

West Virginia Healthy Headwaters

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In an effort to keep healthy waters clean, the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) continues to partner with agricultural landowners in the North Fork Watershed who are interested in participating in voluntary cost-share opportunities. In 2002, the North Fork was delisted from the inventory of impaired water bodies in West Virginia. This was largely in part due to the voluntary implementation efforts of the agricultural community within this watershed. More information on the specifics of how those stakeholders accomplished this achievement can be viewed at http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/success319/Section319III_WV.cfm

One of the most notable recent projects has been the implementation of over 4,700 linear feet of streambank fencing along the main-stem of the North Fork and its tributaries. This project was funded through the WVCA's Agricultural Initiative Program funded with residual 319 dollars. The Verzich Farm is located near Riverton, WV and lacked fencing along the stream. The operation runs approximately twenty head of beef cattle and several horses year round. The livestock had access to the river as well as a spring-fed swale between the pasture and the barn. WVCA and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture staff approached the landowner about fencing the livestock back and providing limited access for watering at the swale. The fencing was installed during the fall of 2010 at natural buffers were allowed to regenerate between the fenced areas and the surface water.

Upon completion of the streambank fencing and limited access for watering, these practices have a projection of fecal coliform load reduction of 8.2368E+12 counts per head/per year, and a soil erosion reduction from 31.64 tons per acre/per year to 2.68 tons per acre/per year.

Staff plans to continue assisting this landowner with water developments in the near future. Mr. Verzich is considering installing spring-head protection with or without cost-share assistance in the future on another location of the farm. This particular project is an example of the success of local staff working with local landowners on a voluntary basis. The landowner had no prior history of cooperating with government cost-share programs. When approached from a voluntary standpoint with the explanation of how streambank fencing could assist in better pasture management and herd health in respect to providing cleaner water for his livestock, he was quick to sign on. Mr. Verzich also noted the simplicity of meeting program administrative requirements as an enticing factor in his participation. A nutrient management plan was also developed to help the landowner better manage the nutrients being applied to his pasture and hay ground. For more information on this project, contact Carla Hardy at 304.538.7581 or chardy@wvca.us or if you would like information on West Virginia Conservation Agency's 319 program contact Pamela Russell at 304.558.2204 or prussell@wvca.us



Before- Total livestock access to spring-fed swale which feeds to the main-stem of the North Fork.



After - Livestock exclusion fencing installed with limited access for watering and natural regeneration for buffers.



After – Three strand hi-tensile electric fence installed along the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac.