

# George Sharpe



George Sharpe was one of the early leaders of the soil conservation movement in West Virginia and, even after retirement, has continued to participate as a leader and worker in various conservation programs. The land judging program which he developed and led for many years provided thousands of youth and adult the opportunity to become aware of soil resources. For many participants, these land judging programs have been their only exposure to the importance of soils in agriculture and community development.

A native of Indiana, he moved to West Virginia at an early age and attended public school in Shinnston and later graduated from West Virginia University.

From 1936 to 1939, Mr. Sharpe was a persistent advocate of the idea of Soil Conservation Districts in West Virginia. In 1939, the Soil Conservation District Bill passed the West Virginia Legislature and because of his work and planning in the Lewisburg area, the Greenbrier Valley Districts was one of the first three Districts organized in the state.

A program that has gained state and national recognition is Land Judging. Mr. Sharpe started land judging in West Virginia in 1946. During the early years of this program he taught as many as 100 classes in a year in land judging and soil appreciation to 4-H and FFA members. The program rose to 18,000 to 20,000 adults and youth taking part in land judging conservation work.

Mr. Sharpe was one of the originators and promoters of the West Virginia Conservation Workshops which were held for an 8-year period – 1945-53. Established primarily for school teachers, the workshops were held for two weeks each summer for 2 college credit hours. In 1957, the Workshop was reorganized in cooperation with the West Virginia Conservation Education Council and was held for three weeks each summer until 1970. The State Conservation Farmer Program, which originated in 1945, was instigated by Mr. Sharpe. This program recognizes outstanding farmers for the establishment and maintenance of conservation practices and as conservation leaders.

His list of awards, honors, and citations is lengthy. For instance, within the state, he has been recognized by the West Virginia Chapter of the Soil District Supervisors Association, Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, Future Farmers of America, West Virginia Vocational Education State Division, West Virginia Chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta, State Soil Conservation Committee, State Department of Agriculture, Izaak Walton League of America, and the State Department of Natural Resources.

He was West Virginia “Man of the Year” in agriculture in 1968.

National awards have come from Lambda Gamma Delta fraternity, Soil Conservation Society of America (the grade of Fellow granted for outstanding achievement), and Future Farmers of America.

As a long-time Extension Soil Conservationist with the West Virginia University Cooperative Extension Service, Mr. Sharpe’s successful career was helped by his great interest in people and his strong determination. He constantly related programs to people, involved people in the programs, and shared the successes with them.