

Washington County hosts representatives from national organization for local agricultural education

By Kinsley Graves, soil conservationist, Jonesborough Service Center



Left to Right: Greg, Longlao, Htut, Kevaly, and Kinsley

The Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted three representatives from the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) program. The YSEALI program seeks to promote mutual understanding, enhance leadership and professional skills, and build long-lasting and sustainable partnerships between emerging leaders in Southeast Asia and the United States.

Greg Quillen, district conservationist, and Kinsley Graves, soil conservationist, partnered with Taylor Malone, from the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council, to give a tour of Washington County and provided information about NRCS to Longlao Nyianu, Htet Zaw Htun, and Kevaly Vongsouthi on Wednesday, July 13.

This event consisted of a discussion exchanging information on local agricultural practices in Washington County as well as Laos and Myanmar. Longlao, Htet, and Kevaly shared about rice production, family farm activities, rubber tree tapping, the role elephants play in the logging industry, cattle imported from Australia to Laos (that wear “sunglasses” to acclimate to the area), and their personal background in agriculture and conservation. Longlao described the high importance of agriculture in their country and that the college where he lectures offers degrees only in agriculture (agronomy, livestock, fisheries, forestry, and agribusiness).

After in-depth conversations about agricultural practices both here and overseas, the tour consisted of five site visits. The participants were shown a restored wetland, active streambank erosion as well as stabilization on the Nolichucky River, channel bed stabilization, riprap gabion baskets at an EWP site, and high tunnel practices at an urban farm. This unique opportunity where Greg and Kinsley were able to participate in learning, sharing, and networking will most definitely be cherished.

All three participants are experts in their respective conservation related fields of agriculture, agronomy, and environmental sciences. There are short biographies written by each participant listed below. More information regarding YSEALI can be found at <https://id.usembassy.gov/education-culture/yseali/> and <https://asean.usmission.gov/about-yseali/>.



Left to Right: Longlao, Chris (producer), Kevaly, Htet, and Taylor discussing eggplant production in a high tunnel.



Left to Right: Taylor, Kinsley, Greg, Longlao, and Kevaly discussing rock riprap gabion baskets at an EWP site.

Longlao Nyianu, from Laos, serves at the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College as a lecturer and coordinator. He has graduate degrees in science and environmental studies from Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, and a bachelor's degree of agriculture and forest resources from Souphanouvong University in Luang Prabang, Laos. Longlao is interested in helping poor farmers in Laos improve their rice yields and planning support irrigation for farmers and develop a better rice seed. Long also wants to educate famers on crop rotation system and animal husbandry.

Htet Zaw Htun, from Myanmar, works at the Golden Plain Livelihood Development Services Coop Ltd., as an agronomist. He obtained his bachelor's degree with distinctions from Yezin Agricultural University. He also has been working with NGOs in Myanmar to provide techniques and training in agriculture, contributing the inputs, monitoring the farmer's plots. In addition, he has delivered trainings on home gardening, natural pesticide, and fertilization to farmers. He also works as a freelance trainer and consultant. Currently, he is working as an extension

field assistant at food and agriculture organization of the United Nations in the Ayeyarwady region. Htet would like to help educate young farmers.

Kevaly Vongsouthi, from Laos, is an environmental and social consultant at Earth Systems Company in Vientiane, Lao PDR. She has experience in environment and agricultural sector and a bachelor's degree in agricultural science. Kevaly would like to learn more sustainable farming best practices to share with farmers in Laos.