

## **Creating Forest Buffers on Private Lands in Bennett Creek**

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As a result of the Lower Monocacy Watershed Restoration Plan several key agricultural landowners were targeted for efforts to remove livestock from tributaries to Bennett Creek and Bennett Creek itself. These landowners until now had not participated in Federal or State conservation cost-share programs in the past. Initial efforts, which began in the fall of 2006, focused on meeting with these targeted landowners in an effort to encourage their enrollment in these existing programs, which some landowners did. However several important landowners did not want enroll in the government programs because they did not want to deal with the “hassle” of the government program or felt the government is corrupt and didn’t want to get involved.

The Potomac Conservancy continued to work with these landowners because these landowners are of particular importance, not just because they have pasture land adjacent to waterways, but also because they are considered leaders in the community. One of the landowners, Dr. Schultz, a veterinarian, has several small animal practices in the area. Furthermore, her property contains the confluence of Pleasant Branch and Bennett Creek and is in a visible from a Green Valley Road. These streams were being impacted not just from cows, but also horses, pigs, goats, emus, donkeys, and various other barnyard animals. The other landowner, Francis Roderick, is a prominent dairy farmer whose family has been farming in the area for generations. The farm contains approximately 250 dairy cows and because of its design, is having an especially significant effect on stream health.

Although it took numerous visits and phone calls, eventually each landowner agreed to fence their livestock from the stream, both remained skeptical on tree plantings. In the fall of 2007 the fences were installed on both properties to exclude the cattle from the majority of the stream frontage. In order to meet Dr. Schultz’s concerns over flood waters destroying the fence, larger posts were cemented into the ground and thicker gauge wire fence was used. Mr. Roderick also had issues that needed to be met prior to agreeing to fence his cattle, in particular Mr. Roderick needed a reinforced cattle crossing so that he could get his cows from one pasture to another on the opposite side of the stream. We were able to meet all of the landowners concerns and each project was successfully completed.

After the fences were installed both landowners decided that they would, in fact, like to do tree planting as well. In the spring of 2008 all tree planting was completed. Because of the size, condition, access and nature of the site Mr. Roderick’s entire tree planting was completed by a contracted professional tree planting crew. Dr. Schultz’s buffer was planted by a combination of volunteers and the tree planting crew. Volunteers, mostly consisting of families from the area, planted 175 containerized trees along the stream banks in less than 3 hours. Typical of Potomac Conservancy volunteers, work did not just stop at tree planting. People continued to pull tires, and trash from hard to reach

areas of the floodplain. When the day finally ended, we had planted 175 trees filled the back of a pickup truck with trash and stacked 18 tires for the County DOT to pick-up.

We feel that by patiently working with these key landowners other farmers, horse owners, and the surrounding community will follow their example and pursue federal programs or other means to re-establish riparian forest buffers and manage existing buffers for water quality. We will continue to work with these landowners on permanently protecting their properties. Currently Dr. Schultz has expressed a great desire to protect her farm from development and has long-term plans to do so. The Roderick's plan to continue to farm for the foreseeable future. More directly these two projects represent nearly a mile of stream buffered and 12 acres of new forests.