

Safe Water Conservation Collaborative

Scope: Local

Location: 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 solely on Jefferson and Berkeley counties which combined, contain over 10,000 acres of conserved land.
- Potomac Conservancy serves as the Collaborative's host partner, providing grant administrative support, meeting facilitation, and overall coordination of the effort.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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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.
- There is a Steering Committee which functions similar to a board of directors to provide overall support, vision, and guidance to the collaborative. The Steering Committee consists of the host partner, workgroup chairs and water utility liaisons. The three workgroups are the Conservation Workgroup, the Education and Outreach Workgroup and the Stewardship Workgroup, who work in tandem to protect drinking water sources through conservation planning.
- Each workgroup meets four times a year while the collaborative meetings occur bi-annually.

MEMBERS:

- Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
- Canaan Valley Institute
- Charles Town Utility Board
- City of Martinsburg Water & Sewer Department
- 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
- Potomac Valley Audubon Society
- Region 9 Planning & Development Council
- Shepherd University
- Shepherdstown Water & Sanitation Board
- 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

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, Potomac Conservancy, 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.
- Created [landowner legacy videos](#) highlighting individual landowners and their stories as an outreach tool
- Protected 1,279 total acres of land including 5.3 stream miles and 51.5 acres of riparian forests in 2022



Information current as of November 2020. Please check with the Collaborative contacts (or website if available) for the most up to date information. To find other source water collaboratives across the U.S. or to add yours to the list, visit the [Source Water Collaborative's How To Collaborate Toolkit](#)