

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



304-558-3708

www.agriculture.wv.gov



Facebook: West Virginia Department of Agriculture



Twitter: @WVDeptofAg

NEWS RELEASE
October 11, 2016

Contact: Buddy Davidson
Communications Officer
304/558-3708; 304/541-5932 (cell)
bdavidson@wvda.us

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT SEES BRIGHT FUTURE FOR CEDAR LAKES

Charleston, W.Va. – The historic home of the annual FFA Convention and the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair will become an even better place for educational opportunities, public events and private meetings, according to Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick.

“We believe that we can make this great property thrive with the plans we’re now putting in place,” said Commissioner Helmick. “We want to bring even more private visitors to the facility, as well as expand the educational opportunities offered there.”

WVDA is currently advertising for a new director for the facility who can both manage daily operations and aggressively market the facility. Commissioner Helmick said WVDA is currently laying the groundwork for the new director when he or she is selected.

WVDA will take care of some maintenance projects that have been deferred in recent years, such as replacing the roof on the dining hall. The WVDA will also investigate the possibility of expanding meeting space to match the lodging space, said Commissioner Helmick.

“We can sleep over 600 here, but we only have meeting space for about 400,” said Commissioner Helmick. “The FFA sets up a large meeting tent to help accommodate all the students when they’re here.” Cedar Lakes will continue to have a strong connection to agriculture education. Besides the annual FFA events, WVDA will construct and operate high tunnels and outdoor gardens that will serve as hands-on learning laboratories for youth and adult education programs.

One aspect of the educational program will be business planning.

-more-

“We need to step beyond just the production side. We want people doing intensive workshops here where business planning is on equal footing with the growing side,” said Commissioner Helmick. “The farmers of tomorrow will also need to be able to market their products and have true business relationships with their customers.”

Many of the traditional aspects of Cedar Lakes will remain the same. It will remain the home of the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, and it will continue to seek private conference business. One of the biggest is the “Road Scholar” program. Road Scholar offers 5,500 learning adventures, serving more than 100,000 participants annually, including art and craft training at Cedar Lakes. The programs combine travel and education to provide experiential learning opportunities featuring an extraordinary range of topics, formats and locations, in every state in the U.S., 150 countries and aboard ships on rivers and oceans worldwide.

The state Legislature gave control of the property to the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) July 1. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) had controlled the property since 1950, when the property was donated by Jackson County to what was then known as the state Board of Education for use as a youth retreat. It quickly became a camp for the Future Farmers of American, now known simply as FFA, and Future Homemakers of America.

Acreage and buildings were added over the years and the current facility comprises 300 acres and approximately 70 buildings and features, plus small scenic lakes and fields. The facility has meeting space for 400 and can accommodate 606 overnight visitors in its dormitory-style cabins and the newer 48-room Holt Lodge, which opened in 1996.

For more information, call 304-372-7860, or email info@cedarlakes.com.

###