

**PROFILES OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONORS
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ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH

JAY MOSER

Jay Moser's family home place "really isn't that old. We've only been in it since about 1935." This isn't because the Mosers are late arrivals to the Jefferson County, Tenn. area. Far from it; Jay's five grandchildren are the eighth generation to live in the county since his great-great-great grandfather arrived in the region from Germany in 1796. The original family home site, regrettably, now lies beneath a Tennessee Valley Authority lake formed by the impoundment of the Holston River, not long after the 1933 founding of TVA.

The family had accumulated significant landholdings in the area by then, and Moser still works much of the rich land in agriculture. "I always liked to watch things grow—crops, soybeans, corn, timber. The soil is very rich at the foothills of the Smokies. Good upland soils with very deep topsoil. We've had years where we brought in 200 bushels an acre of corn across the property. And this is without irrigation."



Jay Moser

The area also used to be the site of the second largest deposit of zinc in America—now largely mined out—but there are other mineral riches there and in other lands that Moser's business owns and works. Moser's primary occupation now is the production of agricultural limestone, which neatly links the family background in agriculture with Moser's current mineral business.

The 1650-acre conservation easement Moser donated in 2008 on land along the Canoochee River and Lott's Creek (bottom left picture)—with approximately four miles of frontage on each—in Evans County, Ga. is Moser's second large easement; his first was in Tennessee. "It's a learning process but having been through the drill is helpful, and Katherine and the land trust were very helpful." In addition to protecting riparian buffers and special natural areas on the property, the land contains very productive soils for forestry, which is undertaken on a significant percentage of the land.

Moser reports that part of the process is also answering people who ask why you're giving so much away. "I tell them, you're not really giving anything away. You're conserving good working lands. And I believe lands in conservation easements will eventually be worth more. Maybe not in my lifetime, but there will be a time when these lands become increasingly valuable. There is a short-term diminution of value, but the long-term goal is to increase value and I think this achieves it. And I've been blessed with three good children, two of whom are in my business (one son and the daughter) and who genuinely love the land and will enjoy it and benefit from it in the future."

The sporting value of the land is already of tremendous value importance to Moser and his family. He manages a good portion of his land for quail (“Denny Hill, my land manager does a real good job for me”) in part because of his love of field dogs. He has two that are worked in the field trials circuit. His family also enjoys the sporting opportunities on the property—all of his grandchildren have visited it and his oldest grandson killed his first deer there. All his children were in the partnership that donated the Evans County easement.

Regarding donating conservation easements, Moser says, “My dad was a lover of the land, and he instilled that in me. I’d donate again. The tax upside is good but even without that we still would have done it back home and here. The financial aspects were not the first consideration. We’re put here to oversee what we’re blessed with and the easements are oftentimes the best way to achieve that. I just didn’t want to see that good land go away.”

