West Virginia Farm Bureau News

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On February 16, I joined Attorney General Patrick Morrisey for a press conference at the Capitol in Charleston. He was announcing his co-leadership of a coalition of 23 states in a lawsuit against the US EPA asking the federal courts to vacate the newly published final rule redefining the Waters of the US and declaring it unlawful. This latest final rule creates a complicated and very overreaching set of regulations that would not only affect farmers, but all of us.

This Biden administration WOTUS rule seeks to ultimately control virtually every drop of water and every acre of land which it flows across. The Biden rule is similar to the Obama rule which was rolled out a few years ago.

The Trump administration implemented a very different rule in 2020 which finally brought clarity and common sense to the WOTUS regulations. We at Farm Bureau worked for years to get these revisions made and we thought we finally had water rules that we could understand and work with. The Biden administration, however, threw all of that out the window. Biden’s rule will burden farmers and all others who use their land for any purpose and his administration’s quest for total control will strip states of their historical control and authority over water issues.

Farmers can expect to be disallowed from doing many common practices on their farms. Improvements such as upgrading draining in our fields will absolutely be a target. For the activities that are allowed, we will likely see permits and fees required for doing them. Farmers could face large fines and even criminal charges if they violate the dictatorial Biden rule.

We, as farmers, have a very strong record of caring for our farm resources and making environmental advances that benefit us and the general public. We have more at stake than anybody else when it comes to protecting our water resources. We cannot allow the current regime to destroy our agricultural productivity and our right to use our land.

I truly appreciate Attorney General Morrisey and his efforts to protect us from this classic example of governmental overreach.

Congress is also challenging the new WOTUS rule through the process known as the Congressional Review Act. Our representatives need to hear from us. They need to know how important this issue is to us.
Who mapped the soybean genome?

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I hope each of you are doing well this winter. It has been my pleasure to represent the West Virginia Farm Bureau as Director of Government Affairs since 2016. Each legislative session has had various prominent issues and challenges. Certainly, the 2023 session is no different.

As I write this article in mid-February, 1,546 House bills have been introduced, as well as 678 Senate bills. Currently, Governor Justice and leaders of both houses are trying to agree on tax reform in order to return a portion of the over $1 billion revenue surplus. Other major topics of this session include reorganization of DHHR and education issues. It is anticipated that about 250 bills will be considered by the close of the session on March 11.

In Washington, DC, work is ongoing on development of the new Farm Bill. Speaker McCarthy, who is from a highly agricultural area of California, has participated in at least one field hearing to collect input from farmers on the development of this important issue.

Senator John Boozman, a ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, has expressed concern with the Congressional Budget Office’s (CBO) projection that due to 8 to 10 percent food inflation, money dedicated to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may reduce available dollars in the bill for farm programs such as crop insurance. Some committee members have said they will consider “work requirements” for some individuals who receive SNAP benefits. Approximately 82 percent of Farm Bill spending will be needed for SNAP.

The CBO projects that expenditures would need to be 6.6 percent for crop insurance, 4 percent for programs like Agricultural Risk Coverage. Projections for EQIP and conservation programs would be only 4 percent of the Farm Bill’s dollars.

Total projections for the Farm Bill, including SNAP funding, would be $1.5 trillion, the most expensive ever. Certainly, few pieces of legislation are more important than the Farm Bill when it comes to safeguarding our domestic food supply. Ensuring that program funding is reflective of market changes is critical to maintaining the Farm Bill’s role in national security and the wellbeing of rural communities throughout America.

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack reported that international sales of U.S. farm and food products reached $196 billion in 2022, up 11 percent over 2021. This is the second consecutive record export sale for U.S. agriculture. Top export markets were China, Mexico, Canada, Japan, European Union, South Korea, and Taiwan. Overall, there were 30 countries where the United States exported over $1 billion in products, demonstrating broad global appeal of U.S. agricultural products. Top export crops included soybeans, cotton, dairy, beef, ethanol, poultry, and soybean meal.

In the United States, consumers are purchasing more organically raised fruits and vegetables. Strawberries are one of the favorites, and nearly $450 million of organic strawberries were purchased in 2022, up 22 percent. Recent surveys show that 15 percent of U.S. consumers shop exclusively for organic strawberries rather than the strawberries produced under traditional systems.

USDA also reported $19.3 billion in imported fruits and vegetables, up 10 percent over 2021. Fresh tomatoes, bananas, grapes, and citrus were the top imported products.

The USDA Farm Sector Income Report forecast net farm income for 2023 at nearly $140 billion, down 16 percent from 2022. Cash receipts for cattle are projected to increase by $2.1 billion. Cash receipts for chickens and eggs are projected to decrease by 24 percent because of large inventory losses due to avian influenza. USDA also projects reduced receipts for corn by 4.5 percent and soybeans by 8 percent. Many unknowns exist for 2023 crop sales, including Mexico’s commitment to ban GMO corn for human consumption, the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and weather conditions.
On the cost side, USDA projects expenses to be up another 4.1 percent, which is the 6th year in a row for increased costs. Fertilizer and fuel are expected to decline from record highs; however, seed, insurance, electricity, and maintenance costs are all expected to increase. For 2023, USDA’s overall rate of return on investment is projected at 7.7 percent.

In other federal news, Senator Mike Braun of Indiana has reintroduced the Protect Farmers from SEC Act. This act would prohibit the Security Exchange Commission (SEC) from requiring “Scope 3” reporting from farms. In 2022, the SEC proposed that registrants would provide certain climate-related information. This reporting would have required greenhouse gas emission data. Previously, farmers had not been subject to SEC reporting requests, but the proposed rule would require new reporting from farmers at significant cost and possible liabilities. AFBF and WVFB oppose the SEC reporting requirement and encourage the adoption of the proposed bill to exempt farmers from SEC rules.

Finally, as we face the future, don’t forget what Babe Ruth said: “Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game.” Likewise, President Abraham Lincoln said, “In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It is the life in your years.” Also, Dr. Martin Luther King said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.”

Have a great day!
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Doddridge County

Recognitions Handed Out at February Meeting

Consecutive Years of Membership Pins and Certificates were passed out at our February 11th meeting. Sandra E. Erwin of New Milton and Delores A. Hinterer Hoover were both recognized for 60 consecutive years of membership. In addition, Mr. Peery L. Ferguson was recognized for 30 years of consecutive membership.

The highlight was the recognition of 88 year old Charles Wellings for 70 years of consecutive membership. Mr. Wellings became a 4-H and FFA member when he was young and worked milking cows as a teen. He served as the State President for the FFA from 1953-1954. Mr. Wellings has shown a life-long dedication to the FFA both monetarily, and through countless hours of service to the organization.

Doddridge County Photo: Steve Butler presents Charles Wellings with his 70 years consecutive membership certificate.

Gilmer County

Woodland Management Field Day Coming on March 25, 2023

The Gilmer County Farm Bureau, together with the West Fork Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Jeesie King, a county forester, will be holding a one-day event on woodland management. Topics covered will include timber cruising and sales, woodland management, wildlife enhancement, road construction and maintenance, tree establishment methods, and alternate farm uses. Registration for this all-day event will begin at 8am at Old Place Farm, the home of Rick and Alice Sypolt (Christmas Tree Farm) and the program will begin at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be sponsored by the West Fork Conservation District and the tour will end at 2:00 p.m. Transportation on a farm wagon will be available for those not wishing to walk. Participants should RSVP to Rick Sypolt at 304-462-8922.

Gilmer County Photo: The Gilmer County Farm Bureau, together with the West Fork Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Jeesie King, a county forester, will be holding a one-day event on woodland management. Topics covered will include timber cruising and sales, woodland management, wildlife enhancement, road construction and maintenance, tree establishment methods, and alternate farm uses. Registration for this all-day event will begin at 8am at Old Place Farm, the home of Rick and Alice Sypolt (Christmas Tree Farm) and the program will begin at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be sponsored by the West Fork Conservation District and the tour will end at 2:00 p.m. Transportation on a farm wagon will be available for those not wishing to walk. Participants should RSVP to Rick Sypolt at 304-462-8922.

Harrison County

Romano Donates Funds

Senator Romano gave his remaining funds from his economic account to the Livestock Association, $29,000.00, to be used for building a Livestock Barn in Harrison County. Throughout his career, Romano has been a true friend of Harrison County Farm Bureau. Senator Romano is a 14 year member of Harrison County Farm Bureau.

Harrison County Photo: Senator Romano gave his remaining funds from his economic account to the Livestock Association, $29,000.00, to be used for building a Livestock Barn in Harrison County. Throughout his career, Romano has been a true friend of Harrison County Farm Bureau. Senator Romano is a 14 year member of Harrison County Farm Bureau.

Wetzel County

Money Raised for Ronald McDonald House

Wetzel County Farm Bureau held a gun raffle for a Henry Golden Boy Rifle. About $1,500 was raised to help purchase supplies, gift cards, bedding, and other things for the Ronald McDonald house.

Wetzel County Photo: Wetzel County Farm Bureau held a gun raffle for a Henry Golden Boy Rifle. About $1,500 was raised to help purchase supplies, gift cards, bedding, and other things for the Ronald McDonald house.

ATTENTION COUNTIES!

WE NEED YOUR NEWS.

Whether you want to show off an event or highlight a member or a success story, this is a great place to sound off.

All articles are due by the 20th of the month prior to publication. And don’t forget a photo...they speak a 1000 words.

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Always ride responsibly and safely. See your authorized BRP dealer for details and visit can-amoffroad.com.

WHATEVER NEEDS DOING, THERE’S A DEFENDER UP FOR THE CHALLENGE.

Our lineup is built extra tough with industry-leading utility features to take you beyond the daily grind. Anywhere you need it, the Defender gets the job done right. And right now, there’s never been more options for you to find what you need.
As I’m sitting at my dining room table typing my March article, I’m looking out across one of our fields on a blue-sky day in the low 60’s – it’s February 19th. Those of us living in the Eastern Panhandle of our beautiful state have been enjoying a mild winter thus far. On February 2nd, like lots of Americans, we waited to see if Punxsutawney Phil would see his shadow or not. His prognostication this year was 6 more weeks of winter. Couldn’t tell it around here, especially later this week when we are looking at a day in the mid-70’s. Thankfully, most of us pay far more attention to the Farmer’s Almanac for our weather. Besides, any Phil on our property doesn’t live long enough to forecast the weather, but I do enjoy the hype and especially the classic movie, *Groundhog Day*.

So, in my last month’s article, I spoke about planning an event for March 21st - National Ag Day, which coincidentally coincides with the 1st Day of Spring. I hope some of you have planned events as this is the 50th anniversary of National Ag Day. This year’s national theme is “Growing a Climate for Tomorrow”. It is a great time to post social media posts for the entire week beginning on Sunday, March 19 – Saturday, March 26. You can find these posts on www.agday.org/socialposts. Plan to post articles in your local newspaper or brief ag fun facts for your radio stations. For me, our local paper is weekly, so I hope to post articles the entire month.

Finally, I will be visiting a local elementary school reading this year’s Ag Book of the Year, *I Love Strawberries*. It is up to us to educate and remind our consumers where the food on their tables, the clothing on their backs, and the fuel in their vehicles comes from, and that without our farms, there is no food.

Your county presidents should have received information from the state office recently on the Youth Speech Contest and the topics for this year’s competition. Those topics are:

1) What is solar farming? How will it impact the future of farmland and food production?
2) What does eminent domain mean? How can that adversely affect farmers and their property?
3) WV forest land and carbon sequestration – Identifying actions to maintain or enhance the role in mitigating climate change?
4) Crossing the bridge from 4-H and FFA to Farm Bureau.

So make sure your local FFA chapters, 4-H clubs, and high school English teachers are aware of the contest. Post it on your Facebook page if you have one and send it to your local newspaper. It’s a great way for high school students to earn money for their education. Remember, the state winner can now earn $750 for up to 4 years of continuing education if they maintain a 3.0 GPA. **Thanks again to Kim and Boone Brown for making that possible.**

Finally, the state WLC committee held a conference call to set dates for the Our Food Link for the Ronald McDonald House Charities in WV. Dates have been set and I encourage counties to continue to contribute both with their financial contributions as well as food drives held in your local communities across the state. Cash contributions to the state office help us shop each year to purchase the meats and frozen foods to fill their freezers. The local food drives of non-perishable foods fill their pantries. This year we plan to observe: Friday, May...
12th – Charleston House; and Saturday, May 13th – Huntington and Morgantown Houses. Hopefully you have received letters to counties which detailed Ronald McDonald House Wish lists to help with your county promotion and planning.

Remember, if any of you have questions about any of the events/activities or want to brainstorm and need someone to bounce your ideas, please call me or any of the state WLC members. We are here to help.

Let me close with a quote from the late Queen Elizabeth II - “It is often the small steps, not the giant leaps, that bring about the most lasting change.” Let’s take those small steps together!

Until next month, may you all be safe, healthy, and always remember to give thanks to the many blessings granted to us from God.

Blessings from my home to yours!
Call fentanyl what it is: a Weapon of Mass Destruction

The United States had 107,622 drug deaths in 2021, a 15% increase of 13,967 from 93,655 in 2020. Almost the entirety of the increase is due to fentanyl. West Virginia had 1,194 fentanyl and other synthetic opioid deaths in 2021, up 10% from 1,083 in 2020.

This substance is now the Number 1 killer of adults aged 18-45.

There’s no question why state attorneys general are pushing the Biden administration to classify fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction. This deadly synthetic opioid is mainly being funneled through our unprotected southern border—Chinese chemical manufacturers are making and sending the raw ingredients to make fentanyl to Mexican drug cartels, which are in turn making and trafficking fentanyl on an industrial scale. But in the face of this evolving and significant problem, the federal government has seemed content to stand by. This is a matter of life or death and we need to treat it as such.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, powdered fentanyl looks just like many other drugs. It is commonly mixed with drugs like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine and made into pills that resemble other prescription opioids. And because of the low cost of production, inherent lethality and vast availability of the substance, fentanyl is an ideal choice for bad actors to use as a chemical weapon.

Classifying fentanyl as a WMD would require the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Drug Enforcement Administration to coordinate a response with other agencies, including the Department of Defense—as opposed to the federal government only treating the substance as a narcotics control problem.

Behind the statistics are stories of people who have lost loved ones to this menace. I was recently joined by eight of those families in calling for more action to curb the illicit flood of fentanyl into West Virginia and the nation. Their stories are what drives me to go the extra mile in doing everything I possibly can within the boundaries of the law to push the Biden administration to classify fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction.

Enough is enough. Far too many people are dying because of this menace. It is these families’ voices that must be heard, their warnings that we must hear and their calls to action that we must heed.

I will keep fighting for them. The stakes are too high and failure is not an option.
Day at the Legislature

Members of the West Virginia Young Farmer & Rancher Committee attended Day at the Legislature on January 30, 2023. The morning started out with an Advocacy training with FFA members from across the state. This presentation covered topics such as the importance of advocacy, initiating a conversation with your elected officials, building a relationship and following up on your discussion. We were able to award two youth memberships to Ethan Jeffrey from Lincoln County and Jacob Swentzel from Doddridge County. Committee members then traveled to the capital where they sat in the House and Senate chambers for introductions. We had a pleasure visiting with all of the wonderful displays that were on exhibit in the rotunda.

That evening, we had a YF&R committee meeting in which 8 members were in attendance. The new committee members for the 2023 year were also announced. Members for this year include Mariah Hatton from Monongalia County, Lacen Mathany from Monongalia County, John Riggs from Pleasants County, Miranda King from Roane County, Elizabeth Cole from Nicholas County, Austin Crowder from Nicholas County, Maggie & Cody Blankenship from Putnam County, Jody Carpenter from Barbour County, Jaimee Carr from Pendleton County, Cody Mitchell from Pendleton County, Lance Sims from Wirt County, Drew Ross from Ohio County, Jessica Hoover & Wesley Mills from Pendleton County, Dakota Pritt & Haley Bennett from Randolph County, Elizabeth Lynch from Berkeley County, Sara Wayne from Braxton County, Charity Morrison from Pocahontas County and Charles II & Michelle Wilfong from Pocahontas County. We spoke about activities for the upcoming year as well our goals. The evening concluded with our favorite part, Taste of WV Reception! The food was wonderful and it was a pleasure to network with so many wonderful people from across the state of WV.
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Hello my name is Dakota Pritt and I am 25 years old. I live in Beverly, Randolph County. I am a 2016 graduate of Tygarts Valley High School. I am a former Elkins FFA Chapter Secretary and Tygarts Valley FFA Chapter Student FFA Advisor. I am a former Randolph County 4-H member, and a current 4-H leader. I also serve in the role of "camp nurse" for various county and state 4-H camps, in WV. Currently I am a School Bus Operator, CPR/First Aid Instructor, and an EMT.

My parents buy yearling cattle and sell direct to consumer. Together we raise a few hair sheep. Additionally, we work together to make and sell square bale hay, since the majority of farmers in our area only make round bales. On top of this, I started brokering slaughter hogs since before covid, and it has continued to grow every year so far. Haley Bennett and I have worked very hard to grow our hog brokering business, to provide sustainably raised pork for our customers throughout the year.

Our favorite pastime is showing hogs at the State Fair of WV. We have since gotten into showing miniature horses as well!

I have been a Farm Bureau member since I was in high school, and a YF&R member since 2018. To me, farm bureau means growth and adaptation for a positive future. We’ve had to change things we did in these past few years to continue what we do on the farm today. We look forward to what the future holds.

Hello my name is Haley Bennett and I am 22 years old. I grew up in the small town of Durbin, Pocahontas County WV. I graduated in 2018 from Pocahontas County High School. I’ve raised rabbits my entire life, and enjoy having a selection of small farm animals. I am a former member of the Pocahontas County High School FFA Chapter and Pocahontas County 4-H. In 2018 I moved to Randolph County on a small farm, with Dakota Pritt. I am focusing on commercial rabbit production, raising chickens and gardening. Most of our rabbits are pedigreed and sold for 4-H and FFA projects, meat, and some for pets. In the summer months, what I look forward to most, is competing at the State Fair of WV and networking with other farmers. If we aren’t at the farm, a Farm Bureau function or the State fair, we are most likely at Burnsville Lake, sitting by the camper with our dogs. I work full time as dog groomer and Vet Technician at an animal hospital in Elkins.

I’ve been a Farm Bureau since 2018, and a YF&R member since 2020. What Farm Bureau means to me is leadership. We have to continue to lead others in our industry and continue to educate the public on where our food comes from!
In early February Jaimee, Drew, and myself went up to Penn State to the “Growing Agriculture Together” Leadership Conference hosted by PA Young Ag Professionals. We had a great time meeting other young farmers from PA, NY, and MD and are excited to attend again next year along with more WV YF&R committee members.

We attended sessions focusing on young and beginning farmer resources, networking within agriculture, precision agriculture, and hoof trimming. We went to the hoof trimming session even though on our farms it isn’t common to have to trim the animals hooves since they spend so much time outside on pasture. Hoof trimming is much more prevalent on larger, indoor dairies which are common in PA. Since dairies aren’t common in WV it was nice to get to talk to a lot of dairy farmers about their farms.

Our favorite part was definitely meeting everyone and learning about their backgrounds in agriculture. It’s important for us to continue to go to these events and network with other farmers because there is always something we can learn from one another. On Saturday night there was karaoke, and you can bet WV YFR sang Country Roads for everyone. Big thanks for PA YAP for hosting and we can’t wait to see you all again next year!
Growing up I never dreamed of becoming a full-time farmer. I lived in Boone County where agriculture is mostly a garden in the back yard. My family was a little different because my grandpa & dad bought land in Roane/Jackson County. We always had about 20 head of cattle just to help keep the farm from growing up. Our neighbors called us the weekend warriors because we did as much work on the weekend as most could do all week. Then we would return home late Sunday night so my dad could go back to work on Monday.

When it was time for me to decide what I wanted to do for a living, I decided on business management at Glenville State College. I never dreamed I would be using my bachelor’s degree to run a farm since I hoped for a management job at the mines. After college, I went to work for Keystone industries driving Rock & Lizard Trucks. I was investing most
the farm. We lost 6 cows to Anaplasmosis. I was devastated and didn’t know how we were going to make it farming. On a trip to the WV State Fair, we stopped by the WV Farm Bureau booth and met Eric Thomason. He told us about the Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. Meeting other farmers our age from across the state and learning from their successes & failures has become an asset since we joined.

We hope to see the committee grow and benefit other young farmers as much as it has us. My dad always reminded me that if farming was easy everyone would do it. I would suggest to anyone thinking or currently farming to keep a good support team around you. Just like they say, it village to raise a child, and it’s the same with farming. Our families and neighbors are always there to lend a hand no matter what we need.

In 2016, we also had to deal with the cattle market crashing. We had to find a way to keep the family farm going. We chose to cut
out the middleman & stated direct marking our beef to consumers. The best form of marketing we have found is word of mouth. The consumers that have bought our beef now have their friends and family buying too. We are marketing now marketing over 60% of our calf crop directly to the end consumers.

March 16, 2020 changed our world forever. Most people will remember it as the day WV went in to lock down for Covid. We will remember it as the day God blessed us with our son, Kennedy Virgil King. He is the reason we keep expanding the farm. We want to continue improving the land so we can pass it on to the next generation, better than we found it.
We had our first boil in the sugar house and it was a success. The smoke went up the stove pipe and the steam went out the special little vent on the roof. We were especially grateful for the roof over our heads on our second day of boiling when a cold rain fell all day. It was quite cozy in our little house with the roaring fire. It has been such fun getting family members involved and letting them learn the process.

Everyone is always shocked to find out that it takes around forty gallons of sugar water to make just one gallon of delicious maple syrup. Equally surprising to folks is how completely finicky those old maple trees are about giving up sap. Maple trees like below freezing nights and days above 40 degrees with lots of sunshine to give abundant buckets of sap.

Trees do not like: rain, snow, ice, freezing temperatures all day, a little wind, a lot of wind, or even cloudy days. The sap just won’t run. Just like people, I guess trees sometimes need a day or two to rest. Folks keep asking my husband and I what our next project is, now that the sugar is house is complete. And I am thinking, just like those trees, maybe a nap would be nice. But of course that won’t happen, because somehow the end of sugaring season exactly coincides with the beginning of calving season!

I have already pointed out how very nicely our sugar house could be converted into a little cow shed for an expectant mama. Or maybe even some bottle fed orphan lambs.

This month’s column is a bit short, but farming, sugaring, and “real” work have been busy these past few weeks. Our buckets runneth over; and my heart is full.
Charles Wilfong, mentioned, “We represent all farmers in West Virginia and since 79% of our state is forested, tree farmers are an important part of our membership so we are proud to honor Kevin Gregory from Braxton county as Tree Farmer of the Year!”

On Monday morning January 30th, 2022, Senator Karnes representing Randolph County read a Resolution acknowledging Kevin Gregory of Braxton County as Tree Farmer of the Year.

After presenting the resolution and reading Senate Resolution 17, Senator Karnes thanked Kevin for his hard work and dedication to conservation in the state. Gregory, who owns property in both Lewis and Braxton Counties, participates in several Natural Resource Conservation Service programs and provides wildlife habitat management consulting services across West Virginia.

Part of being Tree Farmer of the Year is to highlight the work and passion involved in spending time improving your forest through wildlife habitat and forestry practices. Gregory spent the evening of his visit to Charleston at the Farm Bureau’s “Taste of West Virginia dinner talking with numerous elected officials about the states’ forestry and wildlife programs. Currently, the forestry industry is facing the same issue as the education system is with teachers – not enough foresters in the state and not enough students in our state schools to cover the open forestry positions. In order to improve our numbers of both, recruiting programs and increased incentives is required.

Gregory highlighted, “while I retired from a military career, my passion has always been wildlife and our WV forests and mountains. I really enjoy spending the day transforming the landscape into something that promotes increased wildlife capacity and can vastly improve our forests and streams.

Here in West Virginia, Gregory mentioned, that the WV Division of Forestry works with The Natural Resources...
Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U. S. Department of Agriculture under the Farm Bill offering voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial aid and technical assistance to help manage forests and pastureland for residents of our state.

For landowners interested in NRCS programs, Braxton County residents can contact Andy Seitz at the Gassaway Farm Services Office at 304-564-5103 and if you are in Lewis County, you should contact Tom Wilsoncroft at 304-269-8431 Ext 3 who is a USDA-NRCS Representative.

If you are interested in NRCS but not sure if it is right for you, can also contact Kevin Gregory. Gregory owns and operates Eagle Land Transformation which specializes in wildlife habitat management consulting and practices. Kevin is more than willing to provide free advice and assistance to point the landowner in the right direction to get started. Kevin Gregory can be reached at ealgeland2019@gmail.com or gregory68659801@gmail.com.

Remember, you can be considered for financial assistance whether your farm is small (10 acres plus) or large with hundreds of acres.
I am, or until recently was, by nature, a very trusting person. I naturally looked for the best in people and simply trusted that someone would uphold their end of a bargain. Alas, we are all human, and through our interactions we have grown to distrust each other. A handshake agreement is a relic of a simpler world. We are living in a time when we have laws upon laws governing our lives. A time when lawyers guide our every move, and a time when every “jot and tittle” is analysed one thousand times over to achieve an advantage.

During Jesus’ time, the Jewish people lived under an overwhelming 613 moral, civic, and ceremonial commandments. Though He made it clear that the law was still binding upon them, Jesus called out the Scribes and Pharisees for ignoring the “Spirit of the Law” during his stirring Sermon on the Mount. Laws had been added upon laws until the original reasoning behind them had been completely missed.

Until recently, I had no idea of the similar complexity involved in assessing a given property’s farm use valuation. Within the W.Va. Legislative Rules there are no less than 14 criteria used in determining a property’s valuation, with an additional 13 qualifying rules, 6 disqualifying rules, and 35 definitions. My case in point is the denial of an application for farm use valuation made by a Mr. John Bunner in Pendleton County. I choose this case because in my opinion there could be hundreds (if not 1000’s) of similar situations across the state of West Virginia. However, for reasons that shall become apparent, I will not belittle or call into question the motives of the Pendleton County Assessor. John Bunner’s farm contains 115.13 acres of land within Pendleton County. Of that land, 6.24 acres were listed on the application as cropland and the remaining 108.89 acres were listed as woodland. In addition, Mr. Bunner declared a crop production value of $1,160.00.

USDA Map outlining various portions of John Bunner’s farm. This more detailed map was submitted to the West Virginia Tax Commissioner as an effective part of his appeal.
In this case, both the total acreage of agricultural land and the $1,160.00 crop value served to qualify his farm for farm use. As far as the woodlands portion of the farm were concerned, it qualified as part of a bona fide farm because it was “contiguous to a tract of land determined by the Assessor to be actively devoted to farm or agricultural use”.

Mr. Bunner’s application was denied, however, in a letter from the Pendleton County Assessor dated August 30, 2022. In the Assessor’s opinion, the size of the tract of land was “grossly disproportionate to the amount being used for a bona fide farm”. The Assessor went on to remind Mr. Bunner that it had previously been suggested to him that he consider signing this tract up for managed timberland through the West Virginia Forestry Department. It was further stated that he had thirty days to perform a written appeal to the WV State Tax Commissioner.

On the surface, considering all the facts that I have enumerated thus far, the application seems cut and dry. The Assessor seems to have been involved in a blatant overreach. Rightfully, Mr. Bunner appealed the decision. However, within the ruling handed down by the State Tax Commissioner, Matthew Irby, a bit of ambiguity creeps into this story that cannot be understated. He confirms that within the Rule (110 CSR 01A, § 2.6.2) it is provided that the Assessor may consider “The ratio of farm or agricultural use of the land to other uses of the land” in determining whether it is a bona fide farm.

Thankfully, the Tax Commissioner goes on to state that, as in previous rulings, there is no “bright line rule” setting forth a minimum required ratio of property used for farming to the total quantity in the parcel. He further states that no other uses of the land had been demonstrated, and because all other requirements had been met, Mr. Bunner’s farm did, indeed, qualify for farm use valuation. However, the ambiguity still stands and the Spirit of the Law, a good law meant to give farmers a tiny bit of tax break, has faded in a dense mist of Rules and Regulations.

**APPEAL PROCESS FOR FARM USE VALUATION**

**PER WV LEGISLATIVE REGULATIONS, TITLE 110, SECTION 2.8.3, DATE JULY 1991**

The applicant may, within thirty (30) days of notification of the denial of the application, appeal the assessor’s decision to the State Tax Commissioner. The State Tax Commissioner shall rule on the petition no later than January 1st and shall notify the applicant and assessor thereof in due course. The Tax Commissioner may consider any appropriate information relevant to the determination. The decision, which shall be binding on the assessor and the property owner, shall only apply to the eligibility of property for farm use valuation. The Tax Commissioner shall decide only the issue of whether the property constitutes a “farm” or “farms” within the meaning of WV Code 11-1a-3(i) and these regulations.

Instructions:

- Prepare a detailed written explanation of reason for appeal.
- Mail the following information to the Tax Commissioner for his review and consideration (make copies for your records):
  - Written explanation of reason for appeal.
  - Farm Use Valuation Notification – Tax Commissioner will need this notification to understand reason for the denial by assessor.
  - Application for Farm Use Valuation – This application will contain the necessary information to assist the Tax Commissioner in his decision.

- Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the enclosed Farm Use Valuation Notification, originals must be mailed to:

  WV State Tax Commissioner
  WV Department of Tax and Revenue
  1001 Lee Street East/PO Box 11771
  Charleston, WV 25339

What does this mean for you, the farmer? Keep informed of changes in the Rules. If your valuation changes, you must be notified in writing and there are specific guidelines and time-frames for filing an appeal.
Workforce Education Trainings

CDL Program

This program offers career training in the road transportation industry, provides instruction and on-the-road training in a big rig, and prepares trainees to pass the WV’s CDL’s permit and licensing exams. Graduates qualify for entry-level employment immediately upon obtaining their Class A CDL. FMCSA Registered Provider.

Held at Eastern’s Technology Center in Petersburg, WV.

Hospitality Training

These free training sessions are intended to benefit local communities and businesses in the hospitality sector. The trainings will cover all aspects of remarkable customer service, how to create a dining room menu that stands out, leadership skills for hospitality managers and how to improve your restaurant profitability without sacrificing quality.

The How To’s on Creating a Menu, or Fixing One: March 13 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | Capon Springs and Farms

Leadership Skill Development for Hospitality Managers:

April 17 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | Potomac Lanes Bowling Center, Moorefield, WV

Drone Training

Receive hands-on flight training in aerial observation, terrain mapping, flight maneuvers, crew resource management, accident scene reconstruction, search and rescue and night operations by National Drone Services. This free training is available for tourism and agriculture industry.

Dates: March 23, 24, 30, & 31 | 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. | Eastern Main Campus

Contact: WorkforceED@easternwv.edu to enroll or call 304-434-8000 ext. 9253

Agriculture Innovation Trainings

Potomac Highlands Agritourism Summit

Network with industry experts and business leaders, learn the pros and cons of common agritourism models, and improve your business at the first Potomac Highlands Agritourism Summit!

Time & Place: Wednesday, March 15 | 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. | Misty Mountain Event Barn, 49 Misty Mountain Rd, Fisher, WV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAINING/EVENTS</th>
<th>DATE/TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beekeeping 101</td>
<td>Thursday, April 6</td>
<td>Eastern Campus, Room 104B</td>
<td>$15</td>
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<td>2 - 5:30 P.M.</td>
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<td>Irrigation Management</td>
<td>Date TBD</td>
<td>2 - 5:30 P.M.</td>
<td>Dean's Gap Farm, Fort Seybert, WV</td>
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<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 3</td>
<td>Eastern Campus, Room 104B</td>
<td>$15</td>
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<td>Fertigation and Nutrient Mgmt.</td>
<td>Tuesday, May 16</td>
<td>Eastern Campus, Room 104B</td>
<td>$15</td>
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<td>10 A.M. - 4 P.M.</td>
<td>Wardensville Garden Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockmanship &amp; Stewardship</td>
<td>Friday, June 16</td>
<td>Tri-County Fair Grounds, Petersburg, WV</td>
<td>$15</td>
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<td>10 A.M. - 4 P.M.</td>
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Contact: aginnovation@easternwv.edu and call 304-434-8000 ext. 9606
A Sweet St. Patrick’s Day

(Culinary.net) Even if you’re not Irish, a green treat like this Luck o’ the Irish Mint Pie can get you and your guests into the festive spirit. With enough seasonal flavor to go around, this recipe makes two pies, so be sure to cut every leprechaun a generous portion.

Find more festive recipes at Culinary.net.

**Luck o’ the Irish Mint Pie**

Makes: 2 pies (9 inches each)

- 3 3/4 cups heavy whipped cream, divided
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 1/4 cups, plus 2 tablespoons, powdered sugar, divided
- 5 drops green food coloring
- 1 1/4 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon mint extract
- 1 bag mint chocolate candies, chopped, divided
- 2 chocolate cookie crusts (9 inches each)
- 1 bag mint chocolate candies

To make filling: In bowl of stand mixer, whisk 2 1/2 cups heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Transfer to bowl.

In separate stand mixer bowl, beat cream cheese on high 2 minutes. Gradually add 1 1/4 cups powdered sugar and green food coloring; mix until smooth. Add 1/4 teaspoon vanilla and mint extract; mix well.

Fold prepared whipped cream into cream cheese mixture. Fold 1 cup chopped mint chocolate candies into filling.

To make frosting: In bowl of stand mixer, whisk remaining heavy cream and remaining powdered sugar. Add remaining vanilla extract and mix until stiff peaks form.

Pour filling into crusts and smooth tops.

Fill decorating bag with frosting and pipe thick band around edges of pies. Then pipe circle dollops evenly around edges of pies.

Scatter 1 cup chopped mint chocolate candies in middle of pies. Place whole mint chocolate candies into each dollop of frosting around edges of pies.

Refrigerate until firm, 5-6 hours.
Monthly Puzzles with a Few Words of Country Wisdom Tossed in fer Good Measure!

ACROSS
1. G in mg
5. Medicinal amt.
8. Say no
11. Popular Scotch mixer
12. Country dance formation
13. List of candidates
15. Certain battery component
16. Exclamation of sorrow
17. "The Game of Unspeakable Fun"
18. "Fascinating two-handed strategy game"
20. Dutch cheese
21. Not quite right
22. "I thee ___"
23. Crème de...
26. Where Japan is
30. Part of circumference
31. Threatened Asian or African odd-toed ungulate
34. Ready for picking
35. Reasons to sue
36. Romania’s southern neighbor
37. Romanian money
38. Lemon, in Paris
40. Latissimus dorsi, for short
42. Angola’s southern neighbor
43. Dairy farm glands
47. Relax, or ___ out
48. Brooke or John Jacob, of New York
50. USPS delivery
52. Cards against what?
55. Medicinal plant with purple berries
56. Bug-eyed
57. Tiny bottle
59. a.k.a. jumping bone
61. Makes a mistake
62. "___ Day," desirable square in The Game of Life
63. Bard’s before
64. Rip apart

DOWN
1. Govt. property org.
2. Fabled fliers
3. Mine passage
4. India’s Chennai, pre-1996
5. Flooring choice, pl.
6. Hose woes
7. 100 centavos in Mexico
8. Rum cake
9. Particle in A-bomb
10. What’s-old-is-new-again prefix
12. Somewhat late
13. Be at the helm
14. *Not chutes
15. #39 Across, pl.
16. Is no longer
17. *Trade, build, settle this island
20. Curative's concern
21. Curtain fabric
24. Oenophile’s concern
25. Hose woes
26. *Connect how many?
27. Theater passage
28. Asparagus unit
29. Written works
30. Part of circumference
31. Threatened Asian or African odd-toed ungulate
32. Hipbones
33. Butterfly catcher
34. Supernatural life force
35. Drop a note
36. *Like pursuit of no vital importance
37. Sign of bad news
38. Inflict a blow
39. Supernatural life force
40. Knitter’s supply
41. Scraps, or ___ out
44. The beauty of the ball?
46. Morgan Freeman in “Driving Miss Daisy,” e.g.
48. Sign of bad news
49. Inflict a blow
50. Supernatural life force
51. Drunkard, slangily
52. Exhibiting good health
53. Swing seat, sometimes
54. Knitter’s supply
55. Tree fluid
56. Bug-eyed
57. Tiny bottle
58. Dropped drug, acr.
59. a.k.a. jumping bone
60. A Camel, for short
61. Makes a mistake
62. "___ Day," desirable square in The Game of Life
63. Bard’s before
64. Rip apart

Ireland is known for premium beer and liquor, the country’s brewing history goes back over 5,000 years. It’s home to three famous breweries, Guinness, Smithwicks, and Harp Lager, and is home to over 75 independent brewers.

Castles, Castles, Everywhere! With over 20,000 castles dotting those grassy green hills, it could take over a decade to see every castle in Ireland. The most famous are Blarney Castle in County Cork, where you’ll find the Blarney Stone and the Ashford Castle.

DID YOU KNOW?
Irish Names Mean Something
Many of the Irish have names that begin with “Mac” and “O”. Interestingly, Mac means “son of” and O means “descendant of”.

Do you think the national symbol of Ireland is the Shamrock? Think again! it is, in fact, the Gaelic harp.

February 2023 Solution

Cow Cud...

came sit a spell

Theme: BOARD GAMES

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February 2023 Solution
WHERE WILL YOUR PATH LEAD?

Almost 60,000 annual job openings in agricultural and renewable natural resources mean a real future.

With the benefits of the WVU System on a smaller campus, WVU Potomac State College prepares students for successful careers in the agriculture and forestry fields.

Three farms provide 800+ acres of living labs. Students can also use the Innovation Lab to turn an idea for a new product into a fully manufactured prototype.

Our two-year degree can be built to a four-year degree on the Morgantown campus, or students can go straight into the workforce. We also offer a four-year degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Entrepreneurship (SAGE).

Learn more at potomacstatecollege.edu.
WE ARE #1 IN LAND AND FARMS SALES IN WV!

This ancient WV White Oak, has soaked up some 100,000 sunrises since it was born around the time George Washington was president in 1790.

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