Conservation Agriculture: Quantifying Results and Expanding Territory

After a decade of collaboration between Landscape Architects, Conservation Biologists and Master Farmers emergent useful data are shaping new initiatives in Conservation Agriculture. This session deepens our understating of monitoring, feedback loops and resilience in innovative, designed productive landscapes. Case studies include farms in New Zealand, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Tennessee.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Understand the benefits of collaborating with conservation biologists and farmers on large-scale sites to establish a cross-discipline design dialogue.
• Discover new applications of the traditional landscape architecture skill set to improve sustainability in areas where the profession has rarely been involved.
• Use landscape architecture systems approach to create balanced designs that consider the larger ecology, culture, and the financially and productively sustainable agricultural land.
• Analyze presented systems for acquiring and using performance matrixes for landscapes in productive environments.

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

I. Introduction - The ConAg Studio
   a. Why ConAg - Issues
   b. Redefining Production
   c. The Players - Farmer, Scientist, Landowner, Landscape Architect

II. ConAg Studio in Action – Case Studies
   a. Seven Ponds - led by Conservation Biologist James Gibbs
      • The Beginning
      • BioBlitz after 15 years of design and implementation
   b. Overlook Farm - led by Master Farmer Zach Wolf
      • A New Model in Practice - From Pleasure Horse Farm to Silvopasture
      • Cultural Plan - Olmsted’s Legacy
      • Conservation Plan – BioBlitz, Invasives and Monitoring
      • Assessing design after implementation
   c. Tennessee Farm - led by Landscape Architect Thomas Woltz
      • Resetting an ecology for conservation and livestock
      • Creating a closed loop system for cattle production
      • Development of year-round rotational grazing
      • Goals, data, and education
PRESENTERS

Thomas Woltz, FASLA, PLA, NZILA
Principal and Owner of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects. During the past 19 years of practice, Woltz and his firm have achieved a body of work that integrates the beauty and function of built form and craftsmanship with an understanding of complex biological systems, and has yielded hundreds of acres of reconstructed wetlands, reforested land, native meadows, and flourishing wildlife habitat. NBW’s designs reveal narratives of the land in places where people live, work, and play creating a sense of connection and inspiring stewardship. Current NBW projects include Houston’s Memorial Park, Centennial Park in Nashville, and the Hudson Yards East landscape in Manhattan.

James Gibbs
Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology at the State University of New York’s College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) in Syracuse, New York. He is an adjunct faculty member at Columbia University in the City of New York and the Charles Darwin Foundation in Galapagos, Ecuador, and Vice Chair with the Siberian Altai Assistance Project.

Zachary Wolf
After attending Columbia University, where he majored in Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology, Zachary worked for several ecological research centers and then returned to farming as the Field Manager at Stone Barns Center to try to apply ecological theory to hands-on land management. Zach currently manages a diversified farm in the Hudson Valley and directs the Growing Farmer Initiative at Stone Barns Center where he is helping train new farmers in resilient agriculture.