

CONSERVATION PROFILES

“You’ve got to keep at it because you can’t solve the problem in a day or a week or a month...it’s got to be permanently in front of you as one of your goals, and even then the land will change as you’re working on it.”

Roy Ash



Lila and Roy Ash with Stephanie and John Wilkins

Virginia

Conservation of Historic Proportions

Thomas Jefferson would have been proud. The famous American statesman and naturalist is said to have been a frequent visitor here at historic Llangollen Farm, on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Current owner Roy Ash outbid a developer for Llangollen 14 years ago, not only saving the farm and community from urbanization, but building a conservation showpiece out of the run-down farm. And this showpiece pays its own way with 270 cows plus hay and timber sales.

With farm manager John Wilkins, Ash is producing high-quality beef based on sustainable land, water and wildlife practices. The farm began as a largely undivided expanse. Although beautiful, the landscape had seen little maintenance for 30+ years and erosion and watering issues plagued the farm. Wilkins and Ash divided the farm into dozens of pastures where each is fenced, watered, and seeded to match peak grass growth to the season. Working with NRCS and the Soil and Water Conservation District, trials were conducted with native perennials and various cool and warm season annual grasses. The eventual mix extended the grazing season and reduced the need for harvested feed. Each pasture is soil tested before determining how much fertilization is needed to feed the forage without washing excess nutrients into the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information:
www.nrcs.usda.gov
www.beef.org



John Wilkins and NRCS conservationist Larry Wilkinson discuss management options to balance peak performance and environmental well-being at Llangollen. Cattle and wildlife are both part of their management plans.

Watering troughs and hardened crossings assure a cool drink for animals while protecting water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



Six miles of fencing now keeps cattle out of streams and has created 50 acres of riparian buffer corridors. Wildlife plots of vetch, winter pea and grains are increasing the farm's populations of turkeys, quail and rabbits. Red tailed hawks and a bald eagle also frequent the farm.

Having forestalled development and crafted a conservation showpiece, Ash has now sealed the deal for the future, placing a permanent easement on Llangollen that will preserve it in farm and woodland for generations to come. In a county that was the third fastest growing in the nation in 2000, that will be quite a legacy.

LLANGOLLEN CONSERVATION AT A GLANCE

Key Practices:

24 gravity-flow watering troughs
11 ponds
Rotational grazing
Soil testing

6 miles of fencing
Two cattle crossings
Riparian buffers
Nutrient management

Programs Used:

NRCS/SWCD Technical Assistance
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
Chesapeake Bay Program
Loudoun County Farm Easement

