

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

Caring for our land and natural resources comes second nature to these Angus producers. For their efforts, they have been named our 1991 Land Stewardship Award winners.

The goal of the Angus Journal's Land Stewardship Award program is to not only spotlight conservation-minded producers, but to spread the word that our industry does care about our land and natural resources. In this day of environmental activism, public landgrazing disputes, and "ban the burping cow" groups, the true picture is often distorted.

To help spread the right message we asked our readers to nominate and write an essay on an Angus producer they felt was a true steward of the land. These producers promote and use soil and water conservation, forage management, wildlife habitat, waste management, alternative energy or recycling practices. You responded with an impressive 17 nominations from 13 states.

Serving as our judges were Paul Ohlenbusch, range management specialist at Kansas State University; Dan Divine, Missouri SWCD District Conservationist; and Earl McKarns, manager of Shamrock Vale Angus Farms, Kensington, Ohio, and a 1990 Land Stewardship Award winner. The judges evaluated the entries on conservation practices, environmental awareness, educational efforts and a written essay.

Winners from four regions of the United States—West, Midwest, East and South—were selected. These winners each received \$100 and an engraved plaque at the National Angus Conference in Austin, Texas.

An award program such as this is the least we can do to recognize the people who make it possible for the next generation to make their living from the land.

— **Jerilyn Johnson**



The 1991 Land Stewardship Awards were presented at the National Angus Conference in Austin to (l to r) Lawrason and Jane Sayre, Churchville, Md., and Richard and Adele Christy, Scott City, Kan.

WEST WINNER



Donna Sitz & Family

Sitz Angus Ranch, Harrison, Montana

The Sitz family has been a leader in land management and Angus cattle production for the past 27 years. They manage a 750-head cow herd and do an outstanding job of land stewardship on their 12,000-acre foothill ranch. In addition, they keep a summer grazing permit for 12,000 acres of public land.

Donna and her children have carried on the stewardship tradition since her husband, Bob, was killed in a tractor accident in January of 1989. All family members are active leaders in their community, state and nation when it comes to beef production and conservation.

The Soil Conservation Service, Society for Ranch Management, Montana State University and conservation districts have all used the Sitz Angus Ranch as a showplace to demonstrate good land stewardship and innovative application of new technology in beef cattle production. The tours and seminars have benefited producers, students, foreign visitors and range conservationists.

Stock water developments and grazing systems are an integral part of the ranch operation. Prior to 1967, the Sitz's grazing permit land in the national forest was little used due to lack of stock water. Bob Sitz convinced the local Forest Service personnel that he could install a water wheel driven pump in Antelope Creek and lift water 800 feet vertically to the rangeland.

They installed two pumps and water was pumped to three buried storage tanks located at the rangeland's high points. Approximately 35 miles of buried polybutylene pipe now distributes water to 40 stock tanks. It furnishes water for 12,000 acres and allows nine pastures to be grazed as two separate rest-rotation systems.

Another 15 miles of pipeline, leading to several stock tanks, have also been installed on the ranch's private land.

Dryland crested wheatgrass and Ladak alfalfa is used for early spring breeding pastures. Highly productive adapted species, such as regar brome, orchardgrass and creeping meadow foxtail, are used for irrigated pastures. To improve range condition and cattle health, big sagebrush and tall larkspur are controlled.

Their 2,000 acres of cropland, which is primarily harvested for hay and haylage, is irrigated from the Norwegian Reservoir. This picturesque lake, adjacent to the ranch, provides excellent trout fishing and waterfowl habitat.

The water developments, rest-rotation grazing, and the Sitz commitment to leaving adequate forage and cover have improved deer, elk, antelope and upland bird habitats. This

land provides some of the best big game hunting and fishing in Montana.

Nominator: Robert Ross and John Lacey, Bozeman, Mont.

HONORABLE MENTION

Greg Gould, Seven Bar Heart Ranches, Ulm, Mont.

Tom Elliott, N Bar Land & Cattle Co., Grass Range, Mont.

J. Henry Winterholler, Snake River Angus, Wendell, Idaho

Frank Mehling, Medicine Rocks Ranch, Willard, Mont.

Don Berryman, Berryman Angus Ranch, Cebolla, N.M.

LaVern Koupal, Koupals Angus, Dante, S.D.

MIDWEST WINNER



Richard Christy

Zanobia Angus Ranch, Scott City, Kansas

Born in 1914 on Battle Canyon Ranch, Scott County, Christy has been a pioneer for western Kansas in many ways. He was one of the first farmers in the area to institute conservation tillage practices.

Christy moved with his family to the present farm location in Logan County in 1918. An Angus herd was established by his father in 1928, which he has continued to this day. The herd now consists of 21 registered cows and 220 commercial cows. They are wintered on corn and milo crop residues and summered on Chalk Hills grassland.

The 3,600-acre farm includes 250 acres of irrigated cropland used for corn and sorghum silage, 2,000 acres of dryland pasture and crops, and 900 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The soil is silty loam. Terrain ranges from flat to highly erodible. Forage management includes regular pasture rotation.

His farm is on a three-year crop rotation (wheat, milo, fallow) which provides a crop two out of three years on dryland. Crop residues are left on the field to retain moisture and prevent erosion. New crops are planted into existing residue. Manure from drylots is used as fertilizer on irrigated ground. His most highly erodible land was placed in CRP.

Christy developed an innovative water system because of his region's low rainfall. This system includes 12,000 feet of underground pipeline and provides water for six stock water tanks in five different pastures. It earned Christy an award from the Scott County SCS in the early 1980s.

In 1989, 600 feet of windbreak trees were added north of the homestead, including red cedar, Russian olive and elm. Another 600 feet is planned for this fall. This is also a man who enjoys feeding ears of corn to wild turkeys in winter.

Christy has made a memorable mark on the land and his livestock.

Nominator: Bill & Marian Nolan, Scott City, Kan.

HONORABLE MENTION

*Ray Acra, Acra Angus Farm, Scotts City, Mo.
Jim Ratcliff & Jack Brouder, Blue Ribbon Ranch, Vinita, Okla.
Bill, Don & Brent Strickler, Angus Acres, Euclid, Minn.*

EAST WINNER



Lawrason Sayre

Waffle Hill Farm., Churchville, Maryland

Sayre is dedicated to maintaining a livestock production enterprise which respects, conserves and improves both land and environment. Environmental issues and producer awareness of conservation practices is a central issue for all Maryland livestock producers. Profitability and environmental harmony is a challenge created by both urban encroachment and proximity to Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

This producer has confronted this challenge head on. His goal is to establish a total farm management plan, using Integrated Resource Management concepts. With the help of state and federal agencies, he has developed a year-round rotational grazing system for the cow herd.

One of Sayre's best attributes is his willingness to share ideas, successes and failures with other beef producers. Waffle Hill has hosted many field days and Sayre is a sought-after speaker for Extension programs.

Lawrason and his wife, Jane, established a beef cow-calf operation, known as Waffle Hill, in 1960. Their farm includes 217 acres of rolling land, that has highly erodible, loam based soils. It is ideally suited to pasture-based livestock production. They also rent and farm an adjacent 120 acres. With the help of their son, Ned, a herd of 125 Angus cows are maintained.

A total animal management plan was developed to maximize the grazing season and minimize the need for harvested feed. The use of temporary, portable fencing enables Sayre to undertake this plan as well as better manage the cattle's stream access. The results include a timely, even harvest of pasture, which optimizes animal nutrition and subsequent animal performance; prevention of overgrazing and loss of soil cover; and improved water quality. In addition, weed control is accomplished by the cattle, eliminating the need for herbicides. Excess forage is harvested and stored as high-moisture haylage in the spring and as dry hay during the summer.

Land that had previously been tilled and used for corn production was cycled into permanent hay and pasture plantings. Stream bank erosion and nutrient load in the streams which lead to the bay are strictly controlled.

Sayre has endeavored to provide suitable habitat for native wildlife. Hedge rows and wooded areas are managed to provide wildlife cover, shelter and protection, and are included in the total farm plan.

Nominator: Scott Barao, College Park, Md.

HONORABLE MENTION

*Ralph & Henis Veenema, Shiraloken Farm, Deposit, N.Y.
John Pennington, Warrenton, Va.
Don, Tom & Bob Pletcher, Pletcher Brothers Farm, Crooksville, Ohio*

SOUTH WINNER



Al Pedigo

Pedigo Farms, Fountain Run, Kentucky

From day one of his farming career, Pedigo has demonstrated a genuine concern for the land and natural resources of his Kentucky farm. He and his grandmother, Mrs. Ivan Pedigo, formed a partnership 10 years ago to carry on a farming tradition spanning four generations. They manage a 250-head cow herd of registered Angus and Brangus and background approximately 200 steers each year on their 1,300-acre farm. Crops raised include alfalfa, corn, soybeans, wheat and tobacco.

Pedigo developed a conservation plan with the Monroe County Conservation District to maintain the farm's productivity and improve wildlife habitat and water quality. He uses no-till, minimum tillage and rotation practices for growing crops on upland fields. Sod waterways are also maintained to prevent gully erosion.

Pedigo is involved with the SCS in a river bank erosion control project. He is using several varieties of plants to slow bank erosion on his farm. This planting will be evaluated for several years to determine which variety is best suited.

This year Pedigo is also working with the University of Kentucky Extension program in an intensive grazing system. The purpose of this program is to find and demonstrate profitable alternatives to row crops, thus reducing erosion, improving water quality and reducing input costs.

Wooded areas on the farm are maintained for timber production and wildlife habitat. Pedigo selectively harvests timber based on a management system to maintain productivity.

Pedigo is truly dedicated to improving agriculture in Kentucky, making it a better place to live, and raising a family in a safe, healthy environment.

Nominator: Monroe County (Ky.) Conservation District

HONORABLE MENTION

W.B. Herrington, Bilmar Angus Farm, Mt. Calm, Texas

