



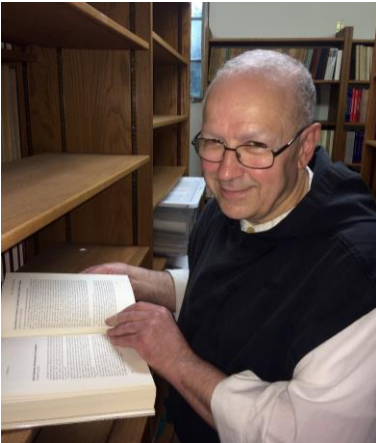
## CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

### *Saving a National Treasure*

## FACT SHEET

June 2015

### **AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE** *Holy Cross Abbey, Cool Spring Farm*



Father James Orthmann of Holy Cross Abbey.

**Berryville, VA** - Father James Orthmann is a monk at the Holy Cross Abbey, a 1,200-acre farm with nearly three miles of river frontage on the main stem of the Shenandoah River.

“In order for us to be spiritually sustainable, it is necessary for us to take care of the place where we live,” he explains. The monks’ “place” is Cool Spring Farm, located along the west bank of the river where the American Civil War Battle of Cool Spring occurred in the summer of 1864.

The Trappist monks of Cool Spring began their natural resources pilgrimage with a sustainability study conducted by the University of Michigan in 2009-2010.

“One of the first recommendations from the study was to get our cows out of the Shenandoah River and all the tributaries on the farm,” Orthmann says. “How could we be true to our guiding principal of loving our ‘place’ with cows in the river and streams? The cows were polluting the water and ruining the stream banks.

“To achieve this, we first removed the cattle from the flood plain and leased that land to an ‘all natural’ produce farm. Next we contacted the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service for assistance with fencing and watering troughs for the rest of the streams on the farm.

“With the help from these dedicated public servants, we were able to protect almost four and a half miles of stream banks, including the Shenandoah River and the historic Cool Spring itself.”

The community of monks continued their sustainability journey by diversifying their operation. Not only do they produce cattle, fruits, vegetables, and timber, they also now have a “natural cemetery,” a retreat house, gift shop, and the Monastery Bakery—the one that produces those famous Trappist fruitcakes.

“Sustainability works,” Orthmann continued. “It’s paying off economically, environmentally, and spiritually. As Trappist monks committed to this community and land for life, fencing the cows out of the stream was an easy first step toward a more holistic lifestyle.”

To learn more about Holy Cross Abbey, please visit [www.virginiatrappists.org](http://www.virginiatrappists.org).

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.

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*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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