



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

FACT SHEET

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AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE

Tim and Susie Brown, Hills Farm



Tim Brown's Hills Farm was the first farm on Virginia's Eastern Shore to enroll in CREP.

Greenbush, VA - Tim and Susie Brown own Hills Farm, 630 acres adjoining the Chesapeake Bay on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. It's a historic farm dating back to 1747.

Hills Farm also has the distinction of being the first farm on Virginia's Eastern Shore to be protected with an open space easement and the first farm on the Shore to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

"I'm a big supporter of the Farm Bill," Tim Brown says of the federal legislation that has provided much of the funding for CREP and other farm conservation programs helping farmers protect soil and water resources. "I wish more people would take advantage of the conservation programs."

"We have wildlife buffers around all our crop fields; they filter nutrients out of runoff water, which helps clean up the Bay," he says. "The buffers were installed as part of the CREP program. They do more than filter runoff; they also provide habitat for wildlife."

Hills Farm has 100 acres of tillable land, but most of the farm is woodland and marsh. Of the 100 acres of tillable land, about half is planted in annual crops; the rest is either in CREP or in some sort of wildlife habitat, including thirteen acres of impoundments.

Brown has a passion for ducks and wading birds and partnered with Ducks Unlimited to construct several holding ponds that can be planted with annual crops or allowed to grow natural plant foods for ducks, then flooded during the migration season. This provides much needed food for waterfowl migrating along the Eastern Shore, a major East Coast flyway.

"I'm proud that we use conservation practices that not only protect the Bay but also the wildlife that use the Bay and the Eastern Shore."

Forest buffers, or the trees, shrubs and other plants that grow next to streams and rivers, are critical to the health of the Chesapeake Bay as well as local rivers and streams. Forest buffers prevent pollution from entering waterways, stabilize stream banks, provide food and habitat to wildlife, and keep streams cool during hot weather.

More than half of the Bay watershed's native species depend on forest buffers for food, shelter, and access to water at some point in their lives. And sensitive aquatic species depend on the shade that streamside trees provide.

Both the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the state agricultural best management cost-share programs can help cover expenses for riparian buffer projects.

This is one in a series of articles about farmers who have implemented conservation practices to improve farm operations and water quality in nearby streams, demonstrating how agriculture has achieved half of the nutrient reductions necessary to clean up local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

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