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WVDA RECEIVES GRANT TO HELP BOOST MAPLE INDUSTRY

Charleston, W.Va. – West Virginia has one of the fastest growing maple industries in the United States. A grant from the Acer Access and Development (ACER) Program will build on that success.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) was awarded a \$203,716 ACER grant, one of only three handed out this year. That money will be used to continue educational and research efforts to accelerate the growth of the maple industry in West Virginia and the central Appalachian region.

West Virginia maple producers tapped 9,000 gallons of syrup during the 2017 season which ran from early-February through mid-March. That was a 33 percent increase from 2016.

"We want to see that number continue to climb," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "This grant will help the WVDA reach out to more maple producers, helping those already in the business build on their brand and offering workshops and seminars to newcomers."

As part of the grant, the WVDA will partner with the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association (WVMSPA), Laurel Fork Sap Suckers and Virginia Tech to hold a Southern Syrup Research Institute at WVU. The event will focus on maple production issues specific to the Mid-Atlantic region including climate, economic and distribution factors.

"We currently rank 13th in the nation for maple syrup production," said WVMSPA President Rich Flanigan. "This proves what we've done so far is working. The grant will springboard us forward to be a real competitor in the maple syrup industry."

This is the first year ACER grants have been awarded. Iowa and Vermont were the other 2017 ACER recipients.

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