



If you want to see a cattleman get wound up, ask 83-year-old

Boyd Smith why he's still making long-range improvements on his farm. "Do you see a For Sale sign on this farm? If you're going to quit improving, you might as well quit. I spend my money today to preserve the soil and water tomorrow," says the Newberry, S.C., producer.

Boyd and his wife, Betty, started work on their farm, which he describes as having been nothing but woods, in 1962. Now, the 150-acre cattle farm is a model for natural resource conservation, proved by a sign that *is* on the farm, one labeling Smith as the Newberry Soil & Water Conservation District Conservationist of the Year for 2007.

Water Troughs And Heavy-Use Areas

Twelve concrete water troughs, installed from 2004 to 2007, take star billing. With technical help and cost-share funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Smith installed underground pipe and the 125-gallon troughs, as well as heavy-use areas around the troughs. The 20- x 20-foot heavy-use areas, made up of filter cloth and 3 to 4 inches of gravel, keep cattle from forming mud holes.

While his 70 Angus cross cows still do have access to his three fishponds, Boyd says, "They will go to the water troughs before the ponds. The water is cleaner, fresher and healthier for them."

The Smiths' son, Hugh, who is an NRCS district conservationist, says it is also healthier for the people and animals downstream when cattle stay out of ponds and creeks. "It helps keep fecal coliform bacteria out of the surface water. We are at the headwaters of a big recreational lake, and we are being ambassadors for agriculture by keeping the water clean."

Hugh also says it is better for the ponds. "You stop the erosion on the banks of ponds and streams when cattle don't go in them. Ponds are a major expense to build. You don't want the cows to tear them down." >>