



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 1993 Land Stewardship Award winners.

The Earth and its resources are not gifts from our ancestors, but a loan from our children.

This Native American proverb holds a lot of truth, especially for today's environmental-conscious society. For America's farmers and ranchers, it has deeper meaning. They're reminded of it daily — when a crop is planted, cattle are moved to fresh pasture, or their children play in a creek.

To help spread the message that beef producers care about their land, resources and wildlife, we asked our readers and state association leaders to nominate and write an essay on an Angus producer they felt was a true steward of the land. We received an impressive 15 nominations from 12 states.

Serving as judges for this fourth annual award program were Vivian Allen, Virginia Tech, 1992 president of the U.S. Forage & Grassland Council; Bill Miller, Council Grove, Kan., editor of Beef Today magazine; and Bruce and Scott Foster of Seldom Rest Farms, Niles, Mich., 1992 land Stewardship Central Region winners.

The judges evaluated the entries on conservation practices, environmental awareness and educational efforts.

"Learning what these beef producers are doing to care for the environment they live in and profit from was a good lesson in why private property ownership is the foundation of the American agricultural system," Miller says. "Most of these applicants could open their farms and ranches to the public and policy makers to help them better understand where food comes from and why it's so important to take care of the land that feeds you."

"As young farmers judging these exceptional stewardship applications, we feel we have additional challenges on our farms to set even higher goals," say Bruce and Scott Foster.

The four regional winners will be honored Sept. 20 at the World Angus Forum in Rapid City, S.D. Their stewardship practices will be highlighted in a slide show presentation before the luncheon.

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



CENTRAL WINNER

Cecil Davis Sr.
Davis Angus Farms
Marshfield, Missouri

When Cecil K. Davis was a 10-year-old farm boy, he often pitched in to help his family plow the fields. Walking behind their old Jenny mare, barefooted and with a lot of stubbed, sore toes, he wished many times the whole world was made of concrete. Then it wouldn't have to be plowed!

By the time he was a mature man, Davis realized the importance of soil, water and farming. He has worked ever since to ensure that both soil and water will be conserved for his children, grandchildren and all generations to come.

Davis manages a herd of 500 Angus cows on his Webster County farm. He leases an additional 2,430 acres for grazing. The rolling Ozark hills terrain includes a high percentage of highly erodible land. He believes in grassland farming and keeps a majority of his land in pasture or forage crops to control erosion.

Davis has owned eight separate farms since returning to his home state from the Navy in 1945. In the past he has had a dairy farm with registered Holstein cattle, a swine operation with Landrace hogs, and turkey and chicken operations.

Approximately 100 acres of Davis' deeded and leased land are renovated each year using no-till farming practices. He has built five miles of terraces, one mile of waterway, two miles of diversion ditches and 11 ponds.

Fifty acres have been set aside on Davis Farms for wildlife food plots. It now supports deer, turkey and quail populations. Trees are planted each year using wildlife bundles, including pine, walnut, pecan, dogwood, redbud and ornamental fruit trees. More than 300 acres of his leased land is fenced for wildlife preservation.

In addition to farming and cattle interests, Davis is a real estate broker and appraiser. He has given his real estate customers trees for the past 10 years.

Davis was instrumental in organizing the Webster County Soil & Water Conservation District. He served on its board for 20 years and was chairman for 10 years. Davis worked to help pass the sales tax for Missouri conservation and parks. This tax is putting more soil conservation practices into action around the state. He also worked to establish watershed areas on five Missouri rivers that head in Webster County.

Come Earth Day, Arbor Day or Rogate Sunday, you can find

this conservation-minded cattleman in schools and churches educating youth and their parents on the importance of conservation and environmental awareness.

Nominator: Charles Davis, Marshfield, Mo.

CENTRAL REGION NOMINEES

Howard & JoAnne Hillman, Bon View Farms, Canova, S.D.
 Jim & Polly Shipley, Shipley Angus, Stockton, Mo.
 Scott & Carol Shively, Oak Lane Farm, Pleasant Lake, N.D.
 Martin Viersen, Viersen Ranch, North Platte, Neb.

WEST WINNER

Gregory Gould
7 Bar Heart Ranch
Ulm, Montana

Greg Gould doesn't survey the land from a pickup window. This rancher would rather get down on his hands and knees to listen to its pulse. Much of what he does is new and innovative. All of it stems from his heart-felt desire to be in harmony with the land.

One of Gould's most important stewardship goals is to prove that chemical-free agriculture can be done on a large-scale basis. The entire acreage of 7 Bar Heart Ranch, where Greg works as manager, is organic certified for all phases of plant and animal production by the Organic Crop Improvement Association.

A portion of this ranch has always been free of chemical inputs. Annual and perennial intercropping allows soil building while at the same time generating annual income. Extensive use of no-till farming practices is made possible by the use of rotation, timing and specialized equipment. His use of annual cropping in a traditional summer fallow area is made possible by a larger perennial base.

An example of soil building rotation is alfalfa grass (nitrogen building, improve soil organic matter) to flax, to buckwheat (weed control, improve tilth phosphorus) to feed grain/grass/alfalfa, to pasture and/or hay, to rest/seed production. Nitrogen is added by legume intercropping and green manure techniques.

Tall grass strips are interspersed with shorter crops to catch snow and rain. Since stopping the use of anhydrous ammonia, soil crusting and moisture loss is no longer a problem. Recharge areas are remedied by establishing permanent sod cover. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plantings are done with the future in mind to maintain a diverse permanent solid cover on highly erodible ground.



Greg has planted more than 20,000 trees in shelter belts to catch snow, for windbreaks and to provide wildlife habitat. Several reservoirs, along with many wells and springs, have been developed to re-establish wetlands areas. They also provide water for cattle and wildlife in dryland areas.

He is working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on a wetlands/waterfowl habitat project. He also works with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to improve wildlife habitat around riparian areas and to monitor wildlife populations.

Multiple, diverse grass plantings in single fields encourage the presence of deer, antelope, waterfowl and game birds. Soil type, tilth and terrain are all carefully considered prior to planting. Greg raises much of his own grass seed in order to plant locally adapted varietal strains.

A three-year rotation of grazing, haying and rest/seed production or intercropping allows different levels of plant maturation. Cattle are fed site specific perennial seed in their feed supplements so that their wastes enhance pasture production. Manure is harrowed into hayfields and pastures.

The Angus cattle herd is a pivotal management tool. Extensive use of temporary and semi-permanent high tensile electric fencing allows for several grazing systems to be put into use as conditions dictate. Almost all fencing is powered by solar charges, including the feedlot. Cattle are fenced off from riparian areas of creeks to limit access to these fragile places. A solar-powered water pumping system is being developed.

Efficient cows mean efficient use of resources. By using the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program, 7 Bar Heart Ranch has been able to identify its most efficient cows. These moderate-framed, high efficiency cows make the best use of environmental resources. They are expected to wean a calf weighing 50 to 60 percent of their own weight, breed back on time and calve within a 60-day time frame — or be culled from the herd.

All male calves are left intact. No hormonal implants are used either in the herd or the feedlot. No subtherapeutic antibiotics are used, antibiotics are, however, used to treat specific illnesses, but this is rare.

Along with several other Montana ranches, Greg has established a feedlot cooperative to feed out and market organic beef according to Montana Organic Standards.

The 7 Bar Heart feedlot was built into a woodlot around the trees (none were cut down). This gives cattle on feed shelter from all the elements. Care is taken to remove animal wastes regularly; manure is harrowed into fields as needed. Runoff is regulated to keep it away from water sources. This was accomplished by building pens with the slope of the terrain in mind. This has kept groundwater clean and keeps animals healthy.

Since Greg became ranch manager in 1985, the ranch chemical bill has decreased from \$60,000 yearly to \$0. The fuel bill for all farm vehicles and implements has decreased from \$40,000 to less than \$9,000. All this proves a decreased demand on non-renewable resources and decrease in chemical pollution of the environment and food chain. Decreased tractor use also reduces soil compaction.

Greg works closely with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) under a Great Plains Grazing contract. Exchange of information with other producers is facilitated by ranch tours sponsored by Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO).

He also works with Montana State University Extension Service to give a series of seminars on sustainable agriculture at 7 Bar Heart. Away from the ranch, Greg is working with the Ag in Montana Schools Project to develop a segment on sustainable agriculture.

Nominators: Aimee Hachigian-Gould, Ulm, Monk; and Ron & Lynne Hinrichsen, Lawrence, Kan.

WEST REGION NOMINEES

William Harrer, Lost Lake Ranch, Great Falls, Mont.

Charles VanderMay, VanderMay Ranch, Kadoka, S.D.

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



Ken Johnson, his wife Karen, children Bob and Jennifer.

SOUTH WINNER

Ken Johnson

Pebblebrook Angus, Tompkinsville, Ky.

Ken Johnson is an Angus breeder who also wears a conservationist and leader hat. He believes in protecting our environment and natural resources through a reasonable approach. He also believes a balance of production agriculture and conservation must be achieved in order for our world to survive.

It's been estimated that erosion has been reduced 50 percent since Ken moved to Monroe County, Kentucky.

Ken farms 180 acres of rolling hills in Monroe County. A registered Angus breeder since 1978, he maintains 30 cows, along with additional replacement heifers and bulls. He also backgrounds approximately 50 steers and heifers each year.

Pebblebrook Angus Farm is forage based with a few acres of corn and tobacco grown. Most of the land harvested for hay is planted to alfalfa.

Ken has a comprehensive conservation program on his Kentucky farm. It has silt loam soils with slopes up to 15 percent. Ken believes this type of land is best suited to forage production. All cropland is rotated to grass after no more than two years crop production. He uses no-till when planting corn and alfalfa. Sod waterways are maintained in all valleys to control concentrated water flow. Sod filter strips are left around all streams and ponds to filter runoff before it leaves the farm.

Legumes are maintained in pastures to reduce nitrogen needs. Several springs have been developed to provide high quality livestock water and to prevent the cattle from polluting the creeks.

Controlled grazing has been adopted for better utilization of forages and improved cattle nutrition. Last year, Ken set the Kentucky state record for beef production in a grazing system.

His record was 1,354 pounds of beef per acre without any additional feed inputs. This was done on alfalfa pasture.

Ken's conservation work goes beyond the farm. He is a district conservationist with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS). In his position he conducts many classes for adult farmers and 4-H and FFA students. He also presents programs to civic organizations to impress the need for sound environmental practices. In February 1993 Ken was a featured speaker at the Kentucky Alfalfa Conference.

To further spread the word about conservation, Ken writes news articles for the local newspaper and radio station. He recently was featured in the national magazine, *Hay & Forage Grower*, and has had forage articles published in other farm magazines.

Ken was responsible for introducing no-till farming to Monroe County. He helped the local conservation district purchase its first no-till grain drill. Since that time, 60 percent of all row crops in the county are no-till planted. He also seeded the first no-till alfalfa here.

Ken is now promoting hybrid bermudagrass as a new forage to area farmers. When it comes to conservation work, his work is never done.

Nominator: Kentucky Angus Association, Gordon Conner, president.

SOUTH REGION NOMINEES

Vincent Aiello, Ilo Ranch, Live Oak, Florida

J.O. "Bo" Creighton, Creighton Ranch, Paris, Texas

C. Bascum Smith, Smithland Farms, Russell Springs, Ky.



Bill Ausley and his sons.

EAST WINNER

William Ausley

Willow Oak Farm

Nokesville, Virginia

Bill Ausley has always possessed an interest in conservation and farming. But it wasn't until 1984 that he had the opportunity to practice both.

That was the year he started Willow Oak Farm in Prince William County, Va. Willow Oak is a registered Angus breeding farm of approximately 80 acres. Although classified as a small,

part-time farmer — his main occupation is airline pilot — Bill's dedication to being a good farmer and thirst for knowledge puts him at equal level with many full-time farmers.

Willow Oak Farm has two ponds, a perennial stream and is bordered by a fairly large flowing creek which eventually makes its way to the Chesapeake Bay. Along with a herd of 35 registered Angus cows, Ausley and his family keep a flock of sheep, five horses and a couple of donkeys.

To start off on the right track, Bill worked closely with the Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). That positive experience influenced him to run for the SWCD board of directors in 1986. He has since become chairman and is running for this third three-year term in November.

Conservation has come first in building this farm. Virginia now requires that all farms which impact the Chesapeake Bay have an approved conservation plan by 1995. Willow Oak Farm signed the first plan approved in the state in June 1991. The plan covers pest management, nutrient management and the agreed upon conservation management.

Bill installed 100-foot grass buffer strips along the farm's main creek. This past summer he fenced off Willow Oak's last remaining stream. A below-the-pond-dam water trough was built to serve as an alternative water source for his livestock.

An 18-acre pasture adjacent to the creek has been put into intensive grazing. He uses cattle in rotation with sheep to graze the paddocks for optimum utilization of forages and optimum control of pests and weeds.

Fifteen acres of alfalfa produce a hay supply for winter feeding. Bill has used intensive grazing of the alfalfa to eliminate spring weevils. The weevils leave their eggs in the stubble that remains after mowing. These eggs hatch the following spring and infest the fields.

Bill's environmentally-sound solution is to let his flock of sheep serve as pest controllers. The sheep are put on the alfalfa in the fall, when it goes dormant. They graze it all the way down, thus eating the eggs. This saves the need for pesticides which can run off into groundwater or their creek. It also saves money.

A manure stacking facility was installed to store manure from the feeding and loafing area. The manure is analyzed and the results used to determine the proper application of fertilizer to be applied on a field. All fields are mapped and numbered (15 separate fields) so records of applications can be kept by Bill and the fertilizer dealer.

Soil samples are taken every year and used to maintain the proper pH and fertilization.

Bill's hard work and conservation knowledge is paying off in other ways, too. Willow Oak Farm won Virginia's Clean Water Farm Award five years ago. This past spring he was named Prince William SWCD "Conservationist of the Year."

Bill volunteers many hours to conservation education and promotion. The farm serves as an outdoor classroom for school children and various adult organizations.

Bill Ausley believes conservation is simply using common sense. He makes a great spokesman for the beef industry.

Nominator: Pamila Ausley, Nokesville, Va.

EAST REGION NOMINEE

Pletcher Bros. (Don, Tom, Bob), Crooksville, Ohio

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