

Brights Preserve Working Farm with Conservation Easement



The Bright Farm, Floyd, VA

Floyd landowners Larry and Debby Bright have protected their 220-acre working family farm with a conservation easement held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

The easement allows the Brights to build one additional home on the property. They'll continue to own and live on the land, and can sell it or give the property away. The Brights farm their land with grass-finished cattle, pastured hogs, and chickens. They also raise and process broilers for direct marketing to consumers.

The Brights moved from a crowded area of Pennsylvania to Floyd 10 years ago. "When we're gone, we want it to be used in a similar fashion," Debby Bright said. "We hate to see land cut up, with houses all over in a nice rural community."

"They're great people with a great vision," said Ruth Babylon, an easement specialist with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Blacksburg office. "This is a working farm producing grass-finished beef, which is becoming much more popular. It was great to be able to work with a couple that is looking to the future."

The Bright's first contact with conservation easements came from a conversation with Roger Holnback, executive director with the Western Virginia Land Trust. "The Brights are working hard to create an integrated, sustainable farm," said Holnback. "It's a win-win situation when you can combine progressive farming methods with perpetual stewardship of the land."

Grass-finished beef is produced from cows that eat grass their entire lives, rather than being fed a mixed diet of corn or other feed. The Bright's cows remain on the farm until they're processed, rather than being sold to a feed lot, often in the Midwest. Relatively new to U.S. markets, grass-finished beef is higher in cancer-

fighting linoleic acid as well as heart-friendly omega-3 fatty acids. Because they consume natural pasture grasses and do not require farmers to grow corn for feed, grass-finished beef cows can be more environmentally friendly than traditionally raised cows.

They looked across the state before they found a long, narrow strip of farmland off Rt. 221, north of Floyd. Larry Bright, a builder in Pennsylvania, cut the wood and built their timber frame house. Debby Bright, a former riding instructor, still has horses and rides competitively.



The Western Virginia Land Trust is a non-profit organization based in Roanoke whose mission is to “promote the conservation of western Virginia’s natural resources—farms, forests, waterways, and rural landscapes.” Since 1996, the Land Trust has helped to save more than 21,000 acres of land in Botetourt and nine other western Virginia counties.

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation is a state agency whose mission is "to promote the preservation of open space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, open-space and recreational areas of the Commonwealth." It holds more than 2,000 easements on more than 400,000 acres of land in the state, including 13 other easements in Franklin County.

For more information on conservation easements, call the Western Virginia Land Trust at (540) 985-0000 or the Virginia Outdoors Foundation at (540) 886-2460.

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