

WVMSPA Meeting Minutes

Taken by Tina Barton, WVMSPA Secretary

0935: Paul Ronk opened the meeting

Tom Salvetti gave some housekeeping items.

Paul asked members to introduce themselves.

- Tamara and Larry Humphrys – Green Co – 50-60 taps
- Barb Ferguson – Taylor Co – 250 taps
- Garrison – Taylor Co – new
- M&S Maple – 2000 taps
- Gary Mongold – 700 black walnut taps, 17 gallons
- Mark Bower – 2500 taps
- Betsy Ihman – Valley Farms – Preston Co, 11,000 taps
- Family Roots Farm – 275 taps
- Michael Gray – 400 taps
- Brandon Daniels – Greenbrier Co – 2500 taps, tapping since 1988 or 1989
- Ron Schwartzenstruber – 16,000 taps – Harmon, Randolph Co
- Roy Ramie – 10 taps
- Herman Hill – Lincoln Co 600 taps
- Kris Marsh 400 taps – Lewis Co
- Tom Salvetti – 100 taps – Lewis Co
- Jeff Griffith – Lewis Co – 25 taps – works with USDA Natural Resources – outreach on working with maple producers
- Jeff Barr – 0 taps – also with USDA
- Kate Fotos – FGU – research
- Keith Heasley –Preston Co – 2250 taps
- Luke Taylor-Ides – FGU – marketing assistance – 32 sycamore taps
- Less Ober – OSU extension educator for Ohio, 1200 taps – 4th generation in Ohio
- Mike Rechlin – FGU – research/education
- Peter Gregg – Maple News – 1000 taps on NY/VT border
- Tim Robanak – chef and judge – 1 walnut and 2 maple – makes bagels with maple instead of malt syrup
- Paul Ronk – 250 maple, 60 sycamore
- Tina Barton – 23 taps in Gilmer Co

0945: agenda approved – added MOU with FGU

0950: Brandon led discussion on the 2022 season

- Better than 2021 but not much better - but warmer climates did pretty well
- Sap had an average of 1.11% sugar state wide
- Some producers started out with higher sugar levels though they dropped as the season went on
- Vacuum “can’t be too high”
- Our WV trees are “lazy”
- Mark Bowers said red maples rarely seed

Metal WVMSPA signs are available for \$25 each – Tom Salvetti has (had) 15 of them

Organic Syrup discussion – it takes 40 hours of paperwork but you get more money per gallon

1010: Maple Day Review

Keith Heasley: February date was blowing snow – 75 people. March date was nice – 375. He gives a tour, taste tests, goodies, bacon wrapped maple smokies. He does not boil sap – too much going on.

Is Maple Day worth it? Most said they like it.

Fergusons: had a school tour of 2nd graders which was a good experience

Gary Mongold : had walnut syrup for maple day – very small event

Walnut discussion: pectin in the sap shows up as you boil – can be used as spreads and in cooking and “crispies”. Dip it out with a skimmer early, or filter early and often. It tastes like the syrup

Maple Days Advertisement Discussion –

- Keith calls local newspaper and TV Stations
- “market bulletin” is a good place to advertise
- It is best for the producer to try to work with their region business associations and news outlets

Maple Days 2023: 3rd Saturday in Feb and March will continue to be the choice – Feb 18 and March 18 2023

- Ceremonial tapping with the WVDA commissioner happened in 2022 and we want to continue with that
- Deputy commissioner of Ag – Joe Hatton lives outside Morgantown but travels constantly all over the state was introduced – spoke later in the meeting

10:45: Mike Rechlin

- Sanitation workshops, grading workshops and quality control workshops are improving production around the states and neighboring states
- Family Roots did a line-clean – pump the pool shock solution through and leave it a couple weeks – even all summer – FGU can help.

11:11: Paul Ronk

- Fair – savory contest needs to be posted on the website
- We need to send more snail mail mailings to alert people about paying dues and meeting announcements

Mark Bowers: WV State building at fair – a display of maple should be included. Also discussed having the TV set up at the fair with a video looping

FGU: Luke Taylor-Ides

- Mobile sugar shack was at the State Fair, and at Maple Days in Pendleton County and Maple Fest in Highland Co Va, and at the Trout Festival
- Educational Tours – Sept 17 open houses at Laurel Fork Sapsuckers in the AM and Frostmore Farms in the PM, Oct 15 – Family Roots and Heaseley Homestead
- Out of the Woods panelists – May 26 and in June – nutritionist will give health benefits of maple
- Fall Certificate Program and higher workshops like marketing and business planning
- Regulatory Handbook update in the works

Keith H: FDA inspection – FDA registration not required for cottage industries

- Selling through a 2nd party – seller requires FDA approval
- Feds tightened up in Virginia, but because of our regulatory manual via WVDA, the Feds leave us alone more
- FGU will help with regulatory issues – syrup@future.edu
- State inspection is advised but not required – will not shut you down but give suggestions for improvement
- FGU will walk through to give pre-inspection
- Lindsay (via Kate) is marketing guru – get Maple Day press release out early, cross-list with other businesses
- Tina – needs to update maple days on website for 2023 (done)

FGU Sycamore Research

- Vacuum is crucial
- 2 year grant – one more year left

Jeff Barr – US Dep of Natural Resources

- Forest management
- Energy - technical assistance and financial assistance

Jeff Griffith – tree syrup producers exploring energy efficiency

1. Higher efficiency evaporator
 2. R.O.
 3. High efficiency pre-heating system
- Payment rate is per square foot of evaporator

Joe Hatton – WVDA – Deputy commissioner

- Com. Leonhardt in Monroe Co today
- Daughter Mariah at Ronald McD fundraiser in Morgantown
- Avian Influenza – follow biosecurity with backyard flocks – chickens and ducks – real concern for the region – WV is in the bull's eye
- Our WV Commissioner is president of multistate Dep of Ags – 14 communities – so we are well represented
- Maple surveys – 59 sample size down from 71 – data will be out in late June – data is used for federal grants
- WV Grown t-shirts is a branding opportunity
- Need to start advertising Maple Days early – June is dairy month – ice cream and maple go well together! Can have maple events other times of the year
- Conservation plan is a good place to get started
- The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has contractors/enumerators to encourage us to contribute AG statistics
- Mary Marple for Jane Lew calls to get info over the phone
- Luck remarked how good it is that WVDA collects this data so NASS doesn't drop WV
- Joe attended Pocahontas County maple day – fully engaged/marketed/farmers market brunch/very well organized – We should work with other counties to get as well organized.
- New license opportunity for Farmers Market – State wide – one fee/one permit.
 - This brought on complaints about it being too expensive/cumbersome – Joe says there is a miscommunication.
- Paul asked about Laboratories for food safety – WVU was doing it. VA Tech may give it up. Luke Taylor-Ides says UNC has a good facility – this is for things like maple mustard/BBQ Sauce – etc – things have to be analyzed if they aren't for pure maple.
- Budget is a challenge
- July 1 – County assessor will send farmers an assessment form – should be able to claim a farm exemption on property taxes.

2:48: Tina gave a report on the minutes – they were not printed for the meeting – there were two zoom meetings since the annual meeting in 2021. The minutes from the annual meeting were on the website and highlights were in the July newsletter. Tina gave a rundown of the Fall Zoom meeting. She was not at the Spring Zoom meeting. Kris accepted Tina’s minutes report - Tom S seconded.

Paul –

- Dues are due at the end of May
- State Fair Cotton Candy sales should bring in double what they did in 2021

Keith provided the treasurer’s report. A printout was handed out. Cathy motioned to accept it. Tom Salvetti seconded.

- State Fair – August 11-20 - Brandon Daniels needs names of volunteers by 5/31 – for 11am to 6pm. We get 2 tickets per volunteer. Assistance for gas is available from WVMSPA

Kate Fotos spoke for Mike Rechlin who had to go home after too much maple-judging.

- Jamie Schuler is the alternate for NAMSC – Mike Rechlin can’t go.
- They are going to talk to IMSI to get isopropyl alcohol approved as a cleaning agent like in Canada
- Contact Kate to help with newsletter – need to get articles

Tom Salvetti – Nominating committee. Brittany and Kris are still current board members. We held the election.

Free Discussion

- Bulk Price –
 - \$2.60-\$2.65/lb for dark
 - \$2.20 for extra dark
 - \$2.70 for light
- Luke Taylor-Ides says Vermont and Canada are setting national rate but WV has higher transportation costs. Our regional markets will run out by the end of the year, but our regional market WILL pay more. It’s devalued if sold outside WV.
 - Paul Ronk says he gets \$14/pint
 - Greg: \$20/pint
 - Keith Heasley: \$17/quart
 - Mark Bowers: \$15/quart but syrup not selling
- Wooden Tapping hammers were given away by FGU to “Hammer Home” how important it is to tap gently and not bang in the taps!
- Brandon Daniels: industry info

- The US has the biggest crop in a long time
- Reserve in Canada is dwindling
- But inflation will hurt sales
- CDL – supply chain issues – pre-buying steel 2 years in advance
- Luke – don't need the farmers market license to sell honey, pure syrup or eggs, but do for veggies whether at the market or on your driveway
- Paul – hunting and fishing shows are good place to sell syrup and cotton candy. He goes once a week to the farmers market
- Peter Gregg – Maple News – 3/16th tubing is being ripped out elsewhere but where there is high vacuum on slopes like in WV
 - Brandon says it is important to de-tap trees early after season ends
 - Demand has been sky high for maple – economy is worrisome – technology advances are amazing
 - Climate change is a thing – getting warmer sooner – some people are missing runs in January
 - Mark Bower noted that the WV season is compressed
- Tom Salvetti of the Nominating Committee announced the results from the election for new officers. Brittany Hervey-Ferris and Kris Marsh are still current board members. We had five new nominees, all of which were voted on (we can have up to 8 board members). The current officers will continue in office. President is Paul Ronk, VP is Greg Christian, Treasurer is Keith Heasley and Secretary is Tina Barton. The new additions to the board are Cathy Hervey, Michael Gray, Mark Bowers, Tom Salvetti and Kody Boone.