

# Walter C. Gumbel



Walter C. Gumbel is honored for his contributions to the conservation development, and utilization of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation and his leadership abilities in working with others to improve the land and to help those who live and work on it.

A native of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Mr. Gumbel was appointed County Agent in Hancock County, West Virginia, upon his graduation in 1929. In 1936, he was appointed Rural Organization Specialist and Extension Soil Conservationist at West Virginia University. Most of the West Virginia Soil Conservation Districts were organized with his help and guidance.

In 1943, Mr. Gumbel was appointed State Soil Conservationist for Pennsylvania by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil and Conservation Service. In 1946, he was appointed Conservationist for the Monongahela Power Company and located at Fairmont, West Virginia, one of the first such positions in the Nation. His duties with this position involved the promotion and development of land use, and water, forest, and watershed management programs affecting agricultural, industrial, and urban groups.

A major contribution to West Virginia was Mr. Gumbel's efforts to organize the West Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Conservation Society of America and serving as its first President in 1946-47. Nationally, he served as Editor of the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation of the Soil Conservation Society of America from 1946 until 1956. It has been pointed out Mr. Gumbel "...made the Journal a highly professional publication by hard work, ability to adapt himself to changing demands, and a very keen appreciation of what is appropriate for publication of this nature." In 1952, Mr. Gumbel was elected a Fellow Member of the Soil Conservation Society of America for his work in practicing, investigating, and teaching soil and water conservation.

Mr. Gumbel, throughout his career was active and effective in many conservation activities, including Friends of the Land, the Water Resources Committee of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, the State Department of Education's Conservation Education Advisors Committee, the Land Committee of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac; and the Northeast Forest Research Advisory Council. He concerned himself particularly with the development of small watershed organizations and a national land use policy.

In addition, Mr. Gumbel served as a member of the West Virginia Emergency Water Resource Planning Committee, the West Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, the American Water Works Association, the National Water Pollution Control Association, and a six-person Task Force at the West Virginia University College of Agriculture to develop a economic development plan for six central West Virginia counties.

On the numerous awards and honors which Mr. Gumbel received, two of the most significant were the Louis Bromfield Gold Medal Award in 1962 for "success in inspiring others to do something about their conservation of Land, Water, and Man," and the Governor's Award for Conservationist of the Year in 1965.

As a colleague reported, "his integrity and ability to obtain the complete confidence of other made him a most effective and sought after individual for service on committees and commissions and for elective offices."