



Longhorns & Land Preservation

A devoted conservationist keeps the bottom line in mind as he develops his Tennessee farmland.

PHOTOS BY COYOTE & PINE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY GEORGE LINDEMANN

GRANDVIEW, TENNESSEE



EST.	LIVESTOCK	LAND
2007	Longhorn and Black Angus cattle	5,000 acres

Hi, I'm George Lindemann, the owner of Coal Creek Farm, which is on top of Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau escarpment at about 2,300 feet. I am also a businessman, developer, philanthropist, conservationist and father of a 19-year-old son, a 15-year-old daughter and 13-year-old twins.

Since acquiring this farm, I've learned to appreciate the value of a great controlled burn and rare insects. I manage the farm with new technology and thinking coupled with some of the old ways. In the process, I'm developing ways to feed native grass to my Texas longhorns while encouraging its growth. The grasses have brought back native flora and fauna that declined after years of clear-cutting. In terms of preservation, I'm working to have Soak and Piney creeks designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers with expanded public access.

➔ **April 2** I got an early start today picking up trash that blew in during the winter. It's incredible how much plastic from the round hay bales get caught in the tall grass along the fence line.

➔ **April 3** After splitting wood, my kids and I jumped into the ATVs. We stopped to check on the barn cats and our retired mules, Pat and Pam.

Spring is emerging on the farm. The daffodils are outshining the forsythia, and the redbuds are also in bloom. I hope they're not showing off too early, as we expect another freeze next week. Our Longhorns live in fields where native grasses (and weeds) sprout. Timing the herd movement just right ensures they'll eat the new growth. The Longhorns, in conjunction with controlled burns, are slowly helping us re-create the savannas that once existed on the plateau but have been replaced by fescue fields or logging timber.

Spring on the Plateau

➔ **April 1** This morning we rotated cattle toward the soup bowl-shaped pond that I dug 15 years ago. Dirt therapy is good for me, and it soothes my soul to see the cattle enjoying it. We migrated the herd to the woods at the top of the property where they will live for six weeks to two months. Longhorns can sustain themselves in the woods during spring, and their foraging opens the underbrush.

Our ranch manager, Harold, and my oldest son and I loaded tools and headed to the "hayfield" to fix fence. We call this area the hayfield because it was the first place we ever cut hay.

➔ **April 4** Ten healthy Longhorn and Longhorn-mix calves were born overnight. Since their mothers were tending to them, I focused on other tasks. We bush hogged briars and sedges. It's nice to know that these plants won't be a problem when we harvest hay later this season. It costs the same to cut and bail a briar (which the cows don't like) as it does good quality fescue grass. So while it takes time and fuel, in the long run we'll break even and most likely be profitable—with better quality hay.

Weeding is a constant struggle, especially since our fields were planted on recently clear-cut land.

"I'm incredibly lucky to live in this paradise," writes George Lindemann, seen here soaking up the view from his Cumberland Plateau farm.

We have spent 15 years reshaping what the loggers left behind, and the fields improve each year. Still, they don't compare to those of our neighbors who have been cutting the same land for nearly 50 years. Reclamation takes time.

➔➔ **April 5** The crew ran out of time with the bush hog yesterday, so we finished the lower field before the rain today. Equipment maintenance was next. Our land has a thick layer of topsoil, so when it rains, we stop running machines over the fields to avoid carving ruts.

Today I saw a bald eagle flying overhead. It reminded me to refill the feeders since Coal Creek Farm is directly in the migration path for so many birds. In 2020, my kids and I documented about 70 different bird types. We learned the names and calls of so many of them. The short migration season (two to three weeks long) always has us wishing for more time and more birds.

➔➔ **April 6** Our land is divided by Coal Creek and Whites Creek. There is a spot that has gotten worn by ATV crossings, and we often gather rocks

by hand and embed them in the steep part of the bank. Most of the major creeks have been fenced so the cows can't access them, but there are many bodies of water on the farm. We carefully maintain all our creek and wet-weather conveyance beds. When the cows gather to drink, it looks lovely and natural, but they leave a mess that leads to erosion. They also poop in the water, which carries the waste downstream to areas where people swim. It's critical to stabilize the banks and create as many ponds as possible without interfering with stream flow.

➔➔ **April 7** Perfect day to hike to the top of Bear Den Mountain. It's the highest point on the farm and has a spectacular view that includes Grassy Cove, the Sequatchie Valley (between Cumberland Plateau and Walden's Ridge) and the Tennessee River Valley. Sometimes I can see Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which is about 75 miles away.

Canoeing & Cattle

➔➔ **April 8** What should've been just a little rain arrived as snow flurries

that persisted as we worked. We're looking for fallen trees so we can repair broken fences and rotate the cows to fresh grass. The herd moved from the soup bowl to the fields by Winter Road. Visitors enjoy seeing cattle graze in this area near the farm's entrance. They drive slowly to watch the calves do their thing.

➔➔ **April 9** Every step I took this morning made a satisfying crunch on the frost underfoot. Returning from my morning hike, I stopped to talk with Harold. He said the shots I heard earlier were related to coyotes getting too close to the herd. I love to hear coyotes sing at night, but we can't let them take our animals.

➔➔ **April 10** Since moving here, I've become an avid whitewater canoer. Canoeing traces back to the Native peoples who farmed this land for centuries. Coal Creek, Whites Creek and Powder Creek flow from my farm down the mountain to the Tennessee River, on to the Ohio, then the Mississippi and into the Gulf of Mexico. These waterways have been crucial to navigation and trade.

➔➔ **April 11** I like to walk around my farm instead of always driving. It's part of a healthy lifestyle that includes exercise, smart eating and mental floss. A cool spring day offers the advantage of no snakes or ticks.



Coal Creek Farm houses several large sculptural pieces, such as this one by an artist friend of George's.

The cattle watch me when I'm on foot but run when I'm on a machine. Some have run straight through our fencing, which can injure them and add to my chore list. Walking puts me closer to the wild mammals and birds that have long fascinated me. In addition, the fungi I find in spring are fantastic. They are considered non-timber forest products (NTFP). Wild edible mushrooms could be a profit center if I could figure out how to find enough of them!

➔➔ **April 12** This morning I looked out and saw a beautiful expanse of clouds wrapping the top of the mountain, where my house stands. It's amazing to go from being able to see the Smokies (40 miles across the valley) to barely seeing 30 feet away.

➔➔ **April 13** We raise Longhorns and Black Angus. Black Angus meat has good fat content that produces marbling and improved flavor compared to other species. But the cattle eat cool-season, non-native grasses only, which are more costly to grow and maintain. Longhorns are very hardy, requiring less water than many other breeds. Although they can look intimidating, they're docile and tend to use their horns (which can reach 5 feet across) to clear underbrush in the woods. This allows them access to fodder that



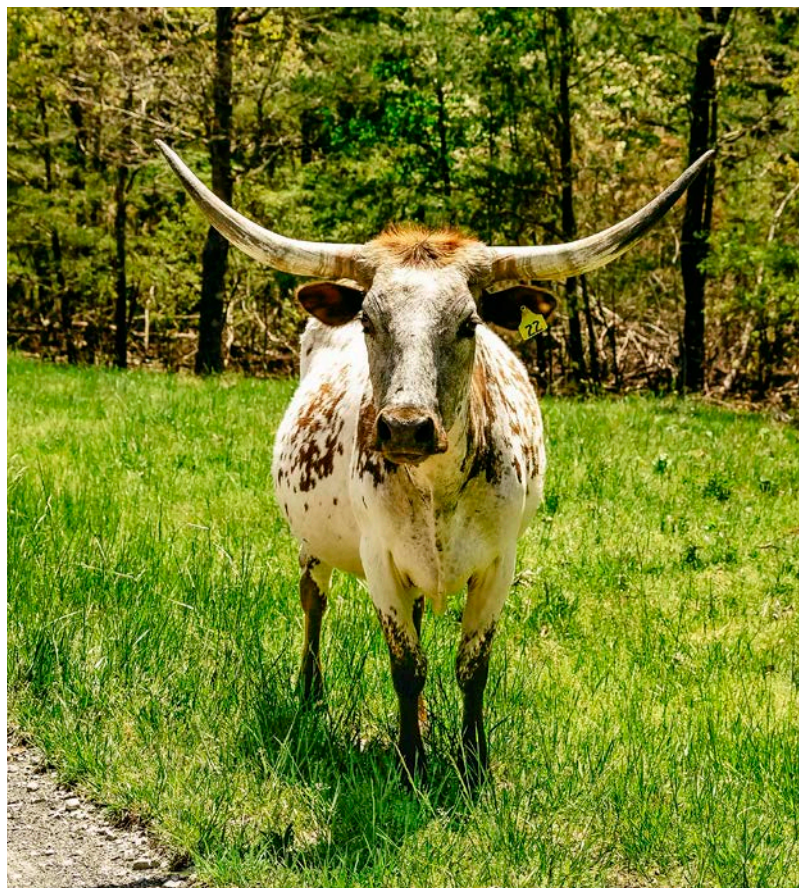
The equipment shed, top, houses all manner of farm machinery. Above, George gingerly drives his UTV through one of the land's creek beds.

other cows ignore. Even so, I watch them as I work. If they get spooked, those horns can cause major damage. Their meat is leaner than Angus and therefore less desirable. They eat native warm-season grass, some weeds and spring forest growth. We use them to help expand our native grass savannas. Financially it's a toss-up, but I want to bring the ecology back to its native state, so we raise more Longhorns than Angus.

Birds, Boats & Burns

➔➔ **April 15** I enjoy the bright colors, songs and antics of the bird species that pass through our area. Last year a pair of killdeer nested just off the side of our driveway. They feigned injury whenever we passed the nest.

➔➔ **April 17** The kids and I took a kayak outing on Obed River's Clear Creek. This beautiful stretch is the only federally protected waterway in Tennessee. The water quality lives



From the front porch of the farmhouse (top), George can admire his longhorns (above) and watch the calves as they romp along the fields, exploring their new world.

up to its name, and the cliffs that tower overhead seem to stand guard for the river. The area is loved by whitewater paddlers and rock climbers from around the world.

➔➔ **April 18** Controlled-burn season is short but important for providing wildlife habitat, encouraging the growth of native plants, supplying fodder for the cattle and preventing accidental fires. Today I met with Jacqueline Broeker, the Strike Team coordinator for the state department of ag's forestry division. She will lead the burn crews here. Jacqueline is an experienced burn boss, and I am confident in her leadership and crew.

➔➔ **April 19** I didn't sleep well. Two years ago, while doing a burn, the wind picked up in the evening and our fire threatened to get away from us. I will never forget it. Though the crew contained the blaze, it served as a reminder of how fast a burn can move. It's good to have Jacqueline on our team this time around.

➔➔ **April 20** The weather yesterday cooperated and our burn began as planned. I woke early today, checked in with Jacqueline and rode out with her to ensure the crew was ready.

Biodiversity on the Farm

➔➔ **April 22** It's interesting to see newly burned fields in a charred state. Today's inspection showed that even though the fire engulfed the designated areas, some shrubs and trees were unscathed. That's called a patchy burn, which creates a diverse mosaic on the landscape. Some places look barren, but grasses will soon cover these fields. By next season we'll turn cattle out to graze.

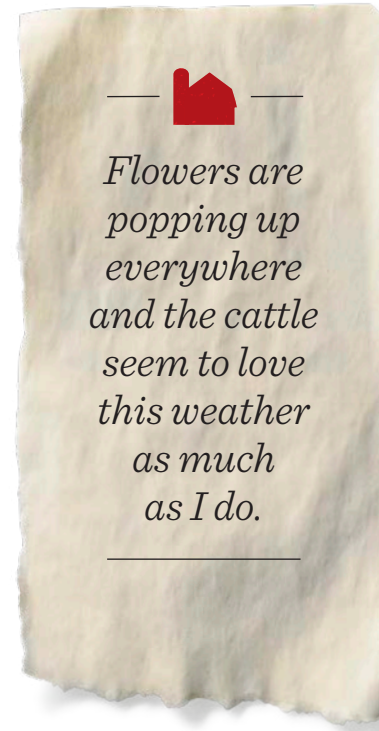
➔➔ **April 23** The farm has had a lot of traffic this month, and its miles of gravel roads have paid a high price. Such roads are labor-intensive to maintain, but this is part of the cost of a successful farm. Today was a good day to get on the grader and deal with some of the worst spots.

➔➔ **April 25** As I walked toward the barn, I took a short detour to check the flow of water coming into the upper pond. Adequate water supply is critical for the cattle operation, and protecting water quality is a job I take seriously. Cattle lead healthier lives when they have access to clean water. I like to keep the cattle high on the mountain in spring when the smaller creeks are flowing. They can drink from these sources until June. In summer's heat, our ponds at the lower elevation become the primary source for hydrating thirsty cows.

➔➔ **April 26** I checked on some of the recently burned woods. By clearing underbrush and allowing us to reseed native grasses, these burns help us restore the habitat of the northern bobwhite (aka bobwhite quail), which is facing extinction. I was ecstatic last summer when we managed to capture one on video.

➔➔ **April 28** Flowers are popping up everywhere and the cattle seem to love this weather as much as I do. The calves look fat and happy as they explore further from their mothers' sides. It makes me smile to watch them run and jump as they charge down the field. We've been breeding our cattle with the goal of creating the perfect bull for the plateau. I'm sure a few of this year's calves will strengthen the herd's genetic lines.

➔➔ **April 29** I love this land. Coal Creek is at the heart of biodiversity



Flowers are popping up everywhere and the cattle seem to love this weather as much as I do.

in the region. Sure, I've had to make choices. I've had to choose between zombie beetles and poison to save my hemlock trees that were dying from invasive beetles. (Zombie beetles eat the others; poison is just poison.) I've learned to appreciate the value that a natural ecosystem adds to the farm. I watch the bottom line, of course, but I also watch the native grasses and wildlife return. I look forward to seeing what the next 10 years will bring.

➔➔ **April 30** Coal Creek Farm is a cattle farm, an environmental experiment and the catalyst for so many memories. I often recall specific locations—like the spot where my oldest daughter found a special mushroom or where my oldest son photographed a common grackle. Helping the land resemble what it looked like hundreds of years ago is a lifelong task, but I'm up for it. I'm incredibly lucky to live in this paradise while contributing to the local environment and economy. 🌱

SPEEDWASH™

Pressure Washing System



POWER BRUSH ▼
cleans decks and driveways up to 4X faster!



ULTRA-FAST. EASY to USE. BUILT to LAST.

A complete pressure washing system from Generac that provides ALL the tools you need for every application.

Up to 3200 PSI for FAST, thorough cleaning!

POWERDIAL™ GUN puts pressure control at your fingertips!

CLEANING TOOLS make washing anything FAST and EASY!

LIMITED-TIME OFFER!*

GET THE COMPLETE SYSTEM
with **FREE Cleaning Tools & FREE Shipping!**

*Visit online for offer details.



Order Today

GeneracSpeedWash.com

Toll Free 877-389-1880

★ USA

ENGINEERED & BUILT
Assembled in the USA
using domestic and
foreign parts.