



West Virginia
Conservation Agency

Creating a Virtual Farm Tour through Video

Background

- Each year, pre-COVID, the West Virginia Conservation Agency holds an in-person Conservation Farm competition across the state.
- That starts with County farms, then moves up to the Conservation District level, then the Area level (two statewide areas) and finally the Statewide competition to determine one winner.
- The purpose of the competition is to showcase farms and the farmer's use of Best Management Practices, the farmer's conservation philosophy/conservation ethic, how they share what they've learned with others, and the volunteer and community service work they've done in the community.



Why hold a Virtual Farm Tour?

- Simply put, it was out of necessity.
- Some of our federal partners and others who act as judges for the statewide tour had travel restrictions as a result of COVID-19 that prevented an in-person farm tour this year.



How did we approach the Virtual Farm Tour?

- Detailed planning was essential. Putting a point-by-point storyboard in place was important to be sure we covered all the key bases.
- Brian suggested we work on an outline that would hit all the key points of an in-person farm tour. (Example: Film rotational grazing with the cattle moving.) The farmers' conservation plan docs were used ahead of time to help us with our planning.
- We then held a meeting to go over our detailed plans. A highlight was going over all the farm's BMPs one at a time on the property. At the end, we conducted a sit-down interview with the farmer(s) to hit points we needed more audio about because it wasn't tour-specific (conservation philosophy, volunteer work examples, etc.)



Video Excerpt 1

backup YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/D7vjFqxIPsg>



What else was planned going into the shoot?

Drone footage, at Brian's suggestion

(Also talk about background of our own drones, but didn't have time, so we worked with the WV Division of Forestry.)



Video Excerpt 2 (Drones) backup YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/j3vhVZR9GeE>



Key Takeaways

- The importance of planning ahead of time for the shoot cannot be overstated. Planning was 100% essential, and the process would have been disastrous without it.
- Planning was also necessary out of fairness to the farmers, as this was a competition, and an apples-to-apples comparison was a requirement.
- Buy-in from the farmers ahead of time was necessary, as this was an intensive video shoot over several hours at each farm and it required a lot from them over a busy and very hot day. The farmers' conservation plan documents were used to help us map out our plan.
- Having a plan in place ahead of time helped us meet a deadline to turn the videos around quickly, because we were able to “plug in” the farmers' responses to our questions with audio and footage one piece at a time.



Thank You!



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