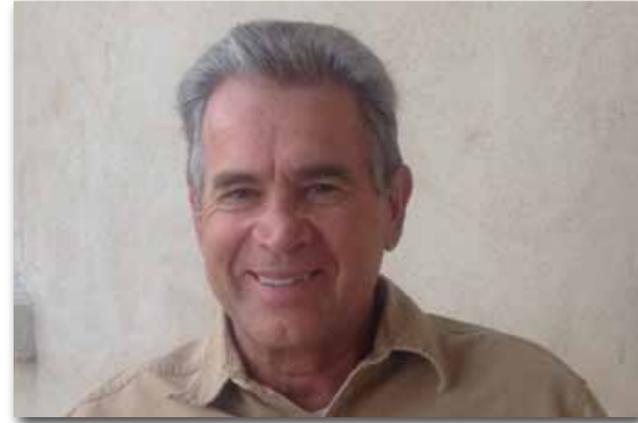


The Potomac Conservancy -- *Connecting You with the Information You Need*

The Potomac Conservancy works to protect and restore Potomac landscapes by enhancing a network of rivers, forests, and natural areas.



Joe can provide a set of experienced eyes on your land.

Because healthy lands translate to healthy rivers, the Conservancy is beginning a new effort to reach out to non-operator landowners and connect them with information and financial resources available to help them maintain and improve the natural resources on their land.

Currently, more than 40 percent of the agricultural land in Maryland is owned by people who either don't live on their land or don't operate their farmland. The purpose of our program is to better assist landowners who live away from their land.

If you are a landowner interested in natural resources conservation and want to learn more about available programs, resources and support, the Conservancy is here for you! Call Joe at 540.903.8947 to see how he can help you!

Funding support provided by: the Palmer Foundation, Blue Moon Fund, and the US Forest Service



Conservation Connections

FALL 2012

What Would You Do to Protect a Million Dollar Investment?

Consider this: the average farm size in Maryland is 170 acres, and the average value per acre of that land is more than \$7,000. That means the average landowner in Maryland has a farm valued at more than a million dollars!

If you owned a second-home valued at more than a million dollars, would you rent it with no stipulations, no written lease, and no requirements for how your investment would be taken care of? That wouldn't make much sense, would it? Yet, those are the conditions on which thousands of farms owned by non-operator landowners are rented.

It is a good idea to consult with your tenant on farm decisions. They work the land on a regular basis. Yet, it is equally important for you to be engaged in the care of your land, just as you would be mindful of the care of an expensive home.

There are many ways to maintain and improve the value of a rental home. You can paint, re-roof, remodel the kitchen, upgrade to an energy efficient heating and cooling system, and so much more.

As a farmland owner, determining the needs of your land may be less straightforward. However, there are a few basic things all landowners can do to protect both the value of their investment and the environment:

1. Protect your land from soil erosion. Keeping topsoil in place ensures your land stays productive. Common practices include low or no-tillage, cover crops, grassed filter strips, and converting steep and

unstable areas to lower-impact uses such as permanent pasture, hayland, or wildlife habitat.

2. Maintain optimum nutrient levels to improve soil fertility. Nutrient management plans help farm operators to apply manure and fertilizers only as needed. This saves money and prevents excess nutrients from washing into streams.

3. Protect streambanks. Stabilize streambanks by planting forested or grassy buffers and ensure that cattle are fenced out.

Maintaining your land is much like maintaining your house. Conservation practices, like furnaces and



Would you rent your house to someone with no stipulations, no written lease, or no maintenance requirements?

gutters, need to be maintained or replaced to protect the value of your property. For example, grassed waterways may need to be reshaped, manure storage structures need to be updated, and fences need to be repaired.

Similar to ignoring a leaky roof, neglecting farmland maintenance will eventually impact the long-term value of your investment. For instance, clearing vegetation down to a stream edge can result in

erosion that eventually eats up cropland.

You don't have to be a conservation expert to ensure your land gets the conservation care it needs. The Potomac Conservancy can help!

Contact our Landowner Advisor, Joe Thompson at 540.903.8947 to request your free land assessment. Joe will identify opportunities you may have to maintain or improve the value of your land. He also can help identify and secure financial resources to make your plans a reality.

What Would You Do to Protect a Million Dollar Investment? *(continued)*

In the meantime, request “Tips for Getting Started” by emailing northernneckjoe@gmail.com. This helpful brochure explains five simple steps to begin protecting your land investment and guides you through talking with your tenant about conservation on your land.

If conservation and long-term productivity are important to you, it is essential that you work together

with your tenant to improve the value of your farm. If you don't have regular conversations with your tenant about what is being done to protect your land, it's a good time to start. You may be surprised at what you hear!

Your land is a valuable long-term investment. Taking action today will protect your investment for years to come!

Want to find out what you can do? Request “Tips for Getting Started”

This helpful brochure contains five simple steps to begin protecting your land investment.

It also guides you through talking with your tenant about conservation on your land, including 20 specific talking points to start a conservation discussion.

Call 540.903.8947 or email northernneckjoe@gmail.com to request your brochure.

Landowner Advisor is a Set of Experienced Eyes

Harry George is the trustee of the family farm that he and his siblings inherited from their parents. “It's been in the family 80 years. We want to protect it and keep it productive like our family before us did,” says Harry.

The majority of the farm is rented out to a local farmer and nearly 40 acres is enrolled in the Forest Resource Ordinance (FRO) Mitigation Bank Program that protects and enhances local forest resources.

“We actively pursue practices to improve the health and value of our land. We want to be sure we are doing everything we can to maintain the productivity of our soils, good wildlife habitat and clean water in our streams,” says Harry.

That's why Harry decided to contact Joe Thompson, Landowner Advisor for the Potomac Conservancy. “After reading the newsletter in June that introduced Joe, I wanted to see what suggestions he could offer for our farm”.

Joe met Harry on the farm a few days later. Joe was

able to identify some areas on the farm that could benefit from additional waterways. They also talked about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and implementing crop rotation, among other things.

“Joe helped me find ways to achieve my goal of attaining the best level of resource conservation for the farm. I was also interested in maximizing the use of available financial and technical conservation programs,” said Harry. “He was very knowledgeable about both agriculture and natural resources and he helped me identify opportunities where conservation practices could benefit my land. He was easy to talk with and answered all of my questions. As a result of our visit, Joe helped me locate \$25,000 to implement additional erosion control and tree planting on my land.”

“It was another set of eyes for me. Joe is a wealth of knowledge, and I'm very happy I took advantage of this free service. I would recommend it to others with a similar interest in improving their land investment,” said Harry.

Get a Free Conservation Assessment

Are you interested in receiving a free conservation assessment of your land?

A conservation assessment is a look at your land through a set of experienced eyes; an objective “quick review” of possible opportunities to improve your property's value and productivity.

To take advantage, just fill out and return the card in this newsletter.

“This free assessment will be helpful to landowners who want to improve their land but may not know where to begin,” says Aimee Weldon of the Potomac Conservancy. If you would like to learn more about financial resources that are available, or would simply like an expert opinion on how to address a particular concern, this offer is for you.

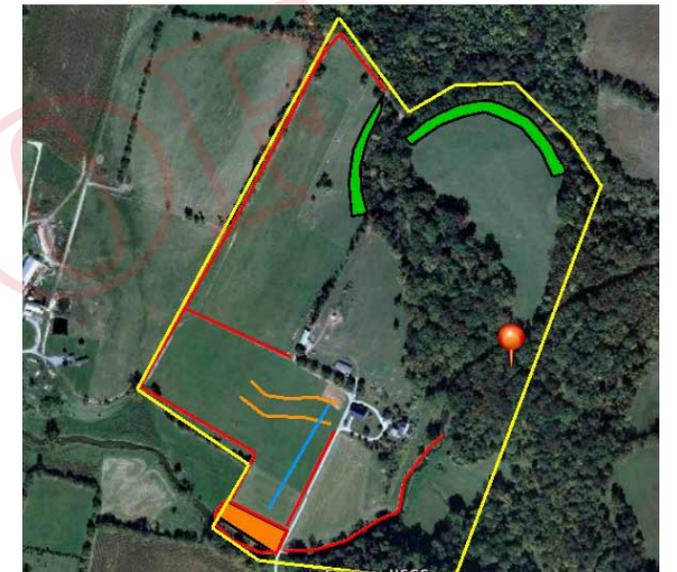
“The assessments will be conducted by Joe Thompson, our Landowner Advisor. Joe has decades of experience assessing the land and recommending conservation options to landowners. While meeting with you, Joe will discuss your interests and examine practices first hand. If you are unable to meet Joe in person on your farm, Joe can also walk your land and discuss his recommendations over the phone with you,” says Aimee.

If you request an assessment, you'll get an aerial photograph of your land with opportunities for

This free assessment will be helpful to landowners who want to improve their land, but may not know where to begin or who would simply like an expert opinion on how to address a particular concern.”

improvement highlighted on the map along with a written summary of Joe's recommendations. Joe will also provide a list of funding sources that could cover each conservation practice and how to take the next step to secure those funds. “There is absolutely no obligation on the part of landowners,” Aimee says. “We are doing this as a service to non-operator landowners as part of a grant that has identified a need for increased assistance and guidance to people who own farm land but don't live on it.”

Call Joe Thompson today at 540.903.8947 or email: northernneckjoe@gmail.com to request a land assessment.



Landowners requesting an assessment will receive an aerial photograph of your land with opportunities for improvement highlighted.

Free Land Assessments Offered

It is easiest to examine the needs of your farmland by walking the ground during an in-field assessment. Landowner Advisor Joe Thompson is available to meet with you on your farm, free of charge. Joe will discuss your interests and examine practices first hand. If you are unable to meet Joe in person on your farm, Joe can also walk your land and discuss his recommendations over the phone with you.

To request an assessment, simply return the enclosed card.

Or, contact Joe directly at 540.903.8947 or northernneckjoe@gmail.com