

# What Land Conservation Means to Me

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Age 12

Horse & Hound Pony Club

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I am going to tell you about my thinking on land conservation through a story. This story is very dear to me because its about my dad and it sort of lets me laugh at him about it.

This story is about my dad and his wild ride through the Black Hills National Forest, just before I was born. It's one of my favorites. It all started when my aunt loaned my dad a horse named Baby. My aunt told my dad that Baby would take care of him and just take him around the house-- well fifteen minutes later he was on a wild ride. Baby took him through branches and bushes galore. But finally, many hours later, Baby stopped in front of a beautiful river, and she would not cross it. He was able to get a signal on his phone and he called my mom, but she could only make out three words "rock, river, road" and luckily my aunt knew where he was. He had ridden five miles that day, over tough terrain, was missing several hours and as it turns out, Baby had taken him to about a mile away from the stable where her boyfriend was, where she spent the winters. Even if it was scary I think that it is was a good experience to have because I think that experiences like that teach people to appreciate nature, I mean what's more fulfilling than traveling through a forest at breakneck speed on horseback with man's best friend following behind? Dad wouldn't have had this

experience had the large forest not been nationally protected. The Black Hills were sacred to my Native ancestors and that day, my dad got to be one with land and animals.

As for me, since joining the Hunt Club, my family has taken time to clean up the trails and pick up trash around our clubhouse. It is very important to do trail maintenance because this helps maintain good relations with landowners who let us ride on their land and allows us to safely ride through their property. Last year, when we were doing trail maintenance, we picked up barbed wire, beer bottles, broken glass, plastic, and even lost horseshoes. Another way we protect the land is by not leaving trash around after the whoopee wagon, a truck that delivers food/drinks. The next way we protect land is by always steering clear of crops, so we don't trample them. We have a landowner's picnic to thank the landowners for letting us ride on their land. We even leave out some food for the foxes.

All land and animals should be appreciated whether a horse, hound, cat, or a chicken. The land we hunt on is basically our entire world and if we take better care of it, we will be able to enjoy it more and for longer.

