

SAFE WATER CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE

Scope: Local **Location:** Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia

SCOPE:

- » A vibrant network of 25+ water utilities, land conservation organizations, and community partners collaborating on land conservation and stewardship practices to protect safe, clean drinking water for communities in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.
- » Current efforts are focused on prioritizing land for conservation, outreach to landowners, stewardship practices on conserved lands, and identifying and addressing barriers to private land conservation.
- » West Virginia Rivers Coalition serves as the Collaborative's host partner, providing grant administrative support, meeting facilitation, and overall coordination of the effort.

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Website: www.safewatercollaborative.org

COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- » The Safe Water Conservation Collaborative was formed in 2017 to assist water utilities with implementing the land conservation strategy in their source water protection plans (SWPP) by engaging willing landowners in conversations about conserving their land to protect drinking water supplies.
- » A Steering Committee, which functions similar to a board of directors, provides overall support, vision and guidance to the collaborative. The Steering Committee consists of the host partner, workgroup chairs and water utility liaisons. Three workgroups, the Conservation Workgroup, Education and Outreach Workgroup and Stewardship Workgroup, work in tandem to achieve our mission of "Protecting Drinking Water through Land Conservation."
- » Each workgroup meets four times a year while full Collaborative gatherings occur bi-annually

MEMBERS:

- » Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
- » Canaan Valley Institute
- » Charles Town Utility Board
- » City of Martinsburg Water & Sewer Department
- » Conservation Fund
- » Downstream Project
- » Eastern Panhandle Conservation District
- » Harpers Ferry Water Works
- » Jefferson County Extension Service
- » Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board
- » Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
- » Jefferson County Water Advisory Committee
- » Jefferson Utilities Inc.
- » Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
- » Potomac Conservancy
- » Region 9 Planning & Development Council
- » Shepherd University
- » Shepherdstown Water & Sanitation Board
- » Sustainable Solutions
- » USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- » West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority
- » West Virginia Rivers Coalition
- » WV Conservation Agency
- » WV Department of Health & Human Resources Bureau for Public Health
- » WV Department of Natural Resources

WATER CONCERNS:

- » Protecting drinking water supplies
- » Implementing source water protection plans
- » Accelerating land conservation
- » Stewardship practices

STRATEGIES:

- » Conservation Workgroup – Using computer mapping software and their specialized experience, they work to identify the best-of-the-best potential conservation easements that will have the greatest impact on protecting drinking water supplies. They also assist the host partner, WV Rivers Coalition, with conveying that technical information to the Collaborative.
- » Education & Outreach Workgroup – They facilitate direct landowner outreach events to engage landowners in conversations about the benefits of conservation easements on drinking water supplies. They also assist with educating the general community about how protecting land protects drinking water through outreach and education.
- » Stewardship Workgroup – develops outreach tools to engage existing easement holders in conversations about continuing to protect their land through conservation practices such as tree plantings along streams, livestock fencing around water sources, and more.

RESULTS:

- » Created a "[Prioritization Map](#)" to visually demonstrate how they prioritize high-value land, based on their GIS Prioritization Model (v1).
- » Created resources specifically for Landowners, including "[Landowner Legacy](#)" videos
- » Planned outreach events in 2020 for prioritized landowners.
- » Created a "[BMP Toolkit](#)" for easement monitors to identify and educate landowners about viable best management practices.