OUR MISSION

We are a special-purpose nonprofit that promotes sustainable economic development by facilitating reuse of commercial, industrial, and mining sites and providing long-term management of key risks from legacy environmental concerns.

WHAT WE DO

West Virginia’s hilly terrain limits the availability of usable land. The State’s rich industrial legacy of coal mining and chemical, steel, and glass manufacturing has left its mark on many prime pieces of real estate, creating additional barriers to development. In order to address these industrial legacies and promote investment and productive economic development, the West Virginia Legislature created the West Virginia Land Stewardship Corporation (WVLSC) in 2013. The WVLSC helps facilitate the remediation of properties with real or perceived environmental issues that might otherwise be overlooked by private developers and local economic development authorities.

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Land Stewardship Program

The WVLSC can monitor and maintain sites that have been remediated pursuant to a state or federal environmental program, including brownfields, underground storage tanks, closed landfills, open dumps, hazardous waste sites, and former mining sites with ongoing water treatment. This oversight ensures that the legal and/or physical measures (formally known as institutional controls and engineering controls) taken to minimize exposure to contamination effectively protect West Virginia’s people and its environment. Engaging the WVLSC as either a short- or long-term steward allows responsible parties and property owners to satisfy their perpetual obligations without shifting focus away from their primary business.

The WVLSC is also qualified under IRS rules to hold conservation easements exclusively for conservation purposes. It can be the named holder of the easement and the long-term steward that monitors and maintains the easement in perpetuity.

Land Bank

The WVLSC Land Bank can take legal title to commercial real estate with known or perceived environmental issues and facilitate clean-up through environmental assessment, remediation, building demolition, or other efforts. After addressing all environmental issues, the WVLSC works with state and local government, local development authorities, and/or private entities to sell remediated properties for uses that stimulate the economy and fit with local development goals.

Site Certification Program

The WVLSC’s enabling legislation authorizes it to (a) establish standard criteria for site certification, (b) inventory and maintain a central repository of information on available commercial sites, and (c) certify sites as ready for redevelopment within 12 months and as “project-ready” for particular types of businesses. This effort helps mitigate potential concerns about environmental conditions and facilitates the reuse of existing properties.
ON GOING
Projects

Special Reclamation Program Assistance

WVLSC first began working on the reclamation of bond-forfeited mining sites in 2016, when the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Special Reclamation (OSR) awarded it a grant for over one million dollars. Pleased with WVLSC’s progress, OSR provided an additional $12 million one year later to fund reclamation design and construction for a total of 15 forfeited permits on 8 project sites.

This year WVLSC’s engineers submitted preliminary site reclamation designs for 5 project sites covering 9 permits. Our contractors began construction on a large water treatment facility next to the Monongahela River in Marion County and completed the reclamation of two permits on a property in Barbour County. This summer we engaged a third construction company to begin the reclamation of the third and final permit for a slurry impoundment that is also located on the Barbour County site.

# STATS

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Organization Development and Outreach

In addition to bringing on a new Executive Director with years of relevant experience, we have focused on refining our existing policies and procedures and developing and adopting new ones to fit the needs of our growing organization. This year we redesigned our website, increased our social media presence, and obtained a new logo that better reflects the work we do. We also developed a quarterly newsletter that is targeted to interested parties, and we continue to build our recipient list. Staff attended the national Land Trust Alliance Conference, a national mitigation banking conference, and the WV Brownfields Conference to increase substantive knowledge and continue building a broader network of similar organizations and potential clients.

Program Development

Over the past year, we developed screening questionnaires and applications for our land stewardship services and our land bank program. We established methods of calculating long-term stewardship costs for monitoring conservation easements and land use covenants, and we developed and adopted internal policies for managing long-term endowments to fund these activities. Multiple privately-owned mitigation banks and companies contacted us this year to inquire about our long-term stewardship services, indicating that a growing need exists in West Virginia.

We entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the WV National Guard to explore the possibility of taking a property into our Land Bank that the Guard is currently using as a training facility. The property has known environmental issues and could benefit from our access to funding for clean-up and remediation. If redeveloped, the facility could attract groups from across the country because of its unique nature, thus infusing a remote area of Preston County with additional visitors and potential economic development opportunities and complementing the Guard’s existing facility there. We also continued discussions with another property owner who is interested in donating a property to our Land Bank to help facilitate its remediation and redevelopment.

Grant Received

This Spring the WVLSC was awarded a $300K Brownfields Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to conduct environmental assessments. In coordination with local communities, we will identify and select properties with high redevelopment potential to perform Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments and engage in reuse planning over a three-year period. While the primary focus of this grant is a five-mile stretch of riverfront in Monongalia County that encompasses Morgantown, Westover, Granville, and Star City, the funds can be used to assess properties anywhere in West Virginia. Priority will be given to commercial/industrial properties that are candidates for entry into the WVLSC Land Bank. This grant will fund part of the due diligence activities that must take place prior to acquiring property and therefore play a critical role in bringing the first few properties through the WVLSC Land Bank.
STAFF

Patricia Hickman
Executive Director

Named Executive Director in January 2019, Patty brings 28 years of experience in environmental education, compliance, and site remediation to her leadership role at the WVLSC. Patty previously served as the Director of the Division of Land Restoration within the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, where she directed agency remediation and reclamation programs. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Resources from West Virginia University.

Jessica McDonald
Director of Operations

Jessica joined WVLSC in June 2017, with over seven years of experience as a real estate attorney and a lifelong passion for cleaning things up. She oversees ongoing projects and daily operations and manages the corporation’s finances. She is a graduate of West Virginia University and the University of Oregon School of Law.

BOARD
Of Directors

The 13-member WVLSC Board of Directors is legislatively mandated to include representatives from industry, labor unions, supporting government agencies, and environmental groups. Four members are named by the government entities they represent, and the remaining nine are nominated by their organizations and appointed by the Governor. Our board members represent the following stakeholder groups:

- AFL-CIO – Allen Nelson
- United Mine Workers of America - Joseph Carter, Jr.
- WV Coal Association - Jason Bostic
- WV Chamber of Commerce - Gale Lea Rubrecht
- WV Manufacturers Association - Jerome Cibrik
- WV Department of Environmental Protection - Erin Brittain
- WV Department of Commerce - James Bush
- WV Environmental Council – currently vacant
- 3 Direct Appointees from the General Public - Jeff Allen; Christy Laxton; Patricia Clark
- WV House of Delegates (non-voting) – currently vacant
- WV Senate (non-voting) – Bill Hamilton