

SUCCESS in WEST VIRGINIA

Landowner Rights and Responsibilities in West Virginia

Project Director: Jesse Richardson and Co-Project Director: Doolarie Singh-Knights; West Virginia University



Photo: Workshop attendees and speaker

“I learned so much from being a part of this process. It will make me a much more responsible landowner... The information actually prompted me to review my farm insurance policy and to reach out to my agent to verify coverage and also to add coverage (additional pastures that I lease). I also shared what I learned with my neighbors and other farmers so they could be more aware.”

-Workshop Attendee

Situation: In 1979, West Virginia University published a booklet entitled *Property: Land Owner’s Rights and Responsibilities in West Virginia*. The publication offers an overview on a range of property issues important to producers in the state and is still used by producers, government officials, and land use planners. However, much of the contents are now out of date. In addition, new property issues have emerged in the intervening 44 years. Carbon contracts, right to farm laws, wind and solar leases, and agritourism, for example, are not addressed in the publication. An updated publication and educational workshops are necessary to encourage the peaceful coexistence of agricultural operations and residential neighborhoods.

Outcomes: The project, led by **Jesse Richardson** and his team at **West Virginia University**, sought to address a broad range of topics under the general subject of property rights and responsibilities in West Virginia. The project developed a landowner rights and responsibilities booklet to update a 1979 publication and held regional workshops within the state to educate agricultural producers and their neighbors on important property issues. The response was overwhelming, as 261 producers and service providers attended the workshops (the vast majority in-person, but some online). Participants were often shocked at the limitations on landowner rights. As hoped, the workshops spurred landowners to examine their property and make needed changes.

Impacts: This project represented a first step in legal risk management by raising awareness and understanding. Farmers and ranchers realized limits on property rights and the risks that arise when others (whether invited or trespassing) enter onto your property. The landowners posted their land, added signage, modified fence and checked into their liability insurance. Hunting and shooting policies were also examined. Some landowners consulted with an attorney.

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Many of the landowners expressed a desire to have certain laws changed. Due to the funding from ERME, a manual was produced that is substantively and professionally a huge improvement on the 1979 publication. In addition to the manual, a Youtube video was also developed and will allow more landowners to view the presentation. The workshops revealed a high demand for landowner rights and responsibilities information and the project director received a number of requests for more workshops in the future.

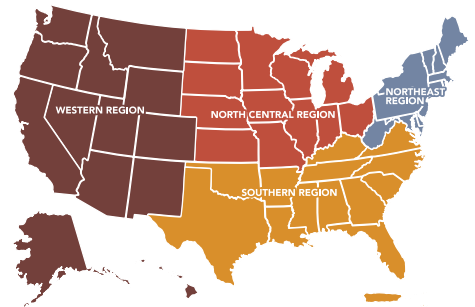
SUCCESS in EVERY STATE

Extension Risk Management Education

Extension Risk Management Education is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, outcomes-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted outcomes that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those outcomes.

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