Greenbrier Historical Society Showcases Farmhouses

On June 7, 8, & 9 2013, the Greenbrier Historical Society will hold its bi-annual tour of homes in the Greenbrier Valley and will showcase, among others, two farm homes.

One will be the circa 1815 home of James Jarrett (1750-1822). He, along with his brothers Owen, Jesse, and David, came to the Greenbrier Valley in the early 1770’s.

Still standing, straight and true, on 100 acres of his original land, the Jarrett House retains most of its original materials. The current owners Margaret and David Hambrick - she a Jarrett descendent - will welcome visitors during the tour. The farm is still active and farmed by WVFB members Joe and Mary Clay, the former a Jarrett descendent.

A gala reception to open the Homes Tour weekend will be held there from 5-7 p.m. on June 7, 2013 and will include candle light tours of the house as well as a display and demonstration of antique carriages by Ray and Lynn Tuckwiller. Wine will be provided by local vintners, Frank and Barbara Tuckwiller of Watt’s Roost Vineyard.

Three more significant properties will be included on the tour on Saturday, June 8 and the Town of Ronceverte will be the highlight of the Sunday afternoon tour. Please contact the Greenbrier Historical Society at 304-645-3398 or info@greenbrierhistorical.org for more information.

Articles for NewsBytes must be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Time-sensitive announcements must be submitted no less than 8 weeks prior to the date of the event. Electronic submissions, including photos, are preferred. Send to joanh@wvfarm.org.
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**On the cover**

Dogwood  
Eric Thomason
Our Food is Safer Than Ever

Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation

Summertime is almost upon us. For most Americans, the warmer weather brings picnics in the park, BBQs and grilling out with family and friends. It also brings the increased chance for foodborne illness to occur if safe food preparation and handling is not given full attention.

Because food safety is such an important issue to farmers, we’ve worked hard to ensure that the food that reaches your table is safe. Thanks to voluntary farmer-led initiatives, strict government monitoring and consumer food safety education, foodborne illness has dropped drastically in the last 100 years.

Not Just Lip Service

According to a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, our food is safer than ever. The number of foodborne disease outbreaks in 2009-2010 declined 32 percent compared with the preceding five years. Some of the credit for this can be attributed to the Food Safety Modernization Act, which was signed into law in 2011. This law aims to cooperatively improve food safety by building on existing systems already in place in the private sector.

Before the FSMA was passed, approximately 72 million Americans fell sick due to a foodborne illness every year. Within a week after the FSMA was signed into law, those numbers were adjusted to 48 million. Significantly, foodborne illnesses now only touch 9.4 million people yearly.

Farmers take seriously their responsibility of growing safe food and that’s not just lip service. Farmers have the same desire as other consumers to have a safe, abundant and affordable food supply. And they also have an important economic interest because the demand for their products is determined by consumer confidence.

Shouting From the Rooftop

Many people don’t realize that there are five federal agencies that administer at least 30 laws related to food safety. Through this intense federal oversight, the level of food safety testing has also dramatically increased. And, just as important, consumer education on food safety is on the uptick.

Even though contamination of food can occur at any stage in food production, a high level of foodborne illness is caused by foods improperly prepared or mishandled at home or in restaurants. To counter this, Farm Bureaus across the country are educating consumers to enhance their food safety knowledge. And it’s working!

According to Dr. Richard Raymond, former undersecretary for food safety at the Agriculture Department, the CDC report is cause for celebration. “You should be able to stand on top of the building and say ‘hey look, (the agriculture) industry is doing a great job, consumers are doing a great job of listening to the safe handling and proper cooking messages…and restaurants and other people that cook our food are doing a better job.’”

So, go on and enjoy your burgers and chops, deviled eggs and fresh salad this summer knowing that your food is safer than ever. And, maybe even have a steak for me while you’re at it.
With political maneuvering at its peak during the final days of the 2013 Regular Session, a friend “Under the Dome” commented, “Don, you can’t make this stuff up!” I would agree. The process is intriguing, to say the least. A total of 1829 bills were introduced, with legislation being completed on 215 bills. Following are highlights of a few key bills Farm Bureau was promoting or opposing.

Legislation was completed on HB 2399, which addressed a procedure to protect livestock in dire condition. The Enrolled Committee Substitute permits the Livestock Care Standards Board to create procedures to address inhumane treatment of livestock. Language revising West Virginia’s antiquated stock laws/general livestock trespass law was also amended/inserted into the bill. A bill focusing on needed updates to numerous sections of West Virginia Code relative to fencing laws died in committee due to concern over recommended language dealing with the apportionment of construction and maintenance of partition fence. Present law states, “Persons owning adjoining lands, both of which are used for agricultural, horticultural, grazing or livestock purposes, shall bear a just proportion of the cost of the constructing, repairing and maintaining a partition fence between such lands.” Farm Bureau opposed bill language whereby cost-sharing was triggered only by grazing or livestock purposes.

Bills targeting lease integration/forced pooling (SB 616 and HB 3151) were opposed by Farm Bureau and died in committee. We anticipate lease integration will be an issue again in 2014.

For the second consecutive year, much-needed legislation to protect West Virginia’s longstanding liability rules died in House Judiciary. But there is a significant difference from the first year the bill was introduced in 2012. That year the Senate passed the bill by a near-unanimous vote, only to see it die in House Judiciary due to concerns surfacing from a few stakeholders. Fast forward to 2013 – Those key stakeholders worked with us to alleviate their concerns and were on page 100%. The stakeholder-approved bill went through the study process without a dissenting vote by Judiciary members reviewing it, resulting in an interim bill with the recommendation “do pass.” SB 338 was introduced and passed the Senate by a 34-0 vote. Again the bill stalled in House Judiciary, never making it to the agenda, in spite of the fact we were told it would be one of the first Senate bills addressed. One friend reminded me, “Sometimes politics gets in the way of policy.” Perhaps the most appropriate explanation can be found in the wisdom shared by another friend – Delegate Bill Hartman, veteran decision-maker with integrity who chairs the Rural Caucus annually reminds me, “Too often we overlook the common good.” While it is unclear who or what truly caused the demise of much-needed legislation to protect West Virginia’s longstanding liability rules, it is crystal clear the “common good” took a backseat again.

Since the Philadelphia-based American Law Institute’s Restatement of the Law Third, Torts: Liability for Physical and Emotional Harm was published in 2010, which has the potential to upend our current trespass law providing that a land possessor owes no duty of care to a trespasser except in very narrow and well-defined circumstances, fifteen states have passed laws similar to SB 338 to protect their liability laws. Will the West Virginia Legislature do the right thing in the future, joining states like Ohio and North Carolina, to protect these traditional common law rules, or lag behind and reinforce the perception of our state being a “judicial hellhole”? Time will tell. Until next time, take care FRIENDS, God bless and KEEP SMILING.
Applying the Science of Ergonomics to Farm Work

Farmers and farm workers report some of the highest risks of work-related musculoskeletal disorders in the nation. “Only recently has the science of ergonomics been applied to farm work to help reduce the number of injuries that cost commercial agriculture millions of dollars every year in health care expenses, lost wages and lowered productivity,” says Industrial Hygienist, Glenn Soyer, manager, Risk Management Services with Nationwide Agribusiness Insurance Company, Des Moines, IA.

Ergonomics is the study of the physical capabilities and limitations of a worker in relation to that person’s work tasks, tools and environment. Ergonomics seeks to reduce stress on the body, and increase safety, comfort and productivity. Ergonomic recommendations are fairly easy to integrate into many farming routines. The key is awareness and practice.

Simple changes that make work safer
Consider incorporating these ergonomic modifications into your everyday work activities to reduce potential injuries to you and your workers.

Lifting
Lift only the loads you know you can handle. Get help or use a mechanical lift for larger loads. Keep the load close to your body, lifting with your legs. Be careful when reaching for items, and move them closer to you before lifting. Avoid twisting or bending at the waist while lifting.

Carrying
If you carry an item with one arm, such as a bucket, keep your knees soft to reduce the strain on your lower back. Counterbalance by raising your other arm away from your body. Be sure to switch sides frequently.
Carrying with both arms is safer for your back and prevents overuse of the favored arm. Make sure the weight is balanced. For example, carry two buckets half full rather than one heavy bucket to minimize strain.

Shoveling
Be sure that your shovel is the right size for the job. If you’re shoveling snow, grain or manure, use a smaller shovel or take smaller scoops. Keep your feet at shoulder width with your knees slightly bent to give yourself good support. Lift with your legs, not with your back. Avoid twisting while shoveling, and keep the load close to your body.

Stooping
Awkward positions such as stooping, bending from the waist or crouching can take a toll on your back. Use a half-kneeling position for better balance and posture instead of a full squat if you need to change a tire or do other work near the floor. If you need to bend from the waist, make sure you don’t reach out too far and wrench your back. Always take frequent breaks from awkward positions to release the tension in your muscles.

Mounting
Always maintain three points of contact with the handrails and steps for stability and balance when climbing on a tractor or other large farm implement. Pull with your hands and step with your feet at the same time while keeping your weight over your feet. This way, each step elevates you straight upward or lowers you straight downward.

Driving
Sit with your back against the seat so that it’s supported. Sit close enough to the steering wheel that your knees are comfortably bent. Shift your position frequently to prevent the muscles from tightening. Consider adding suspension seats to your tractor to decrease whole body vibration.

Using tools
Ergonomically designed farm implements – like clippers, shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows and posthole diggers – help lessen the stress on your back and are readily available at local farm supply stores. Additionally, many power tools have been redesigned to be more body-friendly.

Locate a Nationwide Agribusiness farm certified agent at http://farmagentfinder.com/ or call 1-800-255-9913.
Mountain View Solar
257 JR Howsermoole Way
Berkeley Springs WV 25411
877.96.SOLAR

Straight from the horse’s mouth, “solar is perfect for use around the farm.” Mountain View Solar has extensive experience with agricultural installations as well as residential, commercial, municipal and government installs across West Virginia. Contact us today for a free solar evaluation.
This month’s article provides information to Marcellus Shale gas owners on how to plan for some of the challenges of being a new gas owner. This information is to serve as a supplement to our most recent article “Oil & Gas 101: The Marcellus Shale,” published in the March edition of the Farm Bureau News. Our neighbors in or near Ohio, who are experiencing similar challenges with the development of the Utica Shale, also will find useful information here.

Gas owners may find their lives change dramatically when they begin receiving royalty payments. In many cases, those payments may represent more money than the owners ever expected to receive. As exciting as that is, it also raises other concerns for the owners, such as how to protect the money for their family and how to plan for the future.

Who needs an estate plan? Many people think only the rich and famous need estate plans but, really, everyone needs one. If you have family members you want to protect and you have any assets, then you need a plan for the orderly administration and
disposition of property after you die. The goals of your estate plan should include the following:

• Avoiding confusion when it comes to your final wishes.
• Protecting your loved ones by ensuring that they receive your assets.
• Ensuring that your children have the legal guardian of your choice.
• Helping to reduce or avoid conflict among family members.
• Wealth preservation for your intended beneficiaries.
• Minimizing taxes and legal expenses associated with your estate.

You might be wondering: what is included in your estate? Well, your estate includes everything you own: your house, any other real estate like a farm, royalty interests, autos, jewelry, collections of antiques, coins, stamps, etc. and your possessions (heirlooms). It also includes your intangible property: bank accounts, annuities, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, retirement plans, life insurance and any businesses you may have. Once you add up all of those items, you will have an idea of the approximate size of your estate, which is important for tax purposes.

One very good reason to have an estate plan is to minimize the amount of federal taxes that are owed when someone dies. An estate tax is a tax on the transfer of property to others, usually the children of the deceased. This is separate from probate expenses and final income taxes owed on any income the deceased earned or received in the year of death. Estate taxes also are separate from inheritance taxes that some states impose.

In 2013, the estate (and gift) maximum tax rate is 40 percent. The estate tax exemption (the amount that you can pass, free of tax, to anyone other than your spouse or charity) is $5.25 million, or $10.5 million combined with your spouse. Any part of your exemption that is not used at your death can be used by your spouse at his or her death. Now, those figures may seem like a large amount of assets, but if you are getting large, regular royalty payments from a Marcellus well, you could reach that threshold in a fairly short period of time.

Even if your assets are not up to that amount, there are some other very good reasons for having an estate plan. A plan can guard against other major concerns, such as making sure your children (not your children’s spouses) receive your money upon your death; protecting your assets against creditors; or helping to preserve your family farm for the next generation. Some of the basic tools you can use in your estate plan are a Last Will & Testament, Trusts, such as Living Trusts and Testamentary Trusts, Durable Power of Attorney and Advance Medical Directives.

Those who own large Marcellus or Utica Shale gas interests have the potential to become extremely wealthy, almost overnight, and having a solid estate plan in place will help protect them and their families in the future. In addition to wills and trusts, there are other financial planning techniques that can significantly help protect a family’s increased income. Please stay tuned for our next article, in the July edition of Farm Bureau News, where we will discuss these additional planning options for gas owners.

Robert S. Kiss is a partner in the Charleston office of Bowles Rice LLP, a regional law firm with offices in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Virginia. He is a member of the firm’s Tax Team. Mr. Kiss was a member of the West Virginia Legislature from 1989-2006 and served as the Speaker of the House from 1997-2006 and House Finance Chairman from 1993-1996. Emily R. Lambright is a senior associate in the Charleston office of Bowles Rice LLP. She is also a certified public accountant (CPA). For more information, please contact Mr. Kiss or Ms. Lambright at (304) 347-1100.
Asian vegetables bring variety to your garden

Diversifying gardens with Asian vegetables will provide an exciting, delicious option for West Virginia gardeners.

You'll enjoy unique colors, shapes, and flavors by planting this diverse group of vegetables.

Asian greens include vegetables in the turnip and cabbage families. Napa cabbage is very easy to grow and is a perfect substitute for green cabbage. Napa cabbage can be planted throughout midsummer in most regions of West Virginia. Suitable varieties of Napa cabbage include Blues, Jade Pekoe, and China Express.

Tokyo Bok Choy, a miniature Chinese cabbage, grows very well in the fall. The leaves are an excellent substitute for lettuce. Pak choi, or bok choi, a fast-growing green (45 days from seeding), is used in a variety of dishes, including stir-fries and salads.

Mizuna is an Asian mustard with thin, white stems and fringed (red or green) leaves. The mustard, which is tolerant of cold and heat, is an excellent salad green. Tsukemono is an Asian green that produces a cluster of spine-shaped leaves. Tsukemono can be seeded throughout the summer and fall in West Virginia. A larger version of tsukemono is Taiho Sawa, which has both heat and cold tolerance.

Komatsuna, a mustard spinach, is grown in the fall since this plant does best in cool weather. Susame is a cross between green cabbage and komatsuna. This relatively large plant produces leaves having a sweeter, milder flavor. Susame is an excellent replacement for collards in the garden.

A very popular white Asian radish turnip is the Hakurei, which has excellent flavor. Hakurei radish turns grow rapidly, and the greens or top growth can also be eaten. The radish radish is a long radish with a sweet, peppery flavor.

Chinese broccoli produces a much smaller head than traditional broccoli but is grown in much the same way. Harvest Chinese broccoli by cutting the stem 3 inches in length just before the flowers open.

Japanese cucumbers, which are thin-skinned, mild, and seedless, are an excellent addition to the garden. Tasty Jale, a very good greenhouse/jalapeno cucumber, can be grown in the garden on a trellis.

Asian eggplants are typically long and thin and have a diversity of colors. Asian eggplants do not need pasting because they have very thin skins. Asian radishes are related to cucumbers and are harvested when the fruit is green. The fruit can be pickled.

Edamame, a soybean, is grown as a fresh vegetable. Edamame is a warm-season crop requiring about 95 days from sowing.

Chinese or Yard Long beans are pencil-thin beans that can be as long as 30 inches. They are typically harvested when they reach 12 to 18 inches in length.

Bringing variety to this year's garden and something different to your table is easy with the many Asian vegetable options available.

By Lenora W. Finn, Commercial Horticulture Specialist, WVU Extension Service
WVU has world’s largest collection of mycorrhizal fungi

Joseph Moertl, professor of plant pathology at West Virginia University, breeds more of his “children” every year.

They are very small and easy to overlook because they are hidden away in roots in the invisible world of soil.

His children are fungi – the good kind that form beneficial symbiotic (a close ecological relationship between two or more organisms of different species) associations with almost 80 percent of plants. In fact, plants probably wouldn’t have gotten started on land 450 million years ago if the fungi had not been there to help them obtain food and water.

As plants transpired from water to land, they had no true roots.

“Mycorrhizal” symbiosis provided a way for plants to obtain precious nutrients on land, and they have worked together ever since. The mycorrhizal association is so critical that if the fungi disappeared today, much of the plant life in the tropics and deserts would cease to exist.

The WVU collection of mycorrhizal fungi is the largest in the world and is nine times larger than it was 30 years ago. The collection is used by high school students to discover microbes, by researchers to explore the fungi and the symbiosis, and by businesses to develop applications for agriculture and construction projects. One company, for example, is using the fungi to restore green areas and grow pavement in desert areas affected by oil wells in the Persian Gulf.

“Now they’re my babies. I know all about them. I know when they’re bad and when they’re good,” Moertl said with a laugh.

Moertl first learned about mycorrhizae when a graduate student needed his help with a project involving these fungi.

Moertl examines some of the plant-fungi cultures growing in the Davis College’s greenhouse. (WVU Photo by Mark Dougherty)

Moertl, who has a background in botany and mycology, acquired much of his knowledge about these fungi from working intimately with his culture collection every day since 1982.

After 1990, the collection garnered continual support from the National Science Foundation. Moertl says that WVU’s early contributions of a full-time technician and greenhouse facilities were instrumental in making this effort a success. He used the collection to research a wide range of questions regarding classification, evolution, and biology of these fungi, which resulted in more than 70 published articles, including one in Nature.

James Beaver, a biology professor at Indiana University and former post-doctoral student in Moertl’s lab, said, mycorrhizal fungi were inaccessible to a wider audience before the collection.

“He shined a light of understanding on these cryptic, mysterious fungi and by doing so, he ignited a revolution.

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Tackle water issues first to keep farm roads dependable

Does your gravel or dirt farm road or driveway look like the cardboard pants your farm roads you wear in the third grade? Do you have ponds the size of small lakes and ditch lines that are as crude as the New River Gorge?

After a long, wet winter of freezing and thawing, the roads you depend on to get into and around your property probably need some attention to ensure they will work effectively for you during the busy spring and summer.

Roads' primary purposes
Farm roads and driveways should allow vehicles and machinery to move smoothly and comfortably. They should also allow for site drainage and add water channels to remain clear and continue in their natural paths.

First road maintenance project
Unfortunately, these roads almost never fully achieve these purposes. Farm roads and driveways usually fail because they are unable to handle water. Therefore, for your first maintenance project, focus on correcting drainage issues and ensuring that the soaks are effective water control structures to move water around and across these roads.

Road water control methods
Culverts, perhaps the most common type of structure, are pipes buried under a road that allow water to flow under the road and vehicles to easily cross over the top. Although common, culverts can be expensive to buy, and special equipment or labor may be required to install them. The culvert supplier can help identify the appropriate size for your use, but you can always purchase a size or two larger if you are concerned about future flooding.

Rutting Dips use 3- to 12-inch depressions in the road surface that have long gentle approaches and departures in the direction of travel. The low part of the dip allows water to move past the middle slope of the road. Well-constructed dips have minimal impact on driving comfort and are most effective on gradual road grades. Dips are usually less expensive than culverts.

Waterbars are typically the lowest cost and easiest to install structures, but they are difficult to drive across and require more maintenance. A waterbar is a small surface drain built across and into (not just on) the road surface. Any water flowing down the road is forced past the outside slope of the road. The steeper the road, the more waterbars are needed, and the closer they should be spaced.

The WVU Division of Forestry recommends installing waterbars.

WVU has world's largest collection of mycorrhizal fungi
-- continued from page 14 --

in one understanding of their biology, their taxonomy and systematics, and their importance in agriculture and ecology.” Revent said.

For his work, Martin received the Benjamin Distinguished Scholar award for biostatistics and health sciences. The award, handed out in four categories,

recognition distinction in research, scholarship, or creative activity.

Each honoree receives $5,000 in professional support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

By Dianna Massarella, Senior Writer, West Virginia University

By Ben Spang, Forest Operations Specialist, WVU Extension Service
Are you a distracted driver?

Distracted driving occurs any time you take your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off your primary task — driving safely. Engaging in any non-driving activity while you're on the road is a potential distraction and increases your risk of having an accident.

All distractions endanger the driver, passengers, and bystanders. Eighty percent of all accidents involve distracted drivers. Many behaviors can distract a driver.

Texting
Texting is the most absorbing distraction because it involves manual, visual, and cognitive activity simultaneously.

Between 2009 and 2011, text messaging in the United States increased 50 percent. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 miles per hour, that's like driving the length of a football field while blindfolded.

In West Virginia it is a primary offense to text while driving — this means you can be pulled over and ticketed. Beginning July 2013, it will be a primary offense to use any handheld communication device. All but 11 states have laws prohibiting the use of a cell phone while driving (for details about West Virginia’s law, check https://bit.ly/10MX62Z).

Cell phone voice use
Headsets are no safer than handheld devices. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, having a hands-free phone conversation causes drivers to miss important visual and audio cues that ordinarily would help them avoid a crash.

Driving on the go
Eating and drinking in the car are major concerns. This time needed to organize food or eat some fries or salad is comparable to the time it takes to type a text message (about 3 to 5 seconds).

Adhering the society
Looking at scenery or watching events can theincredible takes part a distraction away from driving.

Engaging audio
Many family vehicles are equipped with video players. They keep passengers entertained, but they can also distract the driver when he or she gets caught up in the recorded entertainment’s audio.

Other distractions
The list of distractions may be endless and it includes grooming, reading maps, talking with passengers, adjusting the radio, and conversing with insects.

What you can do
Give driving your full attention. Take steps to reduce or eliminate distractions. Let the cell phone calls go to voice mail. Pull off the road to take a call or make important calls. Ask friends, family, and co-workers to remind you not to talk or text while driving. Also be a good passenger. Limit behaviors that distract the driver.

"Distracted driving is an epidemic. While we’ve made progress in the past few years by raising awareness about this risky behavior, the simple fact is people are continuing to be killed and injured — and we can put an end to it.” — U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood

By Louise Donato, Marion County Extension Agent, WVU Extension Service

WVU Update

The West Virginia University Extension Service and the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design are pleased to offer this educational insert to the Farm Bureau NEWS as a service to West Virginians. Check our websites for more news (www.cas.vt.edu and www.davis.vt.edu).

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2/3/2013 / Spring 2013

West Virginia Farm Bureau News
Wishing you could buy the farm you’ve been eyeing for years? Maybe you want to build a new home or want a few acres for hunting and fishing.

Give us a call today to find out how rural financing doesn’t have to be an uphill climb.
Nutrient Management Planning

Eric Thomason

Nutrient management is the process of accounting for nutrient inputs and outputs on farms. It involves understanding the nutrient needs of a crop at a specified target yield and the nutrients required to produce that crop. The nutrients can come from residual amounts already in the soil or from added nutrients in the forms of fertilizers or manures. A Nutrient Management Plan is a nutrient balance sheet of all of the farmer’s fields and their associated crops, with a plan to supply the needed nutrients without adding too much of any nutrient. Nutrient Management Planners help farmers understand this process to supply adequate nutrients with the right amendments. Planners must be certified by passing a nutrient management exam and they must receive continuing education credits to keep abreast of new materials and concepts.

Although nutrient management programs have been around for quite some time, nutrient management planning and the development of nutrient management plans (NMPs) for individual farms have been gaining more interest and scrutiny in recent years. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture began a nutrient management planner certification program in 2000 due to increasing concerns with environmental issues and nutrient loading in water bodies such as the Chesapeake Bay. Regulations for controlling nutrients on farms have been discussed by federal and state regulatory agencies and the Farm Bureau is doing its best to protect the interests of farmers while at the same time encouraging environmental stewardship.

Good farm management, and nutrient management in particular, can increase profits and may make the difference between a profit or a loss on the farm. Having a Nutrient Management Plan does not mean that anyone from the DEP or EPA is going to pay you a visit. They may pay you a visit but having a NMP will not prompt them to visit you because a NMP is your private document. A nutrient management plan is simply a good farm business management tool and it would be a great asset if you are ever the recipient of such a visit. Most West Virginia farmers already do a certain amount of nutrient management planning, even if they don’t technically have a written NMP.

Have you ever taken a soil or plant tissue sample and sent it off to be analyzed? Have you ever sent a manure sample for analysis? If so, why? Perhaps you didn’t call it “nutrient management planning,” but you recognized the importance of putting on an amount of fertilizer equal to the needs of the crop. Profit margins in farming simply aren’t great enough that we can afford to apply lime and fertilizers indiscriminately. The Conservation Districts have assistance programs to help pay for lime and fertilizer because they recognize the benefit of healthy, vigorous plants in maintaining the soil and enhancing the productivity of grasslands.

A Nutrient Management Plan may begin with soil, plant or manure samples but there can be much more to involve.
Nutrient Management Planning can involve the evaluation or consideration of many things such as: soil, plant and manure analysis; spreader calibration; timing of a nutrient application; custom blended fertilizers; crop yields and nutrient removal calculations; soil texture and other soil physical properties; soil acidity; soil and plant interactions; micronutrients; liming material used; organic matter; nutrient allowances for crop residues and legumes, and much more. Giving your operation an intensive evaluation and increasing your management inputs could very well increase your profit, improve your environmental stewardship, and give you a better footing if you are ever the recipient of unwanted scrutiny.

There are obviously many specific topics that can be covered in greater depth under the heading of nutrient management planning, and more articles will be written in months to come that will probe some of these areas. But the purpose of this article is simply to advocate for environmentally friendly and profitable farming practices and to express the importance of nutrient management planning.

Nutrient management planning is indeed important both economically and environmentally. On the economic side, we only apply what the soil and crops need. Savings can be seen by potentially spending less than you would by applying rates of fertilizers higher than crops can remove or that the soil can retain. And yields can be greater when crops get proper amounts and proportions of nutrients. On the environmental side, a nutrient management plan will help you get the most out of your fertilizer by helping you keep it in the field and out of streams. Not only can nutrient losses to streams ultimately be harmful to aquatic life, it is the equivalent of throwing your money down the creek. Most West Virginia farmers simply cannot afford to do that.

In the early 1990s I worked with farmers in Preston County doing soil nitrogen testing in corn fields. We pulled soil samples and made nitrogen fertilizer application recommendations based on how much nitrogen was already in the soil as compared to realistic yield goals. In many cases we recommended no additional nitrogen fertilizer application because a combination of manure, crop residue and other nutrient sources were already providing an adequate level of plant available nitrogen. It was understandably difficult for many farmers who were accustomed to side dressing with an additional amount of nitrogen to accept the recommendations. Subsequent crop yields told the story and built trust in soil sampling for fertilizer recommendations. It was very rewarding to help farmers save money, produce good yields and prevent nitrogen loss into the environment.

The WV Department of Agriculture maintains a certification program for WV Certified Nutrient Management Planners and the American Society of Agronomy certifies professional Certified Crop Advisers who can provide expertise in reviewing your current fertilizer program and assist you in developing a NMP as you desire. Many of these certified professionals work for the WVCA, USDA-NRCS, the WV Department of Agriculture and private industry. These professionals would be your sources for seeking assistance with nutrient management planning. Their job is to assist you in developing your NMP.

If there is a particular Nutrient Management or Agronomy related topic you would like to see covered in the format of an article in the Farm Bureau News, please send an e-mail to erict@wvfarm.org.

Here’s wishing you fruitfulness in the coming growing season.

Thanks to Jeff Skousen, Ph.D., Professor of Soil Science, WVU; and Joe Hatton.

Eric Thomason joined West Virginia Farm Bureau in 2009 and works as the Field Representative for the southern half of West Virginia.

Thomason graduated from West Virginia University in 1992 with a degree in Agronomy. While there he served on the WVU Soil Judging Team, and spent his summer months working for USDA-SCS and the Monongahela Soil Conservation District.

Thomason recently passed the West Virginia Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Certification exam.
**Counties Receive Training** - WVFB staff members Steve Butler, Bill Aiken, Eric Thomason and Joan Harman traversed the state along with Steve Uhlman of Nationwide, to conduct membership recruitment training. Meetings were held in Romney, Alderson, Buckhannon, Harrisville, Moundsville and Ona during the month of April. Participants learned about organizing boards and committees, prospecting for members, explaining the reasons for membership, member benefits, and what resources are available for their membership recruitment efforts. Each county Farm Bureau is asked to recruit a minimum of one new member per month.
Young Farmer and Rancher Update

Susan Wilkins, YF&R Vice-chair

By the time you read this, crops will already be in the ground and growing; but as I write this, I am just planting lettuce and beets and setting out onions. It seems like just a couple days ago it was snowing – and indeed it actually was – and now it is 80 degrees and you can practically hear the grass growing.

Spring planting is absolutely one of my favorite times of the year on the farm. It makes me smile to see the bags of field corn stacked in the shed, just waiting for warmer days to be planted; a promise of the sunshine and new life that is to come. I love seeing the chisel plow being pulled out of the equipment shed for the first time and the smell of a freshly plowed field soon after. Since I was just a little girl, I’ve enjoyed making trips out to the corn field to check on my dad or deliver a part or bring lunch; I’ll never understand how he keeps his rows so straight. And it never fails to amaze me how green those first little corn seedlings are when they begin growing.

In a speech I gave last month, I remarked that the season of Spring truly represents what farmers are all about. All through the long and dreary months of winter, farmers plan and dream for these months of spring. Farmers are eternal optimists – we gather tiny dried up little seeds, put them in the ground, and cover them with soil. And then we wait. We wait for it to rain. We wait for the sun to shine. We wait for those thousands of little seeds to grow – to grow enough to feed all our animals in the next year. One tiny little seed represents so much of who we are and how we, as farmers, live our lives by faith. Always keep the faith – for there is truly no higher calling from God than to be a farmer or rancher and to care for His land and His creatures.

Happy Springtime, friends! Sometime during the rush of getting your crops planted and harvested this year, take the time to appreciate how much God blesses us. Take time to think about how much faith each seed represents – and the true miracle of a once muddy field now covered in lush green growth.
The Obama administration has recently unveiled a controversial plan to undo a decade’s-old food aid program, setting off yet another political Washington showdown. For the last 60 years, the United States government has been buying food from American farmers in order to feed impoverished citizens in 44 countries around the world. In fact, America is the biggest hunger relief donor in the world. The current program costs roughly $1.5 billion dollars a year and relies heavily on homegrown producers. The latest White House proposal would eliminate the purchase of food from farmers here at home. If the approved changes move forward, the government would purchase food from developing countries.

Proponents of the new plan believe the program would feed an additional 17 million more people each year while dramatically reducing shipping time. Opponents argue the plan would eliminate shipping jobs and hurt American farm revenue. So far, a bipartisan group of 21 senators have written a letter to President Obama opposing the new changes.

While it is certainly no secret Washington prides itself on wasteful spending, the answer to fixing this program lies in transparency, less regulation and better management. In an already depressed economy, most American industries cannot take another financial blow. The Obama administration rightly argues the current plan takes months to get food to individuals in poor countries. Even though they may be right, sacrificing hundreds of jobs and further damaging the agriculture community all in the name of “cost and flexibility” is not the right solution. The right answer is to better manage what already works successfully. There are other options such as expediting shipping methods while lowering transportation costs. However, the most pressing area of solution is government transparency. If the Obama administration wants to look at ways to improve services while saving money they should look closely at the distribution of food in state-sponsored terrorist nations such as Syria, Sudan and North Korea, since these countries continue to be food-aid recipients. Rwanda, a nation known for government corruption and mass genocide, is another beneficiary country. The United States continues to reward unstable countries with some form of aid. Earlier this year, instead of punishing Egypt over the embassy assault, the White House wrote them a $250 million check. In fact, Egypt receives about $2 billion a year in aid from the United States, which is the most of any nation except Israel. Never mind the fact the fundamentally anti-American Muslim Brotherhood controls the Egyptian government.

Supporters of the food-aid program change believe these countries will be inspired to grow and sell more local food which will eliminate their own shortages. Can you imagine leaving these third-world countries solely in charge of food distribution? Many of these nations’ corrupt governments have starved and impoverished their own people. U.S. aid to many of these countries usually ends up in the hands of the wrong people, who use it for everything except actually assisting those in need.

No doubt America needs to save money. The United States is rapidly approaching $17 trillion in debt, due largely in part to out of control spending and an ever-growing recipient class. Unfortunately, neither party will be intellectually honest with the American people on how to reduce this massive debt because they are focused on winning elections. Therefore, now is not the time to eliminate more jobs. If Washington wants to get serious about saving the agriculture community money while feeding the world more efficiently, it needs to put beneficiary countries under the microscope, loosen up EPA regulations and push for the elimination of gasoline and other transportation taxes. Couple this strategy with eliminating aid to foreign nations that have a hatred for America and the budget would lighten.

But then again, this strategy would make too much sense for Washington.
Lines to the Ladies

JoEllen Blair, WVFB Women’s Leadership Committee Chair

Thanks to everyone who helped us make Food Check-Out Week a tremendous success. Each year it seems like it just gets bigger and better. There may be some changes coming down this year, but I will let you know later if that is the case. Again, thanks!!

WVFB Field Representative Bill Aiken accompanied nine ladies to the 2013 National Women’s Leadership Conference in Las Vegas, April 6-8. It was a great conference and there were many excellent seminars and mini-sessions. Topics included “Exercising Our Influence”; “What Change Means”; “Budget Impacts on Agriculture and You” and one on “Older Farmers: Assessing Risks”. The latter one was very interesting, especially when we learned that many problems start in our early years, even before we begin thinking about skin problems, hearing loss or bone and muscle deterioration.

We also went on some wonderful tours, which introduced us to a whole different climate, landscape and vegetation. It was beautiful, but there’s no place like home!

The posters for the Agriculture in West Virginia contest have been judged, and the winners are: First place, Eva Marie Valentine, Monongalia County; Second place, Mackenzie Myers, Jefferson County; Third place, Andrea Miller, Greenbrier County. All of the posters were great, as usual, and made judging difficult. Many thanks to all the schools that participated, and to all the children who entered.

We are holding our annual Safety Days now, and have approximately 13 camps scheduled at this time. We wish all of you a successful year. Please let us know how many students participated so we know how many youth we reached.

Don’t forget about Ag in the Classroom. As I have mentioned before, the end of the school year is very busy, and you may have better luck getting into the schools at the beginning of the school year before the teachers get too busy.

Please continue to work on the Flora Turner Youth Speech Contest. The topics for this year are: “How Government Regulations Help and Hinder Agriculture”, “Impact of Technology on Agriculture” and “Genetic Engineering in Crops and Animals”.

Don’t forget the tickets for the Gun & Quilt Raffle. The quilt is finished and commemorates West Virginia’s 150th anniversary. It was made by Joyce Ferrebee of Parkersburg.

It is almost Fair time, when everything gets so busy! Have a safe, happy and fun time this summer. God bless!!
Whether you grow your own vegetables or shop the produce aisle in your grocery store, garden-fresh vegetables add beautiful color and great taste to the table.

Ree Drummond, known to her fans as The Pioneer Woman, is raising four active kids on a working cattle ranch in Oklahoma and has written two best-selling cookbooks. She says she loves to find new ways to put more delicious veggies on her family’s table.

“I get so excited about my garden — maybe a little too excited!” Drummond says. “Sometimes I literally have veggies coming out my ears. Fortunately, I’ve got four kids who love to pick just about anything I plant, so everything gets harvested on time — if not a little earlier.”

“When I bring those veggies into my kitchen, nothing shows off their fresh flavor like a little bit of butter — or, even better, Land O Lakes® Butter with Olive Oil & Sea Salt. I love this product because it comes in pre-measured, one-quarter cup sticks of butter. That makes prep easier, because so many of my recipes, like my Pasta Primavera, call for just 2 to 4 tablespoons of butter.”

If you don’t have a vegetable garden or can’t always get fresh produce, don’t despair. Flash-frozen vegetables retain much of their flavor and nutrient value. Thaw vegetables before using them in these recipes, or just heat them through and toss with high-quality butter for an easy side dish.

When they taste this good, kids will be saying, “More veggies, please!”


### Spring Stir-Fry

Yield: 4 servings  
1 half stick (4 tablespoons) Land O Lakes Butter with Olive Oil & Sea Salt, divided  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 pound whole jumbo shrimp, peeled, deveined, tails removed  
3 carrots, peeled and chopped  
1/2 pound asparagus, ends trimmed off, cut into 2-inch pieces  
1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen green peas  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
1 lemon  
1/4 cup finely minced fresh parsley  
Fresh Parmesan shavings, as desired

Heat 2 tablespoons butter in large skillet over medium heat. Add minced garlic and stir to cook for 1 minute. Add shrimp and cook for 3 minutes, or until opaque. Remove shrimp and garlic to a plate. Do not clean skillet.

Add rest of the butter and melt. Add carrots and asparagus in a single layer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 to 3 minutes or until tender but still slightly crisp.

Scoot carrots and asparagus to edges of pan, then add peas to middle of pan. Cook for one to two minutes, stirring gently, until peas are heated through and tender.

Add shrimp back to pan, stir to toss, then add salt and pepper. Squeeze juice of one lemon all over contents of pan and cook for an additional 30 seconds. Remove from heat. Sprinkle parsley over top.

Serve stir fry immediately over cooked rice, or on its own. Top with Parmesan shavings and squeeze on extra lemon juice if needed.

### Margherita Pasta

Yield: 4 servings  
6 ounces (1 1/2 cups) uncooked dried penne pasta  
1 half stick (4 tablespoons) Land O Lakes Butter with Olive Oil & Sea Salt  
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh garlic  
2 medium (2 cups) tomatoes, coarsely chopped  
1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese  
1 lemon

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain; return to saucepan. Keep warm.

Meanwhile, melt butter in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until sizzling. Add garlic; cook 30 seconds or until softened. Add tomatoes and basil; continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until heated through (1 to 2 minutes). Add pasta and Parmesan cheese, stir until combined. Serve immediately.

### Oven-Roasted Asparagus and Mushrooms

Yield: 4 servings  
1 pound asparagus, trimmed  
1 (8-ounce) package mushrooms, quartered  
1/4 cup red onion, sliced  
3 large cloves garlic, sliced  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1 half stick (4 tablespoons) Land O Lakes Butter with Olive Oil & Sea Salt, melted  
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Heat oven to 425°F. Arrange asparagus, mushrooms and onions on aluminum foil-lined 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking pan. Sprinkle with garlic, salt and pepper. Drizzle melted butter and lemon juice over top.

Bake 15 to 20 minutes until asparagus are tender and lightly browned.
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