“If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you...”

– Arthur Hancock, Stone Farm
Our love of the land will be protected forever

Sometimes farmers may think that by conserving your land, you can’t do anything with it,” remarked Arthur Hancock of Stone Farm. “That’s not the case. These conservation agreements are flexible and you can change your farming practices. You can build related barns and farm buildings. I really don’t think this hampers farming at all. It protects farming.”

Since Arthur purchased his first farm in the 1970s, he has seen many of the neighboring farms change hands, some being sold off as smaller parcels. He could have done the same, and for a big profit, but he had other ideas. Arthur and his wife Staci, who live and work on the farm, and have raised their six children there, call this farm home. It is part of their history and they want to keep it safe for the future.

“My motto has always been: “If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you,” shared Arthur. So over the past five decades, the family has invested in the land. What started as a 100 acre farm, now totals over 2,200 acres.

The rolling fields, dotted with patches of woodlands and meandering creeks, are home to the Hancocks’ thoroughbred horses and beef cattle. The family also produces high quality hay, corn, and soybeans.

“Back in the ’60s there were beautiful views in the country; pastureland, valleys, and hills. More and more, our countryside has become cluttered and I want to do my part to conserve this part of the countryside for future generations,” said Arthur.

“The kids and I have been talking about the possibility of conserving the farm for several years now,” reflected Staci. “We watched as our friends in neighboring counties got involved, and wanted to help to do the same to protect our area from high-density residential and commercial development.”

“Staci and I realized that if you don’t conserve your land, who will? It’s part of our family. Future generations will be able to live on the land and farm it in a way that makes sense to them,” Arthur said. “And even if they want to sell it, the property will always be protected from development.”

Conservation runs in the family... and the county

Arthur and Staci’s family isn’t the only one in Bourbon County interested in making sure their farm stays a farm. Arthur’s siblings, Seth, Dell, and Clay Hancock, conserved their equine and cattle operation on Claiborne Farm, just a few miles down the road, in 2011. Combined, the Hancocks have protected over 5,000 acres lying east of Paris and also joined hands with a number of other families in the county. Right now, there are more families partnering with Bluegrass Conservancy to protect their land here than in any other county.

“It is really exciting for us to see so many Bourbon County landowners stepping up to preserve our county’s agricultural heritage, and so personally satisfying to know that the land will be protected forever,” shared Staci.
Bluegrass farms conserved for generations
Along with the Hancocks, three more local families protected their land over the past year

Richard Jay “Rick” Corman grew up in Jessamine County and through hard work, vision, and an amazingly generous spirit, became one of the county’s most beloved community members. Now his memory will live on, forever, with the protection of his farm.

An entrepreneur who built a backhoe business into a multimillion-dollar railroad and related service company, as the founder and sole owner of R.J. Corman Railroad Group, Rick oversaw the growth of his company which employed over 1,100 people in 22 states.

Throughout this extraordinary expansion of his business, Rick was known as someone who cared about people — who cherished life and the health of the community and his beloved farm.

The farm was a special place for Mr. Corman and a place where thousands of guests annually celebrated the Fourth of July, enjoying the evening fireworks and summer picnic. Sadly, at the age of 45, Rick was diagnosed with a rare and serious cancer. After courageously battling the cancer for 12 and a half years, he succumbed to the disease in 2013 and the community suffered a tremendous loss.

Yet his presence continues to live on in the lands he owned and the hearts of the many that were impacted by his generosity and goodwill.

That love of community, and the welcoming spirit he had, took another step forward recently when his 1,200 acre farm was conserved in partnership with Bluegrass Conservancy, after his lifetime.

Prior to his death, Mr. Corman had stipulated in his will, that his farm should be conserved as a working farm and not be subject to sprawling, haphazard development.

A man with vision, a place like no other

Now, thanks to his continued vision, his farm is conserved and a beautiful stretch of Jessamine Creek will be conserved along with it. The creek is considered to be of exceptional quality, and is home to a wide range of plant and animal species.

65 acres of this land, known as the R.J. Corman Natural Area, has also been designated by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission as an important habitat area, and serves as the headwaters for the well-loved Jessamine Creek Gorge.

For Mr. Corman’s family, conserving his farm after his passing is offering them peace of mind.

When asked what this meant to her, April Corman Colyer, Mr. Corman’s daughter, shared, “It’s nice to know that now his farm, just like he wanted it to be, will be conserved for my children, their children, and many generations to come.”

“Rick’s desire to think beyond himself, to think into the future, is one of the things I remember most. Conserving his farm, something that meant so much to him, is just one more way that he is giving back to this community. He was one of the most unselfish people I knew.”

– Luther Deaton
Mr. Corman’s long-time friend
A farm, a wildlife haven, an inspiration

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could have been chopped up by haphazard development — but instead, this farm’s beautiful pastures, quiet woodlands, and wildflowers will remain part of the long rural history of Harrison County.

Susan Richards, a poet who has lived on this land, known as Chicory Ridge, for almost 50 years with her husband, Dick, reflected that, “When we were looking at farms to buy, this was the one that brought the tears to my eyes. Over the years, all Dick’s hard work on it has made it even more beautiful. I walk it daily in every season. I want to live here forever watching over it. But I can’t. I’ll die,” shared Susan.

“I couldn’t stand the idea that our land — which has been cared for as a farm and haven for wildlife since the late 1700’s — would go the way of some sprawling development.”

Susan’s love of the land is a big part of her work as a poet and a writer, including the story of how she and Dick nurtured an orphaned foal in the poem “Night-Watching Mahalia” from her book The Life Horse. Now conserved, the Richards’ land will inspire others for generations.

Is conservation right for you?

D
o you love your land deeply? Is it part of your family, your heritage, and your community’s rural character?

Is the thought of watching your farm become developed after you sell it, or give it to a family member, an unsettling vision? Perhaps you want to make sure that local food, wildlife habitat, clean water, and wide open views have a place in history — right here in Bluegrass Country.

You can ensure that your family — or others in the future— can enjoy farming and your love of the land. Whether you enjoy hunting, fishing, raising livestock or horses, growing produce, or harvesting timber, you have a chance to make sure your land isn’t destroyed by sprawling development.

Farmland conservation provides peace of mind knowing that you have taken steps to ensure a way of life for generations to come. If you would like to talk about your land conservation options, please give Ashley a call at 859-455-4552 or email aneel@bluegrassconservancy.org.

All conversations are confidential to preserve your family’s privacy.

Taking care of the land, every day...

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to all those who have conserved or own protected farms, we are ever grateful and inspired. Thank you for all you do for the land, every day.

Your partnership and love for the land means the world to us and the future of our community — family farms are the backbone of Kentucky.

Visit BluegrassConservancy.org for a list of all of these families and their conserved farms, across the region.

Peace of mind, a dream that will last forever

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o many, there is no better way than conserving your farm to ensure that the land which is so important to our community character, our history, and well-being, is treasured forever.

That was true for Katharine “Katie” Sutphin. Katie owned a rolling eastern Bourbon County horse farm and a southern Clark County farm with a lovely gentle creek lined by trees and surrounded by wide-open fields.

Katie’s love and vision for her land were always clear — she wanted a place for horses to run and a refuge where a child’s creative spirit and connection to land could be nurtured...where they could play in the stream and walk in the woods for inspiration.

In the past year, as Katie was reaching a time in her life when she didn’t know how long she would have to make her dream for her land a reality, she reached out to us and together we conserved her farms.

Although Katie passed on just days after protecting her farms, she was given a sense of peace knowing that the land she loved would be here for years to come. While others will own her farm in the future, Katie’s dream lives on.

7 QUICK FACTS

About farmland conservation agreements

Voluntary. Farmland conservation agreements (conservation easements) are voluntary and do not require public access. You retain your private property rights pursuant to the agreement.

You still own and manage the land. You can sell it, bequeath it, give it to your kids or family, or any combination thereof. The agreement runs with the land.

Flexible. Farming, hunting, forestry, home-based businesses, non-commercial recreational uses, and a limited number of house sites and/or property divisions are permitted, if they are compatible with the land’s conservation values.

Tailored to you. Each farmland conservation agreement is unique to the farm and to your vision for your property.

Versatile. Woodlands, wildlife habitat, streams, wetlands, and cultural resources can all be conserved in the same agreement along with productive farmland, if you choose.

Estate planning benefits. Conserving your land can help with your estate planning, significantly reduce your estate taxes, and often allow for a smoother transition to the next generation.

Tax savings. You may also greatly reduce your federal income tax liability for several years, starting the year you conserve your land. This might help offset capital gains as well.
Partnerships, Volunteers, and Our Members
TOGETHER, MAKING CONSERVATION LAST

If you want to do it quickly, do it alone. If you want to make it last, create partnerships. That’s a great way to look at farmland conservation and the need to ensure that people will care, well into the future.

Thanks to numerous partners and volunteers, the support of our members, and Toyota Motor Manufacturing’s generous community programming grant, Bluegrass Conservancy has been able to offer free programs ranging from farm and nature walks, to farmstead-related estate tax planning and other educational sessions, over the past year.

This spring, experts from the state historic preservation office, the Kentucky Heritage Council, co-hosted a program for local families to learn if their farm might qualify for Kentucky tax credits to bring their historic barns back to former glory.

Berle Clay and his sister Mary Clay Berry, and their spouses Brenda and John, opened their conserved family land, Auvergne, in Bourbon County, for a historic tour.

This summer, for the second year, we partnered with Bluegrass Greensource and Bob and Laura Riddle, to clean up a portion of Elkhorn Creek along the Riddles’ conserved farm in Scott County.

Together, with volunteers from the University of Kentucky’s environmental studies program, local landowners like Mike Daugherty who has conserved his own family farm, Three Springs, in Woodford County, and families and friends, we pulled out about 25 tires and 400 pounds of trash that had floated downstream.

“Keeping our streams clean is part of keeping our farms clean and productive,” remarked Bob Riddle, continuing, “farmers have long been caretakers of the land.”

It is your support that is making these programs possible.

Would you like to partner or volunteer with us?

Conserving the land, inspiring a love of farms and their wild places, providing information on land management or estate planning strategies, and cleaning up streams and waterways in farm-country is a big job—and we can’t do it alone.

Maybe you’d like to get outside and get your hands dirty at a clean-up. Others prefer hosting a casual gathering with friends to learn more about local land conservation efforts and how they can help. We’re also looking for photographers, sponsors, and educational partners.

If you run a business, lead a community group or organization, or are someone who simply wants to make a difference through your partnership or volunteerism, give us a call. The health of our farms, our water, and our community character depend on it and we’d love to work together with you.

“I love the opportunity to get my kids into any greenspace, and it’s even better to visit one where the family has made a commitment to keeping their farmland intact for future generations.”

- Kristin Ingwell Goode

who volunteered at the creek clean-up with her 7 year-old son Will Berry, and their spouses Brenda and John, opened their conserved family land, Auvergne, in Bourbon County, for a historic tour.

Connecting people to the land, throughout the year

What is it about farms that you love?

Is it the sweet smell of hay, or patting the soft nose of a foal? Perhaps it’s fresh, local food or taking a bike ride through the winding tree-lined roads. For many, these experiences are why farms are places of wonder and joy.

You understand the value that conserved farms and open space have on our quality of life. But for farmland conservation to last over generations, we need more people like you—young and old alike—to care too.

One of our biggest challenges is that while our communities often rely on fresh water, local food, wildlife habitat, breathtaking views, and a vibrant agricultural economy, the importance of farmland conservation as part of that experience isn’t always appreciated until it’s gone.

With your help, we are working to change that. Research shows that for people to develop a love for the land it often has to start when they are young.

Now, thanks to growing community support, we are able to offer more free, family-friendly community programs than in prior years, allowing people to connect first-hand with Bluegrass farms, and bring the wonder of nature and farming to people from all walks of life. By providing these fun, regular experiences across the seasons, we are collectively ensuring that farmland conservation will withstand the test of time.

Would you like to host a program on your own farm and inspire the love of the land? Give Laura a call at 859-255-4552.

“People protect what they love. Finding more ways for people to connect with this irreplaceable landscape and agrarian-equine culture will nurture that love.”

- Tom Eblen, Columnist, Lexington Herald-Leader

who joined us for an historic farm tour

Every day, making a difference

Your wonderful support goes a long way to conserve and celebrate farms here in the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky.

Thanks to you, 2014 was a great year for land conservation, with five more protected farms, cleaner creeks and streams, and six more programs offered to connect people to farms and nature, and add value to local farmers.

112 Total Protected Farms
(1998 – 2014)

24,500 Total Conserved Acres
(1998 – 2014)

2014 Revenue

- Contributions and Grants $385,080
- Events, net $15,397
- Stewardship Donations $28,399
- Investment Income $62,529
- Total $462,005

2014 Expenses

- Program Services $376,135
- Supporting Services:
  - Management and General $58,366
  - Fundraising $74,508
- Total $509,009

Revenues and expenses independently audited by Mountjoy Chilton Medley LLP for the year ending December 31, 2014. We are happy to provide you with our full audited financial statements at any time. Full statements will also be available on our new website launching later this year.

Would you like to partner or volunteer with us?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT. IT’S BECAUSE OF YOU that family farms, wildlife habitat, rural heritage, and scenic open space in our community are protected.
Experience farms first hand

Bring your friends and family, and come get to know Bluegrass farms across the region.

Our guided nature hikes and farm tours are fun for all ages and free thanks to our partners, supporters, and welcoming families who open up their land for these community programs.

**SIGN UP** on our website to receive our eNews with announcements for each upcoming program – along with the latest conservation projects and tips – and we’ll look forward to being with you on a fun hike or tour soon.

Lead funding for this year’s community programs is kindly provided by Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky in Georgetown.