



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

FACT SHEET

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AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE **Jimmy Callison**



Summerdean, VA: Ease of herd movement is the number one reason Jimmy Callison fenced his cattle away from the river. “It used to take seven or eight people on four-wheelers and horses to get all these cows to the barn. Now, we can do that with just two people,” said Callison, a full-time farmer in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Callison installed two miles of fencing and three stream crossings, and planted several hundred hardwood trees with help from the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia Department of Forestry, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Prior to the fencing project, the nearly one-hundred-acre field was one big pasture with a river flowing through it. When it was time to get the cows to the barn it took many people to get them there. Since there was nowhere to cross the river with four-wheelers or trucks, the cows often out-maneuvered the farmer and his helpers, causing much consternation.

The fencing project included dividing up the field into four units for rotational grazing with three hardened crossings.

“We designed the project to help me get the cows into the barn. The fencing pattern makes a funnel shape towards the barn. It makes it so much easier now,” Callison said.

Callison’s project in the headwaters of the Shenandoah River is a sterling example of how improving the environment also improves the local economy. Many local businesses benefitted from the project. “I bought the posts and the wire for the fence and hired a contractor to install it,” Callison said. “I bought the gravel and hired another contractor to install the crossings and bought the trees and hired two contractors to plant the trees.”

While Callison paid for everything up front, the programs reimbursed most of the costs. “I could not have done it without technical assistance and funding from these programs,” Callison said. “Sure, the programs fund this to improve the river but it helps my farm and the economy as well.”

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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