

2026 West Virginia Maple Producers Report

Prepared by Kody Boone

West Virginia producers experienced yet another challenging season this year. Hopes were high coming off a banner 2025 crop, and with a long, abnormally cold weather front most of January, anticipation was climbing to again see great production. Unfortunately, what started as phenomenal sap yield following a fast thaw in February, turned into a very short three-to-four-week season with minimal freeze/thaw cycles. Temperatures turned hot quickly, and even following all the best practices, one cannot make sap flow without Mother Nature's help. Sap production dwindled, and despite still-healthy tapholes and line viability, just about all the state's production was finished before March 8th due to the lack of freezing temperatures and extremely warm weather. Only a few producers were able to hold on to slower flow rates in the following days, but syrup quality was questionable, and production during this time was considered slightly off-flavored by some. Many farms in West Virginia produced around 50% of their expected crop, while some producers on vacuum, and utilizing best management practices (BMPs), were able to see higher yields ranging from 80%-95%, despite the very short window of opportunity.

With increasingly variable weather patterns, foresight is limited, and no one will ever know exactly what to do any given year at season onset. However, it is safe to say that our southern maple regions have a morphing climate curve, and the last handful of years have given us insight into what may become our new "normal". It seems that there is very little forgiveness in the season's range, and we must be ready to tap for those early runs, utilize BMPs for healthy tapholes and, if able, utilize mechanical vacuum to ensure production.

Despite a difficult season, the syrup making community in West Virginia continues to grow. The West Virginia Maple Producers Association annual meeting was held in April, with representation from all regions in attendance. This year, the Association created several special purpose committees to pursue specific goals, and members were more than ready to step up to fill those needs. These committees will be fundamental for growth, not just for Association membership, but for the industry as a whole in the Mountain State. We are seeing an increase in desire for producer involvement in educational settings, and with programs like Maple in the Classroom, we are excited to see what can happen in not only secondary-level agricultural programs, but the primary educational settings as well.

The WVMSPA-sponsored Mountain State Maple Days held in February and March were successful this season for participating farms. Many producers reported high public attendance for both their February and March events, and we expect this event to become more popular as our farm base increases. The Maple Days events have been integral for

producers to educate the public and promote the maple industry across the state. It has become a great way for new people to experience West Virginia maple syrup, and a yearly tradition for maple enthusiasts.