



**United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Helping People Help the Land

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
1550 Earl Core Road, Suite 200
Morgantown, WV 26505
Phone: 304-284-7540 Fax: 304-284-4839
<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/>

Mission

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

Vision

Harmony between people and the land.

Overview

Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. NRCS employees provide technical assistance based on sound science and suited to a customer's specific needs. NRCS provide financial assistance for many conservation activities. Participation in NRCS programs is voluntary.

NRCS manages natural resources conservation programs and services that provide environmental, technical, financial, and social benefits.

Our science and technology activities provide technical expertise in such areas as clean water, ecological sciences, engineering, and resource economics. We provide expertise in soil science and leadership for soil surveys.

Technical assistance is provided from our 30 service centers and six RC&D offices. Technical help is also available through certified technical service providers.

NRCS offers a variety of financial incentives to producers and landowners interested in conservation programs. Some programs offer annual payments for conservation use. Others offer one-time up-front payments for long-term easements; many include government funds to share in the costs of installing conservation measures.

NRCS reaches out to all segments of the agricultural community, including under served and socially disadvantaged farmers to ensure that our programs and services are accessible to everyone.

NRCS employees serve all 55 West Virginia counties from 30 field offices across the state. Staffs include engineers, conservationists, technicians, soil scientists, RC&D coordinators, and volunteers. These employees work hand-in-hand with land users to conserve natural resources on private lands.

We work closely with West Virginia's 14 conservation districts and six Resource Conservation and Development Councils. These locally elected or appointed community leaders ensure that local conservation concerns are addressed. The West Virginia Conservation Agency and NRCS balance their specific local needs with a coordinated state and national conservation effort.

Programs

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty. For more information on any of these programs, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

NRCS Technical Assistance Programs and Services

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program

The Conservation Technical Assistance Program helps land users, communities, units of State and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems. The purposes of conservation systems are to reduce erosion and flooding, improve air, soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve pasture, and woodlands. Technical assistance is provided to landowners whether or not they are enrolled in a USDA conservation program. NRCS promotes planning a total resource management system. This sustainable approach takes into account all of the natural resources in the planning

area. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta.html>.

Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs)

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. Technical guides used in each service center are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs). FOTGs are available online at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.

Soil Survey Program

Soil surveys provide a field-based scientific inventory of soil resources, including soil maps, data about the physical and chemical properties of soils, and information on the potentials and limitations of each soil. Soil surveys help people make decisions on how to best use the land based on properties and characteristics of the soils.

Modern soil survey information is available for the entire state of West Virginia. All 55 counties have data available on the Web Soil Survey or Data Mart. Sources for WV surveys may be found at <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/soils.html>.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is a unique program that helps people care for and protect their natural resources in a way that will improve their economy, environment, and living standards. The RC&D Program provides a way for people to work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their communities better places to live. The strength of RC&Ds lies in the local peoples' commitment and dedication to solving local problems.

The purpose of RC&Ds are to guide the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living.

West Virginia has six councils that cover 55 counties. These councils are made up of local citizens, which generally represent counties, cities, and conservation districts. To locate your area RC&D office, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rc&d/rc&d.html>.

Appalachian Plant Materials Center

The Appalachian Plant Materials Center serves 11 states in the Appalachian Region. The center is operated by the NRCS in cooperation with other agencies and universities.

The Plant Materials Center evaluates plants for their ability to solve specific conservation problems related to climate, the rugged topography, soil limitations, various land uses, fish and wildlife needs, and desires of the landowners. The center conducts systematic observations and evaluations of plants needed to protect our natural resources. New techniques are developed for the propagation, establishment, management, and use for new or improved species of grasses, legumes, shrubs, and trees. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/wvpmc.html>.

NRCS Financial Assistance Programs

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

The Conservation Security Program supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations. CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant, and animal life on private working lands.

Yearly rotation of eligible watersheds gives every farmer the opportunity to participate. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

West Virginia has 14 different Local Working Group areas for EQIP allocations and rankings. Each Conservation District has convened Local

Working Group meetings to identify and prioritize their natural resource concerns that EQIP can address. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program is a voluntary program for developing or improving high quality habitat that supports fish and wildlife populations of National, State, and local significance. Through WHIP, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners for the development of upland, wetland, aquatic, and other types of wildlife habitat. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

The Agricultural Management Assistance Program assists agricultural producers to manage risk and voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. NRCS may provide financial and technical assistance to help landowners reduce risk. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, local governments, and/or non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Wetlands Reserve Program provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to

address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private land in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. WRP provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Grassland Reserve Program is a program that helps landowners and operators restore and protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining these areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

Recovery Act Programs

Watershed Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of aging watershed dams is included in section 14 of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL83-566). Dams constructed under the four watershed programs (PL-534, PL-566, Pilot, or RC&D) are eligible for assistance under this authority. Rehabilitation of these dams is needed to address critical public health and safety issues. A priority ranking system will consider the condition of the dam and number of people at risk if the dam should fail. NRCS may provide technical assistance and 65 percent of the total rehabilitation project cost.

Watershed Operations.

This program provides assistance to sponsor local organizations of authorized watershed projects, planned and approved under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83-566), and designated watersheds authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534). NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of watershed protection; flood mitigation; water quality improvements; soil erosion reduction; rural, municipal and industrial water supply; irrigation water management; sediment control; fish and wildlife enhancement; and wetlands and wetland function creation and restoration.

Floodplain Easements.

Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions of the floodplain; conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge, and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives of property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion. NRCS may purchase easements on floodplain lands that meet program criteria. Purchases are based upon established priorities. The easements provide NRCS with the authority to restore and enhance the floodplain's functions and values. Landowners retain several rights on the property, including quiet enjoyment, the right to control public access, and the right to undeveloped recreational use such as hunting and fishing.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL 83-566)

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL 83-566) authorized NRCS to cooperate with States and local agencies to carry out works of improvement for soil conservation and for other purposes including flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water; and conservation and proper utilization of land. NRCS implements the Act through three programs: Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations, and Watershed Rehabilitation. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/watershed/>.

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program undertakes emergency measures—including the purchase of flood plain easements—for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood, or any other natural occurrence is causing (or has caused) a sudden impairment of the watershed. The EWP Program relies on Federal funding which has been limited in recent years. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/ewp09.html>

General Programs

Earth Team

The Earth Team is NRCS' volunteer program. NRCS needs people who are willing to commit their time and talent to conserving and protecting soil, water, and wildlife for their community and everyone in it. Earth Team volunteers may work with private farmers and landowners implementing conservation practices; improving wildlife around their community; or assisting in data collection for soil, water, or archaeology surveys. Earth Team volunteers also assist with office and clerical work, community outreach, and giving tours. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>.

Backyard Conservation

Backyard Conservation shows how conservation practices used on agricultural land across the country to conserve and improve natural resources can be adapted for use on the land around your home. These practices help the environment and can make your yard more attractive and enjoyable.

Ten conservation practices have been scaled down for homeowners and city residents to use in their yards. Tip sheets offer "how to" steps and helpful hints may be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/>.

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Service Center Contact Information

Service Center	Counties Served	District Conservatorist	Phone	Email
Beckley	Fayette, Raleigh, Wyoming	Gary Redden	304-255-9225	gary.redden@wv.usda.gov
Buckeye	Pocahontas	Susan Davis	304-799-4317	susan.davis@wv.usda.gov
Cross Lanes	Kanawha	Luke Hunter	304-776-5256	luke.hunter@wv.usda.gov
Elkins	Randolph, Tucker, Upshur	Larry Casseday	304-636-6703	larry.casseday@wv.usda.gov
Franklin	Pendleton	Doris Brackenrich	304-358-2285	doris.brackenrich@wv.usda.gov
Gassaway	Braxton, Clay	Luke Hunter, Acting DC	304-364-5103	luke.hunter@wv.usda.gov
Glenville	Gilmer	Andy Sentz	304-462-7171	andy.sentz@wv.usda.gov
Huntington	Boone, Lincoln, Logan, Mingo, Cabell, Wayne	Corine Powell	304-697-6033	corine.powell@wv.usda.gov
Keyser	Mineral	Richard Gray	304-788-2332 Ext. 3	richard.gray@wv.usda.gov
Kingwood	Preston	Phil Evans	304-329-1923	phil.evans@wv.usda.gov
Lewisburg	Greenbrier	Tom Vance	304-645-6172	tom.vance@wv.usda.gov
Martinsburg	Berkeley, Morgan	Robert Schnably	304-263-7547	robert.schnably@wv.usda.gov
McMechen	Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio	Katie Fitzsimmons	304-242-0576	katie.fitzsimmons@wv.usda.gov
Moorefield	Hardy	Richard Gray	304-530-2825	richard.gray@wv.usda.gov
Morgantown	Monongalia	Ray Carr	304-291-4377	ray.carr@wv.usda.gov
Mount Clare	Doddridge, Harrison	Jeff Griffith	304-624-9232	jeff.griffith@wv.usda.gov
Parkersburg	Ritchie, Wirt, Wood	Ben Collier	304-422-9072	ben.collier@wv.usda.gov
Petersburg	Grant	Richard Gray	304-257-4702	richard.gray@wv.usda.gov
Philippi	Barbour, Taylor	Mike Mullenex	304-457-4516	mike.mullenex@wv.usda.gov
Princeton	McDowell, Mercer, Summers	Bill Harris	304-487-1404	bill.harris@wv.usda.gov
Point Pleasant	Putnam, Mason	Valerie Hannon	304-675-2020	valerie.hannon@wv.usda.gov
Ranson	Jefferson	Robert Schnably	304-725-3471	robert.schnably@wv.usda.gov
Ripley	Jackson	Valerie Hannon	304-372-6231	valerie.hannon@wv.usda.gov
Romney	Hampshire	Steve Ritz	304-822-3020	steve.ritz@wv.usda.gov
Sistersville	Pleasants, Tyler, Wetzel	Rick Patterson	304-758-2173	rick.patterson@wv.usda.gov
Spencer	Roane, Calhoun	Sam Sheets	304-927-1022	sam.sheets@wv.usda.gov
Summersville	Nicholas, Webster	Larry Greynolds	304-872-1731	larry.greynolds@wv.usda.gov
Union	Monroe	Lee Godbey	304-772-3006	lee.godbey@wv.usda.gov
Weston	Lewis	Andy Sentz	304-269-8431	andy.sentz@wv.usda.gov
White Hall	Marion	Ray Carr	304-363-8861	ray.carr@wv.usda.gov

