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Conservation Activities in West Virginia 2006 Annual Report

Helping People Help the Land

This report gives a highlight of the conservation accomplished in West Virginia in 2006.

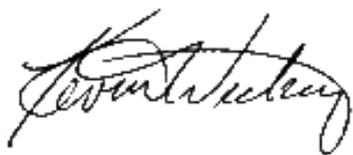
As always, NRCS accomplishments would not be possible without the conservation-minded farmers and leaders who make wise decisions that protect our natural resources. Conservation on West Virginia's private lands is carried out by only a few, but we all benefit from it economically, socially, and environmentally.

The following are some examples of 2006 achievements that improved water quality, reduced soil erosion, increased wildlife habitat, and improved management of crop and grassland in West Virginia:

- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) reduced soil erosion by 383,881 tons. This is equivalent to 3.6 square miles of land covered by 1 inch of soil. Or this amount of soil would fill a hole more than 1000 feet wide, 1000 feet long, and 100 feet deep.
- Six grassland technicians completed 10,500 acres of grazing management plans. Thirty four technical specialists assisted 200 farmers to better manage 13,800 acres of pastureland. The estimated value of increased meat production is \$1,300,000. Approximately 75 educational activities reached over 7200 farmers.
- Watershed technical assistance protected 2.5 million acres and benefited 1.1 million people (63 percent of the State of West Virginia) with flood damage reduction, recreation, and/or water supply.
- Wildlife habitat management plans and contracts were completed on 14,143 acres for 86 West Virginia landowners.
- Funding was available for 247 EQIP applications, totaling \$5,482,243.

- Through AMA, Five Sustainable Organic & Truck Crop Farming contracts received \$119,407 in financial assistance.
- 29 Manure Transfer-Nutrient Management contracts were funded for \$130,787.
- Conservation System Plans were written for 27,595 acres of cropland and 71,251 acres of grazing land.
- Together, the six RC&D Councils completed 636 projects serving 873,003 citizens: 3825 people developed new skills through workshops and training events, 368,700 acres of watershed or area-wide conservation plans developed, 245 acres of wildlife habitat improved, and 5,430 feet shoreline protected.
- In 2006, \$1,886,185 in federal FRPP funds were provided to protect 1,035 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$3.7 million.
- The Plant Materials Center serves Appalachia by evaluating 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.
- Modern soil survey information is available for the entire state of West Virginia. In fiscal year 2006, update mapping was completed on over 586,551 acres. Development of digital soils data is ongoing for all counties in West Virginia. Currently, there are 41 of West Virginia's 55 counties in digital format posted to the NRCS website.
- For the first time in many years, West Virginia avoided the widespread flooding that triggers EWP implementation.

I congratulate West Virginia's farmers, ranchers, and others for being good stewards of the natural resources on their property. I appreciate the excellent assistance provided by NRCS and other conservation partners in making 2005 successful.



Kevin Wickey

State Conservationist

West Virginia

Our Employees - Our Strength

NRCS employees serve all 55 West Virginia counties from 31 field offices across the state. Staff includes 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.

West Virginia Conservation Partnership

NRCS accomplishes our mission by working 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 met. The WV Conservation Agency and NRCS balance their specific local needs with a coordinated state and national conservation effort.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Conservation planning and application comprises the foundation of the Natural Resources Conservation Services' (NRCS) programs and services. Technical assistance may be provided to landowners whether or not they are enrolled in a USDA conservation program. NRCS promotes planning a total resource management system. This is a sustainable approach taking into account all of the natural resources in the planning area.

Conservation Planning

Conservation planning is the cornerstone of NRCS services. A conservation plan outlines the different practices or measures that a landowner may take to protect the natural resources on his or her property. A plan may address only one natural resource issue, or may be comprehensive, addressing all of the natural resources on the landowner's acreage with several conservation practices.

Conservation Application

Conservation application involves the implementation of the conservation plan. This includes the actual construction of conservation practice or practices recommended by the conservation planner and are typically done by the landowner or a contractor. The conservation application process is complete when all planned conservation practices are implemented.

2006 Farm Bill Financial Assistance in West Virginia Highlights.

Program	Financial Assistance	Contracts	Acres
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$5,482,243	247	23,398
Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)	\$254,994	76	--
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	\$1,886,185	8	1035
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$956,052	86	14,143

	Financial Assistance	Applications Selected	Acres
Grassland Reserve Program	\$879,820	5	398

2006 Reports at the following links:

- [Agricultural Management Assistance \(AMA\)](#)
- [Conservation Technical Assistance \(CTA\)](#)
- [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)
- [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\)](#)
- [Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program \(FRPP\)](#)
- [Private Grazing Land Assistance](#)
- [Resource Conservation and Development \(RC&D\)](#)

-
- [Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Programs](#)
 - [Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program \(WHIP\)](#)
 - [Soil Survey Program](#)

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Overview



The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides cost-share to apply structural practices and incentive payments to address natural resource concerns. In addition to financial assistance, this voluntary conservation program also provides technical assistance to farmers.

Contracts are based on conservation plans and may be up to ten years in length to provide a long-term commitment for producers to apply needed practices. The program strives to achieve the most environmental benefits possible.

Local Work Groups, convened by Conservation Districts, provide recommendations to NRCS regarding conservation practices for cost-sharing, cost-share rates, ranking criteria, sign-up periods and other program details. The Local Work Group recommendations are reviewed by the State Technical Committee which provides additional recommendations and advice to the NRCS State Conservationist before final program decisions are made.

2006 Accomplishments

In 2006, West Virginia received 824 applications for EQIP assistance totaling \$11,848,848. Funding was available for 247 applications, totaling \$5,482,243.

NRCS conservationists developed plans for the following conservation practices:

Summary

Program	Financial Assistance	Contracts	Acres
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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$5,482,243	247	23,398
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West Virginia's Resource Concern Priorities for EQIP in 2006

Some priority resource concerns addressed by local planners include:

- Animal waste and other organic contaminants in ground and surface water
- Classic gully erosion
- Soil Compaction
- Off-site damage from sediment deposition
- Excessive nutrients and organics in ground and surface water
- Excessive seepage
- Excessive suspended sediments and turbidity in surface water
- Forage quality and palatability
- Harmful levels of pathogens and/or pesticides in ground and surface water
- Inadequate cover/shelter and/or food
- Inadequate quantities and quality of feed and forage
- Inadequate water and/or stock water
- Soil Mass movement
- Noxious and invasive plants
- Objectionable odors
- Soil organic matter depletion
- Plants not adapted our suited for intended use
- Plant productivity, health and vigor
- Reduced capacity of conveyances by sediment deposition
- Road, road sides, and construction sites soil erosion
- Sheet and Rill erosion
- Shoreline erosion
- Streambank erosion
- Animal stress and mortality

- T&E plant species, declining species, species of concern

2006 EQIP success stories:

Success Story	Service Center RC&D Office	Program
Waste System Protects Water and Saves Labor	Point Pleasant	EQIP
Where to Winter Feed?	White Hall	EQIP

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Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Overview

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Producers may construct or improve water management structures 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, or transition to organic farming.

2006 Accomplishments

Activity	Financial Assistance	Contracts
Existing Woodland Harvest Road, Trail, & Landing Reclamation	\$4,800	2
Sustainable Organic & Truck Crop Farming	\$119,407	5
Manure Transfer-Nutrient Management	\$130,787	29
	\$254,994	76

2006 Success Story

[AMA Provides a Reduction in Production Costs](#)

[Mount Clare Service Center](#)

AMA

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

Overview

Protecting farmland from permanent conversion to non-agricultural land uses in West Virginia is at a critical stage. The state has limited prime farmland acreage and the loss of each acre has a more profound impact upon the rural economy, rural lifestyle, and farm families than in any other state. For this reason the legislature passed the states' Voluntary Farmland Protection Act in 2000 to complement the Federal Farm and Ranch land Protection Program. Counties and the State can cooperate with local land trusts and landowners to purchase voluntarily offered agricultural conservation easements that permanently reserve these lands for farming. In 2002 the NRCS State Conservationist was able to provide \$400,000 in Federal Farm and Ranch land Protection Funds to purchase easements on 780 acres of land valued at \$1,298,900. In 2003, \$977,536 in federal FRPP funds were provided to protect 1,231 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$2.76 million. In 2004, \$1,599,511 in federal FRPP funds were provided to protect 1,782 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$5.4 million. In 2005, \$1.98 million in federal FRPP were provided to purchase easements on 1,429 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$5.8 million. In 2006, \$1.87 million in federal FRPP funds were provided to protect 1,035 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$3.77 million. Each year more landowners in the state submit proposals than NRCS is able to fund. This level of interest is expected to grow in future years as counties develop their programs and the state program becomes fully operational.

2006 Accomplishments



In 2006, \$1,886,185 in federal FRPP funds were provided to protect 1,035 acres of farmland with an easement value of \$3,772,370. Since 2002, 51 farms totaling 6,257 acres have been entered into the program. Other related relationships have been formed between the Canaan Valley Institute and the WV Department of Agriculture and the State Farmland Protection Authority to protect watersheds and farmlands through farm and ranchland protection.

Also, partnerships with the WV Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy as well as the WV Coalition of Land Trusts have led to joint support of farmland protection efforts in the state and the formation of the Association of WV Farmland Protection Programs.

See link for more information: <http://www.wvfarmlandprotection.org/>

Program	Financial Assistance	Contracts	Acres	Total Value
2006	\$1,886,185	8	1,035	\$3,772,370
2005	\$1,979,001	10	1,428	\$5,824,250
2004	\$1,599,511	14	1,782	\$5,417,013
2003	\$977,536	12	920	\$2,753,840
2002	\$400,000	4	550	\$1,298,900

2006 FRPP Success Stories:

Success Story	Service Center RC&D Office	Program
Hardy County's Newest FRPP Farm	Moorefield	FRPP
Preserving Farms Protects the Bay	Philippi-East Area Office	FRPP

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Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Overview



The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on their lands. Through WHIP, both technical and financial assistance are available from NRCS to help establish and improve wildlife habitat.



West Virginia targeted four major habitat types for technical and financial assistance. These habitat types include the development of riparian areas for improved water quality and wildlife habitat; farm wildlife for small game habitat such as cottontail rabbits and native grasslands for songbirds; protection of rare threatened and endangered species such as the federally endangered clubshell mussel; and woodland wildlife species habitat improvements for ruffed grouse and wild turkey.



Conservation practices eligible for WHIP funding include the restoration of grassland habitat in field borders and entire fields; the restoration of riparian areas with trees, shrubs or herbaceous plants; and improvement of woodlands. The use of warm season grasses and native plants are encouraged, as they are more likely to create a higher quality habitat while protecting soil from erosion and improving water quality.

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Applications are evaluated and ranked using statewide criteria. Successful applicants who own or control land agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. This plan describes the landowner's objectives for improving wildlife habitat, a list of practices tailored for the applicant's property that will be installed, detail needed to install them and a schedule for implementation.

Applications are evaluated and ranked using statewide criteria. Successful applicants who own or control land agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. This plan describes the landowner's objectives for improving wildlife habitat, a list of practices tailored for the applicant's property that will be installed, detail needed to install them and a schedule for implementation.

There is no minimum acreage to enroll. The cost-share rate for implementing practices is 75 percent of the total cost of establishment for most practices.

Since the year 2000, the West Virginia WHIP has worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. This partnership enables work crews to build high quality fencing along streams and other sensitive areas, primarily for the establishment of corridors to provide riparian wildlife habitat and improved water quality. Combining these programs enables landowners to have a fence installed at minimal or no cost to the landowner.

2006 Accomplishments

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program received 128 applications for improvements to wildlife habitat, requesting an estimated \$991,000. Wildlife habitat management plans and contracts were completed on 14,143 acres for 86 landowners, obligating \$956,052 for cost-share payments to West Virginia landowners.

In 2003, NRCS has entered into cooperative agreement with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to provide technical assistance to landowners to develop individual wildlife management plans through WHIP. This agreement was renewed for 2006.

Program	Financial Assistance	Contracts	Acres
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$956,052	86	14,143

2006 WHIP success stories:

Success Story	Service Center RC&D Office	Program
Jefferson County WHIP Partnership Projects Benefit Bay and Farmers	Ranson	WHIP
WHIP Provides a Higher Quality Habitat for Wildlife	Mount Clare Service Center	WHIP
Riparian Buffers Benefit Farm to Potomac	Moorefield	CTA, WHIP

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Private Grazing Land Assistance

Overview



NRCS and our conservation partners are providing accelerated assistance to increase the quality and quantity of forage production to sustain farms, reduce erosion, and protect water quality. NRCS, in partnership with the West Virginia Conservation Agency, is staffing 6 grassland technicians to provide assistance to farmers statewide. Activities are coordinated through the West Virginia Grazing Lands Steering Committee, in accordance with a strategic plan.



2006 Accomplishments

- The WV Conservation Partnership is using a cooperative working agreement to staff 6 grassland technicians to complete 10,500 acres of grazing management plans.
- NRCS provided 34 technical specialists to assist 200 farmers to better manage 13,800 acres of pastureland. This involved the planning and installation of 16,000 feet of fence, 900 acres of brush (multiflora rose and autumn olive) control to reestablish pastures, placement of 55 troughs for improved grazing distribution, and proper application of nutrients to improve palatability of forages. The estimated value of increased meat production is \$1,300,000.
- Approximately 75 educational activities have been held reaching over 7,200 farmers. Many are pasture walks used to demonstrate applied grazing systems and to allow farmer-to-farmer discussions on proper pasture management techniques.
- Conservation districts have established demonstration projects for alternative forages, solar powered water distribution systems, and winter animal feeding sites.

- A planning committee has developed the agenda the third Appalachian Grazing Conference for March 2007.
- The WV Grassland Evaluation Contest was held April 7, 2006. This year, 11 teams participated. Cabell Midland High School placed 1st, and Ravenswood High School placed second.

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Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Overview



The foundation and history of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is based on helping landowners and land users voluntarily apply conservation on their land.

Technical assistance is simply about helping people. NRCS employees provide conservation options, recommendations, planning or application assistance to individual farmers, local governments and even individual homeowners. Farmers, NRCS's largest customer base, rely on NRCS technical experts to help them apply practices that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance forest land, wetlands, grazing lands, and wildlife habitat. The agency also helps individuals and communities restore natural resources after floods, or other natural disasters.

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Technical assistance is simply about helping people. NRCS employees provide conservation options, recommendations, planning or application assistance to individual farmers, local governments and even individual homeowners. Farmers, NRCS's largest customer base, rely on NRCS technical experts to help them apply practices that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance forest land, wetlands, grazing lands, and wildlife habitat. The agency also helps individuals and communities restore natural resources after floods, or other natural disasters.

Helping people make wise land-use decisions about natural resources is the primary function and strength of the organization. The primary delivery system it uses with its

customers is known as “conservation technical assistance.” Technical assistance for natural resources conservation is done through West Virginia’s fourteen Conservation Districts.

2006 Accomplishments

In 2006, NRCS staff gave technical assistance to more than 5,402 West Virginians.

Other accomplishments include:

Conservation System Plans Written, Cropland (Acres)	27,595
Conservation System Plans Written, Grazing Land (Acres)	71,251
Grazing Land, Practices Applied (Acres)	66,002
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Written	98
Non-federal Land Managed for the protection and Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Acres)	28,942
Non-federal Land Treated for Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Acres)	36,361
Reduction in the acreage of Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Acres)	11,779
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	383,881
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Acres)	236,865
Wetlands Created, Resorted or Enhanced (Acres)	31

Needs Addressed by CTA

Local Conservation Districts identify the resource needs, set local priorities, and develop local plans to address the identified resource concerns. Conservation technical assistance provides:

- Outreach to new and under-served customers.
- Make initial landowner contacts to explain services and program available.
- Assist private landowners to develop voluntary, site specific conservation plans to address resource issues.
- Assist farmers, private land owners, groups, and others to design and implement conservation practices that meet the objectives in their conservation plans, which have not been funded by USDA cost sharing.
- Provide follow-up with landowners after practice installation to ensure proper operation and maintenance.
- Provide technical assistance to Grazing Lands and demonstrate winter grazing and riparian grazing.
- Provide basic soils information to both rural and urban land users.
- Assist Conservation Districts and the WV Conservation Agency with EPA 319 Water Quality Projects.
- Support Conservation Districts conservation education efforts such as Envirothon, land judging, conservation camps, local workshops and tours.
- Help Conservation Districts develop voluntary Farmland Protection Program proposals.
- Assist local Watershed Associations in efforts with stream restoration activities.
- Support Conservation District efforts to address urban and rural non-farm soil erosion, sediment, and stormwater management issues.
- Support the Plant Materials Center by doing plant collection evaluations and field trials.
- Follow-up to assure program operation and maintenance.

2006 Success Stories:

Success Story	Service Center RC&D Office	Program
Riparian Buffers Benefit Farm to Potomac	Moorefield	CTA, WHIP

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Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)

Overview

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program provides assistance to local citizens, communities, and agencies of local government to restore damaged land and water resources as a result of natural disasters. The most common application in West Virginia is eliminating threats to life and property by clearing blockages from streams and stabilizing critically eroding streambanks following major floods. West Virginia has a high susceptibility to these types of threats due to its steep topography and concentration of housing and other development along streams.

Joint efforts of the West Virginia Conservation Agency, Conservation Districts, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provide timely response to disasters and efficient use of both state and local resources. The Conservation Partnership can provide both financial and technical assistance in completing these emergency measures.

2006 Accomplishments

For the first time in many years, West Virginia avoided the widespread flooding that triggers EWP implementation. The welcome reprieve allowed the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to complete all work from previous events and meet with Local Sponsoring Organizations to improve response procedures.

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Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

Overview

The Resource Conservation and Development program was created so local citizens could develop and carry out an action-oriented plan for the social, economic, and environmental betterment of their communities. The RC&D program was given permanent authorization in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program and provides a coordinator and administrative support to RC&D councils. West Virginia has six councils that cover all 55 counties. These councils are made up of local citizens, which generally represent counties, cities, and conservation districts. The councils set priorities for the RC&D area.

The mission of the RC&D program is to make available the total financial, administrative, educational and technical resources of USDA and other public and private partnerships to increase the ability of communities to meet their regionally identified resource conservation and development needs.

The six RC&D Areas in West Virginia are:

- Great Kanawha RC&D
- Little Kanawha RC&D
- Mountain RC&D
- Northern Panhandle RC&D
- Potomac Headwaters RC&D
- Wes-Mon-Ty RC&D



2006 Accomplishments

The RC&D program has 4 goals they are working on nationwide.

- Land Conservation
- Land Management
- Water Management
- Community Development

Together the six RC&D Councils completed 636 projects during FY-06.

Fiscal Year 2006 Accomplishments	Totals
Acres of Wildlife Habitat Improved	245
Acres of Water Bodies Improved	5
Feet Shoreline Protected	5,430
Acres of Watershed or Area-wide Conservation Plans developed	368,700
Acres Land Preserved or Protected	4,750
Business Financed - Monetary	1,000
Business Financially Assisted	11
Acres of Recreational Area Established, Improved, or Retained	462
Visitor Days Increased	5,745
People Developing New Skills through Workshops and Training Events	3,825
Workshops and Training Sessions	71
People Benefiting from New Technology	250
Economically or Socially Disadvantaged People Served	80,812
Citizens Served	873,003

RC&D is a mix of conservation, economic development, environmental enhancement, and community development. The key to success is local leadership. RC&D places heavy emphasis on natural resources. Developing and using human resources is the single most important factor to RC&D success.

2006 Success Stories:

Success Story	Service Center RC&D Office	Program
McMechen Outdoor Learning Center	Northern Panhandle RC&D	RC&D
Monroe County Vocational School Meat Processing Facility	Mountain RC&D	RC&D
Restoration and Redevelopment of B&O Roundhouse Complex	Potomac Headwaters RC&D	RC&D
DuPont Soccer Complex Green Parking Lot	Potomac Headwaters RC&D	RC&D
American Discovery Trail Information Kiosk	Potomac Headwaters RC&D	RC&D

Regional and National

Nationally, West Virginia is recognized as having strong RC&D Councils with a track record of successes. The West Virginia Councils strongly support the national and regional RC&D Associations. A member of the Northern Panhandle RC&D Council, Howard Coffield, currently serves on the board of the National Association of RC&D Councils, and as the President of the Mid-Atlantic RC&D Association.

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Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Programs (PL-566 and PL-534)

Overview

The purpose of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Programs (PL-566 and PL-534) are to assist state and local governments plan and carry out works of improvement for watershed protection and restoration. They provide for technical and financial assistance by the NRCS to local organizations representing the people living in small watersheds. The PL-534 authority applies to the Upper Potomac drainage (Grant, Morgan, Mineral, Hardy, Pendleton, and Hampshire Counties), while PL-566 applies to the balance of the State. Resource concerns addressed by these programs include:

- Flooding
- Water supply
- Water quality
- Soil erosion
- Fish and wildlife habitat development
- Water-based recreation



The NRCS provides technical assistance in watershed planning, design, project installation, operation and maintenance of installed measures. NRCS also works with sponsoring local organizations as well as other local, state, and federal entities to obtain all necessary land rights and non-federal matching funds.

These programs match local, state, and federal funds and technical resources to provide a seamless delivery system to local sponsoring organizations. West Virginia places a strong emphasis on developing locally led plans that address all relevant resource issues. The NRCS has assisted local sponsors and watershed organizations

install 170 dams and over 50 miles of stream channel improvement in West Virginia.

Project Benefits

In 2006, these projects provided the following benefits to West Virginia:

- \$38.1 million annually in flood damage reduction
- \$19.9 million annually of other benefits (recreation, water supply, etc.)
- 1.1 million people (63 percent of the State of West Virginia) benefited
- 832,000 recreational visitor days
- 355 bridges and 248 miles of road protected
- 11,800 homes and 926 businesses protected
- 1,800 farms benefited
- 2.5 million acres benefited

The combination of water supply and flood-free land can draw new businesses to a community and help broaden and stabilize the economic base. The Mill Creek Project in Jackson County generated \$30 million worth of growth.

Watershed Rehabilitation

The Watershed Rehabilitation Program enables West Virginia to address concerns associated with dams constructed through NRCS assistance. Some of these dams are reaching the end of their economic life and could pose a threat to public safety. This is becoming a major concern nationwide.

Current Activities

The NRCS is currently providing planning assistance to local sponsors on the following:

- Lost River Watershed (Hardy County)
- Dunloup Creek Watershed (Fayette and Raleigh Counties)
- New Creek Watershed Dam Rehabilitation (Grant County)
- Big Sandy Watershed (Mingo, McDowell, Wayne Counties in WV)

- Morgan County Water Resources Assessment
- Horseshoe Run Natural Stream Restoration Project

The NRCS has completed plans for the following projects, which are now in the design phase:

- Upper Deckers Creek Watershed (5 sites in Monongalia and Preston Counties)

The following projects are in the construction or implementation phase:

- Upper Tygart Valley Watershed Project (Randolph County)
- Little Whitestick Creek Project Phase III (Raleigh County)
- Upper Deckers Creek Watershed (2 sites in Monongalia and Preston Counties)
- North Fork Hughes River Watershed Project (Ritchie County)
- Potomac Headwaters Land Treatment Watershed Project (Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton, Hampshire, and Grant Counties)
- Knapps Creek Natural Stream Restoration Project (Pocahontas County)

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Soil Survey Program

Overview



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 have many uses, but are developed to help people make decisions on how to best use the land. These decisions are based on properties and characteristics of the soils, which are published in the soil survey report or as part of a digital database.

2006 Accomplishments

Modern soil survey information is available for the entire state of West Virginia. In fiscal year 2006, update mapping was completed on over 586,551 acres, the third highest acreage in the East region. Our focus is now on updating the soil surveys that were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is important to keep the base imagery, soil physical and chemical properties, and interpretations up-to-date.

Soil Survey Updating in Progress

Soil Survey update project work is underway on private and Federal lands in five counties. The updates are conducted when existing soil information is outdated or inadequate to meet current needs. The five counties needing updating or maintenance include Marshall, Preston, Tucker, Fayette, and Raleigh. The staff is currently working to place all of the official soil survey data on the NRCS website to be accessed electronically.

NRCS works cooperatively with West Virginia University, the USDA Forest Service, and the West Virginia Conservation Agency to maintain and update soil surveys on Federal and private land in West Virginia.

Soil Survey Digitizing

The digitizing of soil maps and the development of soil survey geographic databases

are an integral part of the soil survey process today. Demand for digital soils data increases each year. This information is utilized in a Geographic Information System (GIS) and is being used more commonly by local units of government as well as by federal and state agencies.

Development of digital soils data is ongoing for all counties in West Virginia. Currently, there are 41 of West Virginia's 55 counties in digital format posted to the NRCS website. These are available on the internet as the Web Soil Survey.

Six full-time employees (four NRCS and two WV Conservation Agency) staff a modern soil survey information center in Summersville WV. They complete digital soil surveys and prepare them for public use.

The Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO) is the most detailed geographic database. Using the Web Soil Survey, a digital soils data viewer, or Soils Explorer, a user can browse through the digital soils maps and accompanying reference data, selected interpretations, and a photo gallery with pictures of soil profiles, landscapes, and block diagrams.



Digitized Soil Surveys may be downloaded from: <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov> or interactively at the Web Soil Survey: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

2006 Success Story:

[Soil Survey Information is a Valuable Tool for High Value Forestry in MLRA 127 \(WV, PA, MD, NY\).](#)

[West Virginia Soil Survey](#)

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