Greenhouse Opens

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A national research lab located at WKU’s farm is now complete after a long awaited greenhouse opened a few weeks ago.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham explains the environmental impact of the research being done on soil, air and water.

Problems facing south central Kentucky farmers and livestock producers are being solved everyday at Western Kentucky University’s farm. It’s all because of a unique partnership with the federal government.

Just off Nashville Road is the United States Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service.

Acres and acres of farm land, a high tech lab and finally, a greenhouse.

 “Research conducted here will benefit farmers, livestock producers and society at large.”

The pieces of the puzzle have slowly been coming together since 2001 when efforts began for the U.S.D.A./ARS to team up with WKU.

 “We think this is an outstanding partnership, an excellent example of university/federal type of program.”

Here’s just one example of research that’s underway.

This elaborate set up for rainfall simulation is actually an experiment on fertilizers.

 “We usually make sure this rain has the intensity of a natural rainfall and collect runoff water to see how much of fertilizer nutrient, for example nutrients we are losing and then evaluate and select best fertilizer.”

This type of research experience is invaluable for recent graduate Jacqueline Brown.

“If you go into a job market they want people who know how to use equipment, want people who know how to do research already.”

Jerry O’Bryan owns one of the state’s largest hog operations in western Daviess County. WKU and Agricultural Research scientists are working with him on several aspects of waste management.

 “We look at animal waste management as being a very important part of nutrient source for crops, such as what Jerry has shown us on his farm today with corn, soybeans and wheat.”

And now a 2.6 million dollar greenhouse makes the operation complete.

 “We measure, control temperature and moisture and try to test the hypothesis there.”

Testing theories that will impact our environment for years to come.

 “It’s about identifying and solving problems for those within our reach.”

Over the years, the Animal Waste Management Unit has grown to six research scientists and ten support personnel working in cooperation with eight WKU scientists to develop best practices for utilizing animal waste.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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