



The Conservation Strip

John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

Local Producer wins VFGC Award

Spring 2020

by Melissa Allen, Conservation Specialist

Kinloch Farm was honored by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) as the 2020 Outstanding Forage Producer of the Year. Kinloch Farm, located in The Plains, has been owned by the Currier Family since 1960 and is managed by Farm Manager, Kevin Jennings. Jennings began managing Kinloch Farm in March 2005 with over 1,600 acres of open pasture. With the ability to determine the di-

rection of the farm, Jennings developed the following initial goals: to improve soil health, to renovate pastures, to improve grazing efficiency, and to create a registered all grass genetic herd with historic Scottish Aberdeen Angus bloodlines. Under his management, Kinloch Farm has not only achieved these initial goals but also achieved Certified Naturally Grown (CNG), a designation and organization that holds the operation accountable to third-party standards. These standards forbid genetically modified seeds and almost all synthetic inputs to livestock and land, and encourage continuous lessening of the operation's environmental impact. In addition, Jennings's management led Kinloch Farm to become Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified, a national certification that recognizes the need to implement best management practices for improved animal well-being, meat quality, and record keeping.

Jennings initiated the farm's first conservation practice in 2006, recognizing the importance of clean water and a rotational grazing system. Since 2006 Jennings has worked with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation Dis-



NRCS Forage & Grassland Agronomist, J.B. Daniel, presents the Outstanding Producer of the Year Award to Kevin Jennings and daughter Nicole Jennings of Kinloch Farm.

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Mission Statement

Our Mission is to provide leadership, technical assistance, information, and education to the citizens of Fauquier County in proper soil stewardship, agricultural conservation methods, and water quality protection so as to ensure the wise use of the county's natural resources.



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Local Producer wins VFGC Award (continued...)

tract (JMSWCD) transitioning from large, low management grazing units to smaller highly managed grazing units within a more controlled rotational grazing system. To date, Kinloch Farm has protected over 34,500 linear feet (6.5 miles) of streambank, creating approximately 80 acres of riparian buffer. Conservation efforts continue as Jennings identifies areas to further intensify rotational grazing which will provide exclusion from 100% of streams and ponds on the farm.

Currently, the operation includes 300 cow/calf pairs on approximately 750 acres of improved pasture with an additional 56 acres of Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) used for haying. The pasture and hay fields across four management units on the farm are divided into 37 separate fields with five of these designated as bull lots.

The primary forages grown are tall fescue and orchardgrass; other grasses grown include switchgrass, big and little bluestem, Indiangrass, bermudagrass, johnsongrass, sorghum sudangrass, Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass, and timothy. Legumes used include alfalfa as well as red and white clover. Tillage radishes have been planted and grazed in some fields to improve pasture quality.

Jennings integrates a controlled rotational grazing plan with the primary purposes of maintaining forages in a palatable and nutritious vegetative state, maximizing forage production and utilization, and evenly distributing manure across the farm. Cattle are rotated in and out pastures based on average plant height with a goal of moving at least every seven days throughout the year. "Flash grazing" is used with a rotation of one to four days at least twice on every field in the spring. In August, Jennings selects the fields to be stockpiled, aiming to stockpile 40% of pastures to minimize feeding hay. Soils are tested annually to determine the nutrient needs of the fields.



Cattle grazing in the snow at Kinloch Farm; stockpiling forages extends grazing into winter months.

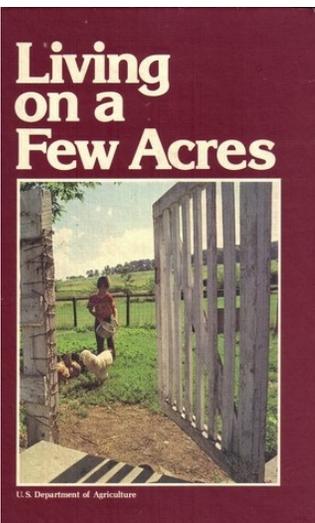
Jennings continually looks for new and innovative ways to improve Kinloch Farm's grazing system. In addition to flash grazing, strip grazing and stockpiling, he has converted over 82 acres into NWSG. NWSG planted included big and little bluestem, and Indiangrass for pastures as well as switchgrass harvested for hay. These fields are not cut until after July 15 recognizing these fields may serve as nesting habitat. They also have integrated NWSG fields with trees, creating silvopasture. These fields should be ready to provide forages and shade for livestock in 15 years. To address soil compaction, they have planted tillage radishes, grazing these fields in late fall and early winter.

Jennings and Kinloch Farm are not only advocates of conservation and rotational grazing on the farm; they are conservation and rotational grazing advocates in the local community as well. They have hosted farm dinners to highlight state cost-share programs, and professional meetings and trainings to share their knowledge and successes with local farmers and professionals. After 15 years of management, Jennings continues to move Kinloch Farm forward advancing their goals. Jennings and Kinloch Farm are valuable assets to the farming and conservation communities.

Staff Picks: Good Conservation Reads

We've all been thrown into chaos recently as a result of the COVID-19 situation. People have been asked to practice social distancing. So if you're getting bored stuck inside, you might find yourself with some free time on your hands. One thing you can do is read a good book. Some of our staff have written summaries of recommended conservation/agricultural/environmental-related books. A wide variety of books (including e-books) are available from your local library, the Library of Virginia, or Project Gutenberg.

Roger Flint: *Living on a Few Acres*, USDA

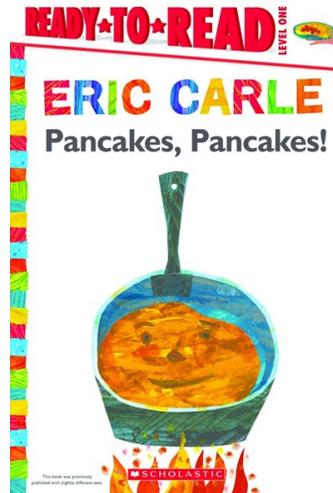


Living on a Few Acres was originally published as the 1978 USDA Yearbook of Agriculture. It was the premier book for those persons seeking back-to-the-country, and farming lifestyles. It gives good basic information for animal husbandry, horticulture, and agronomy. Each chapter is devoted to a type of agriculture, and conservation of natural resources to help the begin-

ning farmer, and landowner recommended with livestock, crop, and land management information. It is an enjoyable reference book for beginners, as well as experienced conservationists, packed with information for small scale agriculture. This book helped initiate the "Do It Yourself Movement" for sustainable agriculture.

John Prizzi: *Pancakes, Pancakes!*, Eric Carle

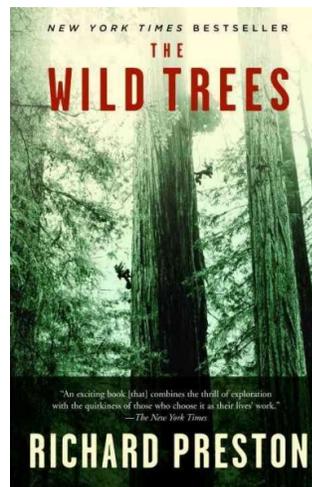
From Eric Carle, venerated author and illustrator of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, comes an honest look at the dedication and meticulous work that our agricultural based citizens must employ on the daily in order to provide the world with the food and drink we enjoy. Eric Carle takes us on this culinary journey with Jack, his mother, and countless others in one



boy's arduous quest through an act we may take for granted in this day and age, enjoying breakfast. Eric Carle, through the lens of Jack, teaches us the power of friendship, the beauty of being one with the land, and the true value of an honest day's work. Learn where eggs come from, milk flows, wheat is milled, butter is churned, and our

favorite sweet treats preserved all in the iconic art style of Eric Carle we have come to adore. Come for the timeless story and beautiful art and stay for the deep dive into the agrarian lifestyle. Who knows, you may even appreciate your humble Johnny Cake a little bit more after this.

Michael Trop: *The Wild Trees*, Richard Preston



This book tells the story of Steve Sillett and his fellow botanists who were some of the first people to study the canopies of California's coastal redwood trees. Ninety-six percent of the redwood forests have been logged and their canopies are so far above the ground that virtually no research had been done until the last 25 years or so. The scientists who

study these trees had to master new climbing techniques which allowed them to ascend over 300 feet into the tops of the tallest trees in the world. This research has discovered entirely new ecosystems which has completely changed the understanding of the importance of the ecological niche of these trees. It has also helped inspire their conservation. Underlying their research is the goal of finding the tallest tree in the world.

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Update on Beeswax Wraps

In our January newsletter, there was an article featuring beeswax wraps. Melissa has completed several of these wraps and is happy to report that they are working well. Here are a couple pictures of the finished product.



Please Note: Due to concerns about COVID-19, the John Marshall SWCD office is currently CLOSED TO ALL VISITORS. Staff will be rotating in and out of the office and because of this may be delayed in responding to phone calls and voicemail messages. It may be faster to get in contact with us by sending an email to johnmarshall.swcd@vaswcd.org or by emailing staff directly. Staff contacts can be found on our website.

Calendar of Events

April 8	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
May 13	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office
May 25		John Marshall SWCD Office Closed	
June 10	4:00 PM	John Marshall SWCD Board Meeting	JMSWCD Office

Staying Connected: The John Marshall SWCD makes it easy to stay connected through social media. If you're on Facebook, "Like" our page to get updates on what's happening at the District.



The Conservation Strip is a quarterly publication of the John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District. To be added to our email list, please send an email to Wendy Merwin at: wendy.merwin@fauquiercounty.gov.

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