

# Support excluding cattle from streams

By **Guest Column** - February 11, 2020



*(Bobby Whitescarver)*

**By Bobby Whitescarver**

Farmers with 20 cows or more would have to exclude cattle from perennial streams.

That's the purpose of two bills moving through the General Assembly — [SB704](#) and [HB704](#).

I am a cattle farmer in Augusta County and I support these bills.

I gaze down at the river flowing through our farm. Today the water is clear. But in winter

chocolate milk—thick with brown sediment. The sediment clogs the gills of all the crit polluted.

In warmer times, anytime the air temperature is above 50 degrees, most of the cattle in the river cooling off. When they move around the cloven hooves on their half-ton b the banks of the river and cause the soil to fall into the river. While they are cooling of into the water. Their manure and urine pollute the water, accelerating the destructior

Not only is the water full of sediment, it's laden with nutrients and pathogens.

We voluntarily fenced our cows out of the river 16 years ago. We used federal and stat the installation of fences, livestock watering systems and livestock crossings.

I was a district conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service an years helping farmers fence their cattle out of streams, rivers and wetlands. Many hav grateful for their commitment to clean water.

But many farmers have not done their part. They have their reasons. They don't want to do, they fear government intrusion, they don't want change, they don't think their c stream. Some say it will put them out of business.

I've never known a farm to go out of business because they had too much conservatio out of business because they didn't have enough conservation. Poor soil health, poor l the carrying capacity of the land – that's what makes a farmer go out of business – n

Many times, I have heard, "I'll fence my cows out of the stream when they make every may be coming soon.

The taxpayers of this commonwealth and this nation fund voluntary projects, like our: They do so willingly because they know that good land-use benefits everyone. Furthe economical to pay a farmer for a fence and a livestock watering system than to pay fo plant and a new school if the farmer went out of business and sold the land for a hous

Cattle exclusion from streams is perhaps the single most cost-effective measure to cl Chesapeake Bay.

It costs about \$50 to remove one pound of nitrogen pollution by upgrading a wastewa city. It costs about \$3 to remove one pound of nitrogen pollution using livestock exclu along a stream on a farm, according to a Chesapeake Bay Foundation study.

Farmers have a lot of work to do in the next few years. According to Virginia's plan to dirty waters list, farmers must install over 17,000 miles of livestock exclusion by 2025. streams, and a restored Bay we need to help our farmers get there.

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*Clarification: This piece has been updated to reflect the current versions of the stream bills originally contained deadlines that have been removed.*

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**Guest Column**

Views of guest columnists are their own. To submit an op-ed for consideration, contact Editor Robert Zu

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