

While in town for his 50th Onancock High School reunion, Dr. Hal Lassiter made time to visit the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (VES Land Trust). Dr. Lassiter is a retired pediatrician who specialized in newborn intensive care. He strolled into the office dressed in jeans and sneakers as if ready for a walk through the woods. He smiled and said, "The VES Land Trust is enabling me to fulfill a fantasy that I've had since I was a boy."

Dr. Lassiter and the VES Land Trust just protected the Elder Farm, 188 acres on Craddock Creek, with a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a tool landowners may use to permanently protect the natural, scenic, and historic resources on their property. Landowners voluntarily relinquish their development rights in favor of preserving farmland, forests, wetlands, fisheries, and historic sites on the Shore. In addition, conservation easement donors can receive tax credits and deductions from the state and federal governments.

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—Hal Lassiter

Dr. Lassiter inherited the farm from his father. When he was growing up in the 50s and 60s, the Elder Farm was part of the larger Bull Farm, which extended from the easternmost boundary of Dr. Lassiter's property today to the Chesapeake Bay. Back then, "it was a wildlife fantasy land, which I

dreamt about preserving someday," said Dr. Lassiter who has fond memories of hunting with his father and friends on the farm. "I distinctly remember the sense of tranquility and timelessness I gained when exploring the area."

Historically the Elder Farm was farmed and forested and continues to be used for agriculture and timber today. In addition, the farm has nearly two miles of shoreline along Craddock Creek. Not only is the Elder Farm a productive working farm with harvestable timber areas, but the farm also



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supports bird and marsh life along its shoreline. The creek buffer filters water draining into Craddock Creek, providing the clean water needed for oysters, clams, crabs and fish to thrive.

For most of his life, Dr. Lassiter dreamed of protecting his childhood wonderland. Having completed the process, he advises others who

are interested, **"If the option is available, do it.** The opportunity to preserve unspoiled land forever comes once in a lifetime, if that. Knowing that the waterfowl and animals will have an undisturbed home forever provides an incomparable degree of satisfaction that is impossible to quantify or value in dollars." It also adds one more piece to the puzzle protecting the Eastern Shore way of life. Land protection and stewardship of that land ensures the traditional Eastern Shore economic engines of farming, fishing, and aquaculture will remain viable.