



Bruce and Katherine Johnson, Dragonfly Farms Winners of the 2019 Clean Water Farm Award York River Basin

Bruce and Katherine Johnson purchased Dragonfly Farms just west of Louisa in the summer of 2017. The 300+ acre property, which had been actively farmed for pasture and cattle since the early 1920's, had recently been leased for corn and soybean production, resulting in severely eroded soils and degraded conditions. The Johnson's were motivated to stabilize the eroding soil, create a productive farming system, and transform the property into a model for regenerative practices.

The Johnson's graze 100 Belted Galloway and Angus beef cows along with 40 Katahdin and St. Croix ewes in order to produce 100% grass-fed meats. In order to provide year round forage for the animals, Dragonfly Farms worked with the Thomas Jefferson SWCD to convert 150 acres of erodible soils in row crops into a diverse pasture system. Year-round healthy sod cover on the land holds the soil and nutrients



in place while rotational grazing management actively recycles nutrients on the farm.



The pasture system consists of 120 acres of perennial cool season grasses composed of orchard grass, novel endophyte fescue and clover. An additional 20 acres were converted to Native Warm Season Grasses in partnership with the NRCS under the "Working Lands for Wildlife" program. This supports summer grazing and provides habitat for ground nesting birds and other wildlife. To further diversify the farm as well as supplement the animals during seasons where the perennial forages are not as productive, 20 acres of multispecies annuals are planted every year using no-till and broadcast methods for summer and winter grazing. All of the forages are grown without the use of herbicides or pesticides, only applying organic fertilizers when necessary.

The Johnsons manage their pasture with an intense rotational grazing system that incorporates 10 permanent paddocks which are divided into thirds using temporary electric wire. A prescribed grazing plan established with NRCS as part of an EQIP project established the base for a constantly improving system of forage management. Livestock have been excluded from all streams on the property, protecting over 21,600 linear feet (over 4 miles) of streambank and creating 94 acres of forested riparian.



In August 2019, the Johnson's shared their knowledge and enthusiasm for best management practices with the public by hosting a Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Pasture Walk. Over 80 local producers and landowners toured the farm and learned how the use of forage selection and grazing management has helped Dragonfly Farms build a productive, resilient grazing system with improved soil health.

Bruce and Katherine Johnson of Dragonfly Farms have shown a strong commitment to revitalizing soil health and protecting water quality on their land. The Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to recognize their efforts by nominating them for the York River Basin Clean Water Farm Award.

