



The Durham County Farmland Protection Program



The Tilley Farm

Roger and Lisa Tilley have protected their 238-acre farm through a series of permanent conservation easements that took place from 2006 to 2009. The farm has been in continuous family farming and ownership for over 200 years, and has been designated by the State of North Carolina as a Century Farm. The property includes a family cemetery that dates back to the 1800's. Roger grew up on the farm, and after high school joined his father in farming full time. Roger Tilley primarily grew tobacco before the tobacco buyout. While he still grows some tobacco, he now primarily grows soybeans, wheat, corn, sweet potatoes and other crops.

The farm is located on Tilley Farm Road, between Red Mountain Road and Bahama Road in northeastern Durham County. The property includes significant acreage along Dial Creek and mature forestland that backs up to NCSU's Hill Forest. The woodland on the farm comprises part of the habitat identified by the State of North Carolina's Natural Heritage Program and rated of state-wide significance due to the increasing rarity of several species found there and the loss of mature tracts of this natural community type.

The Tilley farm is located upstream from Lake Michie, a primary drinking water supply for most Durham residents. Of the 238 acres, 160 acres are comprised of mature woodland, primarily along stream buffers. The farm also includes three farm ponds, which help to filter sediments and nutrients from the streams. The farm is required to conduct practices in conformance with current best management practices. The farm is limited to two percent (2%) impervious surface, one-third the amount of permitted through current development regulations in the watershed. Since Lake Michie drains into the Falls Lake Reservoir, protection of the Tilley Farm also helps to protect the water quality for Falls Lake, a drinking water supply for the City of Raleigh.



The Roger Tilley farm has been designated as a Century Farm by the State of North Carolina; it has been in the same family since the 1700's.



The next phase

While Roger had preserved 102 acres of his farm, he still wanted to protect the remaining 55 acres of forestland he owned as well, that was not included in the first easement. In addition in 2007, the farm that abuts Roger's farm on the north came up for sale, and Roger acquired it. This property had been owned by Arthur Tilley, a cousin of Roger's, and was part of the historic family farm. Roger purchased it in order to keep it in farming and prevent it from being developed for residential homes. His goal was to protect this addition to his farm with a conservation

easement as well. This became a possibility in 2008 when the second phase of Roger's farm was awarded both a \$398,000 State of North Carolina ADFP grant, and a federal FRPP grant for \$210,000. This second easement phase, which totals an additional 137 acres of farm and woodland, is expected to closed in 2009, and has created an overall 238-acre protected farm.

Financial

With the first and second easements combined, the total project value for the conservation easements is estimated at \$1,118,681. Of this, the federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program is assisting with \$404,973 towards the purchase of easement, the

State of North Carolina is providing \$398,000, and the landowner has donated \$98,000 in what is called a bargain sale. Durham County's participation for both phases totals \$211,000, or 19% of the project's value.

Preservation of the 238-acre Tilley Farm as a farm forever strengthens a local working farm, preserves important wildlife and natural habitat, and helps to protect the drinking water for Durham residents, at an average cost to Durham County of \$887 per acre.

For further information on this conservation easement project or other Durham County open space projects, please contact Jane Korest, Division Head, Durham County Open Space and Real Estate at 919-560-7955.

Note: The Tilley farm remains a private working farm. Please enjoy the views from the road while respecting the landowner's privacy.

