

Minutes from WVMSPA Annual Meeting - April 26, 2025

0935 - Call to Order

- Attendance down for value added workshop - looking for new ideas
- Remembrance of Mark Bowers
 - Scholarship of \$200 set up, can receive more donations - it may be used for maple workshops
 - A moment of silence and prayer was held for Mark
- Introduction of new members
 - Cameran Youngston in Dolly Sods area for 3 years. This is Grant County, 3800 feet in elevation
 - John - Lewis County/Weston - 70 taps, looking to expand. Added RO; uses bags.
- NRCS - not attending the meeting.
 - Cody Boone is involved
 - Grant money might disappear
 - Equip Program - 3-4 farms are involved - the efficiency audit was the bottleneck and expensive.
 - FGU and WVU got involved to try to reduce costs to do it not-for-profit
 - Cody wants to grow his business but NRCS wants to help maintain businesses, not really help with growth.
 - Cody recommends having a conversation with the representative FIRST about capacity in order to be able to grow
 - Keith Heasley has invited them to come every year to learn about maple and efficiency
 - Luke Taylor-Ide's take: Federal money is weird; EQUIP is to improve existing infrastructure; The Morgantown office is top-rate so if local rep doesn't have the information, tell them you need to talk to the people in the Morgantown main Office; FGU will be working with NRCS to prequalify certain equipment such as RO, Steamaway, pre-heater, which won't require audits; FGU will train all NRCS agents on maple, but this is on pause because of DOGE. Money is not going

away but will not be as plentiful as recent years. The State might fund if feds won't.

- NRCS also has land related services in addition to efficiency assessment

- Good ally but its weird right now

- Paul Ronk is using it to help reduce beeches so maples grow

- Use it to help improve Return On Investment if you are planning to do this work anyway.

- Invasive species payout is not great - maybe \$100 an acre

- TSI - Timber Stand Improvement - is a better program

- Sugar Bush Management Program can be better than TSI depending on the Conservation District

- REIP - Rural something something

- Helps with new infrastructure which might be morphing

- USDA rural development has lost a lot of employees

1015: Producer Reports

- Kris Marsh - did not produce syrup this year but did work with Smokey Lake

Ask Kris about tax cuts via Farm Assessment

- Luke Taylor-Ide - sycamore syrup - long term experiment - ran two parallel lines: 7/16th walnut spile did better than 5/16 but need more data. It was good year. RO works but has more sugar sand. He doesn't know if sycamore is sucrose or fructose but Va Tech is helping to analyze it. There is a nutrition panel for walnut but not for sycamore.

- Thomas - Grew from 72 taps on 1/2 acre to 109 on 4 acres - mostly red maple. Made 33 gallons

- Tina Barton - 21 taps on sugar maples using buckets, no RO, natural gas cooker.

Mediocre year.

- Cody - 265? - mostly red maple, 1000 ft elevation - used the EQUIP program - ran really well this year, 40 gallons sap/tap, .387t gal syrup/tap, for 6 weeks
- Roy - 34 taps - too icy; made a few gallons on the rocket stove and homemade RO
- John (new) - 70 taps - 9 gallons of syrup, homemade RO and evaporator
- Dominic - went to Vermont and talked about the analysis - asked about putting in air to increase sweetness
- Bruce Mahin - 45 taps, focused on quality - hybrid pan and filter press, expanded RO, 25 acres in Nicholas County on the Gauley River - ready to grow - been at it for 5 years
- Cameron - on year 3 - 490 trees, 123 gallons
- Gary - lots of wind, low sugar, 3000 gallons of syrup, about 25% down, 16000-17000 taps
- Ron Stemple - not there but he did well - Valley Maple - Preston County, 11K taps, has barrels to sell
- Mike - Grandpa Tom's Maple Farm - Used the EQUIP Program; RO is a life-changer - 412 taps, mostly red maples, 108 gallons of syrup
- General report from Brandon - some farms that tapped in the fall caught a very big run on January 24; Higher elevations and lower elevations did worse than mid-range - 1000-3000 feet in elevation did really well.
- Les in Ohio - the north was frozen up until March. He had 900 taps but it warmed up so fast there were only 20 days to the season. The farther south, the better it got. There will be a Maple Camp - July 17-19 in Ohio - it will be an intensive walk-through including an optional grading program at the end - check ohiomaple.org
- Brandon Daniels - best year ever - 4 lbs/tap, 2650 taps in Greenbrier County
- Keith Heasley - best year every - 675 gallons, 25 gallons/tap, all on 3/16th tubing
- Paul Ronk - bad year healthwise - tapped Feb 9 (late) and was unable to check for leaks

Paul Ronk discussed Infused Syrup and the Department of Agriculture - there was a handout. Bottle it at 180 degrees and make sure the Brix are right - that's it! Be careful

though, as it can get too dense from over-cooking. It sells for more than plain syrup, and is very popular.

The \$40 permit for Farmers Markets (2 or more vendors selling) - is good for the whole year. Don't need to pay for each farmers market.

11:00: Budget

- An attachment was handed out. We do have money to spend.
- IMSI will be in Canada.
- NAMSC will be in Michigan October 22-25 - and it was asked if we could send someone to it. Jame Sculer is going as a researcher for WVU, and Abby going for FGU, so their costs are covered. So does WVMSPA want to send someone else?
- A motion was passed for WVMSPA to pay up to \$1000 to send someone to NAMSC, the applicant is to apply, and the board will decide who is chosen to represent WVMSPA.
- Brandon agreed to coordinate the cotton candy fair workers.

11: 15 - Website

- We have someone in mind who can design a new website in WIX but wants \$150/month to maintain it, but while the design work is highly recommended, maintenance is not so much.
- Paul agrees that the website is very important
- Bruce Mahin is a web designer and has offered to help.

11:30 Elections

- Cathy Hervey elected to stay as Secretary
- Keith Heasley elected to stay as Treasurer
- Cody Boone elected to be VP
- Paul Ronk agreed to continue as President
- Tina Barton and Bruce Mahin agreed to be one of the members at large to replace Mark Bowers and Greg Christian

11:32: Joe Hatton from the Department of Agriculture spoke

- Progress on line-cleaning processes but not definite
- Preaches value-added in agriculture
- Working on micro-process authority
- Existing recipes can slide through
- New recipes need to be analyzed at Va Tech (for instance). It's \$300 per recipe - or it could be less depending on ingredients and time to test etc.

- Reaching out to schools and colleges

● Bird Flu - not high pathogen in WV agriculture - some backyard flocks had it. No Dairy Cows have tested positive. Migratory birds are about done migrating so this is lower risk at this time. Bio Security is so important!

- Bugbusters@wvda.us - send photos of unknown bugs and plants
- Trade overseas - order soon!
- Regulatory Process Improvement - speak up
- State Fair - let the fair organizers know if you want to sell - letters should come out in late April/Early May

Les Oberman's lecture

- Weather Extremes - 1 year of drought is not too bad; 2 years of drought will be bad. Sudden disasters such as hurricane and fire - need to be prepared with regeneration and healthy trees.
- Red maple buds don't seem to cause buddy sap
- 68% of sanitation is on the spout so it is best to use new ones
- Using gloves can help prevent squirrel damage because of sweat which attracts them.
- Storage tanks must be cleaned and sanitized.
- Air injection into sap will darken the color but be careful not to also inject oil with the air!
- Injection into boiling sap will be lighter - it keeps it moving and can increase sugar sand
- Cleaning nightly with permeate cuts down on sugar sand

Maple Contest Results:

- Tina Barton - Best in Show for her Golden syrup
- Cody Boone won best in all other grades (Tina and Cody are the only ones who submitted syrups!)
- Paul Ronk won the best confection category