

# THE RESOURCE

FALL 2009

Advancing the conservation of land for horse-related activities

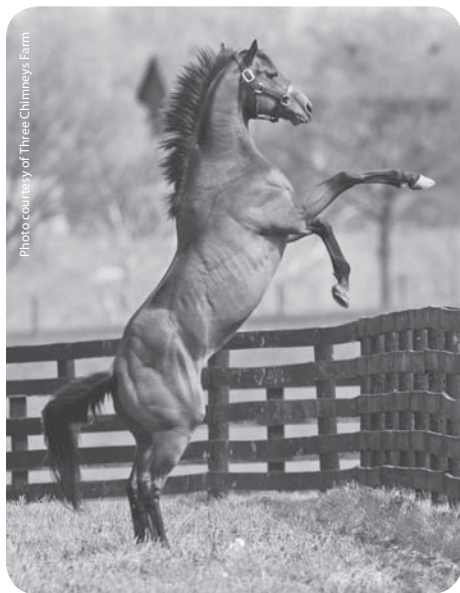
## Community Land Use Planning in Kentucky's Bluegrass Region; A Model for Horsemen

By Robert N. Clay, Owner, Three Chimneys Farm

Thousands of acres of productive land are lost each day across America. The natural struggle between growth and conservation takes on special meaning in the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky where we lose prime farmland at a rate of 11 acres per day.<sup>1</sup> At risk is the \$3 billion Bluegrass agri-business and agri-tourism contribution to our region's economy each year, which includes Kentucky's signature horse industry. To strategically combat this loss, the private and public sector have created a four-pronged approach to protecting the special brand of the Bluegrass, including quality of life and economic development (Bluegrass Tomorrow), land conservation (Bluegrass Conservancy), public financing of the sale of development rights (PDR), and sustainable growth advocacy (The Fayette Alliance.) These efforts have protected over 30,000 acres of farmland, while recognizing the need for growth in a vibrant community. These solutions have evolved and created an effective model for other communities to follow.

Bluegrass Tomorrow is central Kentucky's regional planning organization. This 14-county regional coalition of

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Kentucky Derby winner Big Brown frolicking on conserved land at Three Chimneys Farm

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(Land Use Planning Model continued)

business, development, farming, and preservation interests is dedicated to promoting coordinated growth and preservation planning throughout the region. Bluegrass Tomorrow believes that quality of life and economic development are inextricably linked, and that preserving the precious bluegrass soils and irreplaceable qualities of the region such as the horse industry is a foremost priority. BGT unites the efforts of public, private, and corporate citizens to achieve regional solutions that enable the region to build a strong and efficient economy, which respects the tradition of livable and distinct communities, surrounded by beautiful greenbelts of productive farmland and rich natural areas.

Bluegrass Tomorrow's current emphasis is the *Bluegrass InnoVision 2018* planning project, in which 22 other similar regions were studied comparing 150 different data points covering every aspect of quality of life and economic development. In the study, the Bluegrass Region is a model, and proof that urban growth and agriculture are compatible, as Fayette County (the most heavily populated county in the Bluegrass) ranks first in

average agricultural sales per farm of the 23 regions studied.

See [bluegrasstomorrow.org](http://bluegrasstomorrow.org) for complete information.

Founded in 1995 and incubated by Bluegrass Tomorrow, Bluegrass Conservancy is the region's leading private, nonprofit land trust permanently protecting our endangered farmland for the public benefit.<sup>2</sup> The land trust currently holds 53 conservation easements protecting 8,042 acres or over twelve square miles. Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between a landowner and Bluegrass Conservancy or another eligible organization. These flexible agreements are tailored to the landowner's objectives and property in order to preserve the land for agriculture and/or other open space activities, thereby protecting its conservation values. A landowner donating a conservation easement to a qualified organization such as Bluegrass Conservancy may be eligible for significant income tax and estate tax savings.

Conservation easement donations to Bluegrass Conservancy create world-class public benefit with no public expenditure, and protect land that economically contributes to the community. Protected farmland helps

keep down the high cost of community services and protects our communities' unique brand identity and "sense of place." Many easements are tailored to protect key soil and water resources, forests, wildlife habitat, and historic sites.

Forming a critical mass of protected farmland open-space is a primary goal. Critical mass is achieved when neighboring landowners place conservation easements on contiguous parcels of farmland. Studies throughout the nation show that potential property buyers often pay a premium for the assurance that neighboring lands will be protected from development in perpetuity. For example, the Brandywine River Valley, located in southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, has proven over time that land values of over 20,000 acres of contiguous properties protected with conservation easements have resulted in substantially higher land values compared to properties located outside the protected areas. Visit [www.bluegrassconservancy.org](http://www.bluegrassconservancy.org) to learn more.

Supplementing Bluegrass Conservancy is Fayette County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, whereby public funds are set aside to buy conservation easements on

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<sup>1</sup> USDA Census (2007) and Fayette County PVA data (2008).

<sup>2</sup> World Monuments Fund designated the Bluegrass Region as one of the world's 100 most endangered sites.



Three Chimneys Farm, Midway Kentucky

*(Land Use Planning Model continued)*

qualified lands. This program is the first agricultural conservation easement program by a local government in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. To-date, PDR has leveraged over \$53,500,000 from local, state, and federal funding sources to protect 200 Fayette County farms totaling 22,732 acres. See [www.lexingtonky.gov/index.aspx?page=497](http://www.lexingtonky.gov/index.aspx?page=497) for more information.

Finally, The Fayette Alliance was established in 2006 to promote, through proactive education and awareness, farmland preservation, a dynamic and equitable cityscape through infill-redevelopment, and healthy waterways through the repair of our defunct sanitary sewer and stormwater systems. If responsibly pursued, this strategy

will protect our irreplaceable Bluegrass farmland and related agricultural industries, while strengthening the city of Lexington through innovative growth measures—creating a quality of life essential to our economic and environmental success today and in the future. As a 501 (c)(4) corporation, The Fayette Alliance regularly lobbies local government in furtherance of its land-use mission. Lobbying activities include attending all relevant planning and zoning meetings, and educating the public, political leaders, and government officials about growth issues. Without a doubt, land-use planning in the Bluegrass is a political animal—and having a strong, credible, and consistent presence at the local government level has been an important key to

The Fayette Alliance's achievements. To learn more about The Fayette Alliance visit [www.fayettealliance.com](http://www.fayettealliance.com).

The precious land assets of the Bluegrass Region support Kentucky's strongest brand, the horse. There is widespread recognition of the risk of losing those assets. Smart planning and strong community involvement are helping Kentucky's signature industry protect its factory floor. The Bluegrass Region's four-pronged approach to planning—quality of life and economic development, land conservation, public financing of development rights, and sustainable growth advocacy—are providing a land use planning model for other areas of the country. ■

## From the Saddle

*A letter from ELCR's CEO, Deb Balliet*

There is some legislation important to land owners with which your help is needed. The enhanced tax deduction for conservation easement donations has helped America's land trusts work with farm owners, ranchers and other modest-income landowners to increase the pace of land conservation by at least 250,000 acres a year. However, unless Congress acts, this important conservation tool will expire at the end of December.

Help secure support in the House of Representatives for the Conservation Easement Incentive Act (H.R. 1831) and in the Senate, for the Rural Heritage Conservation Act (S. 812). Both bills make the easement incentive permanent. As of this writing, 224 Representatives and 27 Senators have already signed on. You can reach your Member of Congress by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Ask to speak with the staffer who handles tax issues and tell them you would like your elected official to co-sponsor the appropriate bill named above.

The Recreational Trails Program is expected to continue as normal for now. RTP is funded through SAFETEA-LU which expired on September 30, 2009; an extension was expected. The US Department of Transportation proposed to extend the current authorization (with no policy changes) for 18 months. Check the news scroll at [www.ELCR.org](http://www.ELCR.org) periodically for the most current information.

One final note, we are in the process of changing our name to the Equine Land Conservation Resource. Please bear with us as we make the transition in order to be more inclusive to those who do not ride their horses – (i.e. owners of miniature and thoroughbred horses and to our carriage driving friends.)

Give us a call or drop us a line anytime. You can also keep up with us on Facebook; look us up under the new name, Equine Land Conservation Resource.

Have fun outside! ■



*Deb and "Taz"*

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Munson Photography and Performance Horse magazine





# Equestrian Partners Spotlight: United States Pony Clubs

By Stacy Durham, Georgetown College student  
and ELCR Intern



Photo courtesy of Shelly Mann

USPC vet box

**W**ith a comprehensive commitment to the education of young riders, the United States Pony clubs (USPC) summarizes their objective in their mission statement as providing “a program for youth that teaches riding, mounted sports, and the care of horses and ponies, thereby developing responsibility, moral judgment, leadership and self-confidence.” While their emphasis on education has traditionally steered pony clubbers towards an important understanding and appreciation of equine care and management, the USPC added a conservation component to their curriculum. Stating that their goal is to, “have every Pony Club member become aware of, literate about, and proactively engaged with, protecting land for horse-related activities,” the USPC is taking steps to promote conservation appreciation and understanding amongst its members.



USPC eventing

Photo courtesy of Shelly Mann

Incorporated into the non-mounted aspects of the Pony Club testing, the conservation curriculum asks participants to both learn about and participate in an aspect of local, national or regional equine land conservation. Past projects by students include things such as maintaining horse trails, thanking landowners on whose land they ride, or writing a paper highlighting importance of clean water and how storm water runoff can negatively impact our water supply. There is also a focus on building an understanding of equine land conservation challenges.

Ultimately, the USPC's motivation in adding a conservation component to their curriculum is grounded in their knowledge and concern for issues relating to land conservation. Peggy Entrekin, Executive Director of USPC notes, “USPC long ago identified the loss of land for riding as a threat to young people and equine activities. The USPC's close relationship with ELCR kept us aware of the loss of land and provided us with an awareness of the issues so the formalization of the education components of conservation into our standards was a logical next step.”

Owing to their partnership with the ELCR, as well as their own steps forward, the USPC is setting a positive example for other like-minded equestrian organizations. Through their efforts to promote education and awareness of land conservation issues, the USPC has added a valuable resource to both their pony clubs, as well as the equestrian community as a whole. ■

*Thanks to our corporate friends:*



Equine Network and its fine family of equestrian magazines: Equisearch, Horse & Rider, Equus, Dressage Today, and Practical Horseman



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# Manure as Fertilizer... and Renewable Energy

By Lynnette Batt, *Sustainable Stables*

## The Issue

Anyone who owns a horse is aware of the tremendous amount of manure they produce. One horse generates about 50 pounds of manure/bedding mix a day, enough to fill a two-car garage in under a year. All too often this waste goes in “the pile out back,” to be spread immediately on fields or simply allowed to accumulate. Both options can impact horse, human and environmental health. With scrutiny of horse farms catching up to that previously reserved for large livestock operations, good manure management is critical. Without it, horse farms could be at risk as land use and environmental regulations tighten, particularly in developed areas.

## Composting, the Easy Way

Composting—the process by which organic material is broken down into an earthy, nutrient-rich product—is a great way to manage manure for any size farm. To work properly composting requires the right balance of several ingredients: air (oxygen), moisture, heat, input material, and time. Air, however, can be a difficult ingredient to manage. Manure piles that sit idly do not receive enough oxygen and can take up to a year to compost. Tractors can be used to manually turn the piles to induce airflow and speed the process, but this is time and equipment intensive.

Luckily, an alternative composting method is gaining momentum because it is fast, easy, and affordable. This is aerated composting, in which perforated pipes and small electric blowers are used to inject air into the pile, precluding the need for manual turning. With such a system, compost can be created in 30-60 days. Hundreds of these types of systems are in use around the US, on farms of all sizes in all climates.

*(Continued on next page)*



## Manure Exchange Programs

Got more compost than your land can handle? A growing number of manure exchange programs are popping up across the country. These programs match you with gardeners and landscapers who can put your extra compost to good use. Check with your local extension office or soil and water conservation district to see if your community has such a program. If not, start one of your own. These programs are a great way to demonstrate how horse farms are an asset to the local community. For a good example, see Illinois Extension's Manure Share program (<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/manureshare>).



*Aerated compost bays.*



## Manure as Energy

While composting remains the most feasible form of manure management for many horse farms, technologies are being developed that can turn manure into energy. The upside is that this would provide a renewable energy source that can be used directly on site or be sold back to a utility company. The downside is that these technologies are still costly, and most horse facilities are not large enough to justify the cost.

## Anaerobic Digesters and Biogas

Just reading this name feels complicated. But the concept is actually simple: anaerobic digestion is the breakdown of organic matter without oxygen. In the process, methane (called "biogas") is produced, captured, cleaned up and used like natural gas to produce heat and electricity.

There has been increasing research on the use of anaerobic "digesters" to manage livestock waste. Unlike most horse farms, the magnitude of some dairy farms can make this technology cost-effective. However, high-density horse

communities are now looking into it as a group effort. Marion County, Florida, generates over 400,000 tons of manure yearly from its 35,000 thoroughbreds. Land in the area can handle application of up to 2/3 of this as compost, but the rest requires disposal. In response, the state has provided a half-million dollar grant to build a demonstration biogas plant at the Southeastern Livestock Pavillion in Ocala. Manure will be brought from farms around the county to the central treatment facility.

## Commercial Manure Management Systems

- Agrilab Technologies (heat extraction from composting): [www.agrilab.ca](http://www.agrilab.ca)
- EZ STACK™ Composting Systems (aerated composting): [www.telescopepet.com](http://www.telescopepet.com)
- MaxWest Environmental Systems (gasification): [www.maxwestenergy.com](http://www.maxwestenergy.com)
- O2 Compost (aerated composting): [www.o2compost.com](http://www.o2compost.com)
- Sigarca, Inc. (anaerobic digestion): [www.sigarca.com](http://www.sigarca.com)
- Swebo Bioenergy (incineration): [www.swebo.com](http://www.swebo.com)

*Sustainable Stables is an organization dedicated to green horsekeeping practices. For more information or to contact Lynnette Batt, visit [www.sustainablestables.com](http://www.sustainablestables.com).*

## Gasification, Incineration, and Heat Extraction from Composting

In addition to digesters, other technologies can produce heat and energy from manure. A gasification facility, also in Ocala, is currently being built that will process about 50,000 tons of stall waste (about 5,000 horses-worth) and 50,000 tons of wood and organic waste to produce enough energy to power several thousand homes each year.

In Europe, where land application can be limited due to development density, incineration is used to burn manure on farms of 50-200 horses or more. This significantly reduces the volume of waste, leaving only ash.

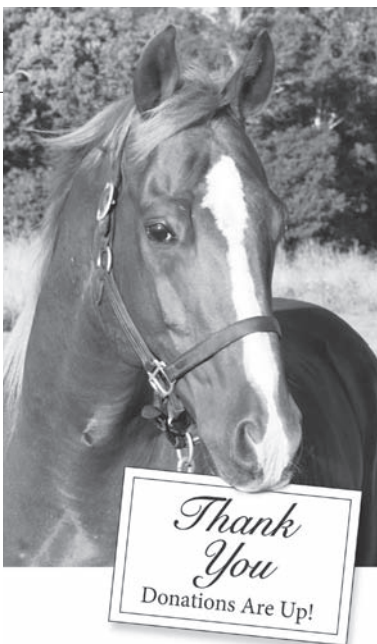
Yet another technology being developed that captures steam produced during regular composting and uses it to heat barn buildings, greenhouses, and water. Researchers have tested it on dairy farms, but believe it could be developed for a 30-50 horse farm.

Over time, improvements in these bioenergy technologies may make them more cost-effective for smaller horse farms. But for now, composting remains the best option for most of us. ■

## Additional Support Needed

**W**e are pleased to report that our annual fund-raising revenues to date slightly exceed those of 2008. However, we need to proceed at full force during this economic downturn, as the loss of horse lands is unrelenting. Even if the rate of development has diminished, savvy developers continue to buy land on the suburban fringes while the prices are down.

It is our hope that you will deem our work worthy of your financial support this year. We are making good progress, but there is still much to do. To make a donation, use the form on the back page or go on-line at [www.ELCR.org](http://www.ELCR.org). ■





## Trail Blazing to Benefit Off the Track Thoroughbreds

**W**e recently had a fun and productive day at the Maker's Mark Secretariat Center on the campus of the Kentucky Horse Park building a sustainable trail to be used in re-training 2nd career thoroughbreds. Thanks to our many volunteers including project partners, the Georgetown College Equine Scholars Program and the Central Kentucky Back Country Horsemen. The trail training course includes wooded trails, a stream crossing and natural jumps. Phase II of the project is being planned. ■



## State of Montana Recognizes Value of Horse Activities

**ELCR** assisted the Gallatin Equestrian Partnership in obtaining a resolution recognizing the historical, economic and cultural value of horse activities within the State of Montana. The approved resolution stated that city, county, and state officials should promote safe equestrian and horse-drawn vehicle access; and include horse uses when appropriate when designing or improving roadways in transportation planning or when planning or implementing parks and trails.

The Montana Secretary of State is required to send a copy of the resolution to the Department of Transportation for its consideration. Additionally, the Secretary of State is to send the resolution to the Montana League of Cities and Towns and the Montana Association of Counties for distribution to their members. To view the Montana resolution, visit [http://www.elcr.org/resources/resc\\_26.pdf](http://www.elcr.org/resources/resc_26.pdf) ■



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*Susanna Colloredo-Mansfield*

## Susanna Colloredo-Mansfield Welcomed to ELCR Advisory Council

**ELCR** recently welcomed a new member to its Advisory Council. The Advisory Council at ELCR provides a means for experts on a variety of topics to assist the organization in a formal, recognized capacity.

Susanna Colloredo-Mansfield, a lifelong equestrian from Massachusetts, has dedicated over thirty years of her life to environmental conservation and education. Susanna is a co-founder and Director of the Essex County Trail Association, which encourages responsible use of the open land, maintains trails, helps establish easements, and promotes good will and communication between trail users and landowners. ■



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