Daniel Receives National Award for Pastureland Conservation

Richmond, VA, February 10, 2016 – Native Virginian J.B. Daniel recently received the American Forage and Grassland Council’s Pastureland Conservationist of the Year award for his exceptional education and outreach to promote sustainable grazing practices statewide.

This annual award recognizes a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee who has exemplified outstanding service to the agency, our clients, and the science of grazing land management. Daniel received this recognition for excelling in five categories: communication, training, partnerships, conservation application, and job complexity.

As the state’s Forage and Grassland Agronomist, J.B. is committed to education and outreach. He serves as an advisor to the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC), providing key support to the annual VFGC winter conference series with an annual attendance of more than 500 producers and grazing advisors. He also spearheaded the development of the “Beginning Grazer School,” a multi-day, immersion-style training course on management-intensive grazing.

Demonstration farms are another key component of his outreach strategy to promote sustainable practice implementation. In 2010, J.B. began working with Shenandoah Valley farmers to launch a project promoting year-round grazing and reduce the need to feed stored hay. Many other demonstration farms have now been added throughout the state, and other initiatives followed to explore the use of annuals in livestock grazing systems and the silvopasture practice, which integrates forage grazing and forest production.

J.B. is a regular contributor to the VFGC newsletter, The Virginia Forager and helped create the highly popular Virginia Graziers’ Planner distributed to approximately 4,000 agricultural producers and partners. He obtained outside grant funds to develop and distribute this calendar, which includes carefully chosen images of highly progressive management practices, along with monthly technical recommendations and reminders.

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J.B. helped pioneer the use of rainfall simulators to demonstrate the damaging effects of runoff on pastureland. NRCS recently profiled one of his demonstrations in their “Science of Soil Health” video series and he hosted Virginia’s *Gaining Ground: Successful Graziers’ Tell Their Stories* movie, featuring four leading Virginia graziers and compelling demonstrations with the rainfall simulator. To date, more than 6,000 DVDs have been distributed throughout the state and to NRCS grazing specialists in almost 20 other states.

“J.B.’s extensive knowledge of pastureland management and ability to collaborate with partners has made him extremely effective in getting conservation on the ground and earned the gratitude of farmers and colleagues alike,” says State Conservationist Jack Bricker. “He can effectively communicate complex technical information and convey the soil and water quality impacts of grazing management while helping meet landowner production goals.”

J.B. holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences from VA Tech. Prior to joining NRCS, he served as a Virginia Agricultural Extension Agent and an Environmental Specialist. J.B. was raised in Lunenburg County and now resides in Amelia with his wife and three children.