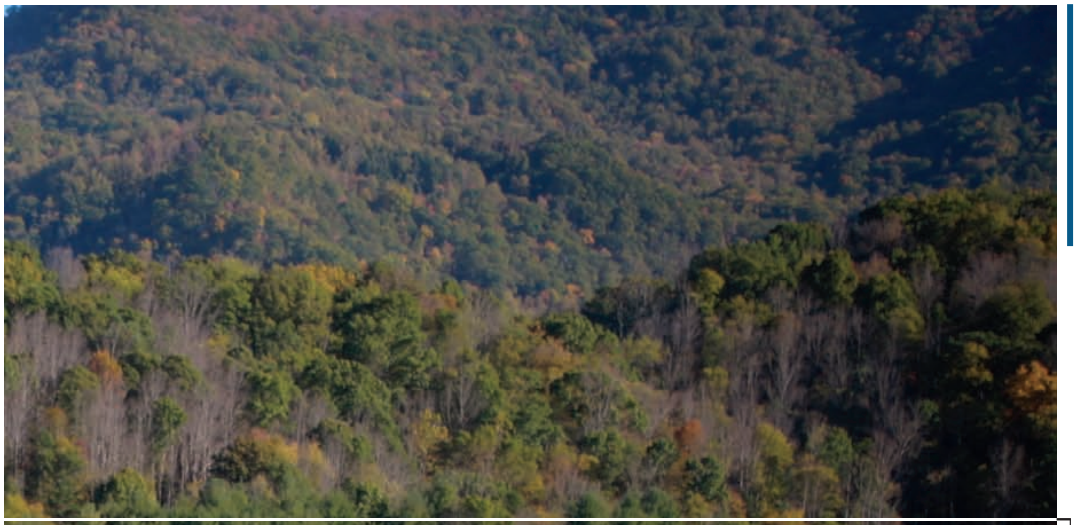

How one couple restored a bucolic farmstead and realized a dream.

STORY & PHOTOS BY DES KELLER

Dave Everett has driven us in a four-wheeler up a steep slope of wooded pasture on his western North Carolina farm. We stop at a flattened grassy patch that affords sumptuous views of the Big Sandy Mush Valley and several 4,500-foot-plus peaks beyond.

There are hints of yellow and orange in the hardwoods on this mid-October day, but the temperatures are relatively warm, the grass still green. Fooled by Dave's presence in the pasture in the early afternoon, a handful of their 30-head of cattle begin bellowing, anticipating a meal.

"To me this is the embodiment of what we're trying to do with our land," Dave says, nodding toward the fields, woods and streams spread out below, much of which he and his wife, Kim, have helped restore and preserve. "We said that we want this farm to be recognizable to folks who lived here 100 years before us." >>