

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

34 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

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George Boody Retiring as LSP Executive Director; Board Chooses Mark Schultz to Lead Organization

George Boody, who has guided the Land Stewardship Project for almost a quarter-century as its executive director, is stepping down, effective at the end of December. LSP's board of directors has voted unanimously to appoint Mark Schultz as Boody's successor. Schultz is LSP's associate director, as well as the organization's director of programs and Policy and Organizing Program director.

"George should be extremely proud of how he has guided LSP during a period of impressive growth in the organization's work, outreach and accomplishments," says board chair Juliet Tomkins. "In this transition to new leadership with Mark, we are excited to have his long-term experience with LSP and his vision for taking LSP forward through the coming years."

Boody started with LSP as its managing director in 1990. In 1993, he took over as executive director, succeeding the organization's co-founder, Ron Kroese, who had led LSP since it was launched in 1982. During Boody's tenure, LSP became a membership organization and expanded its work to encompass four major program areas: Policy and Organizing, Community Based Food Systems, Farm Beginnings, and Membership and Individual Giving. The organization's staff has also grown, with almost three-dozen organizers and support staffers working in three offices and from farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Under his guidance, LSP has gained national prominence for its work to reform farm policy, support beginning farmers and build a just and sustainable food and farming system. Boody also personally led LSP's work in developing influential landscape-level research on multifunctional farming.

Boody is not leaving LSP completely —

after December he will focus his efforts in a part-time capacity with the Chippewa 10% Project, which he helped launch five years ago, as well as other projects.

"I am enormously grateful for the opportunity to serve the Land Stewardship Project's members and staff for the past two



George Boody (left) and Mark Schultz. (LSP Photo)

• • •
"I am enormously grateful for the opportunity to serve the Land Stewardship Project's members and staff..."

— George Boody

• • •
more time to my passion for making science available to the public and assisting LSP in other ways."

New Executive Director

Schultz first joined LSP as a grassroots organizer for LSP's Farmland Investor Accountability Program in 1987, working to hold major life insurance corporations accountable for their conservation and finan-

cial management of farmland they owned. He's been with LSP since then, except for a two-year period during which he helped lead a national corporate accountability campaign focused on General Electric. At LSP, he has built from scratch one of the most respected grassroots organizing teams in the country. He and his staff have led numerous policy and organizing campaigns involving, among other issues, Farm Bill reform resulting in the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, challenging the mandatory pork checkoff, organizing with local citizens to stop corporate-backed factory farms and frac sand strip-mines, healthcare reform, and maintaining local democracy/local control in Minnesota. In recent years, Schultz has worked extensively to train the next generation of organizers and has helped lead several national coalitions working for transformational change in the food system.

"LSP is an inspiring and effective organization," says Schultz. "Our growing membership and strong member-leaders on our board and steering committees, along with our excellent staff, have made it so. We know we have much to do to achieve stewardship and justice on the land and in our society, requiring more great work from LSP and strengthened alliances with other organizations and communities with a similar vision. Excessive corporate power and deeply embedded racial and economic injustice are huge obstacles. But the power of organized people in communities across our region and nation is growing. Leading LSP into the important work ahead as LSP's executive director is an honor and responsibility I look forward to."

Boody and Schultz have been working with LSP's board of directors to plan a smooth transition as LSP heads into its 35th year in 2017. □

Dec. 9 Event in Northfield

A special event honoring George Boody's contribution to the Land Stewardship Project's work will be held Friday, Dec. 9, from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., at St. Olaf College (Black and Gold Ballroom in Buntrock Commons) in Northfield, Minn. RSVPs are required by contacting LSP's Amelia Shoptaugh at 612-722-6377 or amelias@landstewardshipproject.org.

The Beauty Beneath Our Feet

How Deborah Fouch combines her love of the land with a passion for art.

By Brian DeVore

For an artist, it's always nice to get a little public recognition—it helps make up for all those hours spent alone in the studio. So when Deborah Fouch's piece, "Soil Horizon," won a blue ribbon at the Minnesota State Fair in 2015, she was thrilled. But even more exciting was that the artwork—it uses various pieces of painted fabric to represent the different levels of a typical living soil profile—actually got people to thinking about a resource that is often treated like dead dirt.

"There were people standing in front of this piece talking about living soil and what farmers are doing now that's not good for it, and what things other farmers are doing that are good for it," recalls Fouch. "Right there, I have succeeded."

One State Fair attendee was even overheard asking what she could do herself to help resolve the problem of degraded soil. As a result, Fouch was able to strike up a conversation with the woman and provided her information based on her own experience and research into soil health and ways the general public can promote it—from having a more natural backyard and garden to supporting sustainable agriculture in the marketplace and in the policy realm.

"She now has real information and she may act differently having seen that piece of art and having had that conversation with somebody," says Fouch of the fairgoer.

At that moment, Fouch realized she had succeeded in blending her passions for expressing herself through art with natural resource protection and childhood memories of tagging along after her soil conservationist father. And that lively mix had produced artwork that did more than enlighten or entertain for a fleeting moment—it had gotten people motivated to take the next step. It had, appropriately, hit pay dirt.

She's explaining all this while deftly manipulating cloth, yarn, rocks and tissue paper

on a tabletop in her bright studio, which is located in a former factory in Northeast Minneapolis. A pair of old white silos outside her window bounce afternoon light at just the right angle into the workspace. It's not surprising that what Fouch is working on is another "Soil Horizon" piece—since her showing at the State Fair, the artist has found strong interest in what she calls her "soil works." It's resulted in several commissions, and even more importantly, has brought her in contact with farmers who



"It was exciting to get a blue ribbon, but what's more exciting is there were people standing in front of this piece talking about living soil," says Deborah Fouch of her State Fair experience with her work, "Soil Horizon." (LSP Photo)

give her hope that healthy soil will not become a museum piece of the past—it can also be part of our agricultural future.

Finding a Medium & a Message

Fouch grew up moving around rural Iowa, going where her late father John McCleary's various postings with the Soil Conservation Service (the predecessor to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) took the family. She attended the University of Northern Iowa and studied art and history, hoping to be a painter. But Fouch switched to working with fiber after realizing both she and one of her professors agreed on one key point: "I was not a good painter."

Fiber arts and working with fabric ap-

pealed to Fouch because it brought back memories of sewing with her grandmothers. After graduation, she moved to Minneapolis in 1977 and started out doing life-sized dolls, tiny dolls, tiny houses, angels and fairies. "You have to make a living," says Fouch with a shrug as she shows off examples of that earlier work. But these days, she focuses mostly on large fabric pieces that can be hung on walls, and the theme is almost always related to the environment—it's fragility and our relationship to it.

The artwork took on a personal tint four years ago when her father died, and Fouch began doing pieces related to his work: soil, roots and the way they all interact. It was a personal approach to art, a way to honor her father's legacy.

The first "Soil Horizon" was done from memory—Fouch basically started layering fabric and pouring paint until it looked right and resembled what she remembered

from Soil Conservation Service materials and from the information her father had shared. The artist describes one breakthrough she had: pouring paint through real rocks perfectly replicates the texture and pore spaces of healthy soil. As she works on her latest piece, Fouch shows how shredded fabric on the surface of the "topsoil" bears an uncanny resemblance to prairie grasses waving in the wind. She pulls strings and pieces of yarn apart to resemble root systems and other bits of soil life. Print impressions of those "roots" are made and excess paint is allowed to dribble down through the "subsoil," adding an even more organic look to the work. In fact, perhaps the most striking aspect of the work is the roots—they start just beneath the surface and extend

down through everything, connecting the surface world with the underworld, providing the sense that nutrients and energy are being exchanged up and down the profile.

"Then this part is the subsoil with the roots moving down through it," says Fouch, pointing to the living, spindly highways so important to the soil universe. "They're doing the work of moving water. And because I work with really wet paint, water is moving my pigment the way roots move the water. It's this sweet metaphor that I get to engage in."

Fouch works with everything from raw cotton and canvas to rice paper and organza (a sheer shiny material once used in

Soil Art, see page 5...

prom dresses). She also extracts the natural colors and shapes she's looking for by such ingenious methods as spraying vinegar on a rusted piece of metal and letting the oxides bleed out onto cloth.

The result is uncanny, making it hard to determine where the representational nature of the art ends, and the scientific replication begins. That's no accident. These days, Foutch spends hours doing research on soil and other aspects of the natural world.

"It's like science is my hook, my home base into our system," she says.

One recent project of Foutch's involves replicating the very beginnings of the Earth itself, complete with ragged outlines representing shifting continents and nightmarishly beautiful pigments standing in for the "primordial soup" from which we originated. What sparked the artist's interest in undertaking this piece was some reading she'd done about the Earth's pre-history and an experience traveling to Mexico where she stood on an island that consists of a landscape resembling those early days in the planet's existence. Standing in her studio, Foutch re-tells the story of life on Earth: asteroids pelted the planet, beginning a chain reaction that resulted in it raining for millions of years, creating oceans and the biological stew that spawned life. "Don't you love that story?" Foutch asks, interrupting herself.

This is all leading up to something, something that has relevance to all of us today while connecting to Foutch's passion and upbringing.

"I'm working my way up to soil eventually," she says of the place she's at with this artwork. "You have to have things alive and dying before you have soil."

Foutch uses science to not only inform her work, but to help educate the general public. When her art is displayed, she includes a short write-up that puts things in context for the viewer. For example, her "Soil Horizon" piece at the State Fair included an explanation that there are more things alive in a handful of soil than there have ever been humans on the planet since the beginning of time. Foutch is particularly interested in all the new science emerging about the biological activity taking place in our land's basement and how microscopic life interacts—this was information not available to her father when he was doing his conservation work.

Stewards of the Soil

Foutch's art is not only inspired by the resource itself and the science behind it, but

how her father worked with farmers to preserve and improve it. "He'd get in by telling them stories, and then he'd hook them in with more information," she says, adding that he could get farmers excited about changing their practices by using the, "We're going to do this together" approach. "So for me, it's the same thing: find the stories—they're going to hook people in. And then there's the action you can take."

That beats her initial knee-jerk reaction to seeing exposed fall-plowed



Everything from "prom dress" fabric to paint dribbled over rocks went into creating Foutch's "Soil Horizon" piece. (Photo courtesy of Deborah Foutch)

fields along the road and wanting to put up a billboard that said, "He's ruining the soil." She's decided "shame" is not the way to bring about change when it comes to the way farmers, and really all of us, view our relationship with soil. Foutch knew from watching her father that there were farmers out there who could be models for building and maintaining soil health. So she set out to get reacquainted with that side of agriculture.

Two people who stood in front of Foutch's artwork during the successful State Fair showing were Dan Guenther and Margaret Pennings, pioneering Community Supported Agriculture farmers. They were so struck by the piece that they commissioned Foutch to do a simi-

lar one for a meeting room at their Common Harvest Farm in Osceola, Wis.

"She gave a talk here at our farm when she unveiled the piece and it was one of the most moving pleas for soil stewardship I have ever heard," recalls Guenther. "She spoke about the power of art to spark deep emotional connections to the land and the natural world."

Besides Guenther and Pennings, Foutch now has relationships with a handful of farmers, including some from her Iowa roots, who are good soil stewards. Her goal is to put on art shows in rural communities where farming still prevails, connecting with farmers, and eventually, scientists, who can help communicate an important message to a wider audience. Why not put on events that demonstrate to the public how "lovely" our soil is, and then provide an opportunity for farmers and scientists to explain why it's also a critical natural resource, and what we can all do to support it?

"You can have the things that we want to have in our food system, and still have the soil that we need to have by farming in a smarter way," Foutch says. "It's about knowing more deeply what the system is."

Foutch has been doing art for four decades, but still gets excited over the thrill of discovery, whether it be a new factoid about the soil universe—she just read about how plants can communicate underground—or an inventive way to replicate nature in art—"Look at this! I got this!" Foutch says in an excited whisper as she demonstrates how pouring paint through stones replicates the texture of the soil profile.

Some of those discoveries can be depressing, such as the fact that industrialized agriculture has killed off much of the biological life in soil. But Foutch draws hope from environmental success stories like the bald eagle's return from the brink after the pesticide DDT was banned. She is also inspired by farmers like Guenther and Pennings, who care about the soil and its role in creating a sustainable food system.

"I'm talking to people and I'm making connections," she says as she returns to her work. "We're like the roots underground making connections." □

More information on Deborah Foutch's art is at www.deborahfoutch.net.

Give it a Listen

On episode 185 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Deborah Foutch talks about using art to get people to stop treating the soil like dirt: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/886>.



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LSP News

New LSP Montevideo Office

The Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office has moved. The new address is: 117 1st Street South, Montevideo, MN 56265 (upstairs from the Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) office in downtown Montevideo). The telephone number remains the same: 320-269-2105. Stop by and say hello as the staff gets settled in.

2016 LSP Twin Cities Cookout & Potluck

A pie raffle (right photo) was one of the highlights of this year's Land Stewardship Project Cookout and Potluck. The event, which was held on July 28 in the yard next to LSP's Minneapolis office, featured music by the Brass Messengers, brats from Hidden Stream Farm, burgers from Farm On Wheels and vegetarian fare from Tempeh Tantrum. Beer was provided by Summit, Insight Brewing, Fair State Brewing Co-op, Dangerous Man Brewing and Fulton Brewing. Besides the pie raffle, there was a potluck (bottom photo) silent auction and games for kids. This is the 15th year of the annual event.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered their time, silent auction items, food and beverages to make this a great event. (LSP Photos) ☐



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Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* e-letter to get monthly updates from the Land Stewardship Project sent straight to your inbox. Details are at www.landstewardshipproject.org/signup. ☐

Myth Busters Series

Tired of the myths propagated by industrial agriculture? Check out the Land Stewardship Project's *Myth Busters* series for well-researched and often-cited writing that counters the misinformation surrounding agriculture and our food system.

They can be found at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/about/library-resources/mythbusters>. For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. ☐

Land Stewardship Project Staff Updates

Scott DeMuth has joined the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program staff. DeMuth previously served an LSP internship, during which he interviewed beginning farmers about their experiences with crop insurance and helped develop materials for better managing risk on diverse farm operations (*see the No. 2, 2016, Land Stewardship Letter*).



Scott DeMuth

DeMuth has a bachelor's degree and master's degree in sociology from, respectively, the University of St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota. He also has a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies from ACTC (Augsburg College/U of M). He is currently pursuing a doctorate in sociology at the U of M. DeMuth works with a Dakota youth group from the Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, Minn., helping them increase access to traditional native foods.

In his current position, DeMuth is helping organize Farm Beginnings classes (*see page 16*) in west-central Minnesota. He can be reached at 320-269-2105 or sdemuth@landstewardshipproject.org.

Ben Anderson has joined LSP's Policy and Organizing Program team. Anderson has a bachelor's degree in economics and history from Creighton University and a master's degree in social philosophy from Loyola University.



Ben Anderson

He has worked as a lead organizer for ISAIAH, where he restarted and built from scratch the organization's Spanish speaking organizing base and was the lead on three issue campaigns. He has also worked as an organizer for the Minnesota Nurses Association and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

At LSP, Anderson is focusing on organizing around reforming U.S. farm policy, among other federal issues. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or banderson@landstewardshipproject.org.

Katie Doody has joined LSP's Policy and Organizing Program team. Doody has a bachelor's degree in history and Hispanic studies from Brandeis University and has

done master's level coursework at the University of Minnesota in English as a Second Language (ESL). For the past two years, she has worked as an ESL teacher at Anne Sullivan Elementary School in Minneapolis. Doody has also worked as a tutor. During the past year, Doody was a Tar Sands Team Volunteer, during which she supported MN350's opposition to tar sands oil pipelines.



Katie Doody

At LSP, Doody is organizing around state policy issues and factory farms. She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or kdoody@landstewardshipproject.org.

Sylvia Nopar Thomas served an LSP journalism internship this summer. Nopar Thomas has a geography degree from Macalester College, where she received the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, allowing her to visit and work with 35 community radio stations in Bolivia, Peru, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Brazil, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar. She has served as a community radio advocate for Waite House Neighborhood Center in Minneapolis, and is currently a news and features producer for KFAI Radio. Nopar Thomas has also worked at a fruit farm laborer and as a produce assistant at a co-op.



Sylvia Nopar Thomas

While at LSP, she wrote profiles of farmers who are in various stages of transitioning their operations to the next generation. Those profiles will be featured in an upcoming issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, as well as in the *Farm Transitions Toolkit*, which is available at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmtransitiontools>.

Anna Kleven recently completed a journalism internship with LSP. She is a 2016 graduate of South High School in Minneapolis, where she was a staff writer and editor of the award-winning *Southerner* newspaper. Kleven is also a member of the Climate Generation Youth program and the Minneapolis Youth Congress. She also participated in the Amigos de Las Americas 2015 Bahoruco Project in the Dominican Republic and

volunteered for Urban Ventures. Kleven, who is entering Macalester College in 2017, is currently participating in the Expedition Education institute and volunteering with No Mas Muertes, a sanctuary movement migrant advocacy organization.



Anna Kleven

During her LSP internship, Kleven wrote about the sustainable food production and social justice work taking place at Hope Community in Minneapolis. That article will be featured in an upcoming issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*.

Robyn Skrebes has left LSP's Membership and Individual Giving Program to return to teaching.

Since joining LSP's staff as a major donor fundraiser earlier this year, Skrebes has conducted several visits with LSP members in Minnesota and Wisconsin, helping to deepen the organization's relationships with members and raise funds to carry the work forward. □



Robyn Skrebes

LSP's Abdinur Appointed to Environmental Justice Group

Land Stewardship Project organizer **Maryan Abdinur** has been appointed to an Environmental Justice Advisory Group recently created by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

She and 15 other Advisory Group members from around the state will provide input and recommendations to MPCA commissioner John Linc Stine about ways to incorporate the principles of environmental justice into the agency's work.

As an LSP organizer, Abdinur is working with the Hope Community in the Phillips

Neighborhood of South Minneapolis to help build a healthy and local community based food system. She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or mabdinur@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Maryan Abdinur

A Seamless Connection

LSP members get a firsthand look at the negative impacts of unfettered free trade and how Mexican communities are responding.

When a nonprofit organization working with indigenous farmers in the Mexican state of Oaxaca came up with the idea of promoting honey production, it appeared to be a great way for local people to bring cash into the community through export markets. After the honey enterprises took off, the nonprofit's staffers visited communities to discuss how the sweet gold would be collected and transported to the port in Veracruz. The visits showed that beekeeping was going well, but there was one problem: little honey was available for shipping out of the area.

Where did it all go? Into the pantries of the farmers' neighbors. It turns out honey has traditionally been an important food item in these communities—it is a healthy sweetener and is used in traditional ceremonies.

By the time the costs of bottling, transporting and paperwork were tallied up, it was more profitable for the beekeepers to sell locally. It also met a healthy food item would be feeding local people.

That story, which was related to a group of Land Stewardship Project members visiting Oaxaca in March, provided in a nutshell an example of how rural residents in the southern part of Mexico are fighting the onslaught of transnational corporations by utilizing local food production as a healthy, sustainable source of wealth generation.

"That's something that we all definitely took away from the trip: we know the problems that we face, whether it be in farming or community organizing, and we're the best ones to make changes," said Karissa Kostka, one of the trip participants. She works in marketing at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse, Wis., and Rochester, Minn.

NAFTA's Devastation

The 10-day trip, put together by LSP and Witness for Peace, focused almost exclusively on learning more about how indigenous rural residents in Oaxaca are utilizing their connection to the land, food and community to strengthen a part of the region that's been devastated since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), went into effect in 1994, and more recently since Mexico's constitutional reforms were passed in 2014. As a result of these and other changes, small farmers' holdings are targeted for purchase for industrial use or



One focus of the LSP trip to Oaxaca was to learn how trade agreements and other forces have negatively impacted local people. Here LSP members are shown with staff of the Center for the Orientation of Migrants (COMI) Migrant Support Center in Oaxaca City. (Photo by Eric Nelson)

tourist development, support for small farms is almost non-existent, communal lands are up for sale, and mega-projects have proliferated, polluting the land and off-shoring the profits. That's not to mention the fact that NAFTA has flooded the local markets with cheap corn, deeply impacting farmers who are raising a food grain that's an integral part of not just the economy, but the cultural life as well.

The end result has been a mass exodus of residents from Oaxaca and other parts of Mexico as they head to the U.S. in desperate search of jobs. The communities they

leave behind, once thriving farm towns, are often left desolate. Deborah Niebuhr, a Winona, Minn., resident who participated in the trip, says for her it helped put a human face on the impacts of trade agreements like NAFTA. The group visited a sanctuary for migrants who were trying to escape poverty, corruption and drug cartel violence. Mexico is now being crossed by refugees from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Younger people in those countries, in particular, often face a stark choice: become involved in violent gangs/the sex trade, or flee.

"I think there's some sort of myth in the United States that these people are just coming here to get a piece of the American pie," says Niebuhr, adding that most would prefer to stay home and want to go back to their homes as soon as they make some money. "It's not like they want to leave their family and communities, but they have to because they don't have a way to support their families."

"We heard stories from families, young men and teenagers that broke my heart and enraged me," recalls western Minnesota

farmer and LSP organizer Terry VanDerPol of the visit to the sanctuary. "They are fleeing countries, communities and families they love under direct threat of violence and no economic opportunity."

Self-Sufficiency

But the ways residents of Oaxaca are finding to spark hope in their own communities is inspiring, say trip participants. For example, one stop was the farm of Román Kruz and his family, who are using a combination of traditional agriculture and activism to bring back a self-sufficient way of life while protecting the land it exists on. They have built a compound

from local materials and are farming their land using the milpa system, which uses as its basis the interplanting of corn, beans and squash. Every edible aspect of their production is used, including what Minnesota farmers would consider "weeds."

"They farmed as part of who they were, as kind of an expression of their culture," says Hannah Breckbill, who operates Humble Hands Harvest, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm in Decorah, Iowa.

Farmers like Kruz see their farming and

Connection, see page 9...

activism on a wider scale as inseparable. For example, the farmer was very outspoken about the use of GMO corn in the region. Although GMO seeds are banned there, regulators don't enforce the law and they are being planted in the state. Oaxaca is considered by some to be the historical epicenter of domesticated corn, and over 30 different varieties of the traditional germplasm are grown there. There are major concerns that cross-pollination from GMO corn will contaminate the traditional varieties, replacing them with hybrids that, among other things, don't do well in the local climate.

Kruz and others have been getting the word out to other farmers in the area about the importance of protecting the heritage breeds using a combination of practical arguments—farmers need local varieties for local conditions—and a big picture philosophy that these genetically engineered breeds threaten the relationship between people, the land and their food.

“There's this saying that we heard that's part of the movement down there: ‘Without corn, there is no place.’” says Andrew Ehrmann, who, along with Betsy Allister, operates Spring Wind Farm in Northfield, Minn. “They know that their seeds and their food are their culture. It's that seamless connection between the land and the people.”

Sue Nielsen says one of the reasons this connection seems so seamless is that the people they visited value food as not just a source of nutrition—they also see it as part of many cultural elements: music, dance and celebration, for example. She recalls that during the trip conversations, both big and small, seemed to center around the dinner table. It had a profound impact on the group. One of the nights Nielsen, who is a sous-chef at St. Olaf College in Northfield, suggested the group break bread together—literally. They passed around a loaf and each person said what they were thankful for.

“It was really heartfelt, and I think everybody enjoyed that,” recalls Nielsen. “I think that's what food is about. It draws us in as a community and you get past, ‘What's the weather like?’ You really get at the heart of the matter.”

Paula and Sara Freid, who operate a Catholic Worker Farm near Lake City, Minn., were particularly struck by the communal aspect of the communities they visited. Farmers and other residents in an area would often work together to share land as well as ways of adding value to what it produced. This communal activity made it easier for the rural residents to mix social justice activism into their daily lives.



The group listens to the dying presentation at Vida Nueva, a weaving co-op that has had a major impact in the local community. (Photo by Eric Nelson)

“Our Catholic Worker Farm is social justice oriented, so it was exciting to see that,” says Sara, adding that the trip drove home to her that when it comes to international trade and the corporate takeover of agriculture, farmers in Mexico and their counterparts in Minnesota “are dealing with the same issues.”

One example of that communal work was Vida Nueva, a weaving co-op that was originally started in 1996 as a way to provide employment for unmarried women. The co-op has flourished, and the weavings it produces from locally raised wool are world famous. But its impacts have gone far beyond just adding value to a local product—the co-op has gotten involved with everything from egg production to recycling, according to Mairi Doerr, a Kenyon, Minn., farmer. The result has been that Vida Nueva has become an economic engine in the area, with even the men seeing how it contributes to the community.

“So the weaving co-op was not really an island,” says Doerr. “It was more about empowering people who didn't feel empow-

ered, and as they got stronger there was a ripple effect in the greater community. As the late Paul Wellstone used to say, ‘When we all do better we all do better.’ This co-op just seems like a living example of that.”

Arrested Development

The trip was led by Minnesota farmer Charlie Kersey, a member of LSP's board of directors who has visited Oaxaca before. He says the communities they spent time with proved that self-reliance and communal support are not mutually exclusive. Farmers like Román Kruz have seen firsthand that the corporate, multinational way of controlling agriculture does not benefit local people. So

they've decided that instead of trying to compete in an unfair system by, for example, getting larger, they are going to create their own way of doing things. That means emphasizing the production of traditional foods for local markets that serve local people. It's a good lesson to take back home to the U.S., where the current food and farming system is so broken that only complete reform will bring about sustainable change. And that change must start in local communities, some of which to an outsider may appear “less developed” than Midwestern towns and farms, says Kersey. But a farmer integrat-

ing various crops and livestock to produce food for local consumption seems to be thinking much more about the future than one raising thousands of acres of monocrops for an international market that's out of their control, he says.

Asks Kersey, “Who really is the more developed citizenry?” □

Give it a Listen

On episode 184 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, several members of the Land Stewardship Project's delegation to Oaxaca talk about their experience: <http://landstewardship-project.org/posts/podcast/883>.

Witness for Peace

The trip to Oaxaca wouldn't have been possible without the help of Witness for Peace (WFP), a national, grassroots organization committed to nonviolence.

The WFP mission is to support peace, justice and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Upper Midwest chapter of WFP alone organizes several trips to Latin America each year.

For more information, see www.witnessforpeace.org or call 920-421-2269.

Corporate Insurance System is Failing to Deliver Healthcare

Latest premium increases make it clearer than ever the industry is about profits, not people.

By Jonathan Maurer-Jones & Paul Sobocinski

Mark Berle grew up on a farm and has spent his whole adult life—more than 30 years—raising crops and livestock. Today, he produces hogs, corn and soybeans on 400 acres near Gibbon, Minn. Berle has gotten to the point in his farming career where he has enough experience to deal with what markets, weather and the other vagaries of agriculture can toss his way.

But that doesn't mean he's not vulnerable to set-backs from other outside forces that are beyond his control. For example, one of Berle's biggest struggles these days involves healthcare.

For 2016, the farmer's insurance cost was \$550 per month, with a \$6,500 deductible for the year. Insurance for his wife Gail is another \$550 per month, also with a \$6,500 deductible. She works part-time as a social worker and the costs of health insurance are becoming unbearable for the couple. Berle is used to investing money in his operation with the expectation that it will pay dividends later. But it's hard to justify paying insurance premiums when it's unclear what the payoff is.

"If you give farmers a break financially, they will spend the money," Berle says. "There are always things you need to spend money on. But when you put \$20,000 in an envelope and send it to an insurance company, it's gone."

Berle is not alone in dealing with the crisis in our healthcare system. Farm families across Minnesota are hit especially hard by a system that depends on employers providing healthcare, and on corporate insurance companies that prioritize their bottom lines over the people who need care. Families are forced off of farms to look for jobs that provide insurance. Farmers who would like to grow their operations sometimes have little choice but to keep income low enough to qualify for affordable public healthcare programs. Young people who face huge start-up costs to get into farming have yet another barrier in the form of outrageous healthcare expenses.

And the problems with healthcare go well beyond farmers. Self-employed people,

small businesses and even those with coverage through employers are feeling the effects of rising health insurance costs. In truth, we are all stuck in a healthcare system that is organized and implemented according to corporate values. Money and profit margins take precedent over actual healthcare and the needs of real human beings. We not only see this profit-driven approach with health insurance companies, but in other sectors as well. Corporate hospital systems that are not rooted in our communities, along with the unprecedented greed of pharmaceutical companies, also contribute to the projected 50 percent+ average escalation in Minnesota insurance premium costs.

One recent example of this can be seen with the epinephrine autoinjector, also known as the EpiPen, which is used for treating life-threatening anaphylactic reactions to bee stings, food allergies and even certain medications. Pharmaceutical giant Mylan has raised the price of the EpiPen more than 400 percent during the past six years. Meanwhile, Mylan had the second-highest executive compensation among U.S. drug and biotech firms over the past five years, according to a *Wall Street Journal* analysis. Its top five managers were paid a total of nearly \$300 million over that period. This kind of excessive profiteering clearly demonstrates that the corporate-controlled healthcare system has failed, and we need

to build something new which puts people's lives first.

Current Healthcare System

The largest group of Minnesotans — a little over half — get insurance through an employer (see the chart below for a full picture of where Minnesotans get their health insurance). About one-third of Minnesotans are covered by public programs that we have put in place as a society to ensure that people over age 65 and those with very low incomes can get the medical care they need.

Those who don't have employer coverage and don't qualify for one of these programs are left to buy insurance on their own. This group is at the center of the growing healthcare crisis.

This fall, insurance companies announced how much they plan to raise prices for Minnesotans who buy coverage individually in 2017 — and the news was nothing short of shocking. The average increase in monthly premiums will be more than 50 percent, with the smallest increase being 36 percent and several plans jumping more than 65 percent. This follows an announcement by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota that it will stop selling its regular insurance plans to people who buy their own cover-

Healthcare, see page 11...

Where Minnesotans Get Health Insurance Now

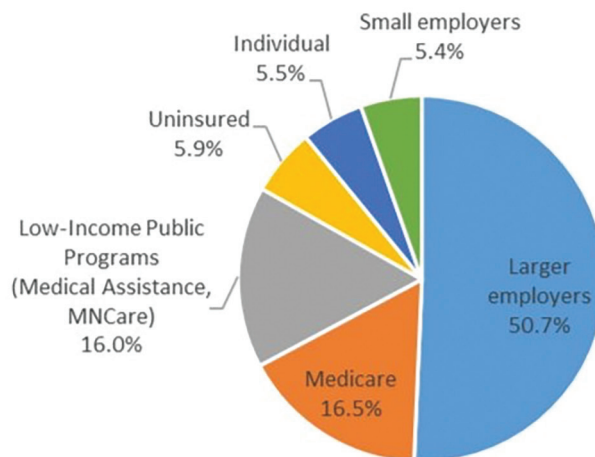


Figure 1

Source:
MN Dept. of
Commerce 2016
Rate Summary

age. Blue Cross has been popular in rural Minnesota, covering about one-third of the 300,000 people who bought individual plans in 2016, largely because of the wide network of doctors and clinics covered. For 2017, these 100,000 people will have to find a new insurance plan, with the plans available having much more limited choices as far as doctors and clinics are concerned.

The insurance companies claim their price increases and plan cuts are needed because they lost too much money from people in individual plans using too much healthcare. The real story is that insurance companies are now required to insure everyone, rather than excluding people with pre-existing conditions from coverage. But covering the people who need the most care doesn't work for insurance companies — they make money by NOT providing healthcare.

So people are left to suffer the consequences. The individual plans have become so expensive that they are nearly useless. Long-time Land Stewardship Project members Loni Kemp and Richard Nethercut are both self-employed, as a consultant and an attorney, respectively. Through 2015, they had opted for low deductibles and paid \$18,000 a year in premiums for the two of them. For 2016, they were shocked by Blue Cross's premium increases, so they kept Nethercut's plan at a cost of \$14,000 for the year, while downgrading Kemp's insurance to pay \$10,000 in premiums for a high deductible plan.

"Paying \$24,000 a year for health insurance while praying no one gets really sick? That is a tough pill to swallow," Kemp says. "Now we find out that even that isn't profitable enough for Blue Cross, and they kicked us out for 2017. Like other independently employed families, we wonder what we are going to do now."

If providing everyone with the health coverage people need means insurance companies cannot turn a profit and are unwilling to provide decent coverage, maybe it's time to look at a new system.

What We Can Do

How much creativity could we unleash if people did not have to worry so much about healthcare? We can build a healthcare system that is publicly run and publicly accountable for the good of Minnesotans, and that is affordable, high-quality and universal — where everyone is covered.

In 2017, LSP will push to raise the income level people can have and still qualify for MinnesotaCare, the state's publicly subsidized health plan for low- and moderate-

income Minnesotans. This would provide more families with access to quality, affordable healthcare. We should also allow people who currently have no choice but to buy an expensive plan from a corporate insurance company the option to buy MinnesotaCare instead. If insurance companies are unwilling to offer decent coverage to people who buy individual insurance, a public system with an eye toward the public good must step in to help address this crisis.

But to build the healthcare system we need, it will take Minnesotans all around the state raising our voices and demanding change. We are eager to hear your ideas and stories about the healthcare system, and to

work with you to make quality, affordable care a reality for all of us. To get involved in LSP's work on healthcare, contact one of us. □

LSP healthcare organizer Paul Sobocinski can be contacted at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@landstewardshipproject.org. Jonathan Maurer-Jones, also an LSP healthcare organizer, is at 218-213-4008 or jmaurer-jones@landstewardshipproject.org. More information on LSP's **Affordable Healthcare for All** work is at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Dealing with Healthcare in 2017

Unfortunately, many Land Stewardship Project members and other Minnesotans will be in the difficult position of trying to get along in the corporate insurance system with as little pain as possible next year. If you are one of the families that needs to buy your own insurance, look carefully for the best 2017 health insurance option for your situation.

In 2016, about 300,000 Minnesotans bought insurance on the individual market. But only one-third of those got their insurance through MNsure. That means a lot of people may have missed out on getting help to reduce their premiums. The average healthcare tax credit in Minnesota was about \$2,400 in 2016.

Here are Some Steps to Take

- Does your income qualify you for a more affordable insurance option? If you have to buy insurance on your own, check the chart below to see if your income qualifies you for any of Minnesota's public healthcare programs or federal tax credits to help afford a private plan.

- Is your entire income less than the number in the far right column below for your household size? If so, you should qualify for cheaper monthly insurance premiums — but the only way to get these tax credits to reduce what you pay each month is to enroll in insurance through MNsure.

- Consider enrolling in health insurance through MNsure— go to www.mnsure.org to find out more. An insurance broker can help you, but the enrollment must happen through MNsure to qualify for tax credits that reduce your monthly premium. There are also people called "navigators" available. Their job it is to assist people with signing up for insurance, and they are not paid to sell certain insurance products.

Dates to Know

- Open enrollment for 2017 runs from **Nov. 1, 2016**, through **Jan. 31, 2017**.
- Enroll by **Dec. 15, 2016**, for insurance to start **Jan 1, 2017**.

Annual Income Limits for Assistance on Healthcare Costs

# People in Household	Medical Assistance for adults (over 18)	Medical Assistance for children	Medical Assistance for pregnant women	MinnesotaCare	Tax credits for private health plans (through MNsure)
1	\$15,800	\$32,670	Does not apply	\$23,760	\$47,520
2	\$21,333	\$44,110	\$44,591	\$32,040	\$64,080
3	\$26,866	\$55,550	\$56,156	\$40,320	\$80,640
4	\$32,398	\$66,990	\$67,720	\$48,600	\$97,200
5	\$37,931	\$78,430	\$79,285	\$56,880	\$113,760
6	\$43,464	\$89,870	\$90,850	\$65,160	\$130,320
For each additional person add	\$5,532	\$11,440	\$11,564	\$8,320	\$16,640

Momentum Grows for Winona County Frac Sand Ban

Residents show overwhelming support for protecting people and the land.

By Johanna Rupprecht

The campaign to ban frac sand operations in southeastern Minnesota's Winona County has continued to move forward this summer and fall, with an increasing number of supporters speaking out in favor of the ban. Residents are calling on our local government to fulfill its duty to protect the common good for people and the land by prohibiting the destructive mining, processing and transportation of sand for the oil and gas industry.

The Land Stewardship Project launched a grassroots campaign calling for this ban in June 2015, after several years of organizing in Winona County and throughout the region to stop harmful frac sand development. If passed, it would set a precedent as the first known outright, county-wide ban on these operations. The evidence from places where the frac sand industry has already taken hold, such as western Wisconsin, shows that the damage it imposes on rural communities and the land is too much to be prevented through regulations, and that this industry has no legitimate right to be allowed into any more communities.

The Winona County Board formally began consideration of the ban in April 2016, and in June forwarded it to the County

Planning Commission to collect public input. The response has been loud and clear: Winona County residents overwhelmingly want a frac sand ban. At a public hearing held on June 30, 59 of the 75 testifiers, or 79 percent, were in favor of the ban. In written comments collected by the Planning Commission this summer, the numbers were even more impressive: 176 of the 200 comments received, or 88 percent, were in favor of the ban.

These speakers and writers provided a wide variety of reasons for prohibiting frac sand operations. Many people who commented cited the unique beauty of Winona County, a part of the Driftless Area, and the fragile nature of our karst groundwater system that makes our water highly vulnerable to pollution. Others addressed the fundamental truth that land has inherent value beyond money, and that it is not only short-sighted but immoral to sacrifice hills, bluffs and farmland for the supposed economic gain promised by the oil and gas industry. Many spoke about the threats to human health, safety and welfare presented by frac sand operations, including water pollution, air pollution, and hundreds of heavy trucks causing accident risks and infrastructure damage on rural roads. Residents pointed out that Winona County is ill equipped to even try to adequately regulate these large-

scale industrial mining operations if they are allowed, and a ban is more prudent than the waste of staff time and public dollars needed to enforce regulations that wouldn't prevent harm anyway. People also noted our moral obligation not to allow Winona County's sand to enable the further harms of hydrofracturing and the extreme fossil fuel energy system causing climate change.

In a 5-3 vote on Aug. 11, a majority of the members of the Winona County Planning Commission chose to side with outside corporate interests instead of the public, and recommended a proposal that would allow frac sand operations instead of a ban. However, their vote is purely advisory. The final decision remains in the hands of the Winona County Board of Commissioners, which is free to reject this bad recommendation and pass the ban.

A final public hearing was held Oct. 13, with the County Board's vote expected later this year. Until then, residents from all corners of the county are continuing to keep up the call for a ban, including at public meetings, through the media, and by directly contacting officials. For the latest updates on the progress of this campaign, visit the Facebook page "Ban Frac Sand Mining: LSP's Winona County Campaign," or contact me at 507-523-3366 or jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Organizer Johanna Rupprecht is based in LSP's office in Lewiston, Minn.

Arnold Joins LSP State Policy Committee

Julie Arnold has joined the Land Stewardship Project's State Policy Steering Committee.

Arnold operates a Community Supported Agriculture farm, Shepherd Moon, in Lindstrom, Minn. She recently served an internship with LSP's Policy and Organizing Program. During that internship she coordinated LSP's 2016 Family Farm Breakfast and Lobby Day at the Capitol and helped with rural organizing related to state policy.

For more information on LSP's State Policy Steering Committee, contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Julie Arnold



At a rally prior to a public hearing this summer, Joe Morse and other LSP members expressed their desire for a frac sand mining ban in Winona County. (Photo by Kaitlyn O'Connor)

LSP Report Shows Increasing Demand for Federal Beginning Farmer & Rancher Grants

By Megan Buckingham

The nation's leading public training program for assisting beginning farmers and ranchers is more popular than ever, and continues to be a critical public investment in community-based organizations that conduct beginning farmer education and training. Those are two conclusions of an assessment of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), which was released this summer by the Land Stewardship Project.

organizations, academic institutions, state cooperative extension, and producer groups to provide training and support to beginning farmers and ranchers.

Since the program was launched in 2009, BFRDP has awarded more than \$100 million to 218 projects across the nation, and is a key publicly supported effort to ensure the success of the next generation of American family farmers.

In 2015, USDA awarded \$17.8 million in BFRDP grants to 34 projects. These projects serve diverse communities of beginning

recent cycles has been dramatic—applications more than doubled between 2012 and 2015. LSP is urging Congress to respond to the rise in demand by increasing funding for BFRDP by 50 percent in the next Farm Bill.

“Community-based organizations have long and deep ties in our area and can offer information that is specifically helpful within our region of production, local marketplaces and styles of production,” says Langworthy, who serves on LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Steering Committee. “As a certified organic, diversified, mid-scale, family-owned and family-operated farm in the Upper Midwest, tailored information like this can be difficult to find within national programming. With our country’s diverse landscapes, cultures, climates and markets, local communities and regional information are invaluable to beginning farmers like myself.”

The full report and recommendations are available on LSP’s website: http://landstewardshipproject.org/repository/1/1860/lsp_2015_bfrdp_progress_report.pdf. □

LSP organizer Megan Buckingham can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or meganb@landstewardshipproject.org. More information on LSP’s work related to beginning farmer issues is on the **Beginning Farmers & Ranchers** page at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange>.

Langworthy on Federal Policy Committee

Lauren Langworthy has joined the Land Stewardship Project’s Federal Farm Policy Steering Committee.

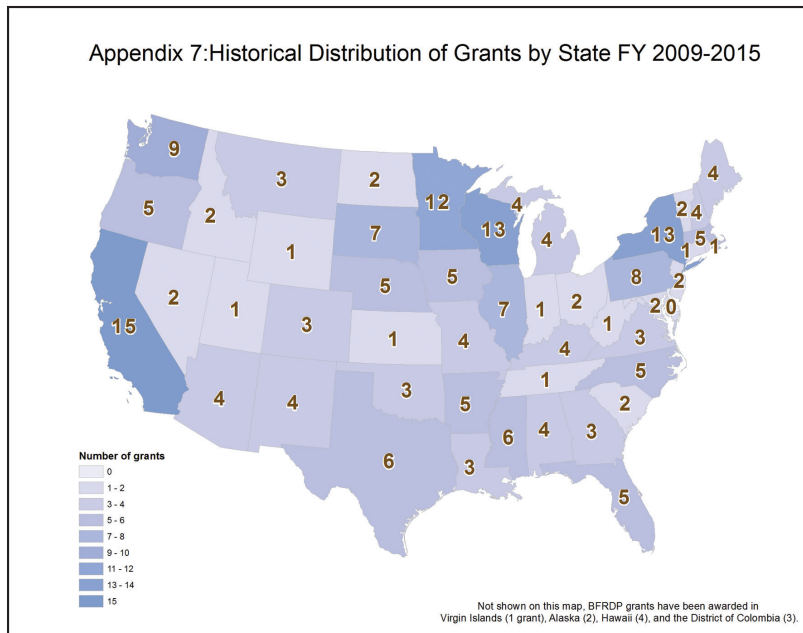
Langworthy, along with her husband Caleb, are graduates of the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings and Journey-person courses (see page 16). They operate Blue Ox Organics, which produces winter Community Supported Agriculture vegetable shares and grass-fed lamb near Wheeler, Wis.

For more information on LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Steering Committee, contact Ben Anderson at 612-722-6377 or banderson@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Lauren Langworthy

Appendix 7: Historical Distribution of Grants by State FY 2009-2015



Since they first became available, BFRDP grants have gone to community organizations and other groups across the country. Source: *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: Progress Report on 2015 Awards*.

The assessment, published by LSP in collaboration with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), is intended to help policy makers and public officials better understand how BFRDP funding, provided through the federal Farm Bill, is distributed and to evaluate its administrative and programmatic strengths and weaknesses. LSP’s *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: Progress Report on 2015 Awards* analyzes the most recent round of project grants in the context of trends in recent years. LSP and NSAC have collaborated on assessments of BFRDP since 2009, when the program began awarding grants.

Administered by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, BFRDP is a competitive grants program that funds community-based organizations, nonprofit

farmers across the nation—from farmworkers in Mississippi to organic producers in the Upper Midwest to urban farmers in places like California.

“My husband and I have utilized regional BFRDP-funded community-based programs, including LSP’s Farm Beginnings, to expand and strengthen our farm business,” says Lauren Langworthy, a vegetable and sheep farmer in Wheeler, Wis. “These programs have been extremely valuable to us as we enter the world of running our own business and navigating the waters of producing and marketing our farm products in the constantly-evolving local foods economy.”

Interest in the program increased again in this most recent funding round, and of the 212 applications submitted, 34 were awarded funding. The increase in demand over

Urban Soil Health: Growing Resiliency

A new LSP initiative asks, 'Can city farming make our hydrology healthier?'

By Dylan Bradford-Kesti

On a sunny Saturday morning in late May, two-dozen Minneapolis residents gathered at the Mashkiikii Gitigan Medicine Garden to view firsthand the wonders of healthy soil. One team of community members undertook a pit infiltration test, which consists of digging two identical 12-inch diameter, 12-inch deep holes. A gallon of water was poured into each hole and observers timed how long it took the liquid to soak in. The holes were located on plots representing widely different land uses.

One plot had been producing corn for three seasons and had just undergone four years of soil health building utilizing compost, slash and burn corn stalks and biochar, as well as animal manure amendments. The other plot represented soil that's more typical of an urban setting: neglected, compacted, lifeless. Within seven minutes, the water in the first plot had infiltrated into the rich soil. In contrast, an hour later the hole dug in the compacted soil was still 90 percent full

of water. The take away lesson: healthy soil equals a healthy hydrological cycle.

This stark juxtaposition of the current and potential health of our urban soils leads us to the Land Stewardship Project's new "Urban Soils Ecosystem Services" initiative. Part of LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program, this exciting three-year endeavor is joining LSP's work to help farmers in rural areas build healthy soils with our efforts in areas like South Minneapolis to create local food production that is not only good for the community, but for the land as well.

City Soil's Hard Truth

Minneapolis, like other urban environments, has a significant amount of impervious area, which stops rainfall and snow melt from soaking down into the soil. In an urban environment, the amount of impervious area on a property is the most significant factor affecting stormwater quality and quantity. Impervious soil means more street flooding, and water running off the surface that's full of chemicals, excess nutrients and sediments. Those pollutants eventually make their way into our lakes, streams and the

Mississippi River.

That's why in Minneapolis people who use stormwater best management practices (BMPs) on their properties can apply to receive reductions in their monthly stormwater utility fee. The thinking is that these BMPs can help more water infiltrate the soil and keep it out of our stormwater system. Credits are available in two ways: stormwater quality and stormwater quantity. Such qualifying practices include rain gardens and rain barrels. Could urban agricultural systems that build soil health qualify as one of these stormwater management BMPs? LSP, in partnership with Afro-Eco, Hope Community Inc., the Freshwater Society and researchers at the University of Minnesota, is using Healthy Food Healthy Lives Institute funding to investigate the potential for urban agriculture as a credible green infrastructure strategy with co-benefits to land access, food access, economic development and environmental sustainability in metro areas.

The timing of such an initiative is critical. Recent trends in precipitation caused by a changing climate have made managing rainwater in Minnesota an increasingly complex challenge. Rainfall amounts are increasing in both amount and frequency, pushing municipal water handling facilities to the limit. Stormwater infrastructure has a finite volume capacity, and may be insufficient to meet future demands.

For example, in June 2012 Duluth, Minn., experienced the wettest two-day period on record, overwhelming stormwater pipes and producing everything from road washouts to raw sewage releases. It's becoming clear that water management that relies solely on concrete and other engineered structures isn't up to handling what our changing climate is dishing out.

A Greener Way

Green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils and natural processes to manage water and create healthier urban environments. At the scale of a city or county, green infrastructure refers to the patchwork of natural areas that provides habitat, flood protection, cleaner air and cleaner water. At the scale of a neighborhood, green infrastructure refers to stormwater management systems that mimic nature by soaking up and storing water.

Green infrastructure offers a promising new approach to managing stormwater by reducing the volume of water that would otherwise flow to traditional stormwater systems and into Minnesota waterways. While there are a number of widely-used green infrastructure strategies and structures available to cities, urban agriculture and commu-



Annelise Brandel-Tanis of Stone's Throw Urban Farm picks kale at a garden in St. Paul. The U of M is conducting research at this and other plots in the Twin Cities to measure the impact building soil health can have on water quality. (LSP Photo)

Urban Soil, see page 15...

nity gardens are not typically among them. In planning for healthy cities of the future, the Urban Soils Ecosystem Services project is looking beyond the single benefit of urban agriculture's potential as a stormwater management strategy. We're evaluating the full range of pluses that derive from city farming as a land use activity. Urban farms and gardens can do everything from improve the visual quality of neighborhoods and create opportunities for interracial and intercultural connections to improve the food security of households.

The potential for using urban agriculture as a form of green infrastructure is huge. Consider this: according to 2015 data tabulated by Gardening Matters, there are 652 community garden projects in Minnesota, with 547 in the Twin Cities seven-county metro region and 256 in the City of Minneapolis alone.

These community garden projects are providing the priceless community co-benefits of food access and positive health outcomes, community building and improved safety, as well as beautification and green space. And when these operations' rely on building healthy soil and keeping the land covered with a permeable surface, they are also providing ecosystem services that could have a major impact on the quality of Minnesota's water.

Imagine the water infiltration impact of 256 mini-farms growing food utilizing biologically healthy soil.

But before urban agriculture can move from being an interesting idea for managing stormwater to a strategy city residents and officials can support on a consistent basis, the benefits must be quantified. The problem is the nature of urban soils in particular are not well-understood, and data on water-holding capacity, infiltration rates or other general characteristics is hard to come by. But the potential for producing such information is significant, given what we're learning about that soil's country cousin.

As the article on page 23 illustrates, cutting-edge agricultural science and real-world experience on innovative farms is showing that when a farmer increases organic matter in a field's soil, the ability to

retain water without it running off increases significantly. One estimate is that as organic matter increases from 1 percent to 3 percent, the soil's water holding capacity doubles. That's exciting news, since we now know that farmers can increase that organic matter through soil building techniques like cover crops and composting.

So how can we apply this knowledge to an urban setting, particularly at a time when there is increasing interest in raising food in our city neighborhoods? LSP and our partners have designed and built urban research sites at six locations — Frogtown Farm, Growing Lots Urban Farm, Hope Community Inc., Mashkiikii Gitigan: 24th Street Urban Farm, Stone's Throw Urban Farm, and Waite House — to answer that question.



U of M researcher Kat LaBine (right) works with students Ashley Hansen (kneeling) and Sam Vilella to lay out a test plot at an urban farm in St. Paul. (LSP Photo)

To launch this research project, University of Minnesota researchers Mary Rogers, Nic Jelinski and Kat LaBine spent this summer working with the garden/farm sites to collect preliminary data on soil bulk density, soil texture, hydraulic conductivity, soil nutrients, organic matter and pH. Information on these properties will enable us to make some comparisons between sites and treatments while investigating the potential for urban agriculture as a credible green infrastructure. This year on the six farms the project collected preliminary data using test kale plots that were all grown the same way.

The kale was then transplanted to farms where control plots were compared to areas that received treatments of compost and manure amendments or cover crops. The researchers then measured soil health before, during and after the season.

Urban Soils Toolkit

We are approaching this project with a few outcomes in mind:

- Develop an urban soils toolkit designed by and for urban gardeners and farmers to help guide in the building of healthy urban soils and shift the practice of dismissing urban soils as “wasteland” we just ignore. While many urban soils are contaminated with lead and other pollutants, there is potential to use bioremediation to clean up and build healthy soils instead of hauling “unhealthy” soil offsite and importing “healthy” soils.

- Complete three years of community based research to investigate the potential for urban agriculture as a credible green infrastructure strategy and eventually establish an urban agriculture “Stormwater Credit.” This could provide vacant lot owners and corporate campuses incentives to open up land to urban farms and gardens.

- Build and organize a base of urban farmers and gardeners using stewardship practices.

Martin Brown of Waite House says he hopes this project marks the beginning of a longer term partnership that not only engages more people in local food production, but provides the kind of scientific data needed to show organic and sustainable agriculture have community wide benefits.

Christina Elias, who manages Mashkiikii Gitigan, said she was interested in this initiative because her operation already applies many water harvesting techniques, including indigenous practices.

“We consider this a great opportunity to both educate the larger community as well as validate the effectiveness of these practices,” she says. “Our hope is that this will ultimately lead to compensation for urban farmers so that they may continue to have a positive effect on their environment while providing organic and culturally relevant food in areas that are lacking access.”

We will be reporting on the results of this research in future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. For more information on the Urban Soils Ecosystem Services initiative, contact me at dylank@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. □

Dylan Bradford-Kesti is a Community Based Food Systems Program organizer.

A Few Spots Left in 2016-2017 LSP Farm Beginnings Course

Classes Offered in Northfield, Minn., & Glenwood, Minn.

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program is accepting applications for its 2016-2017 class session. Separate classes will convene in Northfield, which is near Minnesota's Twin Cities, and Glenwood in west-central Minnesota.

LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 19th year of providing first-hand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial and enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

Farm Beginnings in Other Regions

For information on Farm Beginnings courses in other parts of the country, see the Farm Beginnings Collaborative web page at <http://farmbeginningscollaborative.org> or contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105, amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

This 12-month course provides training and hands-on learning opportunities in the form of classroom sessions, farm tours, field days, workshops and access to an extensive farmer network. Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the region. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the fall, run until March 2017, followed by an on-farm education component that includes

farm tours and skills sessions.

Over the years, more than 750 people have graduated from the Minnesota-Wisconsin region Farm Beginnings course. Graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Beginnings classes have been held in Illinois, Nebraska and North Dakota. Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, New York and Maine.

The Farm Beginnings class fee is \$1,500, which covers one "farm unit"—either one farmer or two farming partners who are on the same farm. A \$200 deposit is required with an application and will be put towards the final fee. Payment plans are available, as well as a limited number of scholarships.

For application materials or more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org, or contact LSP's Karen Benson at karenb@landstewardshipproject.org, 507-523-3366. □

Farm Beginnings Racial Justice Cohort Launched this Fall

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program is launching a Racial Justice Cohort. This five-month cohort will consist of LSP leaders who are interested in deepening and improving their ability and the ability of LSP to work effectively to advance racial justice in the food and agriculture system. This will be accomplished through strengthening the leadership skills of farmers and

other rural members.

Through this cohort, LSP leaders will learn firsthand about issues facing farmers of color in our region, explore structural and institutional racism within the food and farming system, examine self-privilege and power as it pertains to themselves and their farms, and gain skills in advocating for racial justice within the food and farming system. Participants will also have an oppor-

tunity to utilize one-to-one conversations, narrative building, letter writing and meeting organizing skills to reach out to other members of the community.

For more information or to join the cohort, contact LSP's Nick Olson at 320-269-1057 or nicko@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Farm Dreams: Is Farming in Your Future?

Farm Dreams is an entry level, four-hour, exploratory Land Stewardship Project workshop designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether farming is the next step for them. This is a great workshop to attend if you are considering farming as a career and are not sure where to start. Farm Dreams is a good prerequisite for LSP's Farm Beginnings course (*see above*).

LSP holds Farm Dreams workshops at various locations throughout the Minnesota-Wisconsin region during the year. The cost is \$20 for LSP members and \$40 for non-members.

For more information, see the **Farm Dreams** page at www.farmbeginnings.org.

Details are also available by contacting LSP's Dori Eder at 612-578-4497 or dori@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Specialty Crop Grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is seeking grant applications from Minnesota organizations to "increase the competitiveness of our specialty crops" in domestic and foreign markets.

Specialty crops are defined as: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Nonprofit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities and other groups are encouraged to apply.

Funding priorities include:

- Innovation in production, aggregation, processing and packaging.
- Improving operational efficiencies, reducing costs or other barriers, and increasing access to distribution systems.
- Increasing the demand-for and supply-of locally produced specialty crops.
- Pest and disease control, and varietal improvement.
- Practices that encourage conservation and environmental stewardship, including organic specialty crops research.

The application deadline is April 29. For more information, see www.mda.state.mn.us or contact Julianne LaClair at 651-201-6135, julianne.laclair@state.mn.us. □

Farm Beginnings Collaborative, FSA & Financial Education



Fourteen facilitators with Farm Beginnings courses from throughout the country met with USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff in Minneapolis recently to kick off a new cooperative effort funded through a grant awarded to the Land Stewardship Project. The purpose of this cooperative agreement with FSA is to enhance financial education for beginning farmers and prepare them to participate in FSA programs across the country. The facilitators represent various community groups that are members of the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, a national alliance of independent regional groups of farmers and farmer-training support organizations working together to promote Farm Beginnings (*see page 16*), a course LSP launched two decades ago.

Pictured in the front row are (*left to right*): Sheri Doyel, Angelic Organic Learning Center; Ryan Dennet, Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association; Nicole DeLCogliano, Organic Growers School (OGS); Cameron Farlow, OGS; Kathleen Logan Smith, Food Works; Dori Eder, LSP; and Cree Bradley, Worksong Services.

Back row (*left to right*): Grant Herfindahl, Minnesota FSA state executive director; Brian Hartman, Minnesota FSA farm loan specialist; Julie Kolodji, FSA Minnesota farm loan manager; Verna Kragnes, Prairie Rose Associates; Matt West, Dakota Rural Action; Mindy Grant, FARRMS; Scott Demuth, LSP; Gary Lesoing, University of Nebraska; and Christopher Wayne, FARMroots/GrowNYC.

For more information on the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, see <http://farmbeginningscollaborative.org> or contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105, amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. (*Photo by Amy Bacigalupo*)

Deadline for MDA Sustainable Ag Grants Dec. 13

The 26-year-old Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grant program provides small grants to test ideas that could “conserve natural resources, enhance profitability and improve life on the farm,” according to the MDA. The deadline for the next round of grants is Dec. 13.

Applications from farmers receive priority, but the program also funds Minnesota nonprofit and educational organizations as long as Minnesota farmers are meaningfully involved in the project. The program objectives are to explore the profitability, energy efficiency and benefits of sustainable agriculture practices and systems from production through marketing. Grants are available to fund on-farm research and demonstrations and may include, but are not limited to:

- Farm diversification using traditional and non-traditional crops and livestock.
- Cover crops and crop rotations.

- Conservation tillage.
- Input reduction strategies, including nutrient and pesticide management.
- On-farm energy production, such as wind, methane or biomass.
- Developing/refining marketing opportunities, season extension, and post-harvest storage and handling
- Other creative ideas that focus on conservation, energy, profitability and/or farmers' quality of life.
- A total of nearly \$250,000 is available this year.

For more information, see www.mda.state.mn.us, or contact Julie LaClair at 651-201-6135, julianne.laclair@state.mn.us. □

MDA Value Added Grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Value Added Grant Program provides funds for producers and processors

to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by expanding markets. Individuals (farmers) or businesses, agricultural cooperatives and local government entities are eligible. Grants are for equipment purchases or physical improvements and are intended to support businesses that will:

- Start, expand, or update livestock product processing businesses.
- Purchase equipment to start, upgrade or modernize value-added businesses.
- Increase the use and processing of Minnesota agricultural products.
- Purchase equipment or undertake facility improvement to increase food safety.
- Increase farmers' processing and aggregating capacity to sell to schools, hospitals or other institutions.

The application period runs from Dec. 28 to March 2. For details, see www.mda.state.mn.us, or contact Ann Kuzj at ann.kuzj@state.mn.us, 651-201-6028. □

Andy Cotter & Irene Genelin

Wheeling into the Future

It's not every day that you see the words "unicyclists" and "farming" used in the same sentence, but here we go: national and world champion unicyclists Andy Cotter and Irene Genelin launched a farming operation a half-a-dozen years ago. Now, this is the part of the story that cries out for a familiar trope like how peddling on one wheel has taught the couple the importance of "striking a balance" when it comes to the economically risky and physically demanding work of raising food. Indeed, Cotter and Genelin have had to walk a line between taking on as many enterprises as possible while focusing on ones that actually generate the kind of sustainable income and quality of life needed to survive and thrive.

"There are a lot of ways to make money on this farm," says Cotter, 47, on a recent September morning while sitting in the couple's house outside of Hutchinson, west of Minnesota's Twin Cities. Surrounding the house is York Farm (www.yorkfarmmn.com); it consists of a dozen acres of certified organic grapes, strawberries, apples, plums, pears, currants, gooseberries, apricots and Arctic kiwi. A few hundred feet from the house is the picturesque headquarters of their latest enterprise: a remodeled, 90-year-old barn where Cotter and Genelin host weddings and other events. "We just need to pick the right ones and make them work," he adds.

Genelin and Cotter say that the "make them work" part of the equation is made slightly easier by the fact that being a world champion at any sport requires the kind of drive and focus that comes in handy when things get tough out in the orchards, vineyards and fields. But perhaps the biggest benefit of devoting a few decades to a specialty endeavor like unicycling is that it drives home the importance of creating a support network of people who share the same general goals and know what it takes to achieve them.

"We were part of a close-knit community

of unicyclists and to jump into something brand new is a hard transition, especially for me, because I was really good at this one thing: unicycling," says Genelin, 31. "When you come into a whole new experience, how do you get started?"

The Community Advantage

One of the ways the couple recaptured that feeling of community they got through competitions, classes and conferences associated with unicycling was to take the Land



When Andy Cotter and Irene Genelin started farming, they were tempted to get involved with several enterprises. In recent years, they've focused on organic fruits such as table grapes. "There are a lot of ways to make money on this farm," says Cotter. "We just need to pick the right ones and make them work." (LSP Photo)

Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings class (see page 16). During the summer of 2011, Genelin interned on Loon Organics, a nearby Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation. During that experience, she not only learned the nuts and bolts of running a vegetable CSA, but also got her marketing feet wet selling at a major farmers' market in Minneapolis. Loon Organics' Laura Frerichs and Adam Cullip have hosted Farm Beginnings workshops and they suggested she and Cotter take the course. So the



following winter they traveled to St. Joseph, Minn., roughly twice-a-month where farmers and others from the community gave presentations on goal setting, business planning and innovative marketing. Through the class, they also networked with other established farmers in the area.

"It was a great way of creating this comfortable community while getting some encouragement to keep moving forward," says Genelin of Farm Beginnings. "Even if we never want to raise cattle, we could learn something from the way a cattle farmer used holistic decision making to manage."

During the Farm Beginnings course, presenters talk a lot about "unfair advantages"—what class participants bring to an agricultural enterprise that might give them a leg-up. In the case of Cotter and Genelin, they have an 85-acre farm within an hour's drive of a major metropolitan market. The land has been in Cotter's family since 1971, and in 2002 he bought it as a place to live, not because he had a particular interest in raising food. "As a teenager I wanted nothing to do with this farm," he says.

Cotter has a degree in mechanical engineering and computer science, and for the past 20 years has done IT work for General Mills. The company is in the Twin Cities, but Cotter is able to do most of his work remotely through telecommuting. The land had been a working farm, but Cotter has set aside 65 acres through government wetland easement programs, providing income from areas that were perennially wet and difficult to produce a crop from anyway.

But over the years, Cotter's become more interested in farming, particularly if he can balance food production with environmental sustainability. The local food movement has provided new marketing opportunities that weren't available when Cotter was growing up, and the Hutchinson area is home to numerous innovative farmers utilizing sustain-

Fresh Faces, see page 19...

able methods.

“We get together with other farmers in the Hutchinson area who are raising food for the local market and talk about a goal of adding a new farm every year,” says Cotter.

Genelin has a degree in French and when she joined Cotter on the land in 2008 (they had met through unicycling), she brought with her a love of cooking and healthy eating. Raising food seemed a natural fit.

The Intervention

With all of Genelin and Cotter’s advantages—access to good farmland, market accessibility, a network of colleagues—they say it was tempting for them to take on a number of enterprises when they started farming. And at first they did—launching a vegetable CSA and planting dozens of varieties of fruits, for example.

“It’s our nature to get excited about things, so we were growing quite a few different crops, and growing all sorts of types of things,” says Genelin.

But they began to question that business model as a long term strategy for their operation. The work that goes into caring for fruits that may not produce income for years down the road was often neglected in favor of the near-term work needed to get vegetables to their CSA members in any given week.

In addition, the couple’s family has grown—they have a 2-year-old daughter, Ani—and they needed to better focus on what could turn a consistent profit while balancing quality of life. Cotter and Genelin recalled what they had learned in Farm Beginnings about setting goals and monitoring one’s progress toward achieving them. They also were able to get support and advice from the network of area farmers they’d developed.

“When I was pregnant some of our friends came together and helped us think through our financial plan and gave us their frank opinions on what they thought we should focus on if we wanted to be profitable,” recalls Genelin.

“We call it the intervention,” Cotter adds with a laugh.

A few seasons after graduating from Farm Beginnings, Genelin and Cotter took Journeyperson, LSP’s follow-up course for people who are a couple of years into their farming enterprise and want to use holistic decision making to take it further down the road. As a part of the Journeyperson experience, Cotter and Genelin teamed up

with mentors such as Anton Ptak and Rachel Henderson, Farm Beginnings graduates who operate Mary Dirty Face Farm, an innovative fruit operation in Menomonie, Wis. What Genelin and Cotter have learned is that there is not a lot of organic fruit produced in the Minnesota-Wisconsin region, providing a prime marketing niche. Being close to the Twin Cities meant they could take advantage of demand from restaurants and other businesses seeking local fresh fruit.

In the end, Cotter and Genelin decided to drop the vegetable CSA and focus on fruit, a decision that is showing signs of paying off. Today, they provide fruit as “add-on shares” for two area CSA farms and sell to several Twin Cities restaurants. In fact, 2016 has been a break-out year for York Farm in terms of marketing and production, with its table grapes and strawberries receiving rave reviews, and one tree alone yielding 450 pounds of Summercrisp pears.

They see a lot of potential in the organic fruit market and are busy trying to figure out how, yet again, to strike a balance: ramping up production while not getting ahead of their market demand. Around 20 percent of the family’s income comes from the farm presently, and their ultimate goal is to make it 100 percent. Doing that will require using some of the business planning and marketing skills they attained through Farm Beginnings, as well as Cotter’s spreadsheet



“One of our goals is to have Beauty 360, so everywhere you look around the farm is beautiful,” says Cotter. (LSP Photo)

acumen and Genelin’s knack for marketing.

One way they focus their energies is by ranking “top crops” and “secondary crops.” Top crops are those that Cotter and Genelin feel they can make \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually on. In that category currently are strawberries, apples, pears and table grapes. As Cotter provides a tour of York Farm’s vineyards, he talks excitedly about the local market potential for products such as table grapes. Although there’s been a lot of buzz

in recent years around raising grapes in Minnesota for wine production, consumers don’t realize several varieties of table grapes can be grown in the region. He grabs a plump bunch of Bluebell grapes and explains that although the cold-hardy fruit is considered a juice and jelly grape, it’s surprisingly tasty when served fresh by itself. “Restaurants want them,” Cotter says.

Secondary fruits have potential, but the current market may be too underdeveloped to justify ramping up production. Kiwis, for example, can ripen after harvest, which is a nice characteristic. However, that does little good if they can’t be sold.

“People would actually have to learn a little more about them before there’s a big market,” Cotter says as he picks a grape-sized kiwi off an experimental bush and breaks it open to show the green, succulent flesh and shiny black seeds.

Bushels of Beauty

But balancing production and marketing isn’t York Farm’s only focus. Cotter and Genelin are also committed to environmental sustainability and being a positive presence in the community. One of the Farm Beginnings presenters, Audrey Arner of Moonstone Farm, introduced the idea of “Beauty 360”—making the land aesthetically pleasing no matter where one looks.

The couple has worked toward this in several ways—from reclaiming the wetland and planting native prairie to revamping farm buildings and, with the help of unicycling friends, painting murals on walls. Many of the “beauty” additions serve a practical purpose. The natural habitat provided by the wetland easement also buffers the farm from the pesticides sprayed on neighboring corn and soybean fields, for example.

“You can do Beauty 180 pretty easily, but it’s harder to finally get to that 360,” says Cotter. “I tell people we’re at 270. And some people say, ‘Oh, you’re already there.’ And others say, ‘You’ll get there someday.’ So it’s all about what their idea is. My opinion is we have a long way to go, but I’m also much more picky.”

Part of the farmers’ motivation is the desire to pay it forward. After all, Cotter’s parents set up basic infrastructure on the farm, and before that people planted trees on the land, trees that those early farmers had no hope of seeing mature.

“That’s really nice of them, so I want to pass that on,” says Cotter. “When I’m doing this stuff I always think, ‘I can’t wait for the next person to take it over.’” □

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org and look under the **More Farmers on the Land** section. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Dori Eder at dori@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling her at 612-578-4497. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see <http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse>.

Farmland Available

◆ R. Mitchell has for sale 80 acres of farmland in *Wisconsin*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and a greenhouse, tall hoop house, prep area and walk-in cooler are available. A pole barn is currently occupied with owner's equipment. There is a large buffer zone around the entire parcel and tree lines; oak savanna and prairie provide beneficial insects and potential for grazing. There is a need to crop/hay or pasture 65 acres for the parcel to stay in farmland. Owners will continue to live in the house unless there is a sale of total parcel; an apartment is possible in the house. Contact: R. Mitchell, 262-225-9296, ourfarm@netwurx.net.

◆ Lawrence Woodward has for sale 160 acres of farmland in *north-central Wisconsin's Marathon County*. The land has not been sprayed for several years. There is a barn, machine shed, bunkhouse, three-car garage, Harvester silo and log cabin. There are maples that can be tapped, apples, elderberries, a deep well, two streams and abundant wildlife. Woodward would like to sell to a family serious about organic farming/gardening. The asking price is \$300,000 (negotiable to right family). Contact: Lawrence Woodward, lwoodward1@earthlink.net, PO Box 96, Washburn, WI 54891.

◆ Ivan Aronson has for rent 317 acres of farmland in *northwestern Iowa's Woodbury and Plymouth counties (near Sioux City)*. He is interested in creating a long-term agreement with one or more operators who will build a growing and sustainable enterprise and share in that increased value fairly. There are three parcels: a 21-acre homestead, 56-acre pasture and a 240-acre pasture. There are several outbuildings, grain bins and a house, along with cropland, pasture and livestock infrastructure. Contact: Ivan Aronson, 952-544-4589, farmrpf@gmail.com.

◆ Carol Hulst has for rent 155 tillable acres of farmland in *northwestern Iowa's Osceola County (Horton Township)*. No house is available. Contact: Carol Hulst, 712-475-9699.

◆ Knelly Dettinger has for sale a 40-acre certified organic farm in *east-central Min-*

nesota's Pine County (near Willow River). The land includes deer fencing and an irrigation system, and is not near conventionally farmed land. There is a new barn, commercial kitchen, packing shed, workers' quarters, three greenhouses, a transplant house and a farm house. The asking price is \$277,900-\$299,900. Contact: Knelly Dettinger, 507-272-0526, kdettinger@kw.com.

◆ Michael Severson has for rent 30 tillable acres of farmland in *northwestern Wisconsin's Barron County (near Dallas)*. No house is available. Contact: Michael Severson, 715-837-1461.

◆ Jan Kenyon has for sale 73 acres of farmland in *southwestern Wisconsin's Vernon County (near Ontario)*. The land has not been sprayed for nine years and includes pasture. There are no outbuildings or a house. The asking price is \$265,000. Contact: Jan Kenyon, 608-337-4444, jankenyon3@gmail.com.

◆ Kate Stout has a farming operation rental opportunity available in *west-central Wisconsin's Dunn County (near Prairie Farm)*. Stout, a longtime CSA farmer, is downsizing her operation and is looking for a farmer who would like to farm some of her land. Lease would include use and sharing of farm equipment, walk-in cooler, packing shed, hoop houses, irrigation pipe, heated greenhouse, a one-bedroom apartment upstairs in the farmhouse, and more. Land has been farmed organically for 25 years but is not certified. Records available if certification is desired. Price is negotiable depending on the time of year. Rent for May-October, with 2 acres of cropland, is \$1,200 a month with an additional \$200 monthly deposit to be returned at the end of the season when lease agreements are met. Additional land available for \$100 an acre for vegetable ground and \$50 an acre for unfenced pasture. Contact: Kate Stout, 715-455-1569, kstout@chibardun.net.

◆ Helen Davis has for sale 145 acres of farmland in *southwestern Wisconsin's Trempealeau County (near Arcadia)*. The land has not been sprayed for 20 years and it is well protected from drift by topography and 600 acres of neighboring DNR natural lands. There are 75 acres of hay, pasture and cropland (currently in CRP and planted to native prairie grasses; expires/renewable in

2018) and 70 acres of oak/hickory woods. There is a 1950s-era dairy barn and machine shed, both in good condition and with new electrical service. There is an older chicken coop and shop; there is no house. Contact: Helen Davis, hdavis68@hotmail.com.

◆ Wendy Haan has for rent 1.1 acres of tillable farmland in *Taylor's Falls, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. There is a 67 x 26 pole barn with half cement floor and a garage door opening, as well as a trailer home that needs some maintenance. The land has not been sprayed for several years and consists of an open field of grass. The property is in the process of being hooked up to a city sewer system. The asking price is \$200 per month, plus utilities. Contact: Wendy Haan, 612-709-8223.

◆ Tim Wotzka has for sale 8+ acres of farmland in *central Minnesota's Morrison County (near Flensburg)*. The land includes pasture and it has never been sprayed. There is a small barn and chicken coop; the house has many upgrades and is connected to city sewer. The asking price is \$110,000. Contact: Tim Wotzka, 218-360-9668.

◆ Regina Bambrick-Rust has for sale 73.91 acres of farmland in *Will County in northeastern Illinois*. It is now in transition to organic and has been in a hay mix since 2014 with no chemicals. The price range is \$444,000-\$666,000, minus the value of the easement (in process). The land will be available in the fall of 2017. Contact: Regina Bambrick-Rust, 660-332-4026, regina.rust@gmail.com.

◆ Matt and Amy Crowell have for rent 35 acres of farmland in *south-central Minnesota's McLeod County*. A judicial ditch runs through the land. The land is all grass with some trees and it has not been sprayed for several years. Fifteen acres has just been used for hay and there is no fencing. The other 20 acres still has fencing remaining; it had been used for hay the past two years and before that it was grazed. There is no house. Contact: Amy Crowell, 507-621-1356.

◆ Maureen Ash and Rich Purdy have for rent 50 acres of tillable farmland in *western Wisconsin, just south of River Falls*. The

Clearinghouse, see page 21...

land has not been sprayed for several years and it is landlocked, with no roads around it. There is no house or outbuildings. Ash and Purdy are willing to work with renters to assist in getting them started. They have older machinery and other equipment that's available. The rental rate is \$150-\$200 per acre. Contact: Maureen Ash and Rich Purdy, mash76@sbwireless.net, 715-425-0040; N7659 950th St., River Falls, WI 54022.

◆ Karen Schrupp has for sale 120 acres of certified organic farmland in *southern Minnesota's Waseca County (near New Richland)*. Fourteen acres are enrolled in CRP. There is no house. It will be sold using a sealed bid. Contact: Karen Schrupp, 512-394-1169, kasa1947@hotmail.com.

Seeking Farmland

◆ David Watson is seeking to purchase 10-100 acres of farmland *south of Minnesota's Twin Cities*. Land with pasture is preferred. House and barns are a plus, even if they need work. Watson would need to live on the property, but is a licensed builder, so could build a house if necessary. Contact: David Watson, 952-457-6903.

◆ Aaron is seeking to rent 20+ acres of tillable farmland in *southern Illinois (Effingham, Cumberland or Shelby County)*. No house is required. Contact: Aaron, 217-821-8748, aaronieb93@hotmail.com.

◆ Neal is seeking to purchase 10+ acres of farmland in *southern Minnesota (Canon Falls and Northfield area)*. Land with pasture and outbuildings such as a greenhouse and a house is preferred. Contact: Neal, 651-271-0725, Chefmeier@netzero.com.

◆ Cora Hernandez is seeking to purchase farmland in *northwestern Indiana, southern Wisconsin or Illinois*. Land with pasture, fencing and a house is preferred. Contact: Cora Hernandez, 708-916-5240.

◆ Doug Newman is seeking to purchase 40+ acres of farmland in *south-central Illinois's Shelby County*. Land with pasture is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Doug Newman, 217-891-5975, dneuman84@frontiernet.net.

◆ Pa Zao Vang is seeking to rent 2-4 acres of tillable farmland in *Ramsey County, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. No house is required. Contact: Pa Zao Vang, 651-239-8417, pzvvang@outlook.com.

◆ Bairet Eiter and William Lenzen are seeking to purchase 130-200 acres of farmland in *Minnesota*. They prefer land with fenced pasture for grazing dairy cattle and that could eventually be converted to a

certified organic operation. A barn for cattle, a milking parlor, a shop, equipment storage and a house are also preferred. Eiter and Lenzen have a large amount of farming experience and will soon graduate with bachelor's degrees in agriculture fields. They would be ready to move in July 2017. Contact: Bairet Eiter 952-818-4583, bairet.eiter@my.uwrf.edu.

◆ Paul is seeking to purchase 40-180 acres of farmland in *southwestern Wisconsin*. He would prefer land that has no development potential; one building site would be good, but is not required. He can pay cash. Contact: Paul, 608-588-6365, cropground@att.net.

◆ Matt is seeking to rent 2-5 acres of tillable certified organic farmland *within 45 minutes of South Minneapolis*. Land with well drained sandy loam or loam soil is preferred (will pay a premium for good soil); no house is required. A well for drip irrigation is required. Land that is already certified organic is preferred, but not required. A 3-5 year lease would be ideal. Contact: Matt, 612-760-4782.

◆ Brittany Dunning is seeking to purchase certified organic farmland in *Wisconsin*. Land with pasture and water access is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Brittany Dunning, bmdunning912@gmail.com, 262-271-6464.

◆ Marlys McGarvey is seeking to rent 5-10 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin (Pierce County or River Falls area)*. Land with pasture, fencing, outbuildings and a house is preferred. Land that has not been sprayed for several years is also preferred. Contact: Marlys McGarvey, 651-402-3593, marlys_mcgarvey@hotmail.com.

◆ Brandon Kleeves is seeking to rent 5-15 acres of tillable farmland in *Wisconsin, Minnesota or Michigan*. Access to a well and electricity is preferred. Kleeves would also prefer the land to be close to a city to help with the marketing of produce. Contact: Brandon Kleeves, 651-380-2449, brandon@rworganics.com, www.rworganics.com.

◆ Emily Thompson is seeking to rent 1-5 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's Olmsted County*. Thompson prefers land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has a large pole barn. She needs a space to keep 15-20 dairy goats and would like to fence in an area for pasture. Access to water and electricity is required; no house is required. Contact: Emily Thompson, emily.thompson33@gmail.com.

◆ KC Betzold is seeking to purchase 20+ acres of tillable farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's Rice or Dakota County*. No house is required. Contact: KC Betzold, 612-598-2788.

◆ Isaac Keating is seeking to rent 5-10 acres of farmland in *Boone, McHenry or DeKalb County in northern Illinois*. He has a herd of approximately 20 pigs that he uses

to till the soil and clear the land of weeds and invasives. Keating rotates them using portable electric fencing and after pulling the pigs off he tills the soil and plants a variety of crops. He would like to rent woodland, pasture, cropland or a mixture so he can expand his herd of pigs and garden. Contact: Isaac Keating, 630-313-2038, kidbillygoat@gmail.com.

◆ Tiffany McAllister is seeking to rent 1-70 acres of farmland in *northwestern Illinois*. Land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has outbuildings and a house is preferred. Contact: Tiffany McAllister, 847-305-7422, mcalt844@yahoo.com.

Seeking Farmer

◆ Peter Henry is seeking a farmer to join Hungry Turtle Farm, a 63-acre farm in *northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County (near Amery)*. There is also another 100+ acres nearby, all certifiable organic in the next two years (Hungry Turtle will be certified organic by 2017, and has been farmed organically since 2010; there are many organic farms in the area). There are 24 tillable acres on the 63-acre property, which has been put into 6 acres of vegetables recently. There is plenty of space for pastured animal flocks, rotational grazing and hay production. The salary is \$40,000-\$50,000 per year, depending on experience. A full job description is at <http://resilientnorthernhabitats.com>. Contact: Peter Henry, phenry@hungryturtle.net.

◆ Eleene is seeking someone to farm 5.44 acres of land on her farm in *southeastern Minnesota's Fillmore County (near Wykoff)*. The land is flat with fertile soil. The farm has access to water and there are outbuildings for tool storage. An upstairs bedroom could be available for housing. Contact: Eleene, 507-206-1456.

◆ Erik Amoldt is seeking a farmer to join his direct-market micro-dairy in *southwestern Wisconsin's Richland County (near Viola)*. The operation consists of 43 acres and 15 cows; the land has not been sprayed for 10+ years. Housing and profit sharing is available. Contact: Erik Amoldt, 608-475-1065, sturdyfeetfarm@gmail.com.

◆ Jerry Lenz is seeking a farmer to join his livestock operation in *south-central Wisconsin's Green Lake County (near Markesan)*. He has a 175-acre farm with an 80-head Black Angus cattle herd. Lenz is open to developing a rent/lease-to-own arrangement. Housing is available. Contact: Jerry Lenz, 920-948-2366.

Making Plans for the Next Ag Generation

LSP is Offering a 3-Part Farm Transition Workshop in Jan., Feb. & March

By Karen Stettler

It happens more than you would think. A call comes from a farmer who is done farming, as in next week done. The farmer wonders if I know of a beginning farmer interested in taking over and buying the farm. This is a pretty unrealistic way to get beginning farmers started, and in the end the result for the retiring farmer is most likely not ideal either.

Planning for a farm transition is always a challenge. Throw in the fact that you are thinking and talking about money, family dynamics, land legacy, declining abilities and death—hmm, it is easy to see why avoidance and ruts get in the way. If there was only a crystal ball, the planning and decision making would be so much easier.

Why is Land Access Important?

It is the Land Stewardship Project's belief that thriving family farms are critical to a healthy society. When a diversity of family farms is widely successful, there is a ripple effect that brings greater balance and health to economies, ecologies, public policies, communities and the land. Yet agriculture is far from striking a healthy balance. The reality is that we are moving in the opposite direction.

Farms are going under, retiring farmers face healthcare uncertainties, farmworkers are exploited and young people face all but insurmountable barriers to entering agriculture. As a result, our communities and land suffer. In the midst of this crisis, how can sustainable family farms transition their land and businesses to the next generation? To

honor and care for farmers as they retire, to secure our collective food security and to care for the land, LSP member-leaders are working toward solutions.

Taking First Steps

The Plainview Land Access Organizing Committee, based in the southeastern Minnesota community of Plainview and made up mostly of farmers (plus a retired banker), has worked during the past few years to come up with a line-up of important topics that need to be considered when planning a farm transition. Many of the committee

2017 LSP Farm Transition Workshops this Winter

It is not too soon to start planning for the upcoming winter 2017 Farm Transition workshop series in Rochester, Minn. The workshop is three full days (Saturdays: Jan. 14, Feb. 11 and March 11) and there is at least two weeks between sessions so families can do some work on their own. Having the time set aside to fully engage in this process will make the most of this workshop series.

To register and for more information, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

members are farmers in the situation of thinking about their own farm transitions, which makes the topics and focus particularly relevant and based in practicality.

One of the outcomes of this work has been a multi-day farm transition workshop, which we've held during the past two

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In the midst of this crisis, how can sustainable family farms transition their land and businesses to the next generation?
• • •

winters. The goal of this workshop is to help farmers get the farm transition planning process started. We encourage participants to make a list and take steps—no matter how small they seem—to move toward a grounded plan that helps get a new farmer established successfully on their land. When asked what areas of focus were the most helpful in the workshop series, one participant said, "Part of what was important was just pushing us off the dime and getting some info for the next step(s)."

Another participant appreciated the farmer panel and hearing real examples of what other farm families are doing, as well as "being given permission" to think outside the box.

2017 Workshop

We will be holding a new Farm Transition workshop this winter in Rochester, Minn. As in the past, the three-part workshop will focus on developing a farm transition vision, assessing financial needs in retirement, investigating options for farm transitions, sharing resources and introducing communication tools. There will be a number of presenters, including an attorney, a financial planner, a CPA and a long-term healthcare specialist, as well as a panel of farmers who are in the process or who have gone through the process of transitioning their farm.

See the sidebar in the middle of this page for dates and details on registering. □

LSP Farm Beginnings organizer Karen Stettler is based in the organization's Lewiston, Minn., office.

Looking to Transition Your Farm to the Next Generation? Check out the Farm Transitions Toolkit

Owners of farmland who are looking to transition their enterprise to the next generation of farmers can now turn to the *Farm Transitions Toolkit*, a comprehensive Land Stewardship Project/Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture resource. The *Toolkit* is for those people who want to pass their farm on in a way that supports healthy rural communities, strong local economies and sustainable land stewardship.

The *Toolkit* contains resources, links to services and practical calculation tables to help landowners establish a commonsense plan. It also features user-friendly resources on the economic, legal, governmental, agronomic, ecological and even social issues that must be considered in order to ensure a successful farm transition. It is rounded out with profiles of farmers who are in various stages of transitioning their enterprises to the next generation. An online version of the *Toolkit* is at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmtransitiontools/farmtransitionstoolkit>; paper versions can be purchased by calling 800-909-6472.

More Cover, More Cattle, Cleaner Water

The benefits of continuous living cover emerge in a watershed.

By *Brian DeVore*

Andy Marcum's eye-opener was when he walked a ridge on his farm soon after snowmelt and noted the ground was speckled with the delicate, purple pedals of pasque flowers—more than he'd ever seen in his life. For Dan Jenniges, the aha moment came when he realized that he was grazing more cattle on fewer acres, and yet still had plenty of grass available at the end of the summer. J.B. Bright sees it whenever livestock are allowed to carefully graze one of the 250 waterfowl production areas he manages and native grasses and forbs respond with a riot of growth, producing prime bird, insect and mammal habitat. Jeff Duchene's moment of awareness comes repeatedly, whenever he does a rain-fall simulation and notes how without fail the sample of soil covered with well-managed grass or cover crops soaks in more water and sends less running off the surface.

These observations, all taking place in west-central Minnesota's farm country, are no accident. They are signs that an effort to get more continuous living cover established in an agricultural watershed—in this case the Chippewa—is starting to pay off as farmers and natural resource professionals make the connection between more cover on the land, a healthier environment and profitable agriculture.

"I'm kind of excited to see where it can go from here," said Jenniges.

Profitable Pasture

This is part of an initiative called the Chippewa 10% Project, a team effort involving the Land Stewardship Project and the Chippewa River Watershed Project, along with several other partners, including agencies, environmental groups, educational institutions and farmers. The ability of continuous living cover—whether it be cover crops or permanent pasture grass—to produce profits and environmental sustainability

were on full display in mid-July during a Chippewa 10% field day in Pope County. This is an area where the initiative is working with farmers, natural resource agencies and environmental groups on the "Simon Lake Challenge," an effort to spread conservation across private and public lands by getting as much healthy habitat established as possible.

Dan and Linda Jenniges's pasture abutting the East Branch of the Chippewa River is a prime example of how innovations in grazing management can not only profitably improve environmental health, but actually



Participants in a Chippewa 10% field day check out how Dan and Linda Jenniges changed their grazing system to increase stocking rates while boosting grassland habitat. (LSP Photo)

seed better relations between natural resource agencies and farmers.

"I've already noticed a lot more birds, a lot more insects, more deer, and I haven't taking anything away from the cattle," said Dan as he stood in the middle of the pasture in front of a couple dozen farmers, natural resource professionals and journalists during the field day.

He's done more than not take anything away from the cattle—Jenniges has actually been able to increase the land's carrying capacity significantly. He's bumped up the number of beef cows grazing on this 189-acre piece of land from 65 to 85. In fact, the increase is even more dramatic than it appears, considering that initially the pasture

was 289 acres and it still couldn't accommodate 85 cows without suffering the effects of overgrazing.

With the help of advice from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as well as cost-share funds from its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Jenniges has spent the past two years dramatically overhauling how he grazes the pasture. His goal was not only to increase production during the prime part of the growing season when cool season grasses do well, but to extend the grazing season through the late summer hot months when such species often go dormant. So on part of the pasture he planted warm season native grasses and forbs, such as sideoats grama, Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem and white and purple prairie clovers. To prepare the seedbed for the native species, he planted a cocktail mix of cover crops that included, among other species, soybeans, turnips, sorghum, oats and field peas, which he was also able to graze.

Jenniges then expanded the number of paddocks in the pasture from four to 18. This allows him to rotate the cattle more frequently, giving the forages in each paddock time to recover—as much as 60 to 80 days—and distributing manure and urine evenly throughout the landscape. Moving cattle through paddocks on a regular basis is a key element of managed rotational grazing, but Jenniges has taken it one step further. Two years ago, the Chippewa 10% Project brought in North Dakota livestock producer Gene Goven to talk about how he utilizes "mob grazing" to significantly increase the stocking capacity of his pastures while building soil health and improving water quality. This involves putting a relatively high number of animals in a paddock for a short amount of time and then, depending on conditions, moving

them after a few days, often leaving as much as a third of the uneaten forage behind.

This is in stark contrast to the traditional method of grazing, which relies on getting as much vegetation harvested as possible. But leaving feed behind, much of which gets stomped into the ground, builds soil health, making the paddock a fertile home for more growth and building resiliency in the face of droughty conditions.

Jenniges said this mob grazing system was difficult to accept at first, given his propensity to get as much grass as possible off a pasture. "I'm used to the idea of if it's there, you take it," he said. "It's really a mind-set

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to realize that if I leave this I'm going to gain something back from it, and within a year and a half I've seen enough results to sell me on it."

And the results were evident on a day in deep summer—the grass was thick and verdant. "This is the most grass I've ever seen on this pasture," said Duchene, who is a grazing specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

J.B. Bright liked the condition of the pasture as well, and not just because it was producing good forage. Bright, a wildlife refuge specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, noted how the rotational grazing system had created structural diversity, or "heterogeneity," over the 189 acres. In other words, vegetation was at different heights and levels of maturity across the landscape. This is critical for providing different species of wildlife the kinds of habitat and food sources each requires throughout the growing season. The needs of grassland songbirds differ from that of mallards or Canada geese. Bumblebees seek out different flowers than other pollinators.

It's that kind of diversity Bright strives for on the refuge acres he manages, including a waterfowl production area that borders the Jenniges pasture. That's why, working with livestock producers like Jenniges, he utilizes grazing to manage grasslands on refuge lands.

"Grasslands are disturbance dependent ecosystems, so just leaving it alone is going to get you a lot of trees and other woody vegetation, or a lot of non-native grasses,"

said Bright, adding that in some ways grazing is more reliable than his other major grassland management tool, burning, since it's not so weather dependent.

By allowing farmers to contract graze refuge land periodically, wildlife managers not only get improved grassland habitat in public areas, but the farmers get to rest their own pastures, improving the habitat available on those private lands.

And there's an added benefit to this relationship: better community relations. Jenniges explained that growing up in an area where there are a relatively high number of state and federal wildlife areas generated a negative view of refuge lands amongst he and other livestock producers. While scrambling to find enough pasture to graze on, they watched helplessly as these public areas become overgrown with invasives. Being allowed periodic access to these lands shows that natural resource professionals like Bright acknowledge the role working lands conservation can play throughout the community, said Jenniges.



Dan Jenniges used a cover crop cocktail mix to build soil health and prepare a seedbed for perennial pasture grasses. (LSP Photo)

"It gives me a reason to accept some of these public lands in our community," he said.

Such improved relations don't just make for a less tense community. Jenniges's planting of warm season natives in his pasture was done with the assistance of habitat specialists like Bright. For good reason: those species not only help get cattle through a summer slump, they provide food and habitat throughout the growing season for wild residents.

Flower Power

A few miles from the Jenniges farm, Andy and Lindsey Marcum are also proving that intense management can reclaim "lost habitat." When the Marcums moved on to some hilly land adjacent to a Nature Conservancy preserve a few years ago, there

Give it a Listen

• On episode 171 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Andy Marcum describes how he used conservation grazing to revitalize a prairie: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/774>.

• On episode 182, Dan Jenniges and J.B. Bright talk about how rotational grazing is improving profits, wildlife habitat and community relations: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/869>.

• On episode 183, Jeff Duchene describes what a rain simulation tells us about the benefits of having more cover on the land and more roots beneath the surface: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/882>.

had not been livestock present for some 50 years. And it showed it: the grassland was severely degraded, all but taken over by sumac and eastern red cedars.

They mowed the woody invasives and used EQIP funding to install the fencing and watering systems needed for a rotational grazing system. The Marcums started mob grazing it in 2013—moving the cattle every four to seven days—to keep the invasives down. It worked and produced a pleasant surprise in the bargain, a reminder of the land's ecological history. In early spring of 2015, Andy walked a ridge behind his house that had been mob grazed the previous year. Snow had just receded but the land was already sprouting pasque flowers, a significant sign of a healthy prairie.

"I could not believe the amount of flowers I saw," recalled Marcum as he provided a tour of his grazing paddocks. "It started with the pasque flowers, and as we progressed into the summer the amount of wildflowers and the diversity of grass species that came back blew me away. That was the holy cow moment for me that this works."

On a sunny day in July, Marcum, who also does landowner outreach for the Chippewa 10% Project, pointed out grazing areas full of sidecoats grama, big bluestem, Indian grass, lead plant and purple coneflower. Across a perimeter fence that marks the property line, a neighbor's field provided a hint at what Marcum's land used to look like: solid sumac smothered the field as far as the eye could see, making it all but impassable for man or beast.

It's no accident that both Marcum and Jenniges started out revitalizing their grasslands with good fencing. One of the first things to go after livestock leave a farm are the wire and posts—corn and soybeans tend

Cover Crops? Grazing? Rotations? Give the Calculator a Try

The Chippewa 10% Project has developed the Cropping Systems Calculator, a tool for estimating the financial costs and benefits of switching to various cropping and grazing systems, including cover crops. It's available at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/chippewa10croppingsystemscalculator>. Take a look and give it a test drive. We welcome any feedback.

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not to sprout legs and wander off the property. Lack of fencing makes it unlikely that livestock will ever return to that land. This isn't just an issue on private lands: Bright said one of the biggest barriers to using livestock to manage grasslands on refuges is lack of good fencing. Innovations in portable, affordable fencing that can be put up quickly make it possible to return livestock to land that has not been grazed for a long time, decades in some cases. Increased portability of lightweight electric fencing also makes it easier to utilize livestock as a way to target certain areas of the landscape with more intense grazing, while going lighter on others, depending on the condition of the forage and management goals. In a sense, it's made livestock farmers nimbler, and better able to match the animal impact to the what the land needs and can handle.

Follow the Flow

This is all good news for livestock producers and wildlife refuge managers. But having farming systems that are based on continuous living cover be a practical and profitable option also has implications for the wider public. An increasing number of studies show that when, for example, cover crops or well managed pastures are present on a farm, the amount of erosion and runoff of fertilizers and other chemicals drops significantly. Such plant regimes also build organic matter in the soil, which dramatically improves the land's ability to retain moisture while generating its own fertility—in a word, it's made more resilient.

One estimate is that cover crops can cut nitrogen runoff by 20 percent to 30 percent. As soil organic matter increases from 1 percent to 3 percent, soil's water holding capacity can double. Replacing even just 20 percent of a highly erosive corn or soybean field with perennials can reduce runoff by as much as 90 percent.

Those are important facts in the Chippewa, a 1.3-million-acre watershed where 74 percent of the land is devoted to agriculture. The Chippewa is the single biggest watershed tributary to the Minnesota River, one of the most polluted waterways in the Upper Midwest. Environmental scientists agree on one point: more of the land needs to be covered in living plants throughout the year, not just a few months during the corn-soybean growing season. That's why making continuous cover a profitable and practical alternative has implications outside of west-



A rain simulation shows how continuous living cover reduces surface runoff of water while increasing how much moisture infiltrates through the soil profile. (Photo by Rebecca Wasserman-Olin)

central Minnesota.

And there's nothing like a rain simulation to drive that point home. On a bright summer day on the Marcum farm, a motorized sprinkler tracked back and forth above a tray, saturating five squares of soil that



Andy Marcum used a combination of intense invasive species removal and rotational grazing to bring a native prairie back to life on his land. "I could not believe the amount of flowers I saw," he says of a walk he took through the prairie one spring day after it had been grazed the previous year. (LSP Photo)

had been spaded up from area fields. Each square represented different management methods: an overgrazed pasture, a cover cropped field, a rotationally grazed pasture, a field managed using a low-tillage method called strip-till, and a cornfield that relied on heavy tillage. As a crowd of farmers and natural resource professionals looked on, the artificial rainfall began making its way in two different directions: down through the squares, and over their surface, filling large plastic jugs hung in strategic spots. The take home message of this exercise? You want lots of water in the jugs directly beneath the tray, because that's a sign the soil is healthy

enough to take in the moisture and make use of it. Lots of water in the jugs hung to catch surface runoff is not so good, especially if it's stained with eroded soil.

Predictably, the samples that represented the least vegetation above and below the surface—the conventionally tilled cornfield and the overgrazed pasture—sent the least amount of water down through the soil profile; the majority escaped over the surface. Perhaps the most troubling was the amount of sediment that smeared the flume channeling the overland runoff from the intensely tilled cornfield. The cover cropped and no-till samples, with their better soil structure, put plenty of water in the infiltration jugs and produced little runoff. But the rotationally grazed pasture was the winner: it's infiltration jug was almost full while barely enough ran off to water a small dog. What was present was crystal clear.

"I've run this test many, many times and we come up with something close to this every time," said the NRCS's Duchene at the conclusion of the demonstration. "Building soil health like this gives farmers a chance to be proactive on protecting water quality, and it helps your farm as well, because once that soil washes off your land, it's lost." □

Chippewa 10% Project

For more information on the Chippewa 10% Project, see <http://landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/chippewa10project>, or contact the Land Stewardship Project's Robin Moore at 320-269-2105, rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Feathers, Food & Inebriated Grasshoppers

What do wandering orioles and a deeply-rooted dairy farm have in common?

By Brian DeVore

On a Saturday in June, a couple dozen people gathered between a newly sprouted cornfield and a windbreak at the Martin and Loretta Jaus farm in west-central Minnesota's Sibley County. Almost to a person, they were armed with binoculars and field guides. Some were equipped with smart phone apps that can help identify birds via their calls. The "bird nerd" nature of the tour participants made sense, given the theme of the event. Sponsored by the Minnesota chapter of the Audubon Society and Birds and Beans, a marketer of bird-friendly coffee, as well as Organic Valley (the organic dairy co-op the Jaus belong to), it was set up to help birding enthusiasts make the connection between more birds on their life lists and the coffee or milk they consume.

"Our decisions to consume products in an ecologically sustainable way make a difference," Tom Will, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bird ecologist, told the crowd. "Our choices make a difference."

The Jaus are particularly well-suited to help make that connection, and not just because they're organic. Before returning in 1980 to farm this land, which has been in Martin's family since 1877, the couple had gotten wildlife degrees and worked at a wildlife research facility and hunting preserve. As a result, they've committed themselves to blending the "wild" and the "tame" on their farm, making it a bit of a biodiverse island in a sea of corn and soybean fields. For example, their grazing paddocks are surrounded by windbreaks and bird boxes, which attracts bluebirds and other insect eaters that control pests. Martin estimates they can get one pair of bluebirds for every five acres of pasture. "The best year was 35 pairs," he told the tour participants with the kind of pride that other farmers might reserve for talking about bushels-of-corn-per-acre yield. They've restored an 11-acre wetland and reclaimed native grasslands to not only attract wildlife, but pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Will explained how songbirds such as bobolinks and dickcissels that make their summer home on the Jaus farm spend their

winters in South and Central American countries like Columbia or Nicaragua.

"And every place they visit contributes to their wellbeing and health," explained the ecologist. "So it's critical for those birds to find a gem of a place like this farm."

Linking the Americas

Much like how Midwestern farm country has seen most of its grasslands plowed up and converted to annual monocrops over the past several decades, 40 or 50 years ago



During a recent field day, Martin Jaus (second from left) described how he and Loretta's dairy farm blends profitable production and prime bird habitat. (LSP Photo)

coffee growers in the southern hemisphere started cutting down forests to provide coffee bushes with more full sun. This meant more beans per bush, but it also caused erosion and decimated the overstory wintering songbirds require. In the 1990s, organizations began certifying coffee that was grown with the overstory intact. This spawned a market for "shade grown" coffee, which provides a price premium for farmers willing to keep bird habitat a part of their operations.

Part of Martin and Loretta's responsibility on this particular day was to fill in the tour participants on the Minnesota end of the songbird migration cycle, and to show that working farms like theirs are just as critical to supporting healthy bird habitat as an eco-

logically minded coffee farm in Nicaragua.

During a hay wagon tour of the farm, Martin described their method of producing milk, interrupting himself periodically to identify a bird. The Jaus rely on managed rotational grazing and diverse rotations of field crops to feed their 60-cow organic dairy herd without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

At one point during the tour, Martin gave a little history lesson. In the 1960s, drainage ditches were used to drain a nearby lake as well as wetlands. "That's all gone now," said Martin sadly. "The landscape has changed."

But the tour participants also saw what one committed farm family can do to bring their own piece of the landscape back to life. They see: dickcissels clutching waving stems of grass like pole vaulters caught in mid-arc; tree swallows dive-bombing bugs in the grazing paddocks; a young red-tailed hawk circling above; a clay-colored sparrow with its buzzing zheee, zheee, zheee

call; raucous red-winged blackbirds; highly territorial eastern kingbirds; and Baltimore orioles, flashing their vibrant orange and black colors in a grove of trees.

Kristin Hall, the conservation manager for Audubon Minnesota, described how she accompanied the Fish and Wildlife Service's Will out to the Jaus farm on a June day in 2014 as part of a Breeding Bird Atlas survey. She wasn't thrilled at the prospect of traveling to a farm for the survey, given that at the same time many of her colleagues were going to be identifying species in more "birdy" places like the North Woods. Her avian

Feathers, see page 27...

assumptions made an abrupt shift as soon as the Jaus farm came into view after driving through miles of row crop country.

"I swear to you, driving up here you just see the difference," Hall recalled. "It really is the landscape, not only with the birds suddenly singing and moving around, but with the grasses, the fencelines, the birdhouses. It's just a really stark difference."

On the Jaus farm that day two years ago, Hall tallied between 50 and 60 birds, including a nesting pair of long-eared owls.

Digging Deeper

After the tour, participants gathered next to a small pond for lunch. North of this picturesque spot were cows on grazing paddocks. Orioles darted in and out amongst trees near the pond and a chalkboard listed the menu, which was all locally sourced. Zellas, a restaurant in nearby Hutchinson that's committed to sourcing food from local farmers, had prepared the meal.

After lunch, Hall talked about the "powerful changes" people can make with their food choices. "Not all of us can buy a farm," she said, re-emphasizing that what we *can do* is support this kind of farming with our buying habits.

One of the other after-lunch speakers was Katie Fallon, an author and co-founder of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia. Fallon reinforced the connections between a prairie farm, tropical forests and the food choices we make. She talked about the human connections that migrating songbirds can forge. As if on cue, as the ornithologist talked a Baltimore oriole made its chattering call from near the pond.

"That Baltimore oriole could have been seen by somebody at a farm in Nicaragua," said Fallon. "Some person picking coffee beans could have heard that fluty song and looked up and said, 'Wow, that's a really cool bird.' Just seeing that oriole links you to someone thousands of miles away who could have looked at that bird and had the same reaction: 'Wow! Look at that thing.'"

Loretta Jaus, who serves on the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors, wrapped up the discussion by explaining that being certified organic means the farm has chemical restrictions and pasture requirements. These stipulations alone make the farm more wildlife friendly. But organic certification does not require a farmer to restore a wetland or put up bluebird boxes. In fact, surveys show that shoppers consistently choose organic products, or grass-fed products for that matter, because they think consuming them is healthier for them

personally. The health of the land or a rural community doesn't necessarily play a role in such buying decisions. Whenever a food scare flares up in the industrialized system, organic sales spike. That's great, and it's supporting farmers like the Jauses, but as soon as some sharp marketer convinces consumers that a different kind of food is healthier, they lurch to that side of the ship.

And then there's the fact that the truck hauling organic milk away from the Jaus farm will be driving by endless acres of monocropped fields that by winter will be stripped of all plant life. Granted, several participants in this particular tour pledged to purchase organic dairy products from now on, but buying "green" doesn't have the same long-term, generational impact that adapting a new ethic toward the land does, an ethic that means you will support a certain kind of farming in as many ways as possible: from decisions made in the grocery store to those made in the policy realm.

Loretta made the point that supporting bird-friendly agriculture means supporting farms that go deeper than abstaining from chemicals or putting in a shelterbelt here and there. It means supporting a type of agriculture that makes ecological connections literally from beneath the ground up.

She told the tour participants that this became clear to her and Martin in 1989, when west-central Minnesota was in the last year of a four-year drought. One of the results was a grasshopper invasion of *Little House on the Prairie* proportions. A neighboring farm had only skeletal stems and leaf veins left on its soybean plants after the insects ratchet-jawed their way through a field. Insecticide sprayers worked on an emergency basis to save the remaining crops in the neighborhood.

The timing of the outbreak was particularly bad for small grains such as oats, which are crucial to the Jaus rotation. These plants had just started to head out, producing a succulent banquet for the voracious hoppers. Some small grain fields in the neighborhood looked like they had been mowed down after swarms passed through. Loretta and Martin dreaded even going to the part of the farm where they had their small grains planted. But they steeled themselves for a visit, figuring that at least they could use the leftover stubble for straw.

"I still remember rounding a bend in the road and it was ragged around the edges but the rest of the field was harvestable," Loretta recalled. "We were just dumbfounded. We had no idea why that was when right across a grass buffer strip there was a neighbor's field that was pretty much decimated."

She and Martin did some ecological detective work and came to the conclusion

that because their farm had more biodiversity, the grasshoppers had gone for the easier pickings in their neighbors' less varied fields. Pests love it when they happen upon one big monocultural expanse of real estate, making it possible to feed continuously without disruption.

But five years later the farmers learned the answer to this mystery had deeper roots than they had imagined. While Loretta was telling the "grasshopper story" during a tour of the farm, a veterinarian who works with organic farmers interjected to explain what really happened. It turned out diversity *had* saved their fields, but in a more complex way than the Jauses had first guessed. Their crop rotations and other soil-building measures had cooked up such a complex, healthy subterranean world that the fields produced grains extremely high in sugars. When the grasshoppers began feeding, the sugars metabolized into alcohol, which proved fatal, or at least "discouraging" for the drunken critters.

"Don't feel too bad about it—they died happy," Loretta recalled the veterinarian telling her and Martin.

It's a perfect story to tell to just about any crowd, since it contains all the great elements of a narrative: drama, mystery, humor—even an aha moment. It also conveys an important message that even when we think we know everything, we really don't. The interaction of the grasshoppers, soil and plants made it clear that the land is part of a whole. Farmers, and by extension the people they feed, are only fooling themselves if they think they are not members of that same community.

"We learned to watch for things like that," Loretta said at the conclusion of her story. "What the grasshopper story taught us was that we can run the farm, and that we should run the farm, with respect for the principles that are operating the natural systems and that in the end it will pay off in big ways, not only in terms of success of the farm, but in terms of the other living things we share the farm with." □

Give it a Listen

• On episode 181 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Loretta Jaus, Tom Will, Katie Fallon and Kristin Hall talk about the connections between a Midwestern dairy farm and a South American coffee operation: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/866>.

• Episode 25 features Martin and Loretta Jaus talking about why having a "farm as natural habitat" is important to them: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/253>.



The Big Marsh The Story of a Lost Landscape

By Cheri Register
2016; 288 pages
Minnesota Historical Society Press
www.mnhs.org/mnhspress

Reviewed by Jason Abraham

For those who have ever stared into a black-and-white photograph of horses hitched to a wagon and wondered what it was like for the people who came before us, *The Big Marsh* by Cheri Register provides a vivid step back in time when life was not as simple as we might like to think. It's the story of political intrigue and even romance woven around a drainage project that forever changed lives and landscape in Freeborn and Mower counties in southern Minnesota.

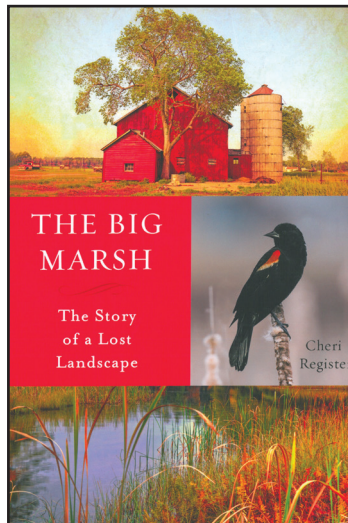
She anchors her journey into the past with a vivid depiction of how this giant wetland would fit into the landscape if it still existed today, how the marsh would have covered four townships east of Geneva Lake off Interstate 35 and how Hollandale and the fields around it were once covered with water and home to thick flocks of wild fowl. The small town of Maple Island was once a real island, and Register reflects on how it's almost impossible to tell that the Big Marsh was once there.

The author soon leaps back into meticulously researched history and the story of what the area was like when white settlers found it. With scraps sifted from military logbooks, she recounts an expedition led by Lt. Albert Miller Lea, the namesake of the Freeborn County seat, who deemed the marsh impassable. A more accurate picture is provided by the public land surveyors who arrived 20 years later with measuring chains and a compass to doggedly delineate section and township lines.

Through the eyes of settler-farmers, small town elites and big shots from the Twin Cities and the East Coast, Register tells how a small, meandering stream called Turtle Creek was transformed into a drainage ditch that turned the Big Marsh into acres and acres of farmland. The story is particularly poignant because it includes her own family history, which begins with her paternal great-great-grandparents Robert and Mary Speer, whose original homestead still stands

on the banks of Turtle Creek. It also includes her maternal great-great-grandparents whose son Elbert Ostrander (Register's great-grandfather) becomes a pet-bear-owning activist in the fight to spare the Big Marsh from drainage.

The battle for the Big Marsh begins when P. D. McMillan, a real-estate developer from the Twin Cities, turns "worthless" marsh into a profitable industrial farm by draining the water from Rice Lake, a smaller body of water next to the Big Marsh. Driven by his early success, McMillan enlists the help of John F. D. Meighen, a newly minted local attorney whose influential family includes state legislators, gubernatorial candidates and wealthy farmers. (Meighen's grandparents operated the general store in Forestville, Minn., which is a historic site today.) Together, with the backing of a group of wealthy investors, McMillan proposes a nine-mile ditch to expose the fertile soil under the waters of the Big Marsh.



At first, the group and their proposal do little but raise the ire of local farmers and the county board as they vehemently oppose the project. But the investors are wise, well connected and, more importantly, well funded. They learn from their mistakes, sharpen their arguments and use their political influence. As a result, the Big Marsh meets the fate of most wetlands that once existed in farm country.

Register carefully crafts her tale around newspaper accounts, and dogged searches through public records. Drawing heavily from Meighen's personal diary, she reveals a man who perseveres in his work despite financial hardships and difficulties in his romantic relationships.

She also uses personal letters and scraps of family history. In a postcard that, as Register says, could pass for a love letter from between her parents-to-be, she reveals how

• • •
"...the investors are wise, well connected and, more importantly, well funded. They learn from their mistakes, sharpen their arguments and use their political influence. As a result, the Big Marsh meets the fate of most wetlands that once existed in farm country."
 • • •

the drainage project might have brought the two together.

In describing her activist great-grandfather, Elbert Ostrander, Register reveals a man dedicated to social justice and environmentalism, with perhaps a little less concern for the well-being of his immediate family.

Register also provides the small details that bring history to life, especially for readers with little farm experience. We learn how peat fires destroyed farms and how smartweed, when entwined in a twitching milking cow's tail, can cause blindness, as well as how cows become oxen.

"An ox is made, not born," writes Register. "A steer — a castrated male — allowed to live beyond prime butchering weight grows huge, strong and patient by age four. A milk cow relieved of calving and the daily dairy cycle can also be put to the yoke and develop oxen strength. Alert Devons with their chestnut red hides and sloping horns; Milking Shorthorns of red, white, or roan; red and white Ayrshires with the lyre-shaped horns and challenging temperaments can be nurtured and trained as working oxen, along with other cattle breeds. 'Ox' becomes an honorific name applied to a large, hardworking, uncomplaining servant animal."

This, however, is more than the sad story of another wetland lost. Some of the profits from the P. D. McMillan Land Company found their way to the Minneapolis Institute of Art through donated paintings and a sculpture. McMillan's son, Dana, who eventually became a vice president at General Mills, was a well known philanthropist who donated numerous pieces to the art institute.

Register's ancestors, the Speers, also prospered in the years after the drainage despite their opposition to the project. Their farm, however, was lost during a recession in the early 1920s that could at least be connected to the changes in agriculture brought on by drainage and industrialization. □

Jason Abraham grew up hunting the wetlands of southern Minnesota, where he learned that the tastiest way to consume ducks involves bacon, ranch dressing and cold beer.

Vitamin N The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life

By Richard Louv
2016; 277 pages
Algonquin Books
<http://richardlouv.com/books/vitamin-n>

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

Vitamin N: *The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life* is Richard Louv's third book addressing the topic of "Nature-Deficit Disorder," a term he coined in his 2005 best-selling work addressing the social consequences of children being separated from the natural world: *Last Child in the Woods*. That first book introduced us to the problem and its causes. Louv's sequel, *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting With Life in a Virtual Age*, painted a more hopeful view of the future while acknowledging the many environmental issues facing the world and the seriousness of these issues. *The Nature Principle* argues that there are solutions available via business, education and politics if we can recognize them, and such recognition will be more readily available as people, especially children, reconnect with nature and become more comfortable with the natural world.

It is important to note that Louv's ideas have begun to filter their way into current educational, as well as social and environmental, discussions. For example, there is the "No Child Left Inside" amendment proposed as part of the re-authorization of the "No Child Left Behind" education reform bill. The arguments supporting such a proposal drew heavily from Louv's writings.

Although these ideas may be sound

and useful to the reader, their underlying philosophy—the importance to children and the overall social impact—could be easily lost on someone who is not familiar with the concept of Nature-Deficit Disorder. Even though reading Louv's first two books is not a pre-requisite to understanding the ideas in *Vitamin N*, I would recommend it.

To a great extent, *Vitamin N* serves as a resource book for the two previous works. Educators, community activists and parents will all find this prescriptive work useful. It delivers on the promise of its subtitle: *500 Ways to Enrich the Health & Happiness of Your Family & Community*. The book contains practical activities and information about organizations, including faith-based groups and programs geared to urban youth and ethnic and racial minorities that may have limited access to natural settings. Louv promotes the idea of creating "Citizen Naturalists," and having communities adopt a natural area and monitoring its condition. Such efforts don't have to be complex: simply taking intergenerational nature hikes can enable communication within a family, strengthening bonds while giving children the opportunity to glean knowledge from previous generations. The beauty of such activities is it just isn't the children who benefit. An example of Louv's straightforward style is on display in a section called "Simple Ways to Expand Time and Space for Kids and Adults," where he lists several simple steps, including:

- Put nature on the calendar.
- Think of nature time as

enrichment time.

- Turn your commute time into a nature safari.
- Take a first day hike.
- Walk this way.
- Go on a moonwalk.
- Make the "green hour" a new family tradition.

Each idea has a short paragraph describing what can be done to fit such activities into a family's lifestyle. For example, under "Think of nature time as enrichment time," Louv writes, "Leisure is good. Of course! Play is essential. But our culture tends to

dismiss independent play, leisure, and nature time as nonessential nice-to-haves. But in terms of child development, or human development at any age, nature time is as important as activities we now consider educational or developmental enrichment."

Such advice may sound like common sense, but that doesn't mean it's easily followed. As Louv points out, "...taking time for nature requires *taking* time—and putting it on the calendar."

The author uses reflections of community members, parents and educators who are utilizing some of these ideas to bring them to life in an easily accessible manner.

Louv identified the problem in his earlier books; his latest one comes close to providing some possible prescriptions, if not a final cure. Read the book and go out and pick the setting for this inoculation, whether it be a farm, a garden, a city park or your own backyard. □

Frequent Land Stewardship Project volunteer Dale Hadler lives in southeastern Minnesota.

Listen in on the 'Culture' in Agriculture

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast>) periodically features conversations, plays and readings touching on literature, poetry and other aspects of agriculture's "cultural" roots. Here is a selection of podcasts related to telling stories about keeping the land and people together:

• **Episode 165**—LSP members honor Wendell Berry with an evening of readings.

• **Episode 152**—People share their connections to the land and community at a special LSP storytelling event.

• **Episode 95**—A play about a retiring couple's struggle with their farm's future (part 2).

• **Episode 94**—A play about a retiring couple's struggle with their farm's future (part 1).

• **Episode 39**—"Keeping the Land & People

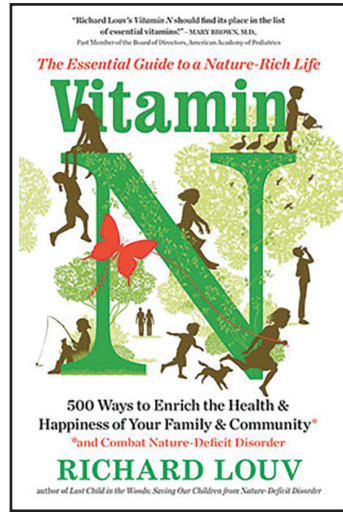
Together" panel discussion (part 5).

• **Episode 38**—"Keeping the Land & People Together" panel discussion (part 4).

• **Episode 37**—"Keeping the Land & People Together" with Joe Paddock (part 3).

• **Episode 36**—"Keeping the Land & People Together" with Mary Rose O'Reilly (part 2).

• **Episode 35**—"Keeping the Land & People Together" with Wendell Berry (part 1).





6 Ways You Can Support LSP This Fall

By Abby Liesch & Megan Smith

Land Stewardship Project members are making a more sustainable and just food and farming system possible. Here are several ways you can help build LSP's power:

#1 Giving Through Your Workplace

Many workplaces offer an option to give to the organization of your choice directly through your payroll. Giving weekly, monthly, quarterly or a one-time gift is efficient, automatic and easy to set up. Ask your employer if they offer workplace giving as an option, and consider supporting LSP in this way!

The Minnesota Environmental Fund (MEF) is a great option for workplace giving. MEF is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations working in Minnesota and LSP is proud to be one of them. If your workplace doesn't already have MEF as an option, ask if they would be interested in learning more. Giving through MEF is a great way to support LSP and other environmental organizations working to make Minnesota a better place. See page 31 for more on MEF.

Did you know that your employer might offer a match for your charitable giving? Workplace matches are offered by many employers and can double the impact of your donation to LSP. Ask your workplace if they have a matching gift program.

#2 Gifts of Stock

Gifts of stock are valuable to LSP and help diversify our financial base. LSP will work with you and/or your broker to handle gifts of stock. Contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org for the information you'll need to provide your broker or if you have questions.

#3 Renew Your Annual Membership or Start a Sustaining Membership

As always, keeping your membership current is an important way to support LSP. LSP's power comes from our base of

members who are committed to our vision of stewardship and justice on the land. When your membership is current, you'll stay informed about the actions you can take, ways to be involved, and opportunities to meet with other LSP members along the way. Becoming a sustaining member with a monthly pledge is a powerful, effective, and paperless way to keep your membership current.

Setting it up is simple: you choose the amount of your pledge, send in a voided check or fill out your credit card information on the envelope in the middle of this *Land Stewardship Letter* or online, and your pledge will automatically be withdrawn each month. Renewing your membership on time, either with a one-time gift or by starting a monthly pledge, helps LSP continue to create a farm and food system that cares for people and the land. If you have questions about when your membership is due to renew, contact Abby Liesch at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org.

#4 Community Partnerships

Together we can accomplish more than we can alone, which is why community partnerships are so important. By partnering with restaurants, food co-ops, local businesses and artists we are able to amplify our message and reach new people.

The Birchwood BOOST at the Birchwood Café in South Minneapolis is a great example of building awareness of LSP's work to build a more just and sustainable farm and food system. Throughout August and September LSP partnered with the Birchwood Café to engage, inform and build the capacity of LSP's work. Café patrons had the opportunity to round up their tab, and the Birchwood hosted events to engage people around beginning farmer support and stopping the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. The goal of this LSP-Birchwood partnership was to raise awareness, engagement and the funds needed to move our work forward.

LSP is honored to have long lasting rela-

tionships with other community partners like Restaurant Alma, Brasa Rotisserie, Bluff Country Co-op and many others.

#5 Give to the Max Day Nov. 17

Ready. Set. Give! On Thursday, Nov. 17, LSP will be participating in GiveMN's Give to the Max Day, an all-day online giving event that brings together nonprofit organizations across Minnesota.

Give to the Max Day is an opportunity for you to join LSP, make a special one-time contribution or renew your annual membership. Over the years over 200 people have become LSP members on Give to the Max Day. If you would like more information about how to be involved with LSP's



As part of its BOOST program to support LSP in August and September, the Birchwood Café hosted a discussion on international trade issues. (Photo by Megan Smith)

Give to the Max Day efforts, contact LSP's Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org.

#6 In Memory & in Honor...

LSP is always grateful to receive special gifts in memory or in honor of a friend or family member (see page 31 for our latest acknowledgments). Memorial gifts are a meaningful way to contribute in the name of someone who cared about keeping the land and people together. Donations made in honor of someone special also make thoughtful gifts for birthdays, special events or around the holidays. Your contribution will be acknowledged in the *Land Stewardship Letter* as well as in a personalized card sent to the family or recipient.

Special memorial gifts can be made on our website, via mail or over the telephone. For details on donating in the name of someone, contact Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Abby Liesch is a membership associate for LSP; Megan Smith is a membership assistant.

In Memory & in Honor...

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received the following gifts made to honor or remember loved ones, friends or special events:

In Memory of Charles Reinert

- ◆ Ryan Batalden

In Memory of Roger Moore

- ◆ Peg Furshong

In Honor of the Farm Beginnings Class of 2016 & Instructor Dori Eder

- ◆ Kayla & Eric Elefson

In Memory of Mary Drenckhahn Rusert

- ◆ Barb & Martin Nelson

In Memory of Harvey Ratzlaff

- ◆ Eat for Equity
- ◆ Michael Bastian

- ◆ Julie Devine
- ◆ Kelly Merrick
- ◆ Nancy Schrader
- ◆ Barbara & Curtis Reid
- ◆ Orlou Mittelstaedt
- ◆ LaVia & Jim Merrick
- ◆ Debra & Douglas Lund
- ◆ Dale & Christine Howard
- ◆ Gregory Lee & Laurie Seidl
- ◆ Helen & Steven Dahlman
- ◆ Charles Schlatter
- ◆ Elizabeth Dahlman
- ◆ Deborah & Jeffrey Lynch
- ◆ Michael Lane

In Memory of Grayce Forsythe

- ◆ Carrie Gaffey
- ◆ Mary Pat Gaffey
- ◆ Pam Masterson & Family
- ◆ Cindy Feldman & Family
- ◆ Jolene Smyth & Family
- ◆ Janice Hougen

In Memory of Christopher McDonnell

- ◆ Carolyn McDonnell

In Honor of Bob Hurt's Birthday

- ◆ Roberta Walsh

For details on donating to LSP in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. Donations can be made online at <https://landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate>.

Membership Questions?

If you have questions about the status of your Land Stewardship Project membership or want to purchase a gift membership, give our Individual Giving and Membership Program a call at 612-722-6377 or send an e-mail to megans@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Volunteer for LSP

A big thanks goes out to the volunteers that help the Land Stewardship Project in all aspects of our work. LSP literally could not fulfill its mission without the hard work of our volunteers. Volunteers help us do everything from stuff envelopes and make telephone calls to enter data and set up logistics for meetings. If you'd like to volunteer in one of our offices, contact:

• **Montevideo, Minnesota:**

Terry VanDerPol, 320-269-2105, tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.

• **Lewiston, Minnesota:**

Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, karenb@landstewardshipproject.org.

• **Minneapolis, Minnesota:**

Amelia Shoptaugh, 612-722-6377, amelia@landstewardshipproject.org.

Support LSP in Your Workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to:

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project.

If your employer does not provide this opportunity to give through the Minnesota Environmental Fund, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For details, contact LSP's Mike McMahon (mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) or Abby Liesch (aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org) at 612-722-6377. □



MINNESOTA Environmental Fund



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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **NOV. 11-13—Fall Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture, featuring Jessie Sutherland**, Cedar Valley Resort, Whalan, Minn. Contact: Bonnie Haugen, bonnie.haugen@gmail.com
- **NOV. 12—LSP Farm Beginnings combined class session in the western Twin Cities region** (see page 16)
- **NOV. 12—11th Annual Earth Conf., featuring the theme, “Story of Seed: Blueprint for Life,”** Mankato, Minn. Contact: Mary Kiemen SSND, kkiemenssnd@yahoo.com, 651-690-2533
- **NOV. 17—Give to the Max Day** (see page 30 for information on supporting LSP)
- **NOV. 22—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Glenwood, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **NOV. 29-30—Green Lands Blue Waters 2016 Conference**, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. Contact: <http://snr.missouri.edu/green-lands-conference>, 612-625-3709, richardwarner@umn.edu
- **DEC. 1—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **DEC. 9—LSP Event Honoring George Boody, 4 p.m.-6:30 p.m.**, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn. (see page 3)
- **DEC. 10—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **DEC. 13—MDA Sustainable Ag Demo Grant Deadline.** (see page 17)
- **DEC. 15—MNSure enrollment deadline for coverage in Minnesota by Jan. 1** (see page 11)
- **DEC. 17—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Glenwood, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **JAN. 3—2017 Minn. State Legislature convenes.** Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org
- **JAN. 7—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)

A Few Spots Remain in the 2016-2017 Farm Beginnings Course

The Land Stewardship Project’s 2016-2017 Farm Beginnings course still has a few spots left. Separate classes are convening in Northfield, which is near Minnesota’s Twin Cities, and Glenwood in west-central Minnesota. See page 16 for details.

- **JAN. 12—LSP “Soil Health & Getting the Next Generation Started” event with no-till farmer Rick Bieber**, Plainview, Minn. Contact: Karen Stettler, LSP, stettler@landstewardshipproject.org, 507-523-3366
- **JAN. 12-13—Minnesota Organic Conference**, St. Cloud, Minn. Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx, Cassie Dahl, 651-201-6134

- **JAN. 28-29—12th Annual Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference**, University of Minnesota-St. Paul. Contact: www.imfconference.org/about.html, Emily Squyres (651-433-3676) or Moua Meng Yang (651-495-1528)
- **JAN. 31—MNSure open enrollment deadline for 2017 health insurance plans in Minnesota** (see page 11)
- **FEB. 4—LSP Farm Beginnings class sessions in Glenwood, Minn., & Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **FEB. 11—LSP Farm Transition Workshop**, Rochester, Minn. (see page 22)
- **FEB. 11—Sustainable Farming Association of Minn. Annual Conf.**, St. Joseph, Minn. Contact: www.sfa-mn.org/conference, 1-844-922-5573
- **FEB. 18—LSP Farm Beginnings class sessions in Glenwood, Minn., & Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **FEB. 23-25—MOSES Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis. Contact: <https://mosesorganic.org/conference>, 715-778-5775
- **MARCH 2—MDA Value Added Grants Deadline** (see page 17)
- **MARCH 11—LSP Farm Transition Workshop**, Rochester, Minn. (see page 22)
- **MARCH 11—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **MARCH 18—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Glenwood, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **APRIL 29—MDA Specialty Crops Grant Deadline** (see page 16)

Conservation Lease Resources

For fact sheets, guidebooks, internet links and other resources related to developing leases that match your stewardship values, see <http://landstewardshipproject.org/conservationleases>.

Resources are also available from LSP’s Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

- **JAN. 14—LSP Farm Transition Workshop**, Rochester, Minn. (see page 22)
- **JAN. 14—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Glenwood, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **JAN. 19—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **JAN. 20-21—Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference**, Ames Iowa. Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org/news-events/events/annual-conference, 515-232-5661
- **JAN. 24—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Glenwood, Minn.** (see page 16)
- **JAN. 26-28—Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Winter Conf.**, Aberdeen, S. Dak. Contact: www.npsas.org/npsas-calendar/2017-winter-conference, 701-883-4304

Check Upcoming Events at www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest workshops, classes, field days and deadlines.