James and Kate Kean
2013 TJSWCD Clean Water Farm Award Recipient
2013 York River Grand Basin Award Winner

By Raleigh Coleman

James Kean has been farming all of his life, and for him, farming is a business. While he farms a large portion of the Ellisville area of Louisa County, the heart of his farm consists of three distinct properties clustered around Hickory Creek and the North Anna River, a major tributary to Lake Anna. This main farm consists of about 253 acres of pasture, on which Mr. Kean runs about 135 cow/calf pairs in three separate herds. These properties have changed quite a bit in the past couple of years, as Mr. Kean has taken on and completed an incredible amount of conservation practices and addressed all identified resource concerns. As a production-minded full time farmer, conservation practices need to make economic sense. As a representative on the Board of Directors for the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, Mr. Kean always understood the value of fencing out streams, but needed it to make economic sense on his own property. Fencing out and sacrificing productive bottom-land was an obstacle, not to mention the investment associated with installing the infrastructure. The farm has been in the Kean family since before the Civil War, and it is often difficult to make changes when things have been done a certain way for a long time. There were also concerns about maintaining additional fences, especially considering that most of the new fence would be in the floodplain. Mr. Kean had participated in conservation programs in the past on various parts of the farm, but most of the property had not yet been addressed.

In 2011, Mr. Kean decided to proceed with a combination of CREP and a 10-foot fence setback costshare program on the 140 acre tract across the highway from his house. The project involved installing about 13,000 feet of stream exclusion fence, five hardened stream crossings, a hardened animal trail, and an alternative water system with seven watering troughs.
This project involved significant out-of-pocket expense on Mr. Kean’s behalf, but the end result was protection of approximately 5,800 feet of stream. Mr. Kean realized the heard health and management benefits of stream exclusion and approached SWCD and NRCS staff about working on the other parts of his main farm. Meanwhile, Mr. Kean installed a winter feeding structure through NRCS and SWCD cost-share funding, again bearing significant cost of his own.

Once James got the proverbial “ball rolling” installing conservation practices, he continued to pursue and complete conservation projects. He completed another project to protect 400 feet of stream and install a stream crossing. In 2013, Mr. Kean addressed the other 300 acres of his main farm with a 35-foot setback cost-share program. This project involved over 15,000 feet of stream exclusion fence, a hardened stream crossing, two hardened animal trails, and six watering troughs. This project excluded cattle from 10,550 feet of stream, and protected several critical areas and over 45 acres of mature hardwoods. Now, he would like to look at addressing some of his other properties.

Stream exclusion has not been the only improvement made to the farm. Mr. Kean crops several other tracts using responsible cropping techniques such as no-till and sidedress applications of nitrogen on corn; however, on the three properties that make up the heart of his farm, all historical cropland has been converted to grass, including a recent conversion of 16.9 acres. Converting cropland to grass has enabled Mr. Kean to extend his grazing season, reduces input costs, and also keeps erosion to a minimum. Over 5,300 feet of recently-installed permanent division fence and an appropriate stocking rate of approximately 1.8 acres per animal unit also allows Mr. Kean to maintain adequate vegetative cover and extend his grazing season through rotational grazing. When he does feed in the winter, it is accomplished in a winter feeding structure, which provides a source of fertilizer thereby turning a potential environmental hazard into a valuable on-farm asset. He also uses poultry litter rather than commercial fertilizer when possible, and a nutrient management plan is in place. Another winter feeding structure is planned for 2014.

Mr. Kean’s position in prominent agricultural groups (including being on the Board of Directors for the Central Virginia Cattlemen’s Association and the Louisa Farm Bureau) allows him to serve as a shining example that conservation goals can be accomplished without necessarily sacrificing production. Mr. Kean has also referred many farmers to NRCS and SWCD staff, resulting in protection of many more streams beyond the bounds of his own property.

In addition to managing an entire farming operation, Mr. Kean has had to be a construction manager over the past two years to accomplish all of the conservation work that has been done on his farm. The end result of all of his hard work is the exclusion of 135 cow/calf pairs from over 16,000 feet of stream, and for that, everyone in the York River Basin should be grateful. Mr. Kean has certainly done his part for clean water.

EXCELLENCE
Alyson Sappington receives
The Chaffin Soil and Water Conservation District Employee of the Year

Productive soil and water conservation districts are essential to the conservation of soil, water, and related resources in Virginia. Good district employees are the foundation for meeting district goals. In 2002, Dora and Wilkie Chaffin (a director in the Piedmont District and current President of the VASWCD Educational Foundation) recommended the establishment of employee awards, and offered to provide funding for these awards.

The VASWCD Board endorsed this offer and approved a set of awards to be called the Chaffin Soil and Water Conservation District Employees of the Year awards. The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Educational Foundation presents these employee awards to recognize the contributions of employees in all Virginia districts and to highlight the accomplishments of some of the best of these employees.

CONGRATULATIONS ALYSON!
Charlottesville Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP) Evolves from VCAP

For the past couple of years, the TJSWCD and three other Soil and Water Conservation Districts, have worked through the Urban Committee of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to develop a cost share program for non-agricultural lands. The program, which is called VCAP (Virginia Conservation Assistance Program), has been funded entirely through grants acquired by the four Soil and Water Conservation Districts that have been involved in this initiative (Thomas Jefferson, Culpeper, Hanover-Caroline, Piedmont).

Recently, the City of Charlottesville adopted a stormwater utility program as part of their comprehensive Water Resources Protection Program. All stormwater utility programs must include a credit policy for people who install, operate and maintain stormwater management facilities (Code of VA 15.2-2114). In addition, localities may adopt an incentives component, which Charlottesville has chosen to do “to provide one-time financial incentives for private property owners to install stormwater management facilities, or engage in practices that improve water quality and local aquatic habitats”.

This “Charlottesville Conservation Assistance Program” (CCAP) is administered and implemented through the TJSWCD as a separately funded component of VCAP. CCAP provides incentive funding for the following nine urban best management practices (BMPs):

- Pet Waste Stations (PWS)
- Impervious Surface Removal (ISR)
- Turf Conversion to Native Plants (TCN)
- Rain Gardens (RG)
- Bio-Retention (BR)
- Rainwater Harvesting (RH)
- Vegetated Stormwater Conveyances (VSC)
- Constructed Wetlands (CW)
- Permeable Pavement (PP)

Funding for eligible projects in CCAP may also include VCAP funds as available. Funding rates and specific requirements can be found in the VCAP Manual available on the TJSWCD website (http://tjswcd.org/UrbanProgram/VCAP_Manual_120613.pdf). Applications are being taken on an on-going basis. Please contact Nicola McGoff with questions, or visit http://www.tjswcd.org/UrbanProgram.html for information about both VCAP and CCAP.

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**Annual Native Plant Sale:** Jefferson Chapter, VA Native Plant Society. Sunday, April 27th. 1pm-3pm. Ivy Creek Natural Area’s Barn, 1780 Earlysville Road, Charlottesville. Choose from over 50 species of native perennials, trees, shrubs and wetland plants. Perennials $4, Trees and shrubs $6.

**Charlottesville Area Trees Stewards (CATS) & Piedmont Master Gardeners Spring Plant Sale.** Saturday, May 3rd 9am-Noon. IX Complex, at the corner of Elliott Ave. and Second St. SE.

The Coleman Family receives the 2013 TJSWCD Clean Water Farm Award
By Emily Nelson

The Colemans operate a family business, and the heart of the family and the business is the farm. Creeks and streams divide around rolling hills, slide through pockets of forests, and glide across grassy fields. Just west of Scottsville, these creeks leave the lush green fields, shaded by both small alders and towering sycamores, entering Totier Creek on their short path to the James River. It is here that the Colemans run their registered Angus breeding operation, always keeping business and conservation in balance. These farms are the center of the Coleman’s world.

Paul Coleman built his family business from the ground up. He purchased his first farm, C-Stock, in 1970 with no house, no fencing, and one barn. He and his wife Virginia, raised their son, Paul Coleman, Jr. on the farm, teaching him to care for and about the land. The family enjoyed farming together, with Virginia on horseback riding the fields and Paul Junior active in 4-H bottle raising lambs. When Paul Junior was old enough, he headed off to Ferrum to get his degree in agriculture with a minor in business. When he came home, his father turned over to him the other family farm, Woodstock, which they were able to buy in 1989. When Woodstock was purchased, there were less than 200 open acres, few fences, and no watering system. Paul Junior moved to Woodstock and helped raise cattle and continued to develop his love of sheep. The two Coleman farms, C-stock and Woodstock, are located less than two miles from each other as the crow flies. Together, they consist of 640 acres of pasture and 236 acres of woodland. Between the two farms, the Colemans graze about 200 cow/calf pairs and 150 hair sheep for meat. These two herds move through the 27 paddocks, eating both grass and weeds, while getting their water from one of the 20 frost-free automatic water troughs on the farms. Between the two farms, there are 3.5 miles of stream protected with 95.4 acres of riparian buffers. Careful planning allows cattle access to the shade from mature forest in each field while restricting the livestock from the steeper wooded slopes. The wooded buffers are allowed to grow up naturally, offering protection to wildlife and shading the protected streams. The hilly nature of the farm and the thin soils require careful management to protect the natural assets of the farm. These natural assets are the basis for the successful breeding operation.

The Colemans run a vigorous business, marketing registered Angus cattle, selling an average of 57 bulls per year. The Coleman’s reputation is widely known, and all these bull sales are done privately with no auction necessary. The Colemans sell bulls across the Eastern Seaboard, and once even shipped bulls to Russia. The successful cattle business is directly linked to the successful care of the farms’ greatest assets, its natural resources.

Managing the forage is the most important component of the Coleman’s livestock operation. Father and son closely manage the movement of the cattle and sheep through the fields.  

Welcome Alicia Welch

Alicia Welch started working for TJSWCD as a Management Analyst on January 2, 2014. This new position was created to fill the void left by Deloris Bradshaw’s retirement, as well as to meet new needs of the District. In addition to taking on most of Deloris’s past duties, Alicia will be working closely with Alyson and staff to enhance grant management, tracking, reporting and overhaul the District’s website.

Alicia has been a Charlottesville area resident for twelve years, graduating from Charlottesville High School. She received her Bachelors of Science in Business Administration through the Old Dominion University Teletechnet program at Piedmont Virginia Community College. Her degree focused on the management cluster of finance and communications; skills that she looks forward to using in her new position with TJSWCD.
The diversity of species benefits their grazing system as the two animals have different parasites and different preferences for forage. The sheep will follow the cows and eat weeds the cows won’t touch. The farm has a nutrient management plan, and the Colemans soil test and lime and fertilize accordingly.

They carefully manage their grass, reseeding the orchard grass fields when stands begin to thin. In recent history, they have incorporated more and more fescue as orchard grass has become less and less viable in this region. They aerate and frost-seed clover yearly, letting the legumes provide much needed nitrogen reducing their need for fertilizer. Having a two farm operation allows the Colemans to move cattle based on environmental conditions, allowing pastures greater times of rest and recovery after grazing. Rather than set aside fields for hay alone, the Colemans graze all fields after getting a first cutting of hay. They are usually able to graze through December before needing to start feeding hay. The Colemans carefully manage the natural resources on the farm that support their business, taking conservation into consideration with every management decision.

The Colemans have been collaborating with the Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service for the past thirteen years. While on Woodstock, all the streams are completely fenced, there is still work to be done at C-Stock. In the tradition of the Coleman family, they will work together to weigh the cost of conservation against the benefits to the health of their livestock and ease of their operation. Beyond a doubt, this family will come together and develop a plan to completely fence all streams on both properties.

More than a business, the farm is a passion for each member of the Coleman family. The strength and love of the Coleman family is embodied in their farming operation. Whether it is the grass that feeds the cattle that in turn feeds the family or the rolling hills and woods that feed their soul, the Colemans love their farm and its greatest glory—its natural resources.

Emily Nelson and Brian Walton present Paul Coleman, Jr. with the Clean Water Farm Award.

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Sources of Funding for Land Management and Land Conservation Workshops

There are a wide variety of land management and land conservation programs available to farmer and forest landowners in Virginia. It can often be overwhelming trying to learn which programs and funding source might work best for you and your particular property. In order to help landowners sort through these programs, a variety of state agencies and private organizations are partnering to offer two, 2-hour presentations in the Virginia Piedmont.

During this 2-hour workshop, attendees will hear from the Soil and Water Conservation District about their 100% cost share program for livestock fencing, the Virginia Department of Forestry on their assistance with Forest Stewardship Plan and sources of conservation funding through the Tomorrow Woods program, and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation will talk about their conservation easement program and a new “Farmer Friendly” conservation easement template that they developed in cooperation with the Farm Bureau and VDACS. In addition, the Piedmont Environmental Council will give a presentation on wildlife habitat programs and the related land management options and sources of funding available to landowners.

Dates: Wednesday, April 30th 6:00pm – 8:00pm, Stonefire Station, Barboursville
       Wednesday, April 23rd 6:00pm – 8:00pm, Lord Fairfax Community College, Warrenton

For a full agenda and list of presenters and their topics for each workshop, go to: www.pecva.org/landworkshop. The workshop is $10 a family and includes dinner. In order to attend, please RSVP by signing up online by April 18 at www.pecva.org/landworkshop or by contacting Maggi MacQuilliam at mmacquilliam@pecva.org, (540) 347-2334 ext. 24.
Rain Barrels & Workshops: If you have a group interested in learning more we can conduct a workshop for you. TJSWCD sells 55 gallon Rain Barrel Kits for $75 daily from the office. More information on our rain barrel program and rainwater harvesting can be found online at: www.tjswcd.org/Rain_Barrels.html. Please contact Lauriston at lauriston.damitz@tjswcd.org

Rain Water Harvesting System: If you are interested in installing a larger rain water harvesting system, we currently have funding for cisterns 250 gallons and larger. The incentive payment rate for these is $2 per gallon. Contact Nicola at nicola.mcgoff@tjswcd.org

TJSWCD celebrates 75 years of service—
“To exercise leadership in promoting natural resource protection.”
We invite you to celebrate our 75th anniversary at Crown Orchard June 4, 2014. Look for details on our website or call the office for more information.

Help us Conserve Paper!
Would you like to receive this newsletter via E-mail, or be notified when we post it on our website? Send an e-mail to lauriston.damitz@tjswcd.org