



## CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

### *Saving a National Treasure*

## FACT SHEET

July 2013

### **AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE**

*Cliff Miller, Mount Vernon Farm*



Cliff Miller on his farm in Rappahannock County.

Sperryville, VA – Mount Vernon Farm has been in Cliff Miller's family since 1827.

The farm, 840 acres near the Blue Ridge Mountains in Rappahannock County, Va., sells grassfed beef and lamb and pastured pork at its farm store and to buyers clubs, food co-ops, and restaurants within a 100-mile radius of the farm.

Miller was one of the first farmers in Virginia to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in 2001, a conservation program funded by the federal Farm Bill. Mount Vernon Farm has several CREP contracts, 170 acres in the riparian buffer program, and several Virginia Best Management Practices.

"We used to use the river to water our cattle, but the Farm Bill programs helped us put secure water in every field we graze," says Miller. "The CREP program actually changed us from a continuous grazing farm to a rotational grazing farm. We move livestock every day to fresh pasture."

CREP and Virginia's agricultural best management practice cost-share program helped pay for the fences to exclude Miller's livestock from the streams on the farm and for the cross-fences as well.

Miller is proud of the holistic approach the family uses to manage the farm and its natural resources.

"My family's 840-acre farm is an organic whole," he says. "We make decisions understanding the implications for each part of that whole—the water, soil, domestic animals, people, wildlife, finances, customers, and the community."

It's a winning management approach.

In 2012 the farm won the Grand Winner Clean Water Farm Award for the entire Rappahannock River basin.

Keeping livestock out of streams has proven herd health benefits. It is also a clear sign to downstream neighbors and other community members of your ethics and environmental stewardship.

Try these options to keep cattle healthy by keeping them out of streams:

- Off-stream watering systems
- Stream fencing
- Stream crossings
- Buffer strips
- Rotational Grazing

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 certain livestock stream exclusion projects that are built to specification.

*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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