tor in slowing or reversing the impacts of human-caused climate change.”

The Blakes have also instituted shorter-duration, higher-intensity grazing, letting the cows’ hooves and manure do much of the work of tilling and fertilizing the earth. They’ve reduced their use of fossil fuels by eliminating hay production; are developing a new, more effective digital mapping range-monitoring system; and are participating in a pilot carbon-sequestration project. Alex adds that among ranchers he knows and has met through Western Sustainability Exchange, “Members of our generation are getting excited about new practices, attending trainings and workshops, asking neighbors about what they are trying, and seeing things done differently.” He himself is part of a start-up that raises and sells all-grass-fed beef, and would like to see more of Keewaydin’s own grass-fed and grass-finished beef (cattle raised on a forage diet exclusively) sold directly to customers, so the ranch could get paid a premium for its more sustainable practices and humane treatment of the animals. “We’re not necessarily proponents of the feedlot model,” he says, “but recognize its vital importance in the current system.”

Raising high volumes of grass-finished cattle is not easy in North America because it requires large tracts of land and a longer growing season than exists in most regions. Active debate continues about whether grass-finished cattle can meet current global beef demand, he adds, but plenty of people see the urgent need for finding a better model and are “trying to figure this out.”

Meanwhile, this spring the Blakes were easily working 11-hour days, immersed in caring for the cows, fixing a break in the corral’s main water line, and figuring out, again,