

Nate and Jessie Rogers, Rogers Farmstead, Berlin, VT

Nate and Jessie Rogers grow grains and keep a small herd of Jersey cows at their farm on the Dog River in Berlin. They grow, harvest, and mill their own grain, and they sell their whole wheat flour, rolled oats, and milk on Saturdays at the Montpelier Farmers' Market and every day at their farm stand.

See: <http://www.rogersfarmstead.com>



Heavy Rains

The main climate change issue the Rogers have experienced is river flooding caused by heavy rains. They bought their farm 4 years ago after the property was flooded during Irene. The farm has one mile of river frontage and during Irene, the fields were completely flooded, the house was damaged, and the previous owners had to go out of business. People had to remove a foot of sand to restore the fields, and a two-acre chunk of land washed away. This washout is shaped like a horseshoe, and it enables the water to rise five feet before it overflows, so it protects the fields from flood damage. During the recent rains, the washout filled, and the water did not overflow onto the fields.

When Nate and Jessie first moved to the farm, they wondered if they should fill the horseshoe back in or let it remain as overflow space for the river. After consulting with the Agency of Natural Resources, they decided to let it be.

The Vermont Land Trust also offered to purchase a river corridor easement from them, in effect paying them to take some of their cropland out of use. With their light soils that lift easily and the susceptibility of their fields to flood damage, they decided to accept the easement, and it has just been approved. They can't farm the land that is within fifty feet of the center of the river, but they can plant trees in this corridor to strengthen the riverbanks.

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The Rogers have planted all their river fields in grasses and perennial crops to strengthen the land, rather than have open soil that could wash away. This means they have 20 acres of river fields that they can't use as part of their rotation for grains, but it addresses their bigger concern that their land could otherwise be washed down the river. They take water quality very seriously and work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the ANR to make sure they have a healthy river that is doing what it needs to do while they still farm the land.



Submitted by Catherine Lowther, Goddard College, Faculty in the BA in Sustainability Program, Chair of the Sustainability Committee