

Dencil J. Strader



Dencil Strader has worked diligently as a state and community leader in agricultural and forestry management for more than 50 years.

Strader was an active participant in the formation of Soil Conservation Districts throughout West Virginia in the 1940s. As a Tygarts Valley Soil Conservation crew chief for 10 years, he supervised reclamation projects, pond drainage and road construction and improved cattle watering systems throughout a five-county area.

Strader worked as the Upshur County Supervisor for the District for 16 years until his retirement in 1991. He continues to serve as an associate supervisor, and has been influential in the group's recent honors, including the highly respected Goodyear

Award.

He developed a forest management plan for his land in the 1950s, which resulted in 250 acres of timber stand improvement, 11 acres of tree plantings, 150 rods of woodlot fencing and six miles of access roads completed. His farm is well known as a showplace for pasture and hay land management. He has consistently worked to maintain its grazing land, including adding annual soil amendments and reseeding, and improving water sources on the property.

He has been recognized several times for his agricultural and forestry improvement accomplishments. He was honored as the West Virginia Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year in 1980, three-time Award of Merit winner from the Conservation District, Tygarts Valley Soil Conservation District's Conservation Farmer of the Year in 1994; and he earned the National Take Pride in America Award in 1989.

He worked diligently with the Upshur County Board of Education to get the Samara Program, a conservation education and testing program, implemented at Buckhannon-Upshur High School. The program has increased attention to conservation issues in thousands of students. He also founded Upshur County Agricultural Day, which has reached 5,000 elementary-school-age students.

He has often used his certified tree farm as an outdoor classroom by hosting tours and field days in cooperation with the West Virginia Division of Forestry and the Tygarts Valley Soil Conservation District. Through these tours and other activities, he has given thousands of West Virginians a new appreciation for the state's abundant agricultural and forestry resources.