Jason Tartt, Sr., of Valls creek heads the farm and wants to use it as a demonstration area to show the types of unique farming that can be done in Central Appalachia.

The district also hosted a very well-attended awards banquet Oct. 16, where they were able to recognize their farm of the year winners and celebrate a Bicentennial Farm, the Richmond Family Farm, which was recognized through

the Century Farm program. The Richmond farm was established in 1796.



Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, nutrient management, heavy use area protection, exclusion fence
 - District contribution toward practices: \$71,649.02
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$174,417.

Tygart's Valley Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Tygart's Valley Conservation District work crew had a busy year working on multiple projects in and around the district.

Mowing and general maintenance was done at the Elkwater Fork dam in Randolph County, the Salem Fork dams in Harrison County, and the Polk Creek dams in Lewis County.

Maintenance work, including mowing, was also done on the Pecks Run and Shooks Run streams.

The work crew performed brush hogging at the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area for the U.S. Forest Service, and performed brush removal, work on troughs and ponds, hydro-seeding and fencing for cooperators who work with the TVCD.

Tygart's Valley supervisors took part in Agriculture and Conservation Day activities in February. Several supervisors attended and visited with their legislators at the state Capitol in Charleston. Supervisors said it was a productive day.

Supervisors with TVCD also attended area meetings with supervisors from other neighboring conservation districts to share ideas and work together on joint concerns.

The district saw an increase in the number of signups for Agricultural Enhancement Program best management practices. The top practices in the district are: invasive species management, lime, watering systems and pond cleanouts.

Among the many community outreach projects in the Tygart's Valley CD, supervisors were involved with drone-spraying demonstrations, biochar presentations,

electric-fencing demonstrations, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) field days and more across the district.



The district worked with the Mansfield Place nursing home in Barbour County to purchase lettuce seedlings and an indoor grower for residents, fostering community conservation for all. The TVCD used funds from the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts' community outreach grant for the indoor grower.



In January, Amber Higgins took a position as a West Virginia Conservation Agency administrative specialist working with the TVCD.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Invasive species management, lime, watering systems, pond cleanout
 - District contribution toward practices: \$73,709.59
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$142,167.13

Upper Ohio Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Upper Ohio Conservation District received the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts' Excellence in Communications Award during an awards banquet in Sutton in October.

The district earned the recognition after a successful year promoting its programs and practices. UOCD grew its Facebook followers by 1,500 in the past year, and had 1.8 million content views, with help from one post that went viral. They also had more than 50 items printed in local newspapers and statewide magazines.

UOCD hosted two gardening workshops in Tyler and Wetzel counties in partnership with Kacey Gantzer of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. Participants learned practical skills in vegetable production, soil health and season extension.

The district also held three rain barrel workshops in Wetzel and Pleasants counties, where participants learned about water conservation and stormwater management while building their own barrels to take home. They hosted a compost tumbler workshop in New Martinsville focusing on soil health, where attendees constructed their own tumblers.

The district received an \$8,000 WVACD grant to expand the Brooklyn Community Garden in Wetzel County. Ten new raised beds were added, along with tools, soil, and other materials to support additional growers.

The West Virginia Soil Tunnel Trailer was taken to eight locations throughout the year, reaching hundreds of students and families. The stops included: New Martinsville School, Belmont Elementary, Paden City Elementary,

Wetzel County Center for Children and Families, Autumnfest, Hundred Heritage School, the Wetzel Sheriff's

Picnic and the Pine Grove Center for Children and Families.

District supervisors organized an Envirothon training at the Wetzel County 4-H grounds, the annual Land Judging Contest in Pleasants County, and the Third Annual Steve Macnarney Forestry Contest, with a great turnout from FFA programs across the region.

In the poster contest, two UOCD students placed at the state level: Justice Kildow earned second place in the 5th–6th grade division, and Henley Smith won first place in the 2nd–3rd grade division and advanced to the national NACD poster contest.

Through grant funding, UOCD distributed biochar to 40 growers to test its effectiveness. Participants tracked their results and shared feedback on successes and challenges. Biochar is a carbon-rich substance that can become a habitat for beneficial soil microorganisms.

Finally, the UOCD supported 75 local producers through the AgEP cost-share program, offering a variety of best management practices. (See the blue box below.)



Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, heavy use area protection, urban agriculture, watering systems
- District contribution toward practices: \$34,348.30
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$71,089.15

West Fork Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The West Fork Conservation District sponsored a Traditional farm that competed in the 2025 West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year competition.

Cole and Samantha Williams' farm on Jake Run Road in Lost Creek, in Harrison County, was the district's 2025 farm of the year. (See top photo.)

The farm has stocker cattle and cow/calf pairs, and Cole Williams utilizes rotational grazing and extended grazing across six paddocks on the farm. He controls invasive species on the farm by using aerial drone herbicide spraying.

"We strive to go above with maintaining good grass, manage invasive species and provide good clean water to the livestock we graze on the farm," Cole Williams wrote in the competition application. "We achieve this by rotational grazing, stockpiling, using aerial application of herbicides, and using spring fed and well-fed watering systems."

The WFCD supervisors also held a pasture walk field day at the Stenger Farm in southern Harrison County in May. The focus was on grazing management and moving forward after the severe drought in 2024. The Stenger Farm was the district's farm of the year that year.

In April, West Fork supervisors held its annual Envirothon training day at Doddridge County Park to help prepare students for the 2025 West Virginia Envirothon competition at Cedar Lakes Conference Center.

At the competition itself, the Doddridge FFA team from Doddridge County High School finished in fifth

place, and also had the highest score among all teams at the Envirothon's wildlife station.



Supervisors once again hosted a sixth-grade conservation day in Gilmer County on April 30. (See bottom left photo.)

In other youth in agriculture news, a team from Lewis County finished fifth out of 19 teams in a Livestock Quiz Bowl competition in Louisville, Ky., on Nov. 18. Bruce Loyd with WVU Extension traveled with the team to the

quiz bowl.

Loyd and Richard Law, who works regularly with WFCD through the USDA-NRCS, both appear in a series of extensive videos for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) grant that was shot and edited in 2025. The videos can be found online at: grazingprofessionals.us

The district held its annual banquet on Sept. 30 at Johnstown in Harrison County.

Conservation by the Numbers:

Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Heavy use area protection, lime, nutrient management, pasture division fence
- District contribution toward practices: \$57,065.48
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$118,536.68



Western Conservation District

2025 Highlights

The Western Conservation District celebrated a West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year award in 2025, as the farm owned by Parrish J. and Jessica Pendley and their daughters won the statewide award in the Traditional farm category.

The Pendley family's enterprise is both a cow/calf operation and an extensive row crop and hay operation, specializing in corn and soybeans, across three farms in both Jackson and Wood counties.

Parrish Pendley practices rotational grazing, which reduces livestock's impact on farmland and helps control erosion, across all farm areas with cattle. He's also developed new water sources on his farmland to help deal with the impacts of drought.

Pendley has a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) buffer on 10 acres of his farm in Belleville, in Wood County. The buffer helps keep water from settling in the fields where he grows corn and soybeans.

Adjoining the buffer is a 40-acre wildlife sanctuary and wetland designed by the state Division of Natural Resources. Fish and other wildlife live in the wetland.

Pendley's farmland is the first that feeds into the wildlife sanctuary and wetland, so the 10-acre buffer serves as filter strips. A key component of CRP, grass filter strips protect water quality by acting as a natural filter to sediment, nutrients and other pollutants.

The Pendleys received a \$1,000 award and will receive the use of a tractor from Middletown Tractor Sales in Fairmont, a longtime awards sponsor.

WCD supervisors regularly participate in the Conservation Farm of the Year awards, and annually submit one or more farms to compete for the statewide awards.

In other educational outreach news, the district again hosted regional and statewide land judging contests in 2025.

Also, the district spent more than their statewide allocation for agricultural enhancement program dollars, which supervisors said shows that their outreach has

been successful. Supervisors spent local funds to make up the difference, providing more cost-share funding to cooperators.

The district held their spring agriculture workshop in March at Point Pleasant, which included discussions about landowner involvement in forest carbon projects, summer annuals, regenerative agriculture, federal and state conservation programs and more.

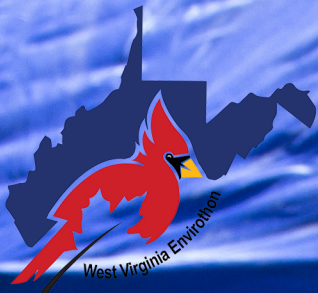
And supervisors volunteered their time for the 2025 WV Envirothon, which was hosted within the district at Cedar Lakes Conference Center in April.



Conservation by the Numbers:

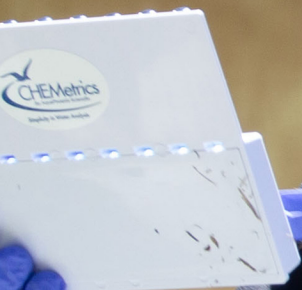
Top agricultural enhancement best management practices:

- Lime, heavy use area protection, watering systems, pasture division fence
- District contribution toward practices: \$87,311.70
- Combined district and cooperator contribution: \$142,531.47



Envirothon 2025 Highlights

140
Students
participated



\$23,250

In scholarship money, awards
and advisor/school stipends

More than 3,450
Students participated since 1997

More than
\$291,000
In college scholarships
granted since 1997

Farms in Jackson/Wood and Hardy counties win the 2025 WV Conservation Farm of the Year awards

SUTTON, W.Va. – Farmers from the Ravenswood area and near Mathias in Hardy County, who were recognized for their efforts to protect soil, water and other resources, received the top West Virginia Conservation Farm of the Year awards during an October recognition ceremony in Sutton.

The Parrish J. Pendley Farm in Jackson and Wood counties (Traditional Farm) and Wilding Woolly Farm in Hardy County (Non-Traditional Farm) received the awards during the West Virginia Conservation Partnership Conference luncheon.

Parrish Pendley, also known as “PJ,” operates his farms in Jackson and Wood counties with his wife, Jessica, and daughters Paisley, Josie and Tilly.

Hope and Beverly Yankey’s farm near Mathias in Hardy County is a sheep farm where wildlife, soil and water conservation practices are strongly emphasized.

Each farm received a \$1,000 award and will receive the use of a tractor from Middletown Tractor Sales in Fairmont, a longtime sponsor of the conservation farm awards.

Both farms have demonstrated a commitment to conservation practices that protect soil, land, water and related resources. Wilding Woolly Farm was sponsored by the Potomac Valley Conservation District and the Pendley farm was sponsored by the Western Conservation District.

West Virginia farms are eligible for the Conservation Farm of the Year honor after winning first at the county, district and area levels. Two groups of judges visited both farms in August, as well as the other finalists’ farms, and

graded them on their use of best management practices, impact on ecological systems and community-based activities.

The Pendley farm competed against finalist DC Lucey Farm in Marshall County, and Wilding Woolly competed against finalist T&T Organics & EDGE Demonstration Research and Training Farm, in McDowell County.

Parrish J. Pendley Farm

The Pendley family’s enterprise is both a cow/calf operation and also an extensive row crop and hay operation, specializing in corn and soybeans, across three farms in both Jackson and Wood counties.

Parrish Pendley practices rotational grazing, which reduces livestock’s impact

on farmland and helps control erosion, across all areas with cattle. He’s also developed new water sources on his farmland to help deal with the impacts of drought.

Some of the woodland on his farms is separated from pastureland by exclusion fencing, which aims to keep livestock out of critical areas not intended for grazing.

The operation also has a comprehensive nutrient management plan.

Pendley has a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) buffer on 10 acres of his farm in Belleville, in Wood County. The buffer helps keep water from settling in the fields where he grows corn and soybeans.

Adjoining the buffer is a 40-acre wildlife sanctuary and wetland designed by the state Division of Natural Resources. Fish and other wildlife live in the wetland.



See **FARMS OF THE YEAR** on next page

FARMS OF THE YEAR from Page 22

Pendley's farmland is the first that feeds into the wild-life sanctuary and wetland, so the 10-acre buffer serves as filter strips.

A key component of CRP, grass filter strips protect water quality by acting as a natural filter to sediment, nutrients and other pollutants, and protect soil from erosion by stabilizing cropland that might have been susceptible to damaging water and wind, according to the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The Pendleys are first-generation full-time farmers.

"You take a special pride in being able to manage these farms and have them way better than when you obtained them -- and strive to make them better hopefully for the next generation -- because you know how hard they were to acquire yourself," Parrish Pendley said.

He was a past Farm Service Agency committee member for three terms. He also supports 4-H and the Jackson County Junior Fair, and his daughters are involved in 4-H Cloverbuds.

The Pendleys and their daughters are also active in their church, Milhoan Ridge Baptist Church, and in their community.

Wilding Woolly Farm

The Yankeys' conservation philosophy has evolved into introducing conservation practices on the farm, but then minimal interference after establishing the practices and "allowing Mother Nature to continue the restoration and return to balance," Hope Yankey wrote in a farm biography.

In 2022, the second-largest tree planting in West Virginia that year took place at Wilding Woolly in an area of the farm set aside in the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

The trees were planted in areas with poorer soil, on hillsides or in wet, spring-laden areas that may flood. Such land is ideal for excluding livestock.

"They planted 1,100 trees in two days," she said. "It was phenomenal."

A trip to New Zealand in 1993 opened Hope's eyes to a new way of doing things on the farm. The goal became to under-stock and under-graze the farm, with far fewer sheep and fewer Scottish Highland cattle. Hope and her

husband also began to remove livestock from woodlands and riparian areas and moved toward using only organic and "low-impact methods in an effort to transform the soil health and habitat for plants and wildlife," Hope wrote.

Last year, the Yankeys took on streambed restoration within the Bald Knob tributary that is the beginning headwaters of the Lost River. A bulldozer helped establish two triple-tiered pooled areas to collect and dam water, and 10 log dams were erected along the stream bed.

Nine trees and 55 native streambed shrubs and bushes were then planted to help shade the water to cool surface temperature for aquatic organisms.

Pollinator habitat establishment has become a priority on the farm. Milkweed and thistle have been allowed to grow to welcome pollinators.

The couple's efforts have led to the reintroduction of species to the farm, including a variety of birds, butterflies, bees, small mammals and aquatic life, Hope said.

"At the moment, Bev and I, in our mid-70s, are committing this farm to strictly a conservation effort in part to make sure that we can protect the Lost River watershed and the pristine environment that we've been able to produce here over the course of 45 years," Hope said.

They plan to enroll their entire property, as well as an adjoining 40-acre property they are in the process of purchasing, into a conservation easement with the Cappon & Lost Rivers Land Trust, which will preserve the land in perpetuity.

Hope and Bev's community service work includes hosting a "Lost River Clean Up" roadside trash pickup, media outreach to share their story and highlight available conservation programs and volunteer work at Lost River State Park and Shenandoah National Park.

Hope also received a Women in Agriculture in West Virginia award in 2021.



WATERSHED PROJECTS from Page 2

The work was performed in collaboration with contractors and the Northern Panhandle Conservation District.

In McDowell and in eight other southern counties, the WVCA removed nearly 4,668 cubic yards of woody debris from 46 sites, as well as 316 cubic yards of sediment and 57 cubic yards of trash from many of those sites.

Debris removal work was performed in Cabell, Kanawha, Lincoln, Mercer, McDowell, Mingo, Raleigh, Wayne and Wyoming counties.

WVCA also responded in May to a disaster declaration after flooding in Mineral County, inspecting the New Creek dams and all the county's Patterson Creek dams within a 48-hour window, Starcher said.

None of the dams overtopped, and each was functioning properly and as it should.

"We responded to all three (EWP) events effectively in 24 hours," Starcher said.

All the staff who work under Starcher were involved in at least one, if not all three of the events.

Five months of EWP work is a big effort when looking at the year as a whole, he said. The day-to-day work, however, didn't stop as conservation specialists assisted watershed technicians with monthly operation



and maintenance dam inspections and agricultural enhancement program signups continued uninterrupted, as well as work on dam rehabilitation projects.

"We take our responsibility to provide flood relief during disaster declarations very seriously," said WVCA Executive Director Judith Lyons. "Our response across several events in 2025 was swift, and we took an all-hands-on-deck approach to doing our part to remove debris blockages to help protect people and property."

Some other significant watershed projects in 2025 included:

Samuel J. Ware II dam/North Fork of Hughes River debris boom

The WVCA and Little Kanawha Conservation District installed a debris boom to two anchors across North Bend Lake in Ritchie County in the early fall.

The boom crosses the lake near the dam structure itself, which was rededicated for Ware, a former USDA-NRCS engineer, in October.

As a cost-saving measure, the conservation district had purchased the boom directly. Pacific Netting Products of Washington state produced the boom. Debris booms hold back large woody debris to help ensure the performance and function of a dam's riser and principal spillway outlet system.

A video detailing some of the debris boom installation process can be viewed on our WVCA YouTube channel.

Saltlick Creek Watershed Rehabilitation

Planning work was completed and moving forward in 2025 on a total rehabilitation of the entire Saltlick Creek watershed in Braxton County, a first-of-its-kind project for small watershed dams in the U.S.

See **WATERSHED PROJECTS** on next page

Left: A rehabilitated section of Little Wheeling Creek in Ohio County after debris removal work was completed in mid-July.

WATERSHED PROJECTS from Page 24

Onsite archaeological and architectural field work was completed, as well as onsite drilling activity/subsurface exploration.

A public meeting was held in February to discuss environmental aspects of the rehabilitation project with the public.

The Elk Conservation District has been heavily involved in the planning.

Upper Deckers No. 5 riser obstruction removal

In December, WVCA staff and contractors worked with the Monongahela Conservation District to remove an obstructed riser at Upper Deckers No. 5 dam in Preston County.

Someone had lodged and boarded up a plywood obstruction within the dam's riser, which is a violation of the state's Dam Safety Act.

WVCA worked with contractors and the district to first draw down the pool using pumps and siphons at Upper Deckers No. 5, then sought the help of a dive team to dislodge the obstruction.

The riser is now functioning properly.

GLCI PROJECT from Page 4

There are 11 total GLCI videos.

Five "Train the Trainer" videos aim to equip agricultural educators, technical specialists and conservation partners with the tools and knowledge to effectively assist farmers in improving grazing management. Participants will gain strategies to teach and support on-the-ground conservation practices.

Five "Farmer Learning" focused videos are designed for producers and landowners. This pathway offers practical, easy-to-understand lessons to help improve pasture productivity, enhance livestock health, and protect natural resources. Viewers will learn from experts and peers about real-world practices that strengthen farms and the land farmers depend on.

One "Farmer Testimonial" video gives some insight into the programs that have assisted some West Virginia farmers and their efforts to get conservation practices on the ground.

Coda said the focus of the videos aligns with the Agency's work to incentivize conservation best management practices through programs like the Agricultural Enhancement Program.

"The foundation of any conservation practice is rooted in these qualities of improvement of soil health and

water quality," Coda said.

As a cooperator may watch one video at a time, they might also find an idea that helps them build on a larger conservation plan for their operation. Implementing new conservation practices, Coda said, doesn't need to be taken on all at once.

"You can kind of work at it brick by brick, season by season," she said.

Partnering agencies for the GLCI project include the WVCA, WVU Extension, the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts, the Appalachian Grazing Conference Committee, the state Department of Agriculture, and USDA-NRCS of West Virginia. While these partners may not all be directly involved with the day-to-day operations of administering the grant, they make up an advisory committee that brought the proposal together and continue to advise how the program is implemented.



Right: Bruce Loyd (center) with WVU Extension works with filmmakers from Studio Mukri during a weed control video shoot.

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