

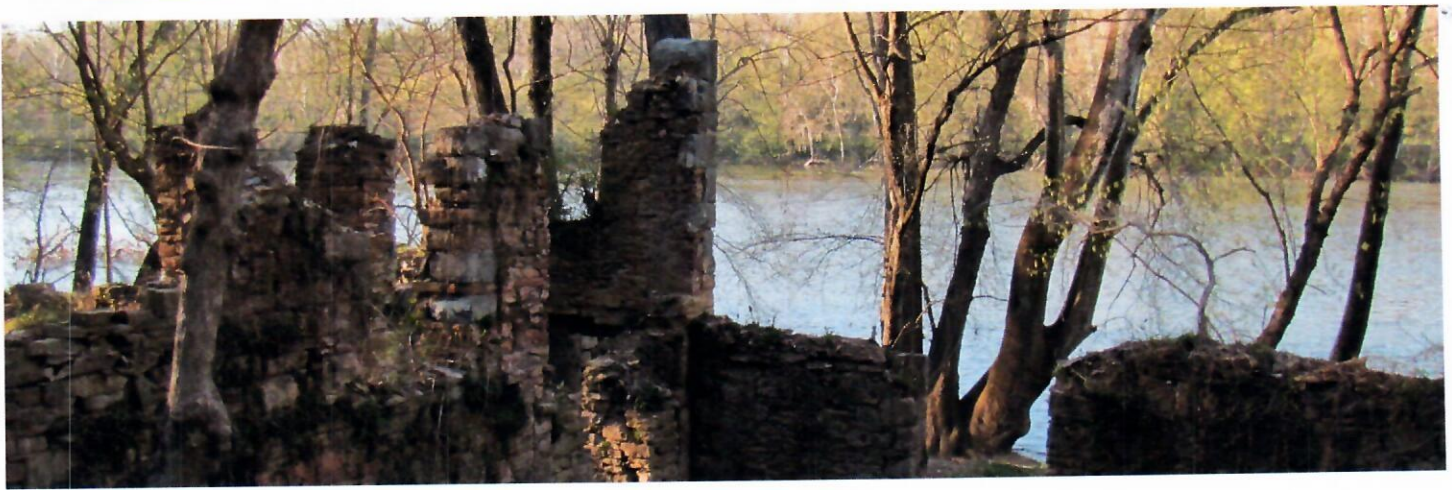
Private Lands, Public Waters

A Safe Water for West Virginia Conservation Collaborative



An action plan to protect Jefferson County's drinking water sources through voluntary land conservation





Helping Water Utilities Protect Drinking Water Supplies

Following the 2014 West Virginia water crisis, each water utility within the state that serves a population of over 25 customers was required to develop source water protection plans. In addition to planning for emergencies, utilities created plans to ensure safe water by working upstream with communities, businesses, and landowners. Safe Water for West Virginia was created by West Virginia Rivers Coalition to facilitate collaboration and innovation to protect drinking water supplies.

One of the best ways to protect drinking water supplies is to work with landowners on stewardship practices that protect water. Voluntary land conservation easements are a tried-and-true way to protect water by protecting land and landscapes in critical watersheds that feed our drinking water supplies.

Private Lands, Public Waters is a collaborative action plan to help willing landowners conserve their land to protect drinking water supplies. It includes:

- Raising awareness among the public and policy makers about the link between protected lands and clean water;
- Collaborating to develop and implement conservation strategies, share information, and cooperatively seek public and private funding for easements and the costs associated with them;
- Cooperatively seeking policies that build local capacity to conserve lands that protect water.

Jefferson and neighboring Berkeley counties are among West Virginia's most successful land conservation success stories. Combined, they contain over 10,000 acres of conserved land. This plan seeks to support their continued success, with a special focus on watersheds that impact the drinking water supplies for Shepherdstown, Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, and Charles Town.

How the Safe Water Conservation Collaborative Started

With support from the Land Trust Alliance and the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network, WV Rivers Coalition brought together land trusts, Jefferson County water utilities, watershed groups, public agencies, and community leaders to learn from each other. Land trusts brought their conservation experience; public agencies and watershed groups shared their work with landowners on "best management practices," and water utilities described the challenges they face in delivering safe water to their customers.

Water utilities are challenged by two clear and compelling facts. Most of what impacts drinking water supplies comes from the lands that drain into surface waters, or rivers and streams. Also, they have little influence on what happens on the lands that impact the water before it reaches their intakes.

Public agencies like the WV Conservation Agency, WV Department of Environmental Protection, and the Division of Forestry — assisted by watershed groups — engage private

landowners to implement strategies to protect waterways. They plant trees along streams, work with farmers to exclude livestock from streams, plant buffers to reduce the amount of fertilizers and manure entering waterways, and help secure matching funding from programs aimed at restoring the health and vitality of the tributaries that feed the Chesapeake Bay.

Land trusts work with private landowners who love their land, and who are interested in seeing their land stay in farming, forestry, or open space forever.

Private Lands, Public Waters land trust partners include:

- Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board,
- Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission,
- Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board,
- Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle,
- Potomac Conservancy, and,
- West Virginia Land Trust.

What's a conservation easement?

A conservation easement is a voluntary contract between a landowner and a land trust, government agency, or qualified organization in which the owner places permanent restrictions on the future uses of some or all of their property to protect scenic, wildlife, water, or agricultural resources.

Easements are tailored to meet the needs of each landowner. The landowner still owns the property and can use it, sell it, or leave it to heirs, but the restrictions of the easement stay with the land forever.



Protect Land to Protect Drinking Water

Policy Priorities

Accelerating land protection within drinking water protection areas requires retaining or enhancing existing funding sources and demonstrating how to leverage new programs.

Partners will collaborate to shore up existing funding streams that protect drinking water supplies. These include:

- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which provides grants to purchase conservation easements.
- The "Farm Bill," which provides funding for conservation practices.
- The Environmental Protection Agency, which funds voluntary stream restoration programs.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has helped conserve lands through the American Battlefield Protection Program.

Partners also will seek new policies on innovative ways to protect water supplies through land conservation. These might include:

- Utility and landowner incentive programs.
- The State Revolving Funds that assist utilities with infrastructure projects.
- State Conservation Tax Credits, which could provide enhanced tax incentives for land conservation.

Public Awareness and Outreach

West Virginians care about safe drinking water. Despite the success of land conservation efforts in the Eastern Panhandle, many people are still unaware of how conservation works — and about the values

of conservation for drinking water. The Safe Water Collaborative will work to change this by:

- Elevating public understanding of land conservation and the challenges facing drinking water.
- Working with elected leaders and public officials to increase understanding of conservation easements and how they can protect drinking water.
- Informing water utility customers and upstream landowners about voluntary actions that can make a difference for drinking water.

Collaboration on land conservation in critical areas

Jefferson and Berkeley counties are WV leaders in the number of voluntary easements and their total acreage. Berkeley County has a special role in protecting Jefferson County water supplies because its streams flow to the Potomac River. Conservation partners will work together to bring their expertise to zones of critical and peripheral concern to support the source water protection plans of Jefferson County's water utilities. Their work includes:

- Informing landowners about opportunities and funding to voluntarily conserve their land.
- Leveraging resources to address one of our state's most pressing challenges.
- Collaborating to seek additional public and private funding to accelerate land conservation that protects drinking water.

Our Partners

Many people, organizations, and agencies helped inform and shape this plan. Among them are:

Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board
Harpers Ferry Water Works
Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission
Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board
Jefferson County Parks and Recreation
Land Trust Alliance
Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle
Opequon Project Team
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Region 9 Planning & Development Council
Shepherdstown Water Board
The Conservation Fund, Freshwater Institute
West Virginia Bureau for Public Health
West Virginia Farmland Protection Authority
West Virginia Conservation Agency
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
West Virginia Land Trust
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
West Virginia Rural Water Association

Which lands to protect

Zones of critical concern. If an emergency occurs, a ZCC is the drainage area for which a contaminant could reach a public drinking water intake within 5 hours. Lands in ZCCs are high-priority for land conservation.

Zones of peripheral concern. These are lands that could

impact a drinking water intake within 10 hours of a contaminant getting into a waterway. They are also priority areas for land conservation projects.

Upstream lands. These include watersheds in Berkeley County that impact the Potomac River above Shepherdstown.

Protecting land, protecting water

This map depicts the zones of critical and peripheral concern for Jefferson County's municipal water utilities. These are the watersheds that could directly impact drinking water supplies. Each utility has a source water protection plan that includes working with their customers and upstream landowners to ensure safe water.

The map also shows lands that have been conserved through easements or public agencies. As you can see, small streams can have big impacts on drinking water.

There are many efforts underway to assist landowners who want to prevent runoff from their land from entering waterways. These include voluntary practices coordinated by public agencies to help landowners implement best management practices, like tree plantings that create forest buffers — often organized by watershed groups in partnership with public agencies.

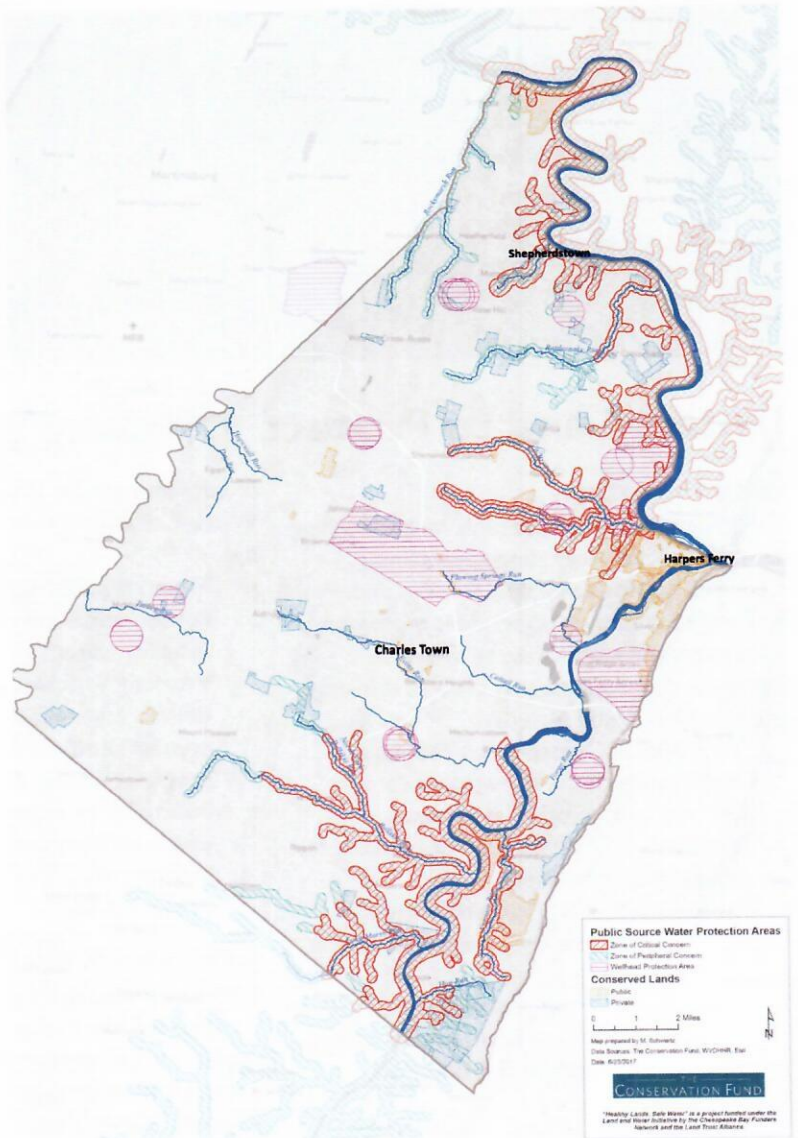
The good news is that many landowners care about protecting water for drinking and recreation. And the public cares deeply about our local streams and signature rivers like the Potomac and Shenandoah.

By focusing some of the successes of our local conservation groups and agencies on drinking water protection, Jefferson County and adjacent Berkeley County can create a model for drinking water protection in West Virginia.

Part of the solution is to leverage existing funding sources to accelerate conservation to protect drinking water. Another part is to raise awareness of how land conservation can protect water supplies.

Our water utilities draw water as it comes to them. They don't have the resources or, in many cases, the authority to work upstream outside their jurisdictions. Private Lands, Public Waters is a chance for all of us to work together as a community to bring about lasting protections for our drinking water while working with property owners who love their land and care about our future.

Zones of critical and peripheral concern



Program coordination

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West Virginia Land Trust

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Steering Committee

Members (12)

WV Rivers Coalition
(Tanner Haid)
(Chair pro tem)

WV Rivers Coalition
(Myia Welsh)

Workgroup Chairpersons (4)

David Lillard (Member Emeritus)

Water Utility
representatives from
priority watersheds (5):

Charles Town Utility Board
(Jackie Milliron)

Harpers Ferry Water Works
(Barbara Humes)

Shepherdstown Water Board
(John Bresland)

City of Martinsburg
(Steve Knipe)

Jefferson Utilities Inc.
(Jeff Pippel)

Objective(s)

3. Providing overall coordination and supporting emerging leadership of the Collaborative to advance implementation of a five-year action plan;
4. Promoting source water protection policies that accelerate land conservation to benefit water quality; and
5. Building the field for land conservation that benefits water quality beyond the project's geographical scope through sharing "lessons learned" with other regions and partnerships.

Priority Tasks

3.2.1 **Host bi-annual meetings of the Collaborative**

0.2.1 **Create a Governance Document** to guide the structure and function of the Collaborative

3.1 **Assess Collaborative current capacity** to support landowner from start to finish

3.2 **Continued coordination of the Collaborative** that supports sustainability of group, including funding strategies to support long-term viability & success of the Collaborative

Additional Tasks

Provide short- and long-term vision for the Collaborative on how the work can and should be conducted to protect drinking water in priority watersheds

Continue to foster local connection and buy-in from water utilities, specifically around accelerating land conservation strategies in Source Water Protection Plans

Meeting Schedule

Bi-annually (March & September)