



Out and About In The Tygarts Valley Conservation District

We're Going Green!

TVCD now offers an "e-newsletter" for anyone who is interested.

If you would prefer to receive an electronic version of our newsletter, or would like to be added to our mailing list, please visit wvca.us/districts/tvcd.cfm or call our district office at 304-457-3026.

Dates to Remember

- ⇒ TVCD Regular Board Meeting - October 24th
- ⇒ Election Day - November 8th
- ⇒ TVCD Regular Board Meeting - November 14th
- ⇒ OFFICE CLOSED in observance of Thanksgiving - November 24th & 25th
- ⇒ TVCD Regular Board Meeting - December 13th
- ⇒ AgEP Deadline for Lime and Fertilizer Contracts - December 16th
- ⇒ OFFICE CLOSED in observance of Christmas - December 26th
- ⇒ Eat & Reap Dinners TBD

Fall 2016

Farmland Protection: Opportunities for Tomorrow

When you drive around our beautiful state, you may have seen signs on some properties stating that the property is protected forever. Most commonly the sign is for one of the county farmland protection programs although other groups such as the West Virginia Land Trust also manage conserved land across the state.

So what does protected forever mean? From what is the land being protected? Can any type of land be part of one of these programs? In this article and subsequent articles we'll explore farmland protection efforts in Upshur County and other counties across West Virginia.

When you see a protected forever sign on a farm it means that the property owner and a Farmland Protection Board (there are 17 counties in West Virginia with farmland protection boards) have entered into a legal agreement known as a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legal document, ultimately filed in the court house as a new deed to the protected property, which defines permitted and restricted land uses. These conditions that create the

protected status are perpetual, and although forever really is a long time, the practical view is that the protected status remains as long as there is a legal system to enforce the terms of the conservation easement.

Protected land means it may not be subdivided or have certain land use activities. In general, activities that relate to agriculture and the quiet use and enjoyment of the property are permitted. Examples of restricted uses would be commercial activities (beyond agricultural types of business), additional residences (unless otherwise agreed), billboards and large signs, and industrial operations. As a farmland protection board our focus is to enter into a conservation easement with owners of properties that have high value to either agriculture or to conservation.

(Continued inside)



Farmland Protection (cont.)

Land on very poor soil, former industrial sites or brownfields, and commercial properties would not be appropriate land use types for a conservation easement. A conservation easement is usually purchased by the Farmland Protection Board, and occasionally with matching funds from cooperating agencies, like the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Some property owners choose to donate the full value of the conservation easement to our board. Whether sold or donated, once the conservation easement is in place, the property owner still fully owns their land. They are free to sell or bequeath their land at any time. As a party with interest in the conservation easement, our role as a farmland protection board is to ensure that the terms of the conservation easement are honored by the current and all future property owners. We do this by regularly scheduled property visits and the property owner is always encouraged to walk their land with us. These monitoring visits are documented and the reports are filed along with the records for the protected property. They become part of the permanent record of the easement property and serve to ensure that the terms of the conservation easement are being honored.

Around the state, there are hundreds of properties under easement. Some of these easements were purchased by local County Farmland Protection Boards, some were purchased with matching funds from the USDA and the West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority, and a surprising number of easements were fully donated. Despite these differences in how or whether a property owner is compensated for their conservation easement, when property owners reveal the reason they placed their property into a conservation easement, the reasons boil down to three common reasons.

The first and perhaps the most frequently heard reason is to fulfill a sense of connection to generations past. Many of our property owners live on land purchased by their parents, grandparents, or generations even further back. They recognize the hard work and dedication required by their ancestors to take land and make it into a working farm – a farm that usually kept food on the table, paid the bills, and even sent children off to college. The current property owner feels that by putting their farm into a farmland protection program they are ensuring that the agricultural legacy of their land will continue into the future.

Related to the first reason is a group of property owners who may not be connected to their land through many generations of family, yet they still feel deeply connected to their property. Some of these owners have only recently purchased their farms but already sense that there is something important about their property that needs to be preserved into the future. They may be on a quiet stretch of a local creek or have a farm with a 200 year-old house, but something about their property is so special that they feel it needs to be protected forever.

The last common reason folks go into a farmland protection program is financial. If the property scores highly on local or on the USDA ranking, and if sufficient funds to purchase the conservation easement are available, then the easement is purchased. This can amount to a significant amount of money for the property owner who still owns the land once the conservation easement has been purchased. In the case of full or partial donations of a conservation easement, there may be significant tax or estate planning advantages to the donor. Stay tuned for more information on farmland protection and its benefits in our next quarterly newsletter.

Garden Construction Underway

Thanks to a grant provided through the Tygarts Valley CD, WV Association of Conservation Districts, and the NRCS, the Tucker Valley Elementary Middle School is constructing a high tunnel and school garden. Before the end of the 2015-2016 school year, students constructed two raised beds outside of their classrooms. Students explored soils and composting and how to start seeds. The 4th grade class planted carrots for the incoming 4th graders to harvest at the beginning of the new school year. The 3rd and 4th grade classes spent a morning at Sickler Farms to learn the how utilize a high tunnel, and construction on the tunnel is underway.



District Equipment Rental

TVCD offers the following equipment for rental by district cooperators:

- (2) Four ton lime spreaders
- 3 Pt. Hitch Fertilizer Spreader
- Post driver

Effective January 1, 2016 the new pricing of equipment rental is as follows:

- 4 Ton Lime Spreader \$60/day
- 3 Pt. Hitch Fert. Spreader \$30/day
- Post Driver \$75/day



If you would like to reserve our equipment for your personal use, please call 304-457-3026. We recommend calling at least a week in advance of your desired pick-up date. All rental contracts are subject to an advance deposit of one day's rental fee.



conserving
natural resources
for our future

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James Nester, SR.
David Bonner

Upshur County

Rex Reeder, Secretary / Treasurer
John Sencindiver

Roller-Crimper for Rent

TVCD now offers a 4-foot roller-crimper for district cooperators to rent. The roller-crimper is a useful tool to be used as an alternative to high intensity tillage of small scale vegetable and grain producers.



This three-point hitch attachment is suited best for a small tractor that is capable of pulling 1200lbs. Contact our office to make arrangements for renting the roller-crimper. The cost to rent is \$30/day.

For more information and a video demonstration about how to use this tool visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?=EjcyoalaeAM>

Our Mission:

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