

George R. Heidrich



George Heidrich, a general livestock farm operator in the Eastern Panhandle's Jefferson County, was truly a man of the soil. He was a citizen activist who carefully evaluated the future then worked as hard as he could to insure that there would be a future. It was hard work, in 1940, when he decided to help develop an environmental consciousness in others. In that year, with unemployment at a new all-time high and with rumblings of war on the horizon, to speak of conserving our air, soil, water, and the plants and animals that thrive on them was just not being done, even though the "Dust Bowl" of the 1930's was still fresh in the minds of most citizens.

The legislation establishing a State Soil Conservation Law was implemented in September 1939 with the establishment of a State Committee. The Eastern Panhandle Soil Conservation District was chartered on February 12, 1940, the first to be so; and George Heidrich was instrumental in forming the organization. Later, in 1944, he was appointed as a District Supervisor, a position he served until in 1981. He was a Secretary from 1944 to 1955, and he was Board Chairman from 1955 to 1981 (26 years).

Mr. Heidrich assisted in organizing the Potomac Headwaters RC & D Project, and he served as Vice Chairman for nine years.

He served on the State Soil Conservation Committee from 1948-1975. Shortly after the National Association of Soil Conservation District Governing Officials was formed, Mr. Heidrich was elected (1950) as an area Vice-President and served through 1952. From 1948 to 1957, he was a registered congressional lobbyist for the National Association of Conservation Districts and spent many long days in Washington, D.C. He and the association were very successful, and the economy of the entire nation benefitted. He was always active in the West Virginia Association of Soil Conservation Districts and served as President in 1974 and 1975. He was President of the Jefferson County Farm Bureau in 1946 and 1947.

Mr. Heidrich was especially proud of his work in assisting in the planning and establishment of the Warm Spring Run Watershed Project. This, a first in the State, provides flood protection to the area, which includes the town of Berkley Springs. Prior to that project, the city flooded each spring. Since the completion of the project in 1955, no flooding has occurred.

George Heidrich was one of the most influential men who ever worked in the soil conservation movement.