

Spring 2008

Mountain Profiles

The newsletter of the West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists

A Message from the President...

Hello, all. The long, cold nights of winter are finally over (I hope!). Although Punxutawney Phil, the more famous cousin of French Creek Freddy, was said to have seen his shadow, indicating another six weeks of winter, I think the cold season extended past that prediction. I wonder how long winter would have been if he hadn't seen his shadow (?).



This newsletter reports on several activities in which WVAPSS was (and will be) involved. Our incoming president, Rob Pate, has done a great job putting together the field trip and meeting for this summer. This is being planned to coincide with the Smithsonian Soils Exhibit in Washington D.C. (see following article). Additionally, the WVU Soils Team, which receives financial support from WVAPSS, placed third in the 2007 National Collegiate Soils Contest and will be going to this year's national contest after placing third in the Southeast Regional Soils Contest.

The WVAPSS fall business meeting, which has been held in conjunction with the WV Conservation Partnership Conference in Charleston, was a success. Two interesting talks were given, one that addressed reforestation strategies on mined lands, and one that provided information on revegetation of historic sites using native plants.

The 2007 Golden Auger Award was given to one of our charter members. Keeping the identity of the recipient secret until the Partnership Conference was no small task, requiring deception, conniving, and downright trickery. I don't think we went as far as treachery. Hey, it worked!

It's been a pleasure working with the WVAPSS Executive Council members for the last two years. I've got one more year on the council, but this is my one chance to publicly thank them. I hope you'll enjoy reading up on the activities. The highlight for me, as with all other *Mountain Profiles* issues, is undoubtedly the "On the Lighter Side..." section at the end of this newsletter. I'm sure you won't be disappointed by this latest installment, which provides nuggets of timeless wisdom from its anonymous author.

- Dave Kingsbury, President

WVAPSS Annual Meeting 2008

The West Virginia SWCS and WVAPSS have teamed up this year to plan a trip to the Smithsonian Soils Exhibit in Washington, DC. This should be an exciting year for our organizations, and we are planning to be there for the opening of the much anticipated Soils Exhibit. Information about the exhibit may be found at:

<https://www.soils.org/smithsonian/>. Additionally, WVAPSS will be having their business meeting following the visit to the Soil Exhibit.

A block of rooms has been reserved at Quality Inn-Iwo Jima, in Arlington, VA (details below), for the nights of Friday (July 18th), and Saturday (July 19th). Cost is \$89.00/night for two double beds, with a maximum of 4 staying in each room. You may consider staying an extra day or two if you want to take this opportunity to explore our Nation's Capitol.

The exhibit opens Saturday, July 19th, so we expect that most participants will travel on Friday. The Soil Exhibit is in the NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM. Smithsonian hours are 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM. WVAPSS is planning to have our business meeting Saturday evening (7/19) at 7:00 PM at the Quality Inn-Iwo Jima.

Reservations are **NOT** to be made with the hotel, but with the AAA group travel agent that we are using, Ms. Laura Gooch. You can contact her at 1-800-642-5878, or email her at: lgooch@aaa-alliedgroup.com. I would suggest that you email Ms. Gooch, tell her what group you are with, leave your phone number, and she will call you back. At that time Ms. Gooch will ask for a credit card number for the reservations. Reservations need to be made by May 5th, 2008. Those making reservations will be charged a \$50.00 deposit fee on their credit card. About 30 days before the trip, the balance of your lodging will be charged. These charges are fully refundable if you cancel, as long as cancellations are made prior to the day you are scheduled to arrive (ask Ms. Gooch for the official cancellation policy). The \$50.00 advance charge is necessary because of a 12.5% motel tax that is imposed in the DC area

The motel website is: <http://www.qualityinniwojima.com/>.

If you want to get directions from MapQuest, the address of the hotel is:

Quality Inn-Iwo Jima
1501 Arlington Blvd
Arlington, VA 22209

WVU Soils Team Places Third in SE Region, Prepares for Nationals in Rhode Island

(Submitted by Dr. Jim Thompson)

The WVU Soils Team is preparing for their third straight trip to the National Collegiate Soils Contest, which will be hosted by the University of Rhode Island on April 18 and 19. The WVU students will be competing against teams from 21 other universities as they attempt to build upon their recent success. In 2006 the WVU Soils Team won the National Championship. This was followed by a third place finish in the 2007 National Collegiate Soils Contest.



The 2007 WVU Soils Team (l to r): Katey Buckland, Amber Taylor, Rachelle Thorne, Corry Calderone, Sarah Taylor, Randy Riddle, Kent Smith, and Cody Mozena.

The Team qualified for the 2008 National Contest by placing third in the 2007 Southeast Regional Soils Contest hosted by Eastern Kentucky University—their highest finish in the SE Region since 1992. The Team left Morgantown, WV, early on Monday morning, October 15, 2007, and arrived in Richmond, KY, that evening, stopping along the way in Slade, KY, to visit Natural Bridge State Park. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday the Team spent many hours describing the physical and morphological properties of the soil at 11 different practice sites, then used this information to develop interpretations related to water availability, erosion hazard, and land use planning. The contest, which was held on Friday morning, presented the students with four more soil sites to describe and evaluate. The other top schools were Virginia Tech, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, and University of Tennessee. Two WVU students finished among the top ten individual scorers. Kent Smith placed ninth and Rachelle Thorne was tenth.



The eight members of the WVU Soils Team represent specializations from across the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences. Team members include former individual National Champion, Corry Calderone, as well as two other students from the 2006 National Championship team, Randy Riddle and Kent Smith.

Collegiate soil judging provides training and practical experience for students learning proper methods of soil and site evaluation used by professional soil scientists. The Team is supported by resources from WVU, the West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientists, the West Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, various WV Conservation Districts, and donations from alumni of the WVU Soils Team. The Team will travel to Rhode Island in April and spend four days practicing and learning about the different physical and morphological properties of the local soils prior to the two-day contest.



For more information on the WVU Soils Team, or if you would like to support the Team's travel to the 2008 National Collegiate Soils Contest, please contact Jim Thompson (james.thompson@mail.wvu.edu).

83^d West Virginia Public Health Association Annual Conference

The WV Public Health Association Annual Conference was held September 19 through 21, 2007, at the Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown. Conference participants consisted primarily of professionals in the public health arena. Most attendees were employees of state agencies and county health departments. The conference theme was "Public Health - Promoting a Healthier West Virginia", with a wide variety of public health agenda topics such as environmental health, public health nursing, and epidemiology, to mention a few. The conference provides a forum for companies and private professionals to interface with public health officials and other professionals. Exhibitors were located throughout the conference area.

WVAPSS members Wendy Noll, Steve Baker and Dave Kingsbury operated an exhibit on September 19th and 20th. The exhibit provided information on soil survey interpretations and availability, soils training, and the types of services that can be provided by professional soil scientists. Several health department employees (primarily sanitarians) expressed interest in training opportunities. The next annual conference will be held in Snowshoe in September 2008.

WVAPSS Business Meeting and WV Conservation Partnership Conference 2007

The West Virginia Conservation Partnership Conference was held October 29th through November 1st, at the Charleston Town Center Marriott. The WVAPSS Business Meeting was held on Tuesday afternoon, October 30th, in conjunction with this conference. Thanks to everyone who attended! In addition to regular association business activities, two interesting talks were scheduled for the meeting. John Vandevender, who is the manager of the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Alderson, WV, spoke about revegetation efforts at the Stones River National Battlefield near Murfreesboro, TN. This Civil War battlefield has areas of calcareous cedar glades, which are relatively rare in the U.S. A glade generally consists of an open area surrounded by trees, which are the dominant climax vegetation in the eastern U.S. More than half of all calcareous glades in the U.S. occur in Tennessee, and about 10 percent of the rare plant species occur in these calcareous cedar glades. At this battlefield, the glades have become overrun by invasive Eastern Red Cedar. This project is an effort to reverse this trend by collecting native plant species and revegetating areas of the battlefield using these native plants.

The second speaker was Patrick Angel, who is a forester and soil scientist with the USDI, Office of Surface Mining (OSM). His talk was about reforestation of mined lands with the emphasis on planting of high-value hardwood tree species on pre-law (abandoned mine land) and post-law surface mines throughout the Appalachian coal mining states. The methodology is referred to as the Forestry Reclamation Approach and stresses reduced compaction in the upper portion (4 or more feet) of the reclaimed refuse/regolith in order to provide a more suitable growth medium for tree root growth. This approach stresses the use of at least two tree species and the use of native and non-competitive herbaceous plant species in the initial plantings to allow tree species to be more competitive.

T-shirts for sale!!

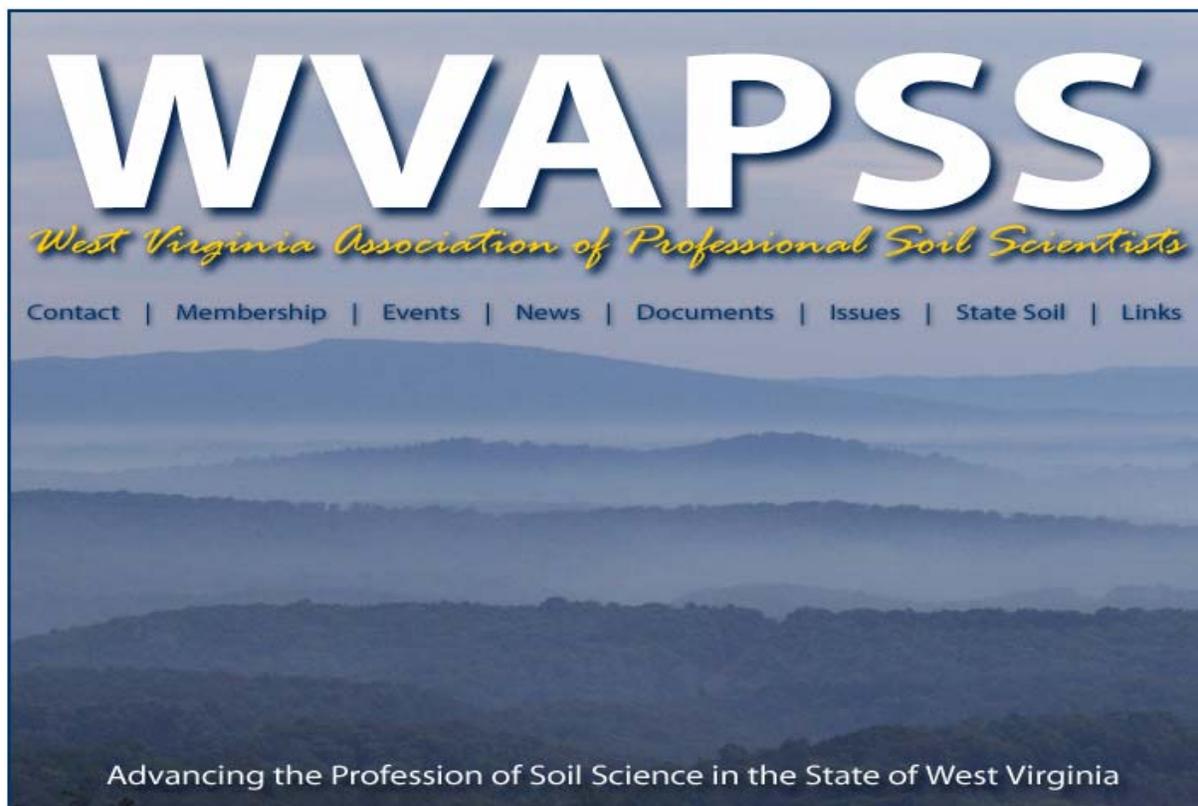
We have a nice selection of stylish new WVAPSS T-shirts. These shirts are high quality, 100% cotton, with the WVAPSS logo over the left breast. Short sleeves are \$10.00 and long sleeves are \$12.00. Both are available in medium, large, and x-large in white, gray, navy and hunter green. To order, contact Mary Beth Adams at 304-478-2000, or email at mbadams@fs.fed.us.



WVAPSS Website Redesign

(Submitted by Jim Thompson)

If you point your browser to www.wvapss.org you will see something new and different—the WVAPSS website has undergone a major redesign. The WVAPSS Executive Council discussed the website in June 2007 and decided that the website needed to be updated. It has previously been announced that, after years of dedicated service, Doug and Sue Boyer were retiring as WVAPSS webmasters. Consequently, Rob Pate (Vice President) and Jim Thompson (Chair of the Public Relations & Education Committee) were charged with the task. The new look of the website incorporates most of the elements of the previous site, so it is still a source for information on WVAPSS officers, membership criteria, the membership registry, and links to other useful and interesting websites. You can also download copies of current and past editions of this newsletter, *Mountain Profiles*. In the coming months we will continue to revise and update the website, adding the most current membership registry, a new consultants list, and more photographs from previous WVAPSS events.



The new front page for the WVAPSS website.

If you have any comments or would like to offer any suggestions about the WVAPSS website, please contact Jim Thompson (james.thompson@mail.wvu.edu).

Grassland Evaluation Contest

(Submitted by Katy McBride)

The 2008 Grassland Evaluation Contest will be held on April 11th, near Jackson's Mill, WV, in conjunction with the annual Beef Expo. The judging site consists of a farm pasture used for livestock grazing. A scenario with the landowner's goals for livestock and wildlife production is provided along with appropriate soil survey information, aerial photos, maps, scorecards and other relevant information. The contestants first determine the condition of the field then make corrective decisions based on sound agricultural practices compatible with the landowner's goals.

The Grassland Evaluation Contest consists of four sections: Grassland Condition, Soil Interpretation, Wildlife Habitat, and Plant Identification. Each of these factors is considered in evaluating the pasture to best utilize the resource and to help make useful management decisions.

This contest is open to 4-H and FFA teams. Each member of the first-place team will receive a \$500 scholarship while each member of the second-place team will receive a \$250 scholarship. The top-scoring individual will receive an additional \$500 scholarship. The first- and second-place teams qualify to represent West Virginia in the Mid-America contest in Missouri.

The results of the 2007 Grassland Evaluation Contest are as follows (rank by high school, top four): 1st—Cabell Midland; 2nd—Clay County; 3rd—Ravenswood; 4th—Ripley FFA 1. Individual rankings are as follows (top four): 1st—Allison Robinson (Cabell Midland); 2nd—Josh Hafer (Ravenswood); 3rd—Steven Clagg (Cabell Midland); 4th—Cassandra Morgan (Cabell Midland). Congratulations to these groups and individuals!

In addition to many individuals who contribute time and/or money, organizations that sponsor the Grassland Evaluation Contest include:

- WV Grassland Steering Committee
- WV Conservation Districts
- WV State Conservation Committee
- WV Assoc. of Conservation Districts
- WV Conservation Agency
- USDA-NRCS
- USDA-Farm Service Agency
- WV Department of Agriculture
- WVU College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Science
- WV FFA Association
- WVU Extension Service
- WVU Ag & Forestry Experiment Station
- WV Farm Bureau
- WV Cattleman's Association
- WV Shepherd's Federation
- Wes-Mon-Ty RC&D
- Capitol Conservation District
- WVAPSS
- Local Agribusinesses

For more information on this year's Grassland Evaluation Contest, please contact Gary Redden, District Conservationist (304-255-9225 ext. 136), Jamey Darlington, Soil Conservationist (304-364-5103 ext. 105) or Katy McBride, Soil Conservationist (304-645-6172 ext. 108).

Golden Auger Winner 2007

The 2007 Golden Auger Award was presented to Stephen Carpenter, NRCS State Soil Scientist for West Virginia, MO-13 Leader, and charter member of WVAPSS. This award is given jointly by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and WVAPSS and recognizes individuals who have made major contributions to the field of soil science and to the soil survey program in West Virginia. The nomination is made from the members of WVAPSS while the selection is made by the past recipients of the award.

This year's selection process was somewhat out of the ordinary. The State Soil Scientist is normally involved in the final selection process. For obvious reasons, this could not be done this year. Two nominations were voted on, with the winner being Steve Carpenter. When Steve asked who the selection was this year (to prepare the name plate for the plaque), he was told that it was the other nominee, and that no other nominations had been made (a minor deception). The deception worked completely when the award was presented at the WV Conservation Partnership Conference in Charleston, WV, on October 31. Total surprise was achieved. The following photo proves this. Make sure to congratulate Steve if you have not already done so.



Golden Auger Award presented to USDA-NRCS State Soil Scientist and MO-13 Leader Steve Carpenter (center) by WVAPSS Vice-President Rob Pate (left) and President Dave Kingsbury.

2007 NRCS Soil Survey Fall Field Week

(Submitted by Mike Jones)

This past fall a quarterly meeting was held which involved National Cooperative Soil Survey participants from West Virginia. West Virginia University and NRCS also held a field week in conjunction with the meeting, in Hardy County, WV, during the week of October 1-5, 2007. This field week was conducted to support a study looking at how land use, landscape position, and soil type influences infiltration and Ksat, as well as providing a forum for training and technology exchange. A total of six pedons, representing three benchmark soil series, were described in detail and sampled for full laboratory characterization. The samples were sent to the National Soil Survey Laboratory (NSSL) in Lincoln, NE, for these analyses. Several techniques that are not commonly used in West Virginia are being employed in this study and include the tension infiltrometer and the double ring infiltrometer methods. The more commonly used Amoozemeter method was also used. Results have been received from NSSL and are currently being evaluated.

In addition to WVU and NRCS staff, there were participants from Penn State University and Cornell University, as well as NRCS soils staff from Virginia, Maryland, and the National Geospatial Development Center in Morgantown. Several WV NRCS Resource Soil Scientists also participated. Even retired NRCS soil scientist Ron Estep made it out for the quarterly meeting. It was great to see Ron! Conditions were DRY and WARM, to say the least! I guess that's better than cold and wet, though. Meals were prepared by the N & S Restaurant in Mathias. I believe the talk of the week was the barbecue loaf sandwiches prepared for lunch!!! One participant commented that they didn't know you could do that with meat product. Long hours of Bridge were played by some. I think it may have affected the work efforts the following day, although that might have been caused by the bourbon. All in all, it was a good time! I would like to thank all that came out and helped!

West Virginia Soil Survey News

SOIL SURVEY RESTRUCTURING PLAN

In 2006 the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NSCC) started to implement a restructuring plan that attempts to increase efficiency by conducting soil survey operations on more of a regional basis, rather than a county (or similar entity) basis. The new soil survey regions are based on Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA's). The nation was divided into MLRA Soil Survey Areas (MSSA's) to be maintained generally by staff in one office location. The MLRA Soil Survey Offices (MSSO's) provide a more stable employment location (not based on the duration of a county soil survey project) that employs several staff members to better coordinate and share project responsibilities. The MSSA's typically consist of 7 to 15 million acres and often occur in more than one state.

The restructuring plan calls for a reduction in the number of soil survey project offices from about 255 offices to 144 MSSO's, serving 146 survey areas. This is a reduction of more than 100 offices. At the end of 2007 about 73 percent of these MSSO's were established. These MSSO's provide both the production work and quality control for soil survey activities in their respective areas.

Two MSSO's have been established in West Virginia. The soil survey leaders in these offices are James "Skip" Bell in Morgantown and Steve Baker in Huntington. These two soil survey leaders started MLRA soil survey activities in November 2007. The two offices currently have two (Morgantown) and three (Huntington) staff members. These two offices have responsibility for soil survey activities in most of WV. Other office locations having soil survey activities in WV include Marietta, OH; Roanoke, VA; Frederick, MD; and London, KY.

New Section...Mystery Member!

We're trying a new section in the newsletter. Consider this a "pilot" section. We've gotten some old pictures of one of our members (see below) and have provided a few clues as to their identity. Our photos of the month are provided by one of our members who graduated from the University of Maryland in the early 1980's, worked for a private consulting firm for a short time, then moved to WV when they accepted a soil scientist position with the SCS (yes, pre-NRCS...they're getting old).

Can you identify this member?
(Answer at the end of the newsletter)



Updated Consultants List

The WVAPSS Consultants List is in need of an update (it's only been about seven years). At our last Executive Council Meeting it was decided to start maintaining the list on an annual basis, since it is relatively easy to update the list on the website. The list is available to full and associate members of WVAPSS. Although it is planned to maintain the list on the website, it is possible that printed copies of the list (in brochure format) may be made in relatively small numbers. A \$20.00 fee will be charged for inclusion on the list to cover these costs and any costs associated with mailing brochures. Possible mailings would include such entities as health department officials, planning boards, conservation districts and District Conservationists. However, it is hoped that the Website list will satisfy any demand. Since those individuals included on the list stand to gain most financially and professionally from this service, it was decided to assess the fee to cover any associated costs separately from regular WVAPSS membership dues.

The application form and instructions are also available (or will soon be) on the website. Additionally, the existing (and out-of-date) brochure can be viewed on the website.

On the Lighter Side...

Daisy Duke: Inspiration for a Monument

I was a student at Berea College almost half a century ago. The chairman of the agricultural school was Dr. Robert Johnstone, a very wise man in a rural sort of way. I remember him for his often repeated advice, "Boys, don't go out there and build a monument to your ignorance." His prime example of such monument building was the agent who convinced some hillside, subsistence farmer that he needed an expensive Harvester silo. I didn't reflect too deeply on his advice at the time, because, even at my young age, I had already become rather competent at building various ignorance monuments, and I had not even "gone out there" yet.

A few years later, I had gone out there to become an employee of USDA and eventually the Area Soil Scientist for northeastern West Virginia. The local SCS Conservation Technician asked me to use our truck-mounted power auger to help evaluate soil suitability at a potential pond site. I agreed, and at the scheduled time we set out to Burlington, WV, to determine whether clays were available to construct a dam that would adequately hold a pool of water.

As we were driving toward the farmstead, the soil scientist in me was pontificating to the technician about the poor nature of the local Devonian geology for pond construction. I talked about the Berks and Weikert soils, and how their droughty, permeable, shallow, shaly characteristics did not bode well for pond construction. I was getting on a roll. I talked about how the drainageways were quite small, and how the limited runoff from these watersheds would have difficulty recharging a pond. I am not sure whether the technician was impressed with my knowledge, but I was beginning to make quite an impression on myself. I concluded my negative discussion of the site by lamenting the lack of colluvial Ernest soils, which would be better suited for pond building than these residual Berks and Weikert soils which were covering the landscape. All this knowledge was tossed out while still driving into the farmer's back yard and without having bored a single hole.

As we parked, something caught my eye that made me think that this pond project might just deserve a second look. Coming out to greet us was Bonnie, the farmer's attractive, young wife. She was dressed (I use 'dressed' loosely) in a pair of very short, short-shorts. Toward us came Daisy Duke, or at least an anatomically correct replica. After all my negative dialogue, I turned to the technician and half-jokingly remarked, "Ralph, we are going to build this pond."

We fired up the auger truck, took several soil samples, and, as expected, found limited clays. We built the pond. It has always leaked badly. It is still very visibly located adjacent to a busy US highway. There are probably several morals to this story, but they all can be summed up by Johnstone's profound advice. I am still haunted by his saying, "Boys, don't go out there and build a monument to your ignorance."

2007-2008 Executive Council Members

It is that time of year again when we need to start thinking about nominations for officers. The Vice-President position is one that is available annually. We are also in need of an Ethics and Registration Committee Chairperson to replace Eileen O'Neill, who will be cycling off at the Annual Meeting in July. Eileen's past efforts in fundraising activities have been GREATLY appreciated! Thanks for all your hard work! Anyone interested in being on the executive council, or if you know of a good candidate(s) for one or both positions (Vice-President and standing committee chairperson), please let someone on the executive council know. Here are the current Executive Council Members:

Past President - Michael Jones

President - Dave Kingsbury

Vice-President - Rob Pate

Secretary-Treasurer - Mary Beth Adams

Constitution and By-laws Committee Chair - Katy McBride

Ethics and Registration Committee Chair - Eileen O'Neill

Public Relations and Education Committee Chair - Jim Thompson

New WVAPSS Members

Please welcome the following individual(s) that have become members of WVAPSS in the past year: Afton Campbell, David Glass, Amanda Moore, Estella Ruth

Have you paid your dues?

Just a quick reminder, there is still time to pay your 2007-2008 dues. As in the past, dues are \$15 for the year and can be sent to:

Mary Beth Adams
USDA Forest Service
PO Box 404
Parsons, West Virginia 26287.

Thanks!!

Many thanks to those contributing to the newsletter. They certainly made it a much more manageable task!

(Mystery Member identity—Rob Pate, NRCS Soil Scientist, Beckley, WV)