



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

FACT SHEET

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AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE *Scott Plein, White House Farm Foundation*



Luray, VA—“The way to get things done is to lead by example,” says Scott Plein, founder of White House Farm Foundation, White House Natives, and owner of three farms he has converted from water-fouling land uses to sustainable engines of hope for restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Before Plein bought Long Road Farm near Luray, Virginia, the beef operation there had been deemed a “founded”

complaint under the Agricultural Stewardship Act of Virginia. The farm had a giant cattle feedlot with a stream running through it, causing polluted runoff to flow into the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

Plein bought the farm in 2012, and he immediately removed the feedlot, fenced off the stream, installed riparian buffers, and stabilized the eroding stream banks. He worked with the Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service to design and install the conservation practices.

“Cost share programs and technical assistance make it easy to take care of the land and the water,” Plein explains.

Today the farm is a stellar example of sustainability with stream exclusion fences, stream buffers, and 11 grazing units that facilitate rotational grazing. Two of the grazing units will be planted in native warm season grasses that will provide forage during July and August, the two months that most cool season pastures go dormant because of the heat.

“My background is in turf management,” Plein says. “The more you cut turf, the better it gets. I saw a direct relationship with turf management and rotational grazing. Continuous grazing just doesn't provide the best or most amount of forage for cattle, but rotational grazing does.”

In addition to setting a conservation example for stream fencing and rotational grazing, Plein founded White House Farm Foundation, an educational non-profit fostering sustainable land uses, and White House Natives, a wholesale nursery that grows only Virginia native trees and shrubs.

“My farms produce cattle, grain, hay, nursery stock, clean water, and wildlife,” Plein says. “And they make more money now per acre than when they had feedlots and polluted runoff.”

Scott Plein: proving every day that working farmers can be great producers and great conservationists.

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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