

Partnerships: Providing for a Better To



Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area will provide more acres of hunting and other recreational opportunities in Monongalia County.

By Gary M. Foster

Across the country, increased demands continue to be placed upon our nation's wildlife and natural resources. In addition, accessibility to private lands for the purposes of enjoying outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, trapping and fishing has continued to decrease, presenting a significant concern for fish and wildlife agencies throughout the country. Commercial develop-

ment, primary and secondary home construction, mineral extraction activities, land leasing programs, and the increased posting of lands across West Virginia threaten wildlife habitat quality and/or the ability of outdoor recreationists to access private lands.

To help combat these growing trends, the Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Section implemented a Wildlife

Management Area (WMA) program years ago. It was designed to conserve and manage habitat for a variety of wildlife species and to increase public access to these resources.

Legislation passed in 1988 requires that all licensed anglers and hunters buy a "conservation stamp." Those funds are designated for land acquisition and capital improvement projects such as boat

tomorrow



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launching ramps and public shooting ranges. The conservation stamp fund has resulted in the purchase of significant tracts of property for West Virginia's WMA system. In addition to land purchases and various lease arrangements with governmental agencies and industry, other creative partnerships, funding sources and legal avenues have been implemented to help meet the DNR's objectives and the needs of



Steven Wayne Rotsch

Dedication of Little Indian Creek WMA included, from left, Dennis Fredericks from Consol Energy, Ron Fretts of the WV Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Gov. Joe Manchin and DNR Director Frank Jezioro.

our state's anglers and hunters.

Collaboration with conservation organizations such as the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has resulted in benefits for outdoor enthusiasts across north-central West Virginia. The DNR bought and created Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area, a 1,036-acre tract located in south-central Monongalia County, in the fall of 2006. The West Virginia State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation contributed \$194,250 toward the purchase of the new WMA, which accounted for 50 percent of the acquisition cost. The donation was made possible as a result of the dedication and hard work of local chapter members of the NWTF through their fund-raising efforts such as their "Superfund" banquets throughout the state.

Currently, 27 local NWTF chapters in West Virginia work for the betterment of our state's wildlife resources and to insure that our state's residents have places to enjoy outdoor recreational sports. In addition to donations for land purchases, the NWTF in West Virginia has made significant contributions toward habitat enhancement projects and wild turkey research. They

also help educate our state's youth by sponsoring J.A.K.E.S events and providing educational materials to schools. The NWTF continues to have a strong partnership with the Division of Natural Resources, and are appreciated for their continuing efforts in the conservation of our wildlife resources.

The Pedlar WMA located in northcentral Monongalia County is an example of how cooperation between industry and state fish and game agencies can provide outdoor recreational opportunities for future generations to enjoy. This area, which encompasses 766 acres and contains two lakes, was previously owned by Consol Energy, Inc. The large, coal-based energy company piped mine water from existing underground mines into the impoundments to treat and improve water quality.

When Consol Energy's operational plans changed and there was no further need for the two impoundments, the lakes and surrounding acreage were reclaimed and "gift deeded" to the DNR at no cost to the state. Over the past two years, a significant investment of capital improvement dollars on the WMA has resulted in a new shoot-

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One of the nature trails at the Lantz Farm and Nature Preserve.

and Nature Preserve consists of 555 acres of mature forests and rolling meadows. The property, previously owned by descendents of Alexander Lantz, has a rich history dating back to 1826. It was the desire of the family to preserve the farm and surrounding forest land and to make it available for the public's use and enjoyment.

After numerous discussions between representatives of Wheeling Jesuit University (WJU), the DNR and members of the Lantz family, the property was "gift deeded" to WJU to insure the preservation of the old farm

ing range, and a boat ramp and courtesy dock. In addition, personnel developed angler access trails around the lakes' shorelines. Consol Energy, Inc. is to be commended for their gracious gift to the state which provides a model for how partnerships involving industry can result in a win-win scenario for West Virginia citizens.

Another management tool which can be used to conserve wildlife habitat is the use of deeds of conservation easements. Conservation easements are commonly used to protect land against commercial or housing development, to conserve unique habitats and to insure public access to properties for future generations.

The Lantz Farm and Nature Preserve is a prime example of how deeds of conservation easements can be used to meet these objectives. Nestled in southeastern Wetzel County, the Lantz Farm

house and surrounding buildings. As a condition to the gift deed, the University agreed to enter into a deed of conservation easement with the state of West Virginia to provide for the perpetual use of the area for the public's enjoyment and benefit. In addition, the DNR Wildlife

Resources Section entered into a cooperative agreement with WJU to co-manage the property for its wildlife resources and to maximize public outdoor recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, and hiking on the interpretive nature trails.

The wildlife management areas mentioned above illustrate ways in which conservation organizations, industry and private citizens can make a difference in conserving valuable wildlife habitat and assuring that future generations of hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts will have a place to enjoy these activities. Through partnerships and collaborative agreements we can continue to expand opportunities and provide for a better tomorrow for future generations.

For additional information on the Pedlar WMA, Little Indian Creek WMA or the Lantz Farm and Nature Preserve please contact the DNR District I Office at (304) 825-6787. Contact any DNR district office, the Elkins office, or Charleston office if you are interested in pursuing a conservation easement or gift deed of land.

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New fishing area at the Pedlar WMA features new courtesy dock and boat ramp.