

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

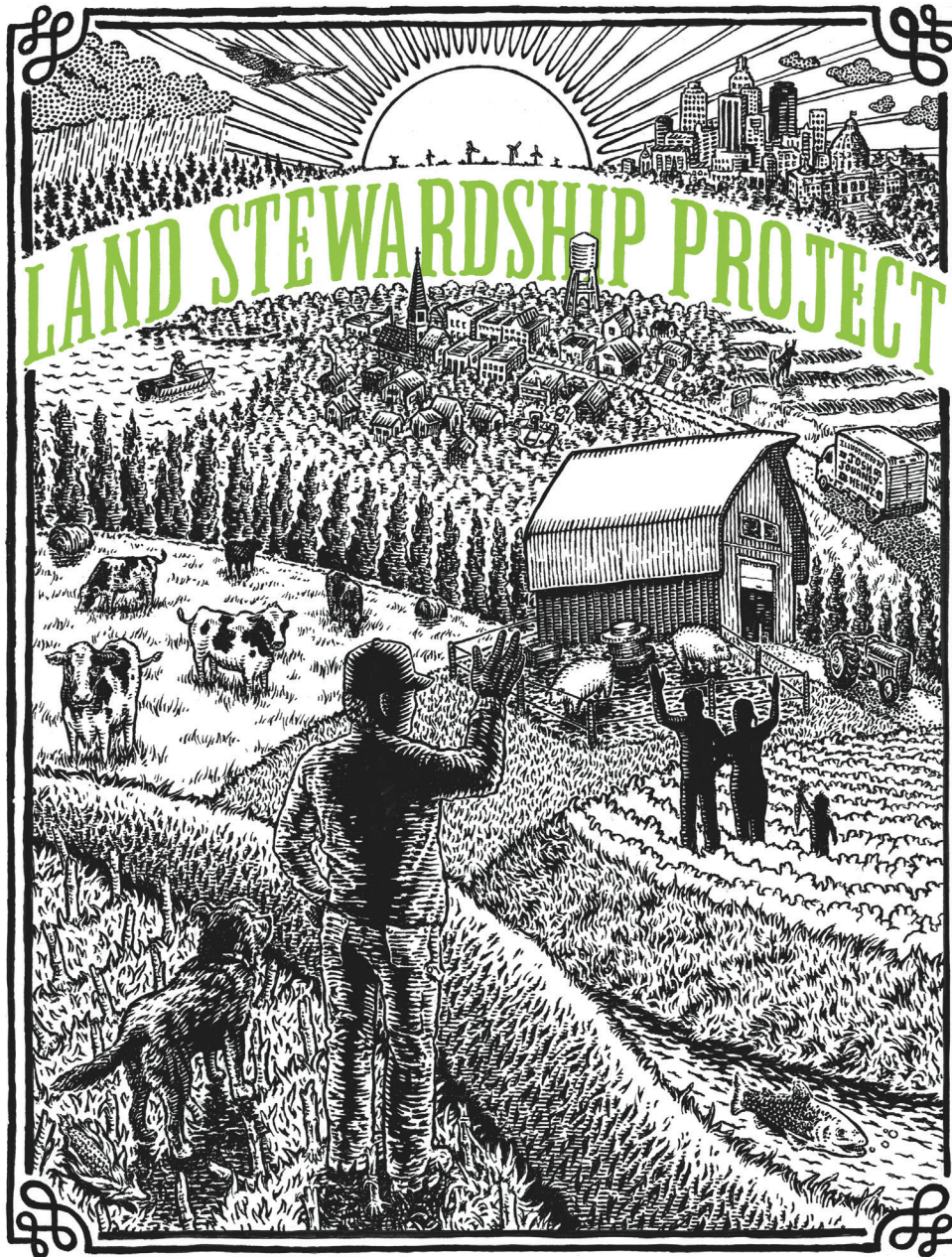
34 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

Volume 34

www.landstewardshipproject.org

Number 4, 2016



Art by Josh Journey-Heinz

The passing of the leadership torch as LSP begins its 35th year (page 3).



The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published by the Land Stewardship Project, a private, nonprofit organization. The Land Stewardship Project's mission is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop healthy communities. Members of the Land Stewardship Project receive this publication as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the *Land Stewardship Letter* should be addressed to the editor, **Brian DeVore**, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407-2102; phone: 612-722-6377; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deborah Allan, Kim Bartmann, Lisa Coons,
Dean Harrington, Alan Hoffman,
Loretta Jaus, Charlie Kersey, Jody Lenz,
Vince Ready, Juliet Tomkins, Sue Wika

STAFF

Southeastern Minnesota

180 E. Main St., P.O. Box 130, Lewiston,
MN 55952; phone: 507-523-3366; fax: 2729;
e-mail: karenb@landstewardshipproject.org
Karen Benson, Dori Eder, Doug Nopar,
Johanna Rupprecht, Shona Snater,
Karen Stettler, Caroline van Schaik

Western Minnesota

117 South 1st Street, Montevideo, MN 56265;
phone: 320-269-2105; fax: 2190;
e-mail: ispwest@landstewardshipproject.org
Amy Bacigalupo, Scott DeMuth,
Andrew Marcum, Robin Moore,
Nick Olson, Terry VanDerPol

Twin Cities/Policy

821 East 35th St., Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55407;
phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 6474;
e-mail: info@landstewardshipproject.org
George Boody—Executive Director
Mark Schultz—Associate Director/
Director of Programs
Maryam Abdinur, Ben Anderson,
Brian DeVore, Katie Doody,
Steve Ewest, Josh Journey-Heinz, Jonathan
Maurer-Jones, Dylan Bradford Kesti, Timothy
Kenney, Bobby King, Abigail Liesch,
Mike McMahon, Tom Nuessmeier,
Rebecca Wasserman-Olin, Stephanie Porter,
Mark Rusch, Amelia Shoptaugh,
Megan Smith, Paul Sobocinski



This LSL printed by Johnson Printers, Rochester, Minn.

Contents

LSP in Transition...3

- The Passing of the Leadership Torch

LSP News...6

- LSP & FSA Agreement
- New Montevideo Office
- LSP Staff Meeting
- Farmers: Time to Sign-up for 2017 CSA Directory
- Snater Joins Soil Health Team
- LSP in the News
- LSP Applauds Defeat of TPP

Policy & Organizing...8

- Organizing Around the Next Farm Bill
- Sannerud Joins Federal Policy Committee
- MDA Value Added Grants
- Healthcare in Crisis
- What to do About Healthcare in 2017
- Stories from Healthcare's Front Lines
- In Historic Vote, Frac Sand Ban Passes in Winona County



Farm Transitions...22

- Incubating Entrepreneurship
- *Farm Transitions Toolkit*
- It's Time to Plan that Transition
- LSP Offering 3-Part Transition Workshop this Winter
- Farmland Clearinghouse

Membership Update...30

- Making a Legacy Gift to LSP
- LSP Launches Future Impact Fund
- Give the Gift of Stewardship
- Membership Questions?
- In Memory & in Honor
- Get Current with LSP's *LIVE-WIRE*
- *Myth Buster* Series
- Volunteer for LSP
- Support LSP in Your Workplace



Continuous Living Cover...13

- Contributing to Millions of Years of Research
- Neighbor-to-Neighbor
- Cropping Systems Calculator
- Chippewa 10% Project
- The Hardest Step in Cover Cropping
- 'Roots for Our Future' Events in January
- Farmland Conservation Lease Resources
- Specialty Crop Grants

Community Based Food Systems...18

- The Ripple Effect
- LSP, Hope & Food Justice

Farm Beginnings...21

- Apply for the 2017-2018 Class
- Farm Beginnings in Other Regions
- Is Farming in Your Future?
- Beginning Farmer Podcasts

Reviews...28

- *The Future of Family Farms*
- *Fracture*
- Get Your LSP Cap



Stewardship Calendar...32

The Passing of the Torch

New Leadership at LSP Represents One More Link in a Stewardship Chain

When George Boody became executive director of the Land Stewardship Project in 1993, the 11-year-old organization had no formal programs dedicated to organizing for better policy, supporting beginning farmers or promoting local food systems. LSP wasn't even a membership-based group at the time—its constituency consisted of farmers and others interested in soil conservation and sustainable agriculture who attended meetings and field days, participated in actions and received the *Land Stewardship Letter* in the mail.

Not that LSP hadn't accomplished a lot already in its first decade: the organization had garnered national headlines for work related to holding giant insurance companies accountable for their treatment of farmland, the play *Planting in the Dust* had already ignited discussions about stewardship in communities across the Midwest and beyond, and the organization had been integral in the development of the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, the precursor to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. But when Ron Kroese, who had co-founded LSP with the late Victor Ray in 1982, stepped down as executive director, he knew that the group had much more potential to expand in breadth and depth. Kroese felt confident that there was a good core staff in place, along with a board of directors that represented LSP's constituency of stewardship farmers and others who cared about keeping the land and people together. Today, reflecting on those post-Kroese years, the organization's first executive director says his instincts were spot on: LSP has become a regional and national leader in creating a sustainable food and farm system.

"Even though I was only there the first 11 years, I get to bask in all of LSP's success," says Kroese with a laugh. "The best thing I ever did was hire George and get out of the way."

Now, 23 years later, it's Boody's turn to step aside. This fall, LSP's board announced that he would be stepping down as executive

director and focusing his energies part-time on watershed and soil health projects. As LSP begins its 35th year on Jan. 1, associate director Mark Schultz will become the organization's third executive director. The transition comes at a time when LSP and the sustainable agriculture movement in general have evolved from being part of the



George Boody (left) talking about continuous living cover at a field day on the Mary Jo and Luverne Forbord farm in west-central Minnesota. "This nexus between water quality and agriculture and food has been in my blood since the 70s," he says. (LSP Photo)

"fringe" to playing key roles in the future of our society. But 2017 also marks a critical juncture for rural communities, the land and the people on that land. Challenges such as corporate concentration, broken policies, structural racism and climate change loom large, making the presence of a strong, people-based organization that's grounded in the grassroots more crucial than ever.

Science for the People

When Boody first came to LSP as its administrative director in 1990, he already had a reputation for doing pioneering work in the nascent field of sustainable and organic agriculture. He had grown up the son of a small town doctor and a nurse in Cambridge, Minn., and went on to study biology and ecology at the University of Minnesota, where he was exposed to books such as *Ecology: The Subversive Science* and an on-campus group called Science for the People.

"If you look at the structure of science, it is clear it's more and more serving technology and corporations. We didn't feel it should be captured by that," says Boody of the students and professors he networked with at the U of M.

This was the late 1960s and early 1970s, a tumultuous time on college campuses as students and faculty grappled with such issues as the Vietnam War and the use of chemicals like Agent Orange, as well as the environmental impacts of industrial pollutants. Boody became increasingly interested in the intersection of food, farming and environmental health. He went on to do graduate work at MIT and eventually got a master's degree in horticulture and human nutrition at the U of M.

In the early 1980s, Boody organized one of the first forums at the university on organic agriculture. He brought in such pioneers as southwestern Minnesota farmer Carmen Fernholz for the event. Supporters of an alternative way of farming were thrilled. That wasn't the case for professors who were committed to conventional agriculture and didn't feel a land grant university was the place to explore "sustainable" ways of producing food.

"It was packed, and it was hostile," Boody recalls, adding that given that negative initial reception it's been particularly satisfying to see the U of M in recent years warm up to—if not fully embrace—sustainable farming. Besides the presence of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture on campus, the U of M today is

also home to such initiatives as the Forever Green cover crops program and the organic dairy/alternative swine research facilities at the West Central Research and Outreach Center. Such public support of alternative agriculture is the result of pressure put on by LSP and others.

Boody's commitment to using science in the service of promoting a more sustainable food and farming system only deepened after leaving school. Before joining LSP's staff, he was a certifier for the Organic Growers and Buyers Association and worked on groundwater/agriculture issues for the Minnesota Project. That latter work would continue to fuel Boody's passion for utilizing sustainable farming practices as a way to provide ecological services such as cleaner water.

"This nexus between water quality and

Transition, see page 4...

...Transition, from page 3

agriculture and food has been in my blood since the 70s," he says.

Power of the People

If George Boody's scientific background is key to making the argument for changing agriculture's trajectory, then Mark Schultz's organizing skills are the mechanism for bringing about that needed change.

When Kroese and Ray launched LSP, they were convinced that in the 1970s a push to maximize agricultural production at all costs had created a highly unsustainable farming system. The result, as an increasing number of studies were showing, was erosion levels that rivaled Dust Bowl rates, as well as polluted water and shuttered Main Streets. Books like *The Unsettling of America* by Wendell Berry "woke people up" to the devastating impacts of industrialized agriculture on rural communities, recalls Kroese, who had previously worked as a journalist. While working for the National Farmers Union, Kroese and Ray had come into contact with farmers who had a high stewardship ethic, but felt isolated in their communities.

"High yields were being honored, but we felt we needed to honor the stewardship ethic," says Kroese.

That's why in its early years LSP focused on holding meetings in churches and other community venues where people could share ideas about stewardship of the land and talk about the importance of ethics. But Kroese said it soon became clear to him that there were policies and market forces that forced even well-meaning farmers to do things to the land that went counter to their personal ethics. To truly bring about positive change in rural communities, the policy and corporate control aspects of agriculture had to be addressed. That meant an emphasis on grassroots organizing.

Kroese says the "biggest, most wonderful thing to ever happen to LSP" was the hiring of the late Steve O'Neil, an organizer who went on to hire and mentor other LSP organizers such as Audrey Arner, Doug Nopar, Patrick Moore and, eventually, Mark

Schultz.

Schultz was hired in 1987 to run the Farmland Investor Accountability Program, an LSP campaign to force insurance companies to be better stewards of the farmland they owned. Their track record had been abysmal, with companies in some cases ripping out basic soil conservation measures like grassed waterways and windbreaks soon after taking ownership of farms. Working with farmers in southeastern Minnesota and across the Midwest, Schultz directed a campaign that not only drew national attention to the problem, but triggered real change.

"We moved the needle," recalls Schultz.



Mark Schultz (right, holding banner) and a group of farmers went to the Wayzata, Minn., office of Travelers Insurance Company in 1988, demanding a meeting with its director for farmland investment. Shown making a telephone call to the company's national headquarters is farmer Dale Snesrud. Also pictured are LSP organizer Patrick Moore (holding his daughter Frances), farmer Jim Blaha (holding the other end of the banner) and farmer and former LSP board member Bob Duban. (Photo by Paul Wellstone)

"We forced insurance companies to change their conservation policies."

That campaign drove home the point for Kroese and Schultz the importance of combining a stewardship ethic with the kind of organizing that makes such a philosophy viable on working farmland. It also made it clear that corporations can be pressured into doing the right thing and that the most authentic campaigns emerge from the concerns of people—in this case farmers who were living in the communities where land was being abused by the insurance companies. It was also no accident that the campaign revolved around the conservation of a resource critical to the survival of not just the land, but the people: soil.

"I love the pairing of these photos," says Schultz on a recent fall day, gesturing toward a conference room wall at LSP's Minneapolis office.

One photo is a 1988 back-and-white shot

showing Schultz, fellow organizer Patrick Moore and a group of LSP farmer-members occupying the Wayzata, Minn., office of Travelers Insurance. Taken by the late Paul Wellstone, who was involved in the campaign and would later go on to become a U.S. Senator before he was killed in an airplane crash, the photo shows farmer Dale Snesrud ringing up the national headquarters of the insurance company, demanding a meeting. Snesrud and Schultz later traveled to Connecticut to meet with company officials, who eventually reformed their farmland conservation policies.

Below the photo is a striking color image of southeastern farmer Duane Hager's hands. He's holding a clump of soil from one of his fields that's full of organic matter—one can almost smell the healthy humus.

"Those photos show what we are protecting and the action needed to do it," says Schultz.

In other words, it shows that when connections are forged, they can make for a powerful force for change. Schultz learned that lesson early in life. In the 1960s, the traditionally Irish-American Chicago neighborhood he grew up in was fast becoming the home of African-Americans, and there was significant push-back by whites. Schultz's parents worked with African-Americans to integrate a neighborhood organization and to fight racial bias on the part of realtors. Schultz recalls as a boy of 8 or 9 having white people in the neighborhood hurl racial epithets at his family. Change did not come immediately, but Schultz learned that people from

different backgrounds could work together to set in motion an agenda for reform.

That experience stuck with him years later when, after graduating from Princeton University with a degree in Irish history, he decided the best way he could bring about positive change was to be an organizer.

"It's about working with people whose voices aren't heard very much," Schultz says. "Organizing is my passion."

After college, Schultz worked for a time on a cooperative farm in Michigan his older brother Paul was running with a group of people. It consisted of an orchard that produced organic cider for the emerging natural foods markets in Michigan and Chicago. People from the inner city came out to work on the farm, which became an economically viable enterprise in the community. It was evident that people from all

Transition, see page 5...

walks of life seek a connection to the land and how their food is raised, a revelation that served Schultz well in the early 1990s while, working with LSP, he and others worked to launch the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement in the Twin Cities region.

After leaving the farm, Schultz went to work as an organizer in Trenton, N.J., where he learned the importance of putting in place the infrastructure for hearing people's concerns, even if the connections aren't immediately evident. The campaign in Trenton was supposed to be centered around affordable housing, but it was difficult to get people to attend meetings. So, after the community's last full service grocery store closed, Schultz and others organized community gardens in empty lots. The gardens provided a key venue for having conversations with local people about their housing concerns, among other things.

"It's a *huge* lesson to learn — the power of listening to people," he says.

Authentic Policy

Schultz has kept those lessons in mind during his quarter-century tenure at LSP (he left the organization from 1989 to 1992 to work on a campaign for INFACT, now known as Corporate Accountability International). He created an LSP Policy and Organizing Program from scratch that has had major impacts on everything from preserving local democracy so communities can control the spread of factory farms and frac sand mines to developing and getting passed into legislation national policy initiatives such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Schultz recalls one 1998 fly-in to Washington, D.C., where 14 LSP farmer-members made 44 visits to members of Congress and their staff over a two-day period, pushing Farm Bill reforms like the creation of a program that would reward farmers for producing real conservation benefits on working farmland. LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee, which Schultz staffed, had developed this idea as a draft policy, and went to D.C. to convince lawmakers to put it in the Farm Bill. Out of that fly-in came the forerunner to the CSP, currently the USDA's largest conservation program. CSP represents a major change in federal farm policy that mostly rewards commodity production to the exclusion of diversity.

"We had a real impact — not just on creating good farm policy, but passing it," says Schultz. "And it came from people — it

was authentic."

True to the Mission

Looking back over the past two decades-plus, Kroese, Boody and Schultz are proud of LSP's ability to balance short-term victories — getting more beginning farmers started successfully and killing factory farm proposals, for example — with putting in place the building blocks for long-term, systemic change by, among other things, creating the next generation of leaders.

Boody says one of LSP's strengths is the ability to interconnect its various programs: Farm Beginnings; Policy and Organizing; Community Based Foods; and Membership/



LSP co-founder Ron Kroese: "It's about the people *and* the land."
(LSP Photo)

Individual Giving. Such dovetailing is key: training the next generation of beginning farmers would do little if policy and market barriers that limit opportunities for them were not addressed, for example. Water-friendly farming practices aren't viable in the long term if they can't be done profitably. Without quality, affordable healthcare, farmers can't stay healthy enough to take care of the land.

In a world where there is never a shortage of issues to address, balancing the taking on of new initiatives with not exceeding the human and financial resources available to a nonprofit organization is a constant challenge. But that job is made slightly easier by a simple rule: listen to members. For example, there was no initial funding for starting a beginning farmer training program, but two decades ago a group of farmers in southeastern Minnesota called the Wabasha County Give A Damns pushed LSP to do something about supporting the next generation of agrarians.

Through the leadership of LSP organizers Karen Stettler and Amy Bacigalupo, the brainchild of those Wabasha County farmers has evolved into Farm Beginnings, one of the most successful community based beginning farmer training programs in the country. In fact, it served as the model for the USDA's national Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

"It wasn't a grand strategy or wisdom from on high," says Boody about creating programs from scratch and integrating them into the rest of LSP's work. "It was about nurturing ideas from the people who were on the ground and in our communities."

But as LSP heads into its 35th year, major challenges confront both the organization and the overall movement to create a sustainable food and farm system. Corporate concentration and the industrialization of agriculture is at an all-time high, racial and economic disparities are widening, and climate change is threatening the ability to produce food on a consistent basis.

Such challenges make LSP's work researching and developing profitable, resilient production systems — something Boody will be able to do more of after he steps down — more critical than ever. But it also means doubling down on putting in place the mechanisms for implementing such practices. That means growing membership, becoming an authentic ally to organizations and communities of color, and, like always, listening to the concerns and ideas of people.

Despite the challenges, Ron Kroese has no doubt his and Victor Ray's 35-year-old germ of an idea is up to the task. After leaving LSP, Kroese went on to work for the National Center for Appropriate Technology, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the McKnight Foundation. He's currently a senior fellow at the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, where he is developing an oral history video project on the beginnings of sustainable agriculture federal policy. Through all those experiences, he's seen how organizations that stay true to their roots are the ones that have the most consistent, long-lasting impact.

"It's about the people *and* the land," Kroese says. "LSP has been able to stay true to the ultimate mission that if we take care of the land, it will take care of us." □

Give it a Listen

In episode 186 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, George Boody and Mark Schultz discuss their personal passions and how LSP brings about positive change: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/892>.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

LSP News

New LSP Montevideo Office

The Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office has moved. The new address is: 117 South 1st Street, 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.

Farm Beginnings Certified by FSA

The Land Stewardship Project has been working to build bridges with the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to help more beginning farmers access capital and manage risk. A step forward was taken earlier this fall when LSP and Minnesota Food Association (MFA) staff and farmer-members hosted national FSA administrator Val Dolcini at Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix, Minn. Dolcini presented LSP's Amy Bacigalupo with certification of Farm Beginnings as a qualified education program for people who participate in FSA's farm loan programs.

The Minnesota Food Association's Big River Farms Training Program provides primarily immigrant and minority farmers with instruction and certification for organic vegetable production, access to resources and markets for growing, distributing and selling those vegetables, and a forum in which they can develop and practice business skills.

Bacigalupo directs LSP's Farm Beginnings Program, which is entering its second decade of training beginning farmers. Farm Beginnings is now a national model for community based beginning farmer training programs. For more information on Farm Beginnings and LSP's other training initiatives, see page 21.

Pictured are (left to right): Farm Beginnings graduate Paula Foreman; LSP's Bacigalupo; Hilary Otey Wold of the MFA; farmers Knyaw Say Paw and Aung Tim; and the FSA's Dolcini. □



LSP Holds All-Staff Meeting



The staff of the Land Stewardship Project gathered in Farmington, Minn., this fall for its annual meeting. Pictured in the front row (left to right): Maryan Abdinur, Jonathan Maurer-Jones, Scott DeMuth, Amy Bacigalupo, Stephanie Porter, Amelia Shoptaugh, Mark Schultz, Mike McMahon, Karen Stettler, Dylan Bradford Kesti. Back row (left to right): Robin Moore, Rebecca Wasserman-Olin, Abigail Liesch, Mark Rusch, Paul Sobocinski, Steve Ewest, George Boddy, Caroline van Schaik, Doug Nopar, Ben Anderson, Nick Olson, Katie Doody, Timothy Kenney, Johanna Rupprecht, Tom Nuessmeier, Karen Benson, Josh Journey-Heinz, Megan Smith, Terry VanDerPol, Megan Buckingham, Bobby King, Brian DeVore. Not pictured: Andy Marcum and Shona Snater. (LSP Photo)

Farmers: Time to Sign-up for the 2017 CSA Directory

If you are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer operating in Minnesota or western Wisconsin, the Land Stewardship Project invites you to be listed in the 2017 edition of LSP's *Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region CSA Farm Directory*.

An online version of the *CSA Farm Directory* will be available by Feb. 1 at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/findingjustfood/csa.

The deadline for submitting listings is Monday, Jan. 9. The listing fee is \$15 for LSP members and \$20 for non-members. There is a 250-word limit for listings.

For information on getting listed, contact LSP's Brian DeVore at bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377.



Land Stewardship Project in the News

The Land Stewardship Project's work and our members have been featured in the news lately:

→ "The Myth that Cattle are a Climate Change Catastrophe," *Big Picture Agriculture*, 6/21/16

→ "Healthcare rate hike may heavily impact farmers," *Agri News*, 9/15/16

→ "Corporate agriculture: Growing concerns resurface in farm country," *Le Sueur News-Herald*, 9/26/16

→ "Health insurance rate increases mean uncertain future for many Minnesotans," *Marshall Independent*, 10/1/16

→ "The Chippewa: Can A River be Saved?" *Star Tribune*, 10/4/16

→ "Soil: A farm's no. 1 investment," *Agri*

News, 10/12/16

→ "Premium hikes, coverage limits frustrate insurance shoppers," *Star Tribune*, 10/22/16

→ "After months of talk, Winona Co. frac sand mining ban on the table," *Rochester Post Bulletin*, 10/24/16

→ "Frac sand ban step from approval: Winona County board votes 3-2 to create final language," *Winona Daily News*, 10/26/16

→ "With TPP stopped, advocates urge continued action for fair trade," *WorkDay Minnesota*, 11/16/16

For links to these and other news stories related to LSP's work, see the **LSP in the News** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org. □

LSP Applauds Defeat of TPP

Massive Pro-Corporate Trade Deal Appears Dead for Now

The Land Stewardship Project applauded reports in November that the largest proposed pro-corporate trade deal in history is not moving forward in the U.S. Congress in the immediate future. The controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would have given corporations unprecedented power to control everything from environmental and health regulations, to local community governance.

"This policy would have given corporations the power to sue my local township, which is against my rights and local democracy," says Nolan Lenzen, a Land Stewardship Project member and dairy farmer from Eagle Bend, Minn. "I worked to defeat this policy because this was not a trade deal but

a corporate power grab over our democracy and our economy."

For the past two years, LSP members from across Minnesota, working with various allies, have been participating in meetings, collecting thousands of petitions and making hundreds of telephone calls to stop the TPP. They expressed concerns that this pro-corporate policy was bad for democracy and bad for rural communities. LSP also brought farmers to meet their elected officials in Minnesota and D.C. to oppose this policy.

"LSP is proud to have been a part of a broad coalition of labor, environmental, consumer, faith and human rights organizations that worked tirelessly to help everyday

Shona Snater Joins LSP Soil Health Work

Shona Snater has joined the Land Stewardship Project's "Bridge to Soil Health" team. Snater has a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology management and conservation from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, and is a Minnesota Master Naturalist. She has conducted underwater research and worked as a horticulturist research assistant. In recent years, Snater has worked on farms in southeastern Minnesota, including as a vine crop manager and greenhouse coordinator at Featherstone Farm, as well as a farm manager at Whitewater Gardens Farm.

Through the Bridge to Soil Health initiative, Snater is working to expand a network of crop and livestock farmers in the southeastern Minnesota region who wish to make on-farm changes that build soil health, enhance water quality and increase profitability.

Snater is based in LSP's Lewiston office in southeastern Minnesota and can be reached at 507-523-3366 or ssnater@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Shona Snater

people raise their voices and oppose the TPP," says Mark Schultz, LSP's Policy and Organizing Program director.

Schultz adds, "This is an important victory for people. The reason the TPP won't be brought up for a vote in the lame duck session of Congress is because it would be defeated. And it would be defeated because the American people, across the whole political spectrum, have clearly and strongly rejected it. Only the corporations and their allies want it. This is a victory for American democracy."

For more information on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, fast track and other trade issues LSP is working on, contact LSP organizer Ben Anderson at 612-722-6377 or banderson@landstewardshipproject.org. More information is also available on the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org. □

Organizing Around the Next Farm Bill

Congressional Ag Meetings on LSP Members' Farms Highlight Need for Reforms

By Ben Anderson

“I’ve seen the impacts of the current federal crop insurance program in my community,” Darwyn Bach, a Land Stewardship Project member and farmer, said on a warm August afternoon. Standing with Bach were 20 other LSP farmer-members gathered in a circle at the Darrel and Diane Mosel farm near Gaylord in west-central Minnesota. Looking directly at U.S. Representative Collin Peterson, the ranking Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee, Bach continued: “We have fewer younger farmers and more vulnerable land being farmed; federal crop insurance needs to change.”

Representative Peterson jumped in to defend the current crop insurance program. The Congressman spoke of how he feared insurance companies would not continue to provide insurance if it wasn’t as profitable, which would result in a collapse of the program. Bach and other LSP members pushed back and continually emphasized that while they wanted a risk management system that provides a basic safety net, crop insurance had become a mechanism for consolidating land, providing massive give-a-ways to corporations and even encouraging the kind of practices that threaten soil health and water quality.

This encounter, where an everyday farmer, working with a group of his peers, brought his voice and story to a decision maker, is at the heart of how LSP works to make change. This meeting at the Mosel farm was one of two such gatherings in August where LSPers met with members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation. Prior to the meeting with Rep. Peterson, we also

met with U.S. Rep. Tim Walz at the Mike and Joan Gilles dairy farm near Ridgeway in southeastern Minnesota. Walz also serves on the U.S. House Agriculture Committee.

These meetings were held because work on the upcoming 2018 Farm Bill has already begun. As in the past, the Land Stewardship Project is activating and organizing members to have a voice in shaping this piece of policy, which is re-drafted roughly every five years. LSP believes in building a food system that allows family farms, the



LSP members met with U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson (front: second from left) on the Darrel and Diane Mosel Farm in west-central Minnesota. (LSP Photo)

land, healthy urban food access and rural life to flourish for years to come. Our federal policy needs to prioritize family farmers and motivate stewardship of the land while ending support of corporate concentration and control of the land. We as citizens have the right to shape our federal policy and direct our policy makers. In short, we need the 2018 Farm Bill to reflect our values.

During the summer on-farm meetings, over 50 LSP members were on-hand to speak eloquently to the emerging concerns being raised around the 2018 Farm Bill.

In addition to speaking about the need for reform to the federally subsidized crop insurance system, LSP members spoke about why the next Farm Bill should include major investments in programs that promote and reward good stewardship, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Kyle Colbenson, who raises beef cattle near Rushford, Minn., told Congressman Walz that CSP helps farmers like him put in place good working lands conservation practices. However, it doesn’t do enough to reward practices that are already in place, and the payments are not competitive with renting the land out for row-cropping of corn and soybeans.

Reforming federal crop insurance and improving the CSP are two of the emerging policy priorities that LSP is looking to champion and campaign. The LSP Federal Policy Committee, which is made up of LSP farmer-members, has been listening to other

members and considering policy options during the past several months. The committee will formally announce LSP’s 2018 Farm Bill agenda by early 2017. Look for a summary of that agenda in the next *Land Stewardship Letter*. In the meantime, LSP will be reaching out to farmers and other rural members to talk about these priorities, get input and organize the power to win.

Tough Fight Ahead

LSP learned at the two farm meetings with Representatives Walz and Peterson that it will be a difficult road ahead if we are to make successful changes to the Farm Bill. For example, Congressman Peterson’s

initial answer on crop insurance, where he defended the needs of corporate interests instead of everyday farmers and the land, shows what we are up against. Later in the meeting, he did start to speak to reforms that we would support. Overall, both Peterson and Walz were hesitant to embrace the substantial changes needed so that agriculture can provide true land stewardship and support for rural life. This means LSP will need a larger movement of members

Farm Bill, see page 9...



Mike and Joan Gilles (holding banner on right) hosted U. S. Rep. Tim Walz (holding banner, second from left) during an LSP policy meeting in August. (LSP Photo)

...Farm Bill, from page 8

and supporters across Minnesota and the Midwest that will not be afraid to advocate and take action. In order to make the 2018 Farm Bill “Our Farm Bill” and not one that continues to give money to corporations, consolidates land and destroys the soil, the Land Stewardship Project needs hundreds of active members and supporters to be part of this campaign.

This fall, LSP held a series of regional organizing meetings to talk with members and supporters and start getting them involved with this policymaking process. There will be more regional meetings at the beginning of 2017; if you are interested in hosting one of these meetings, contact me.

LSP makes positive change by bringing together everyday farmers and supporters who believe in stewardship of the land and

sustaining rural life. The upcoming 2018 Farm Bill is an opportunity to make a positive difference in federal policy that could change the landscape of agriculture as well as our rural communities. Farmers standing and talking with Representatives Peterson and Walz is the first step in creating a Farm Bill for the people and the land. Change is possible if we work together.

If you have questions about LSP’s work around reforming federal farm policy, contact me at 612-400-6352 or banderson@landstewardshipproject.org. You can also contact LSP organizer Tom Nuessmeier at 507-995-3541 or tomn@landstewardshipproject.org. More information is also available at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/federalpolicy>. □

Ben Anderson is an LSP organizer focusing on federal farm policy.

Sannerud Joins Federal Policy Committee

Eric Sannerud has joined the Land Stewardship Project’s Federal Policy Committee.

Sannerud co-owns and operates Mighty Axe Hops, an 80-acre hop farm near Foley, Minn. Mighty Axe recently broke ground on a major expansion, and supplies hops to several local craft breweries.



Eric Sannerud

Earlier this year, Sannerud accompanied other LSP farmer-members to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Congress and organizational allies to discuss farm and trade issues.

For more information on LSP’s Federal Policy Committee, contact Ben Anderson at 612-722-6377 (banderson@landstewardshipproject.org) or Tom Nuessmeier at 507-995-3541 (tomn@landstewardshipproject.org).

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.

Healthcare in Crisis

LSP Meetings Address Possible Insurance Coverage Options for 2017

The current healthcare crisis in Minnesota is the result of a system that lacks transparency and accountability, according to a former commerce commissioner for the state.

“It’s a system that we keep patching instead of fixing permanently because this is an area where lobbying is extreme,” Mike Hatch told a group of 70 people gathered at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm, Minn., on Nov. 10. Besides serving as Minnesota’s commerce commissioner during the 1980s, Hatch was the attorney general from 1999–2007. “It is an enormously complicated system, and it keeps getting more complicated because we just put Band Aids on it,” he added.

The Land Stewardship Project held meetings in New Ulm and Mora, Minn., in November to address a health insurance situation that has reached an unprecedented level of unaffordability. Earlier this fall, it was announced that premium costs for Minnesotans on the individual market would rise at least 50 percent.

Many farmers and business owners in rural areas get their insurance through the individual market. During the Nov. 10 meeting, participants shared stories of how in 2017 their premiums will rise while their healthcare options shrink at an alarming rate (*see page 11 for excerpts of rural Minnesotans talking about their experiences with healthcare*).

Hatch said that when he was commerce commissioner he worked to hold the health insurance companies accountable for the large amount of money they kept in reserves, called “net worth.” However, the health insurance companies successfully lobbied the state Legislature to remove caps on the amount of money they could hold in reserve, which is left over from people’s premiums. As a result, the recent record premium increases are occurring despite the fact that these companies have massive amounts of reserves, according to Hatch.

Paul Sobocinski, a Wabasso, Minn.,

farmer and LSP organizer, said the recent premium increases for individual plans are just the most recent sign that the healthcare system is in crisis, and is not serving the public good. Even people who have insurance coverage through an employer are struggling to cover the costs and are grappling with limited options and skyrocketing



LSP Healthcare Organizing Committee member Dr. Aleta Borrud: “For most of the world, healthcare is a human right. Farmers are indispensable to the health and welfare of our communities. Farmers should have a right to all the healthcare they need.” (LSP Photo)

prescription costs.

“We need to reemphasize that people’s lives come before corporate profits,” said Sobocinski. “That means holding corporations accountable.”

As discussion heats up about what should be done about the healthcare crisis, Sobocinski said it is important to stay focused on

people and to hold onto progress that has been made.

“We need to keep the good while weeding out the bad. Before we toss something away, we need to have something better to replace it,” he said.

As premiums rise, tax rebates available through an insurance exchange like MNsure actually become more attractive. An insurance broker encouraged participants in the New Ulm meeting to look into tax credits available through MNsure.

“A lot of people say, ‘I want nothing to do with MNsure,’” said Susannah Setterholm, a broker with United Prairie Insurance in New Ulm. “You may have avoided MNsure in the past, but you can no longer avoid it—you need to see if you qualify for tax credits. With the premiums crazy high, that means the tax credits are crazy high. The reality is MNsure works.” (*The “Dealing with Minnesota Healthcare in 2017” sidebar on page 11 has more information on insurance options for next year.*)

LSP Healthcare Organizing Committee member Dr. Aleta Borrud of Rochester, Minn., described during the New Ulm meeting how while doing obstetrics training in Scotland, she was struck by the government-sponsored healthcare system there, which provides excellent medical coverage at a fraction of the cost here in the U.S.

Borrud said as a physician in this country, she spends increasingly less time with patients and more time figuring out billing. It is particularly troubling to see farmers struggle so hard to attain affordable, quality healthcare

while working to produce food for society, she said.

“For most of the world, healthcare is a human right,” Borrud said. “Farmers are indispensable to the health and welfare of our communities. Farmers should have a right to all the healthcare they need.” □

LSP & Affordable Healthcare for All

The Land Stewardship Project is working on several fronts to help rural Minnesotans find quality, affordable healthcare. LSP will also be active during the 2017 session of the Minnesota Legislature as lawmakers debate the future of healthcare programs in the state. For details on healthcare options, as well as how you can get involved in efforts to reform the system, see the **Affordable Healthcare for All** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also contact Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 (sobopaul@landstewardshipproject.org) or Jonathan Maurer-Jones at 218-213-4008 (jmaurer-jones@landstewardshipproject.org).

Dealing with Minnesota 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 in 2017. 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.

Here are Some Steps to Take:

→ **Check if your income qualifies you for a more affordable insurance option.** The chart to the right lists the income limits for the state's public programs (Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare) and for subsidies available through MNsure that can dramatically lower what you pay each month.

→ **Enroll through MNsure to receive premium subsidies, if you qualify.** If your income qualifies you for federal premium subsidies, you must enroll through MNsure to get them. There are "navigators" available to help you with finding and signing up for insurance — visit www.mnsure.org and click on "Get free expert enrollment help" to find someone in your area. There is no

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

charge for this service.

→ **Sign up early for the most options.** Medica, HealthPartners and UCare all have caps on the number of people who can sign up for their individual plans. This means some insurance plans and doctors may not be available if you wait too long. As of Nov. 11, Medica was not taking any new enrollments; you can still renew your plan if you are already covered by Medica.

→ **See if a small group plan may be an option.** Small group plans can be 20 percent to 25 percent cheaper than individual plans

and can provide better coverage. It could be an option if you 1) have an employee or 2) run a farm operation or small business that is incorporated.

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**.

Stories from the Front Lines of the Healthcare Crisis

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Land Stewardship Project has spent the past few months reaching out to rural Minnesotans to get their feedback on how the current health insurance crisis is affecting them. Here are excerpts of just a few of the dozens of responses we received.

Costs are Outrageous

→ "My wife and I are being dropped by Blue Cross and Blue Shield because they say they will no longer insure individual plans. So far the best option for us is a plan with a \$2,077 monthly premium and a \$13,100 deductible."

→ "Premiums going from \$576 per month to \$982 per month! Each! And we're healthy! Ridiculous!"

→ "My premiums have gone from \$195 in 2013 to \$476 in 2017. I make \$13.10 an hour. Can't afford this."

No Support for Farmers & Small Businesses

→ "My wife would love to stay at home and help but she works off the farm and carries the health insurance. She is exhausted

some days working all day and coming home to help on the farm."

→ "My husband and I started a new business two years ago so we are self-employed. Our healthcare coverage has been extremely stressful ever since we started the business. We have switched plans three times during the two years and now have to switch

• • •
"Currently my husband and I operate the farm together but I am seeking employment elsewhere to obtain health insurance."
 • • •

again. Our income has been unknown and variable, therefore it's not easy to determine what we qualify for. The positives are that we can get coverage, there are no healthcare exclusions, there is no cap. But because of the area we live in, there have been limited choices and now there will be even fewer choices. We both have health

issues and can't even count on continuity of care or planning for major medical procedures because we don't even know what coverage we will have next month."

→ "My husband and I operate the farm together but I am seeking employment elsewhere to obtain health insurance. The system does not support self-employment. We have two full-time employees besides. With my husband's healthcare needs we must have insurance. I want to continue farming but may no longer have that option!"

A Cut in Pay?

→ "I am 61-years-old, single, and have a gross income of \$50,000 per year. My premiums for this year were approximately \$7,000 and for next year will be close to \$10,000. This coverage does not cover my prescriptions. The deductible was \$6,000 this year and will be over \$7,000 next year. I cannot pay these premiums and I cannot afford to not be able to walk into a hospital. My plan is to ask my employer to cut my

Healthcare Stories, see page 12...

...Healthcare Stories, from page 11

salary so I will be eligible for MNsure.”

CEOs Do Well, Regular People are Left Out

→ “I cannot afford healthcare coverage. I am self-employed, 63-years-old and female. The subsidy does not lower the cost enough. Paying a fine because I cannot afford coverage feels very punitive. I’m glad people who have been denied coverage can finally get it, but we have a long way to go for this to be affordable. I also see red when I learn how much the insurance company CEOs make...”

Falling Off the MinnesotaCare Cliff

→ “I farm 320 acres and have 75 stock cows and drive a school bus and started driving a fertilizer truck for two or three weeks in spring and fall. I had very good insurance through MinnesotaCare, and when I started driving a fertilizer truck it put me over and I couldn’t qualify. It was like punishing me for trying to do better. I made about \$2,500 too much so now it’s costing me about \$10,000 to \$11,000 more. I should have stayed home and sat on the couch and watched TV I guess!”

→ “I make just enough that I don’t qualify for MNCare. My premium is now \$600 per month with a \$6,000 deductible. If my premium doubles — the cheapest I have seen is \$1,100 per month — how am I sup-

posed to afford other necessities? How can approximately one-third of our take-home pay go to healthcare?”

Like Having No Insurance at All

→ “The only individual plan we can afford is one that is basically catastrophic coverage. We pay thousands in premiums but have yet to receive any benefit since we have never met the deductible, which is now \$13,100. It almost feels like we don’t have any insurance, since we basically pay for everything out-of-pocket, although there is security in knowing we would not lose our savings if something major did happen. Our young adult children just starting out in jobs get much better health insurance because they qualify for MinnesotaCare, which I am happy for. We are middle class and receive a hefty federal insurance subsidy, which is the only thing that makes our monthly payment

• • •

“It was like punishing me for trying to do better.”

• • •

anywhere near affordable.”

→ “I’m a disappointed Blue Cross and Blue Shield customer of 33 years, starting in 1983 with a plan through my employer and since 1999/2000 on an individual Blue Cross plan with an ever-higher deductible. Thankfully, I can count on one hand the times I’ve needed medical services, but that also means I never meet my deductible. I’ve been paying for health insurance AND paying for services. And now Blue Cross and Blue Shield is dropping my individual plan! Am I crazy to think they wish they had a

million customers like me? I’m healthy, pay increasing premiums and pay out-of-pocket for services because of a high deductible! Money in the bank for Blue Cross and Blue Shield, right?”

Employer Plans

Have Problems, Too

→ “Last year I had to drop coverage for my husband since through my work insurance policy I could not afford to cover him. This year his private insurance is going up \$300 a month with an already high deductible and a moderately high co-pay. My work insurance is not good at all — I do pay 10 percent of the premium, but the deductible is so high that unless you are pregnant or in need of some serious healthcare, you will not meet it and qualify for coverage. Then if you do meet it, the plan has three tiers of responsibility for payment, and the insurance company will be the last one to pay anything. What a crock.”

→ “I don’t qualify for MNsure because my employer offers health insurance which is more expensive than getting an individual policy. My premiums are more than my mortgage payment. Nothing is covered when going to the doctor for even just minor medical treatments. I’m forced to have coverage, so am I supposed to pay the health insurance bill when money is tight, or keep food on the table, lights on and roof over my head?”

Make Insurance Companies Accountable

“I am a small business owner and finding insurance that is affordable is impossible. Insurance companies need to come to the table.” □

In Historic Vote, Winona County Passes Frac Sand Ban

New Measure is First Known Countywide Frac Sand Ban

By Johanna Rupprecht

The Winona County Board of Supervisors voted Nov. 22 to pass a ban on any new frac sand mining, processing, storage or transport operations in the southeastern Minnesota county’s jurisdiction. This step comes after a 17-month grassroots organizing campaign by county residents calling for a ban, led by members of the Land Stewardship Project.

Winona County has been targeted by the frac sand industry’s attempts to extract silica sand for use in hydraulic fracturing of oil and natural gas. Thousands of residents have opposed frac sand development due to its harmful impacts on the land, as well as

on public health, safety and quality of life in local communities.

In June 2015, LSP members and supporters from across the county, many from neighborhoods that began fighting frac sand proposals several years earlier, set a goal of banning the industry outright, working to get Winona County to become the first county to do so. During Winona County’s process of considering the restriction this summer and fall, an average of 80 percent of public comments received by officials were in favor of the ban.

The County Board passed the ban by a 3-2 vote in the form of an amendment to Winona County’s existing zoning ordinance. It prohibits any new operations for the pro-

duction of industrial minerals, including the silica sand used in hydraulic fracturing.

While the overwhelming majority of public input from Winona County residents consistently favored the ban, the measure was fiercely opposed by the Minnesota Industrial Sand Council and other representatives of the frac sand industry.

This ban is a major victory for people and the land and an example of local democracy at its best. The story here is one of local residents taking on outside corporate interests bent on exploiting our communities and the land. In Winona County, we’ve shown that people power can defeat corporate power. □

LSP organizer Johanna Rupprecht can be reached at 507-523-3366 or jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org.

My Contribution to Millions of Years of Research

A Farmer Reflects on his Land's Past, Present & Future When it Comes to Soil

EDITOR'S NOTE: Southeastern Minnesota farmer and Land Stewardship Project member Curt Tvedt recently talked to LSP staffer Shona Snater about why he is excited about building soil health on his farm. Below is an excerpt of Tvedt's thoughts.

The soil scientists say there are more living species in a tablespoon of soil than there are people on the planet; that, I cannot wrap my mind around. A whole universe under our feet. I believe it was Leonardo da Vinci that said, "We know more about our solar system than we know about the soil we walk on." I believe it is still true today.

But let me give you a bit of historical context as it relates to my farm. This land we're on had originally been wooded prairie. My great-grandfather came here in 1854, and the land had probably been farmed 60 to 70 years before my dad purchased the farm in 1941, and he actually started working with the Soil Conservation Service (the precursor to the Natural Resources Conservation Service) shortly after that. At that time, the land basically wouldn't take any water. It was just yellow-red clay, and it had been farmed up and down the hill. It was in bad shape. There was a quarter-of-a-mile that had seven ditches that my dad couldn't cross with his Farmall M tractor because they were washed out so bad. The land was sloped, so to conserve the soil, my dad planted contour strips 100 feet wide, and he farmed 30 acres of sweet clover, which he plowed under as a green manure to build the soil. If I recall correctly, my dad got 30 bushels of corn per acre and 15 bushels of oats the first year to feed the family on. The soil was pretty beat up. I can remember my dad getting tears in his eyes when we would get an inch of rain and the gully would be running yellow-red with dirt.

That was where the concern for the soil all started. When I bought the farm from my dad, after he had spent his lifetime conserving the soil, he was scared that I would take it the other way, forget about the conservation and let it all wash away again. I started with 160 acres growing primarily corn silage and hay. Every time I put a few soybeans in, I got a lot of erosion; it loosened up the soil too much. So I said no, I am not going raise

soybeans like this.

There are two factors that drive my way of farming. One of them is if the ground is gone, my resources are gone. The other thing: I don't want to be part of the cause of problems in my community like flooding. That is why I am getting excited about cover crops. It is not only what's on top of the ground that is important, but also what is



During an LSP field day, Curt Tvedt describes how he planted soybeans into a rye cover crop. (LSP Photo)

happening under the surface.

Even to this day, after a rain I usually hop in the pickup to see what is going on. I am 74-years-old, and I have these creeks that I have been watching for quite a while. I'll notice when a culvert is running over with water, and then I will go to another culvert and it is not running over. So I ask myself, what is going on? The flood flashpoint has really raised in the last 12 years. It is like a toilet effect, where we get that big flush of water, a big whoosh, and then it runs all over the roads, tearing them up, and then the water drops right back down again. As a youngster I really didn't see that kind of

problem happening. There was quite a bit of hay and pasture in this area that has been taken out. I don't know if we can farm as intensely as we have been farming and be able to incorporate cover crops, but that is why I am experimenting, especially with soybeans.

For example, two summers ago I had a neighbor come in and plant soybeans into the rye cover crop growing on one of my fields. Because of wet weather, the cover crop had grown taller than planned, and the result was a lot of biomass on the field. Normally, one would kill off the cover crop and then plant the soybeans through the dead residue. But my neighbor didn't think he would be able to plant through the massive mat of dead rye that would be present in that case. So instead, we no-till drilled my soybeans right into shoulder-high rye, and I got told by some respectable people that I was crazy.

I drove over the rye with a big roller after planting the soybeans. It is absolutely amazing the power of a seed. A soybean in particular has got a lot of oil in it, so it has a lot of energy, but the rye mat was thick. The beans' cotyledons have to get up to reach sunlight because they only have so much energy. I went out and looked at it after about day 10, and I almost went back out there to till it up because you couldn't see any rows. Yet, the beans pushed themselves up and through the mat, and I found some that had even grown sideways. It was amazing—95 to 98 percent of the seeds germinated in that stand.

When I harvested that 32-acre field, I averaged 50 bushels per acre, which is the same as the Minnesota state average that year. Those beans went in June 3rd—a month behind—and it took them 10 days to get through the mat of rye that I had rolled. I had no broadleaf weeds; the rye mat acted as a natural weed control. Plus, I had no erosion. My organic matter has increased from roughly 1 percent to over 4 percent. That's good news when it comes to retaining moisture: the Natural Resources Conservation Service says for each 1 percent increase in organic matter, it allows the soil to store 27,000 gallons more water per acre.

I think researchers like Dwayne Beck and farmers like Gabe Brown hit the nail on the head when they say the prairies were built without tillage and they were successful and fertile.

What did Mother Nature do? How many years of research and development does she have? Millions? I don't know. That is why the rest of my farming years are going to be designed around research, and learning how to best conserve and build back my soil. □

Neighbor-to-Neighbor

Simple Conversations—Complex Results

By Robin Moore

The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* newspaper recently ran an in-depth series of articles (<http://strib.mn/2dCKu8y>) about the environmental risks faced by our Minnesota waterways, focusing on the Upper Mississippi, the Red River and the Chippewa River. The last article in the series highlighted the Land Stewardship Project's work related to the Chippewa 10% Project, which is helping farmers and other landowners balance profitability with clean water. Featured was Pope County farmer Dan Jenniges and his innovative rotational grazing system, as well as examples of farmers who are trying out practices such as cover cropping.

ers mentioned, and the story is more complex than that. He is respected in his area first as a successful farmer; a farm is a business and farmers can't ignore the bottom line. But he is also a good steward and a conservationist, and the neighbors are also noticing that.

Recently I lucked into witnessing a revealing neighbor-to-neighbor exchange. I stopped by Dan's farm one evening in August to do some monitoring on a field with a multi-species planting of cover crops. After talking on his porch for an hour about farming, water and government regulation, I made room for myself in the front seat of his pickup by moving a bunch of wrenches and we headed to the field.

When a neighbor approached from the



Dan Jenniges (left) and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge specialist J.B. Bright discuss the environmental and economic benefits of a diverse landscape during a Chippewa 10% Project field day at the Jenniges farm. (LSP Photo)

hillside where he had planted winter rye last year after corn, harvested it for forage this year and planted short season soybeans afterwards in June. The rye had left massive amounts of roots that made no-till planting difficult, resulting in a poor, uneven stand of soybeans.

But two weeks after planting, the region received almost seven inches of rain in three days. Dan said that if it hadn't been for that root mass and the no-tilling, that hillside would have washed away and he'd have no soybeans at all, and a lot less good soil.

"I'm a lot happier with those beans now—a poor stand is better than no stand," he told the neighbor.

Jenniges went on to say that the farmer he contracted with to plant the soybeans had come away afterwards cursing that stupid cover crop, wondering why anyone would ever plant the stuff. After the rains, that same farmer changed his tune and now plans to put in his own rye during the fall. Dan enthusiastically explained the other advantages of no-tilling and building organic matter: feeding the underground life and sequestering/cycling nutrients.

He hit all the points and his neighbor was listening closely. Jenniges clearly understands that keeping his topsoil on his field rather than in the ditches and water has conservation and economic benefits. You really can't separate the two.

We went on to the cover-cropped field, rented from a neighbor who specifically asked Dan to farm his land after recognizing how Jenniges worked to reduce erosion and build soil. Here Dan talked more about



I asked the neighbor why he was interested in trying cover crops. He said that last winter he drove by one of his fields and watched the hillside soil blow in small drifts. It made him feel sick inside and he couldn't let that happen again. (LSP Photo)

It was a good series of articles and helped highlight what proactive measures all of us, including farmers, can undertake to develop healthier watersheds. However, that article focusing on the Chippewa 10% Project left the impression that farmers really only care about their bottom line and not about the long-term conservation effects of their practices.

I've worked extensively with Dan and Linda Jenniges and some of the other farm-

other direction, the two farmers slowed, rolled down windows, exchanged machinery woes, asked after family and discussed crop conditions. Eventually the neighbor said, "Say Dan, I been meaning to ask you about that cover crop stuff, seems you're the guy to ask." Dan looked over at me with a big, \$#!^ eating grin and then invited the neighbor to come join us at the field to talk about it.

Along the way, Dan pointed out a steep

Neighbor, see page 15...

soil biology, the benefits of a diverse species mix, and how grazing can improve soil health. He bragged about better water infiltration and how his kernel counts were up this year on fields that had produced cover crops for grazing in previous years.

I asked the neighbor why he was interested in trying cover crops. He said that last winter he drove by one of his fields and watched the hillside soil blow in small drifts. It made him feel sick inside and he couldn't let that happen again.

The neighbor asked questions about seed and Dan and I helped him pin down his main goals and even figure out a five-species cover crop mix to meet them. He was hoping to partner with the Chippewa 10% Project, and was interested in the Haney Soil Health Test and financial incentives we had available. He was especially excited that his fields were next to a highway and he wanted to let the public know about what he was doing there by posting signs.

With Dan still grinning we parted. I promised to put the neighbor in touch with our partners that could provide funding support for cover crop seed. Unfortunately, since our funding supports work in the Chippewa River watershed and his land is about a mile outside of the watershed, it turns out we were unable to partner with him or give him any sort of financial support. He had no other options for this growing season. While there is some federal funding for cover crops through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program, farmers have to apply for the program at least 12 months (sometimes 18 months) in advance.

LSP and farmers like Dan Jenniges create opportunities for greater stewardship all around us. Dan's work has influenced neighbors, increased his access to cropland and grasslands and upped the stocking capacity of the land he owns while keeping the soil on his hills and the water in his soil. He is intensely proud of these results, of the wild-life flourishing around his fields, of the clean snow in winter, and the undamaged hillsides in spring. His neighbors are noticing and deciding to follow suit without any knowledge of Dan's bottom line. For me, that inspires a lot of hope...and frustration when there's little support.

We need structures and programs ready to respond to this positive interest shown by Dan's neighbors. We need dedicated funding that encourages and reduces the risk of the initial learning curve when it comes to cover, perennials and even re-integrating livestock into farming operations. LSP and the Chippewa 10% Project are a few of the

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.



Chippewa River watershed farmers Byron Braaten (top) and Mark Erickson (bottom) show off tillage radish cover crops earlier this fall. The radish's deep tap root helps break up soil compaction while the leaves can provide good livestock forage. (Photos by Robin Moore)

only resources for such support in this watershed, and we're reliant on restricted grant funding.

Like Dan's soybean field, the benefits of building soil health don't usually emerge in the first year or so, and our current system favors a single season focus. We need policies that encourage a longer view, that can capture the interest in new conservation practices and that lead to nimble, accessible federal and state farm programs that advance stewardship practices in a timely fashion. Such programs must support a culture of profitable stewardship.

However, as my recent experience with farmers like Dan Jenniges shows, it's not always about the bottom line, or the amount of the incentive—it's also knowing that your neighbors think that you're doing the right thing. □

Robin Moore coordinates the Chippewa 10% Project out of LSP's Montevideo office.



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.

Cover Crops: The Hardest Step is the 1st One

The Soil's Version of the Power of Compound Interest

By Caroline van Schaik

The telephone rang late one afternoon in early October. It was a call from a jubilant, if exhausted, dairy farmer who said he'd planted 20 acres of rye the previous night. He said he'd been attending Land Stewardship Project cover crop/soil health events and that despite the pitfalls of harvest, machinery and too much rain, he was determined to do something

in, cash crop chemical carryover, and how to deal with the cover crop in the next growing season. But as farmers across the Midwest repeatedly make clear in an annual cover crop survey, sticking with this practice past the second year brings exponential rewards.

That's certainly the case when it comes to the farmers raising cover crops as part of the Land Stewardship Project's Haney Soil Health initiative in southeastern Minnesota. They are seeing intriguing results even in this second year of the initiative, which

to spend at least \$25 an acre on what you wouldn't miss until it is gone. But unlike a new roof, biologically active soil with good tillth reaps measurable and repeat rewards within years. It's the agronomic version of the power of compound interest: the more you add to the soil bank, the more its biological life grows in a self-perpetuating cycle. And just as making that first deposit in a savings account is tough when you're living paycheck-to-paycheck, building soil health can feel daunting at the beginning.

Learning the ropes together is a big part of why LSP invited southeastern Minnesota farmers to plant small fields of cover crop mixes along with their usual crops and to meet a couple times a year to discuss their observations. These demonstration farmers (and others) also send soil samples in for analysis using the Haney Soil Health Test, which is showing positive results for correlating biological activity (as measured by respiration) with nutrient availability and, therefore, soil productivity.

LSP was started 35 years ago out of concern for soil erosion, so it is gratifying to see the current interest in getting more living cover on (and roots in) the ground for more months of the year. Erosion control is the frequent inspiration for covering the soil; add to that the implications for water quality, fertility, resilience in the face of severe weather, and the ability to double crop for cash, forage and feed, and you grasp the magnitude of the all-encompassing package that we call, "cover crops." □

Caroline van Schaik coordinates the Haney Soil Health initiative out of LSP's office in Lewiston, Minn. She can be contacted at caroline@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366. A slideshow of photos from the September field days is at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/888>.



Southeastern Minnesota beef producer Dean Richards (black sweatshirt) talked about why he grazes a field of rape/oats during a LSP field day in September. He says grazing cover crops saves him the cost of purchased feed, improves his herd health, adds fertility to this field, and gives his permanent pasture a rest. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)

this year. "I just hope it gets up and green," he said, adding that after that, well, he'd figure out what he would do with it next spring. The farmer had taken that all important first step.

One doesn't have to be a farmer to know that the hardest part of taking on something new is getting starting. Factoring in the building of *soil* as well as the growing of a main crop is undoubtedly "something new" for many farmers. And if your soil-building tool of choice is cover crops, first steps must take into account seed choices, equipment, getting a cash crop out in time to get a cover

prompted four of them to share their experiences during field days in late September.

A little background on this soils-focused initiative: demonstration fields range in size from a few acres to 60 and are managed with and without chemicals. This makes for a perfect illustration of the utility of cover crops regardless of farm size and cultural practices. Planting cover crops is an equal opportunity decision for any farmer or landowner who realizes that putting money into their soil is an essential cost of business.

Much like re-roofing your home before it leaks, building soil is an unglamorous way

Give it a Listen

- Episode 176 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast features a discussion of a new test LSP is experimenting with that provides deeper insights into soil's productive potential: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/805>.

- In Episode 177, a farmer and a researcher talk about making cover crops pay: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/830>.

'Roots for Our Future: Building Soil & New Farmers' Events in January

“When I give the mortgage to my sons, they should not ask, ‘Where’s the soil?’” says South Dakota no-till farmer and rancher Rick Bieber, who will speak about the realities of his emphasis on both soil and a new generation of farmers on Thursday, Jan. 12, in Plainview, Minn. Land Stewardship Project is hosting this event, “Roots for Our Future: Building Soil & New Farmers,” which will take place at the Peace United Methodist Church, 52497 275th Ave., from 4 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The cost is \$10 and \$5 for additional family or farm members; a local foods supper is included. Please RSVP to LSP’s southeastern Minnesota office by calling 507-523-3366.

Land access, the next generation of farmers, and profitable farming share a common need for healthy soil. “Building soil makes sense for now and into the future,” says Karen Stettler, an LSP Farm Beginnings organizer. “There won’t be land or new farmers if we don’t pay attention to our soil now. Every generation benefits.”

Bieber and his family produce wheat, corn, soybeans, flax, peas, sunflowers and alfalfa, as well as have a 600-head cow-calf grazing operation. They farm in north-central South Dakota and regularly produce record yields, despite receiving only about 16 inches of rainfall annually in their part of the state.

“I feel the biggest error of the past is still an error many producers are making and that is, ‘I didn’t believe in my soils,’” says Bieber, who regularly speaks on the integration of cover crops, no-till farming, livestock, soil building and nurturing new farmers. “Our soils are our livelihood. Our soils are our partners. We must treat them as such.”

Bieber will be joined by a panel of area farmers pursuing innovative soil building practices on their own operations. Topics will include crop rotations, soil dynamics, the role of livestock, current agricultural economics and Bieber’s approach to mentoring apprentice farmers.

Of note is that Bieber’s grandfather testified before the U.S. Senate on the need for USDA conservation offices, which subsequently were opened nationwide. The late father of Twin Cities fabric artist Deborah Foutch (www.deborahfoutch.net) was a USDA soil conservationist in Iowa. As the artwork to the right shows, Foutch has begun exploring some of the natural systems her father championed, including the root-soil-life connection. An example of her fabric “soil” art will be on display during the event in Plainview.

LSP is holding other soil health/beginning farmer events this winter, including a three-part Farm Transition Planning workshop in Rochester, starting in January, and a soil building event Jan. 27 in St. Charles. For details on the Farm Transition workshop, see page 25.

Jerry Ackermann, a long-time cover crop farmer and researcher from near Lakefield, Minn., will keynote the Jan. 27 event, scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Ackermann raises corn, soybeans, alfalfa and beef cattle on his Jackson County farm. During this event, additional southeastern Minnesota farmers will share their soil-building experiences as well. For details on the Jan. 27 event and to register, contact LSP’s Doug Nopar at 507-523-3366 or dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org.



Artist Deborah Foutch uses various fabrics and other materials to create pieces that introduce people to the wonders of the soil universe. For more on Foutch and her work, see the No. 3, 2016, issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. Episode 185 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast features a conversation with Foutch: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/886>. (Photo courtesy of Deborah Foutch)

Farmland Conservation Lease Resources

For fact sheets, guidebooks, Internet links and other resources related to developing farmland 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. □

Specialty Crop Grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is seeking grant applications from Minnesota organizations to “increase the competitiveness of our specialty crops.”

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 practices that encourage conservation and environmental stewardship, including organic specialty crops research, as well as increasing the demand-for and supply-of locally produced specialty crops.

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. □

The Ripple Effect

A 5,000-square-foot Hub of Change in an Urban Community

By Anna Kleven

Joe Banks, 74, had been working for hours on a chilly April morning. He dug his hands into the cold dirt to yank stubborn weeds, and spread mulch across the newly restored soil of the garden at the Rose in the Ventura Village neighborhood of South Minneapolis. Garden staffers Maryan Abdinur and Gwen Jenkins worked at his side. They could expect to see him at the garden three-times-a-week, greeting them with his gentle manner punctuated by the occasional wisecrack. He was a regular volunteer at the Peace House, a non-profit down the street that provides spiritual respite and meals for the homeless and unemployed. Banks wandered over to Hope early last year out of curiosity and quickly became a familiar face.

In a sense, the new garden was a classroom, and Banks was an eager student. Before he began volunteering at Hope, his small plot in the shady woods of Saint Paul suffered annually because of his self-described “inabilities” when it came to gardening. But as summer approached, he was beginning to have some nagging doubts. He couldn’t help but wonder, will anyone use this garden? Will people respect the space? He imagined graffiti on the workshed and trampled beds.

By May of this year when the Rose had its first visitors, it became clear that vandalism was not the obstacle. The staff’s biggest challenge has been getting the word out to neighbors: “This is yours to grow, to use, to share, to learn...”

Early in the growing season, when Banks and other committed gardeners were working in the plots, people from the neighborhood watched curiously from the other side

of the fence. “They were not ready to break the bubble and come in,” says Abdinur.

Ventura Village is one of the most diverse and economically challenged neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Hope and other nonprofits have aided in the transformation of parts of the neighborhood. “Place-making,” “power building,” leadership development and providing affordable housing are Hope’s primary strategies.

Abdinur, a Community Based Food Systems organizer at the Land Stewardship



What sets the Rose apart from the 275 other community gardens in South Minneapolis is the way its organizers seek to purposely inform people about their place in the food system. (LSP Photo)

Project, which works in partnership with Hope, calls the community group a “beehive” because it has a quiet exterior but is buzzing with activity on the inside.

Its latest project, however, is difficult to miss. A couple hundred feet north of the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Portland Avenue South, Hope and LSP have partnered to create the Rose, a 5,000-square-foot community garden that had its inaugural growing season in 2016. It is big enough to be considered an urban farm. In the center, a gazebo shades a patio and benches. The water system relies on an underground cistern that collects rain and recycles it through a

pump for garden use.

On an August afternoon, the product of Banks’ and others’ hard work is vividly visible in the Rose. Plants are paired with companion crops in neat rows, encircled by a path of perennials, fruit trees and sprawling vines like cucumbers and watermelon. With berries and fruit trees on the perimeter of the garden, there are plenty of options for on-site grazing. “You can eat your way through the garden,” says Abdinur with a laugh.

Most community gardens are either made of individual plots, or are a larger, production-based project. In contrast, the Rose is cared for collectively. There is no lock on the gate and community members are welcome to harvest day or night.

What sets the Rose apart from the 275 other community gardens in Minneapolis is not its innovative features such as the cistern, but the way its organizers purposely seek to inform people about their place in the food system while supporting them in

growing and eating their own food. It was designed as a classroom where Hope staff, community leaders and neighbors can uncover insights into how to transform a food desert into an area that can feed people affordably.

There is a feedback loop between three main programs associated with the Rose: garden work days, skill-shares and cooking nights.

The Garden

Like most decisions about programming at Hope, the idea for a communal garden was contrived from a series of deep listening sessions. The staff heard enthusiasm for gardening, but noted a lack of experience with raising produce. Of the two existing gardens at Hope, one had individual plots for autonomous gardeners,

and the other was a project of the Youth Stewards, which supported teen jobs through an initiative called Step Up Discover. The garden at the Rose was a way to make raising food a visible part of the community.

For the people who come from a farming background, the garden is an opportunity to reconnect with their roots. Linda Taylor grew up on a farm in Illinois. Members of Taylor’s family—from her great-grandmother down to her father—were sharecroppers. Now she is gardening at the Rose, which she calls a “definite eye catcher.”

Ripple, see page 19...

Taylor brings her grandkids—including Evan Sebastian, 6—to the Rose. For now, little Evan insists he doesn't like vegetables and prefers to watch his grandma garden from the sidelines. Taylor hopes that by learning about and picking their own food, her grandkids will eventually move beyond pea pods to eating more daunting vegetables and someday join her in the garden.

For the majority of residents, it has taken more than a simple invitation to get them to step into the plots. The communal garden model can be counterintuitive. Abdinur muses that she would have better luck distributing food if she set up a table and yelled, "Produce for sale!"

"How do you engage a group of people who are so used to buying in a grocery store and not used to seeing fresh produce?" asks Abdinur.

One of the hottest days this spring a woman stopped by the garden, where Abdinur and others were weeding. "She was talking to us and saying, 'It is so hot! You should have done this before the day got too hot. Why are you out here?'" says Abdinur. The woman recalled that in her native Somalia the farmers strapped a weeding machine to donkeys instead of doing it by



Cooking classes have become a key way to ensure the garden's food is put to good use. Pictured are (left to right) Rosalie Nass and Glenda Eldridge, along with LSP organizers Dylan Bradford Kesti and Maryan Abdinur. (Photo by Bruce Silcox Photography)

hand, or they finished their day before noon.

Skeptical, the woman watched the group for a while before jumping in. Eventually, she pulled Abdinur aside and asked for help distinguishing weeds from edible plants. Then she slowly began weeding other beds and ended up working all morning.

This was a small affirmation for Abdinur, who was born in Somalia herself and aims to expand Somali women's safe space "from the Zumba Fitness room out into the garden." It's been difficult to find a way to help them understand that the garden is a place for them and their children. Most of the Somali families immigrated from the nomadic north of the country and don't share Abdinur's agricultural background—she grew up on a farm in the more agricultural southern region of the country.

"I want to see change where instead of parents telling kids not to go in the garden, rather the parents are sending the kids down and saying, 'Go play in the garden. See what you grow. Go harvest the mint leaves you were talking about. Try it out. Bring it to the kitchen.'"

The Cooking Nights

On a sticky summer night Abdinur, Hope Food Program coordinator Alisa Hoven and 12 residents do just that—bring the garden's production to the kitchen. The day before they had harvested

summer squash, and on this particular night they pick basil. After harvesting the basil, they scatter to gather the over-abundance of ripe produce. A half-hour later they leave with 30 pounds of cucumbers—some as big as small dogs—as well as a watermelon and a box of tomatoes.

As soon as they haul the food back to the kitchen, everyone crowds around the tiny watermelon, the first of the season. They slice it open and discover a white, flavorless inside. Nobody can explain why. As people recover from their disappointment, Hoven reminds the group that everyone is learning together (it turned out they had harvested the watermelon too early). "We have created a space where people can say, 'I don't know this,'" says Abdinur.

As anyone who gardens or belongs to a Community Supported Agriculture farm knows, using all the produce is a creative challenge. Abdinur shows the group how to slide cucumbers through a juicer, adding lemon and sweetening the drink with sugar. Everyone slurps it up as the table is set. Kids come flying into the room to claim a chair around the big round table.

Cooking nights this year were well-attended from the start. Abdinur and her LSP colleague Dylan Bradford Kesti were challenged to facilitate groups of 20 or more. Groups too large to coordinate and children scurrying around hot stoves and sharp knives forced them to return to the drawing board. They decided to use the Australian Community Kitchen model (<http://commu->



"I want to see change where instead of parents telling kids not to go in the garden, rather the parents are sending the kids down," says LSP organizer Maryan Abdinur. (Photo by Anna Kleven)

Community Based Food Systems

...Ripple, from page 19

nitykitchens.org.au/what-is-a-community-kitchen), where half-a-dozen to a dozen participants and a group leader meet weekly or every-other-week to prepare healthy food together. The group plans together, cooks together and eats together. Youth are welcome as long as they have an adult committed to supervising them.

The oldest of 20 children, Abdinur is used to taking charge. In the Hope kitchen, she tended to take over when people didn't know what to do. But she soon learned that it was more efficient and mutually beneficial to teach people new skills. "If I can show people how to use a knife, I can help more people by setting up other stations... instead of doing everything myself I can step back and be the facilitator," she says.

The Skill-Share

Perhaps the most critical piece of this initiative is the "skill-share," also called "Ripple Ecology." In a partnership with Waite house and Gardening Matters, as well as the Permaculture Research Institute Cold Climate, the participants first learned skills around food and land in the urban environment:

soil building, water systems, wild foraging, seed saving and food preservation. Then they were given the option of facilitating their own workshop on a topic of their own interest or expertise.

At one such session, Bonita Watkins, a Hope resident, presented about the importance of eating balanced meals. She brought a portion plate to pass around. Although people cracked jokes about how infrequently they eat a "Bonita plate," all eyes and ears were trained on her with respectful attention.

Watkins says that the garden has improved her spiritual and physical health. "It's good for ageing gracefully, for a holistic approach to life."

Other workshops led by participants included flower pressing, mushroom growing and the science of photosynthesis.

Abdinur, who is part of the planning team

for these sessions, hopes Ripple Ecology participants share the information with their circles and even implement the practices — like the oyster mushroom habitat made from a Fleet Farm gallon bucket — in their own homes.

Everyone at the skill-share commits to sharing the information or skills that they learned with three to four other people, either formally or informally. This can be as simple as a Facebook post or a conversation with a family member. That person then shares it with three or four more, and on and



"Skill-share" sessions offer a way for community members to pass on knowledge to others. Pictured at a recent session are (left to right) Quantina Beck-Jones, Valerie Reece, Maryan Abdinur and Ebony Beck-Jones. (Photo by Bruce Silcox Photography)

on. The ripple effect is amplified.

This concept doesn't stop with the skill-shares. Gwen Jenkins, who recently served as a Minnesota Green Corps volunteer with Hope, said one goal of the garden organizers is to build people's confidence to the point where they can plant their own garden in the individual plots located on Oakland Avenue. They can then go on to mentor other beginning gardeners.

This goal is in perfect accord with Hope's central ideology: to uplift people's expertise, and build human capital surrounding food and the ecosystem.

New Growth Emerging

As with any good community initiative, people are bursting with ideas about how to improve this initiative. Joe Banks, for one, believes that they might have to think outside of the box and "do things that might seem silly or inappropriate" in order to draw passersby into the Rose. Picture someone in a carrot costume waving a sign on the corner of Portland and Franklin. Welcoming people in doesn't always take such dramatic action. One workday Abdinur spotted people watching from their apartment windows that over-

look the garden. She scrawled an invite on a whiteboard and held it over her head for them to see: "Come join us," read the makeshift sign. They did.

Jenkins and Abdinur plan to involve more people in seed ordering, seasonal planting and garden design in years to come. Jenkins wants to increase autonomy by offering a one-time garden orientation. At the end of the training the participants would be presented with a key to the workshop and access to all the tools.

After this season of involvement in the garden, Banks has observed how garden-work can positively impact quality of life for elders. He ponders the possibility of a new component that would bring residents of senior housing to the garden "to give them the opportunity

to touch, taste and smell."

Watkins agrees. "It's good to watch things grow," she says. "Life is important, with all the pollution in our planet it's nice to see new things come up." □

Anna Kleven recently served a Land Stewardship Project journalism internship.

LSP, Hope Community & Food Justice

Since 2009, the Land Stewardship Project has been working with the Hope Community through an initiative called "Growing Neighborhood Access to Healthy Food." It's an attempt to build community power and capacity to shape a strong neighborhood-scale system that ensures reliable, affordable and equitable access to healthy food.

For more information, contact LSP's Dylan Bradford Kesti at 612-722-6377 or dylank@landstewardshipproject.org. Details are also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

It's Not too Early to Apply for 2017-2018 LSP Farm Beginnings Course

Minnesota-Wisconsin Region Classes to Begin in Fall 2017

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program is accepting applications for its 2017-2018 class session. The locations of these classes will be announced in 2017.

LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its second decade of providing firsthand 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.

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

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.

the region. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the

fall, run until March 2018, 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 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 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. □

Beginning Farmers Sound Out on *Ear to the Ground* Podcast

Ear to the Ground, the Land Stewardship Project's award-winning podcast (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast>), often features interviews with beginning farmers who are utilizing creative methods to balance financial viability and environmental sustainability with a good quality of life. Here's a sampling of some of these recent shows:

- **Episode 180** — Using Farm Beginnings and Journeyperson training to make holistic decisions on a community farm.
- **Episode 172** — With the help of LSP's Farm Beginnings and Journeyperson, Sara Morrison takes her garden beyond the backyard.
- **Episode 170** — How a Farm Begin-

nings field day makes everyone a "consultant."

- **Episode 169** — A livestock/crop farmer lends out an "odd corner" on his property as a launching pad for a beginning vegetable operation.

- **Episode 167** — Farm Beginnings grads achieve a series of "micro-goals" in service of the bigger picture: a successful livestock enterprise.

- **Episode 163** — Rising from the ashes: Farm Beginnings grads recover from a disaster and launch a dairy farm.

- **Episode 161** — How women play a major role in the future of farmland and our rural communities.

- **Episode 160** — Farm Beginnings graduates team up to create an innovative marketing cooperative in the Lake Superior region.

- **Episode 158** — An Australian ag financial planning expert talks to LSP about creative ways to transition farms to the next generation.

- **Episode 155** — Farm Beginnings farmer-presenter Chris Duke talks about the importance of relationships in direct-marketing.

- **Episode 149** — Farm Beginnings grads talk about being in the "experimental/making mistakes" stage of their enterprise.

- **Episode 141** — A beginning farmer incubator near Duluth is helping revitalize food and farming in the Lake Superior region.

- **Episode 140** — New farmers talk about how Farm Beginnings helps them balance demand for their products with keeping their businesses, and lives, sustainable.

Incubating Entrepreneurship

How a Landowner is Providing Farmers More than a Place to Raise Food

By Sylvia Nopar Thomas

In the 1990s, David Washburn stood on doorsteps of local restaurants delivering boxes of vegetables with his cellphone hanging off a belt-loop on one side of his pants and a bulky two-way radio clipped to the other; he never wanted to miss an order. Nicknamed “Robo-Farmer” by his customers, Washburn’s creative ability to combine innovation and tradition didn’t end when he retired from farming in 2000. For most of his adult life, Washburn has started cutting-edge businesses—from an aerobics studio to a Community Supported Agriculture farm—based on what he sees as the next niche needing to be filled. His latest innovative endeavor—providing affordable and accessible farmland to organic vegetable farmers—may be his most challenging enterprise yet.

From Farmer to Farmer-Landlord

Washburn’s original farm, Red Cardinal, was not only a good example of how important it is to have access to land, but the knowledge and guidance of experienced farmers as well. When Washburn, his wife Meg Anderson, and their farming partner, Everett Myers, started Red Cardinal Farm back in 1990, they were among the first wave of agricultural operations in the Twin Cities to embrace the Community Supported Agriculture system. Called CSA for short, the model provides weekly shares of produce to members who pay a seasonal subscription. Anderson, Washburn and Myers dove into the business head first—at its peak Red Cardinal served about 450 CSA families, and had 15 employees and interns. Washburn and partners gave business lessons to interns three-times-a-week, where they opened up their financial books and showed the beginning farmers what worked and what didn’t,

and why. Unfortunately, Red Cardinal’s success came at a price, and after 10 years the three partners were so burned out that they decided to close the operation.

Their “retirement” in 2000 left Washburn and Anderson with two plots of organic farmland in Minnesota’s Washington County, on the edge of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. One of those plots was 120 acres with good soil. They were committed to keeping that 120 acres in farming, and at first rented it to a neighbor for hay production.

In 2011 the opportunity to rent the land to several different farmers came up when the Minnesota Food Association (MFA) approached Washburn. MFA has an initiative that provides primarily immigrant and minority farmers with instruction and certification for organic vegetable production, along with training to develop and practice farm business skills. The nonprofit organization tries to connect farmers with farmland after they complete the training.

MFA Executive director Hilary Otey Wold says that participants find it frustrating to get good training in raising food, only to be stymied by lack of access to land and capital. In rural areas of the U.S., a lot of information about available farmland gets passed around by longtime residents via word-of-mouth, and this information isn’t

Incubating, see page 23...



David Washburn on the land he and Meg Anderson rent out to several vegetable farmers. “I’ve decided that when I’m on my deathbed, I’ll be happier having tried something different and taken some risks in order to permanently protect for farming the best part of our land,” he says. (Photo by Sylvia Nopar Thomas)

usually accessible to immigrant communities. According to Otey Wold, a huge part of renting farmland is trusting that the renter is going to treat the land well. Because of cultural differences, it's hard for many landowners to trust someone from outside the community, especially if they use slightly "alternative" farming practices such as organic production.

"I encourage farmers who have land available to take a chance on beginning farmers. It's just a matter of building a relationship and getting to know each other better," says Otey Wold. "After that, trust almost always comes."

Washburn and Anderson did just that, and they agreed to rent small plots of their organic farmland to MFA alums. It was clear to the couple that they weren't emotionally ready to sell the land and many farmers from the MFA program live in the city and commute to plots they work, so it was a win-win situation. Washburn knows that access to land for immigrant and minority community members is more challenging, and he has been interested in using his land to support progressive change for many years. For example, in 1999 they provided a parcel to River Market Community Co-op to create Meadowlark Community Garden. The couple provides water to the parcel, and Meadowlark charges gardeners \$45 per summer to farm a plot. A total of 32 plots are leased and the rental income supports the community garden's infrastructure.

Washburn and Anderson currently have six different operations that are renting organic land on their 120-acre farm. As of now, they use their intuition to make decisions about who to rent to and if their ideas seem economically viable and good for the land. Renters pay \$175 per acre each season, plus approximately \$100 to cover the cost of a portable toilet.

Washburn is hoping to soon develop long-term written leases that cover three to as long as 10 years. Otey Wold explains that one of the biggest challenges for organic, immigrant and minority farmers in the MFA program is finding long-term leases where they can build their business and invest properly in their farm. With year-to-year leases, it's difficult to justify, for example, long-term soil improvement measures.

From Washburn's perspective, "If we have long-term leases then it is good for the land, and it is good for the renter."

Each operation is farming on one- to five-acres of land, and they are either certified organic or they will be certified organic in the near future. "I know it is expensive and a pain for the farmers, but it is the only method I have right now to hold farmers accountable," Washburn says of the organic certification, which was originally put in place when Red Cardinal was in operation.



The Washburn-Anderson land provides a place for Twin Cities "commuter farmers" to produce for local markets. (Photo by Sylvia Nopar Thomas)

Washburn provides water and irrigation lines, but because of the current zoning situation, he can't provide much else in terms of infrastructure, such as outbuildings. Because he doesn't have a previously-built home on the property, township zoning laws make it difficult and expensive to erect any structures, even hoop houses. The income Washburn makes from renting his land barely covers property taxes, but over time he hopes to be able to charge higher rent by providing more infrastructure on the land, like washing, packing and refrigeration facilities.

A Mentor as Well as a Landlord

Washburn also provides another key resource to the renters: experience raising organic vegetables and running a successful business. Due to his own background with mentors, Washburn is happy to provide advice for his renters when possible. When he and Anderson started farming, they developed relationships with organic vegetable production pioneers Richard DeWilde of Harmony Valley Farm and Martin and Atina

Diffley of Gardens of Eagan. For Washburn, developing relationships with older, more experienced farmers was key, so he prioritizes networking with younger farmers that are on his land. Besides offering firsthand growing advice, he shares the book *How to Grow More Vegetables* with his renters.

One of Washburn's tenants is Eduardo Rivera, the 33-year-old owner of Sin Fronteras ("without borders"), a three-and-a-half acre vegetable farm. Rivera has been farming on Washburn's land for three years,

and the native of Mexico provides CSA shares to members of the Latino community, as well as delivers wholesale to restaurants and food co-ops in the Twin Cities region. The small-scale vegetable farmer and recent graduate of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course sees Washburn's land as a canvas. It is a place where he, as a younger farmer, can practice his own growing skills and do some experimentation. Rivera remembers in his first season on the land Washburn came by and, seeing what Rivera was getting into, provided advice that has stuck with the young farmer: "I wouldn't plant anything unless I had it already sold."

A New Land Access Model?

For now, Washburn and Anderson enjoy renting out their land and offering advice to beginning farmers when needed, but they are also making plans for eventually transitioning these acres to the next generation. Bitten again with the innovation bug, they have

...Incubating, from page 23

a new idea for transition that goes beyond just selling the land outright to one farmer. The proposal centers around creating a kind of permanent collective organic farming system on the most productive part of the 120 acres of land.

"I don't want to pass the farm on to an individual, because when they are done with the farm then they are just going to have to go through the same difficult transition process that I would," Washburn says. "I haven't seen a whole lot of farmers who have successfully transitioned their farms within the urbanized metro area."

In order to recapture their equity in the property and to allow for the permanent protection of the best farmable land—roughly 50 acres—Washburn and Anderson's plan calls for creating more than 60 acres of oak savanna prairie habitat with 10 housing sites that would be sold.

The couple doesn't have kids, and their relatives aren't interested in farming. In addition, Washburn estimates the 120-acre farm is worth \$1.5 to \$2.5 million and he knows that a young farmer can't make those land prices work with a start up operation; nor would he want to put that burden on them. But what if they could create a system that provides long-term rental agreements for as many as 10 or 15 different farmers?

"This is an opportunity for farmers to begin farming without having to take out a loan or having financial resources to begin with," Washburn explains. Farmers would pay rent out of what they earn from their vegetable production. In a sense, the collective operation would be an "incubator" farm, a place where both beginning and seasoned farmers could rent land and practice farming without having to take on all of the responsi-

bilities of farm ownership.

"I think most of the farmers who finish our MFA farmer training program would prefer to own land, but because of the realities of financial constraints, many of our farmers look for land to lease too," the MFA's Otey Wold says.

With several different small organic farmers on the land, Washburn envisions a kind of community-based farming model. Amongst themselves, farmers can share equipment in exchange for money or labor (some of his current renters are already doing this). Eventually, Washburn and Anderson would like to pass land ownership on to a nonprofit that would collect rent and provide support for small organic enterprises. From Washburn's perspective, the challenge comes in balancing the desires of his current

• • •

"I encourage farmers who have land available to take a chance on beginning farmers. It's just a matter of building a relationship and getting to know each other better."

— Hilary Otey Wold,
Minnesota Food Association

• • •

vegetable farming tenants, the hay-making tenant he still has, and community gardening members.

"It is hard because people don't like change," he concedes.

Currently all of Washburn's renters are commuter farmers, and he aims to appeal to people who are interested in living away from the land. The farm is only 15 miles outside of St. Paul, so it gives people an opportunity to benefit from the resources of the city while reverse commuting out to the farm to work.

That transient lifestyle may not appeal to everyone in the long term. Sin Fronteras' Rivera says for him the commute out to the land from his home in Minneapolis every day is a hassle and he hopes to buy his own land and move off Washburn's plot within

five years. The most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture shows 50 percent of agricultural workers in this country are Latino, but only 3 percent of farms are operated or owned by Latinos. Less than 1 percent of the over 74,500 farms in Minnesota list Latinos as principal operators. Rivera wants to help change that demographic by owning land. However, he and his wife Sammie Ardito also have a 6-year-old daughter, and it is important for him to raise her near other people of color, so he has to be specific about where he buys land. If ultimately Rivera can't buy land that is accessible to communities of color, then he will probably just keep renting and working as a commuter farmer so that his family can benefit from the resources and diversity of the city.

Washburn is aware that his transition plan isn't perfect, won't be a good fit for everyone, and carries with it a certain amount of complexity. But he's convinced that successfully transitioning farmland onto a new generation of small organic farmers will require a new model and a new way of thinking about land ownership. For an innovator like him, it is exciting and inspiring to plan and creatively transition land in a way that supports his entrepreneurial nature and small organic farming values.

Says Washburn, "I've decided that when I'm on my deathbed, I'll be happier having tried something different and taken some risks in order to permanently protect for farming the best part of our land." □

Sylvia Nopar Thomas recently served a Land Stewardship Project journalism internship.

Words & Pictures

In LSP's multi-media slideshow, "True Sustainability Means Passing on the Farm to the Next Generation," two unrelated farm families describe how they are transferring an agricultural enterprise from one generation to the next: <http://bit.ly/1xOCof>.

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.

It's Time to Plan that Transition

LSP Farm Transition Workshop to be Held this Winter

By Karen Stettler

Robbi Bannen and Ted Fisher own and operate A to Z Produce and Bakery, a highly successful, 25-year-old agricultural enterprise on 80 acres near the western Wisconsin town of Stockholm. They rotate vegetables, sheep, cattle, chickens and pigs with small grains and hay. They market the vegetables through a 40-week Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprise (hoop houses are used to extend the season). Bannen and Fisher also make pizza in two wood-fired brick ovens using produce, meat and flour from the farm. They sell the pizzas on-farm Tuesday evenings from March through October. Bannen and Fisher have three adult children. They took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Transition planning workshop last winter (see sidebar at the bottom of the page for details on the upcoming 2017 workshop). Bannen and Fisher recently shared their thoughts on the experience:

Bannen: "The 2015 farming season was hard and I started to worry about how we were going to keep going and maintain the farm. I think I was hoping there was some magic farm transition formula that somehow I was not privy to. We had just paid off our mortgage and yet the farm felt less like ours than ever before. Suddenly we were not owners, but stewards for the future, and I felt panicked about how we were going to take care of this little rectangle and ourselves as we continue to age. So I felt we needed to enroll in the workshop."

Fisher: "Robbi's prompting was the primary motivation for taking the class. I tend to focus on the present and just getting the work done. I realize that we need to think about the next phase of our lives and the farm, even if it may not change soon."

"One of the valuable things about the

workshop was the process of clarifying our values and goals using the holistic planning model. This was not completely new to us, but it helped me focus on what is really important. What we value guides all of our decisions, including farm transitions.

"The class offered a lot of financial plan-



Robbi Bannen & Ted Fisher (Photo by Sylvia Nopar Thomas)

ning information, as well as information on financial assessment, long term care and estate issues. We learned that we really need to keep earning income for as long as we can."

Bannen: "Don't stop working yet. I always thought that once the farm was paid for and our youngest child was through college that we could just pare our lives down to the essentials and maybe not work so hard. The workshop's presentation on Social Security and financial planning for 'retirement' really gave me a wake-up call. To ditch out on earnings now would have serious consequences for the future. If anything, it's time to ramp up the game."

"After the class it was important to me to write a vision statement that consolidated

our values around the farm and our children and our future. It was also important to let our children know we were thinking about the future of the farm and check in with each of them about their intentions.

"In July there was an LSP led gathering so workshop participants could reconnect and check in. That was really helpful. The workshop was quite structured and packed with information and this gathering was a time for us to get a little more personal about our individual situations. We plan to follow through this winter with some legal work as regards the farm. We plan to continue the conversation with our children."

Fisher: "I would definitely recommend taking the workshop. There are many complicated legal and financial issues which arise as we age. The legal and financial experts at the class provided valuable information and guidance."

Bannen: "The old adage, knowledge is power, comes to mind. Knowing the issues that surround the transfer of a farm helps defray the anxiety that led me to want to take the class. Understanding my motivations and desires for this farm also calms the waters. The 'transition' part of it all seems murkier than ever. Recently I have wondered if the transition is not a land transition but a transition in attitude. What is clear to me: I love this farm and I'd like to farm for many years in some capacity. Our operation might have to change to accommodate aging. I'd like to embrace those changes, whatever they be."

Fisher: "Farm transition is about life transition. In the longer view it is our lives that come and go—the farm stays. We pour body and soul into the farm while we are here. It feeds us and many other people and we work to leave the land better than we found it. We will leave it one day; we know that for sure. We hope to see someone else love it as much as we do. Living to see this happen in some form is, to me, the central issue of farm transition." □

Farm Beginnings organizer Karen Stettler can be contacted at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

Sign-up for LSP's Winter 2017 Farm Transition Workshop

- Are you a farm family or landowner thinking about the future of your farm?
- Are you interested in planning for the next generation on your land?
- Do you have a spouse/partner helping to make these decisions? Are you both on the same page?
- Are you ready to begin the planning process but don't know where to start?

The Land Stewardship Project is offering a Farm Transition Planning Workshop this winter in Rochester, Minn. There will be a chance to network with other farmers at all stages of going through the farm transition planning process. Topics include goal setting and financial planning as well as legal, tax and healthcare implications on farm transition plans. The workshop will be held on Saturdays (Jan. 14, Feb. 11 and March 11). The workshop fee is \$150 per family, which includes three day-long sessions, course materials and meals.

For more information or to reserve a spot, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

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

◆ Shodo Spring has for rent 8 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's Rice County (near Faribault)*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and an orchard was planted in 2015 (ready to graft). Possible income from nursery stock from orchard and raspberries is available. There is some fencing (some needs repair). The soil is fertile sandy loam and is ready for organic certification. There is water available and use of a woodshop could be arranged. Shared housing is a possibility; a neighboring house could come up for sale in the future. The asking price is flexible; will consider partial sharecropping. Contact: Shodo Spring, shodo.spring@gmail.com, 507-384-8541.

◆ Jonathan Henderson has for sale 4 acres of farmland in *southwestern Michigan's Kalamazoo County*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes a pole barn, a concrete block workshop, a chicken coop, a well house and a house. The asking price is \$180,000. Contact: Jonathan Henderson, 269-615-5181 or artdept3@yahoo.com.

◆ Amy Doeun has for sale 40 acres of farmland in *Chisago County, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes a greenhouse, hoop house, packing shed, pole barn, grain bins, chicken coop, other animal housing and a house. The fencing is set up for sheep, cattle, goats and pigs. There are also mature apple trees and a clover/alfalfa hay field. The asking price is \$450,000. Contact: Amy Doeun, 651-270-3658, AMY-DOEUN@YAHOO.COM.

◆ Steve Gordon has for sale 80 acres of farmland in *southern Michigan's Jackson County*. The land includes pasture and has not been sprayed for several years. It has fencing (including cross-fencing), two wells and good water; approximately 6 acres is enclosed in deer-proof fence. There are barns, a chicken coop, corn crib, woodshed, toolshed, shop and house. The asking price is \$430,000. Contact: Steve Gordon, gordonfarm@mail.com.

◆ Patricia Barta has for sale 35.2 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's*

Rice County (near Faribault). The land has not been sprayed for three years and includes perennial gardens and an apple orchard. The four-bedroom, three-bath house has a five-car garage. The asking price is \$459,000. Contact: Patricia Barta, 612-404-0075, patricia@patriciabarta.com.

◆ Olga Trujillo has for sale 15 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin's Pierce County (near River Falls)*. The land includes pasture, a pole barn, loafing shed, two silos, a machine shed, a calf barn and a house. It has not been sprayed for several years. The asking price is \$275,000. Contact: Olga Trujillo, olga@olgatrujillo.com.

◆ John Lenarz has for rent 10 tillable acres in *western Wisconsin's Pierce County (near Spring Valley)*. The land is part of his home property, which also includes a hardwood forest, 18 acres of native prairie and a 1-acre pond. It has been planted to alfalfa/mixed grasses the past three years. No house is available. The asking price is \$60 per acre. Contact: John Lenarz, 715-698-2277, 715-531-7536, je1954@baldwin-telecom.net.

◆ Jen Hommerding has for rent 40 acres of farmland in *northwestern Wisconsin's Barron County (near Cameron)*. The land has not been sprayed for at least eight years and there are 5 acres of open field, with the remaining in mature woods (potential for maple syrup, mushroom, woodlot grazing, etc). There is no house, but a travel-trailer is available as well as electricity, water and a small garage. Rent is negotiable with the possibility of exchange of goods (e.g. land for food/construction work). Individuals who have completed LSP's Farm Beginnings course or are interested in permaculture are preferred, and construction experience is a definite plus. Contact: Jen Hommerding, jjhommer@yahoo.com.

◆ The Michigan State University farm incubator program has for rent .25 to .5 acres of certified organic tillable land in the *central Upper Peninsula of Michigan*. The program provides access to all tools and infrastructure, including walk-behind tractor, hand tools, greenhouse/hoop house space, water access, packing shed, cooler/cold cellar, and technical assistance from staff. The rent is \$700 per year, and the land will be available in March 2017. Contact: [www.msunorthfarm.org/apprentice-](http://www.msunorthfarm.org/apprentice-farmer-program.html)

[farmer-program.html](http://www.msunorthfarm.org/apprentice-farmer-program.html).

◆ Groundswell Farm has for sale two turn-key certified organic produce operations in *western Michigan (between Grand Rapids and Holland)*. The 7-acre Quincy Street Farm has \$160,000 in annual sales and all of the infrastructure needed to grow produce and supply markets. The 10-acre Polk Street Farm has \$40,000 in annual sales and also has all infrastructure in place. The asking price for the Quincy Street Farm is \$195,000; for the Polk Street Farm it's \$95,000. More information is at www.groundswellfarm.org/farm-for-sale. Contact: Katie Brandt, groundswellfarmer@gmail.com.

◆ Bonnie Warndahl has available 48 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin's Dunn County (near Tainter)* for hosting honey beehives. Warndahl's farm is a vegetable, herb and flower operation. The land is surrounded by mostly wild land and the farm has not been sprayed for at least 15 years. Warndahl will host the beehives in exchange for honey and some guidance on learning beekeeping. Contact: Bonnie Warndahl, 612-462-9311.

◆ Sylvester Wetle has for rent 80 acres of farmland in *south-central Wisconsin's Adams County*. There is pastureland; approximately 40 acres has been lying fallow for more than 40 years. It would be ideal for organic production, grazing cattle or cutting native hay. Wetle can provide water and electricity. Contact: Sylvester Wetle, showperg@aol.com.

◆ Terri Hunter has for rent 130 acres of farmland in *south-central Missouri's Laclede County (near Lebanon)*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes pastures, fencing and water sources. There is approximately 45 acres of open pasture with some cross-fencing. Two small fenced orchards and a large vegetable garden are also available. The owner is willing to share repair and restoration costs. The asking price is \$1,200-\$3,000 annually. Contact: Terri Hunter, 314-740-9857, 417-532-0715, 2pinesfarm@gmail.com.

Clearinghouse, see page 27...

◆ Margaret McCoy has for rent 10 acres of farmland in *southern Missouri's Taney County (near Brownbranch)*. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes pasture, a house, a small garage and a large pole barn. McCoy's father lives near the farm, and would be willing to mentor a new farmer. The rent is \$1,000 per month. Contact: Margaret McCoy, 740-294-9437.

◆ 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 which is half cement floor (electricity and heated). The other half is dirt but has large doors and is ideal for storing large equipment. There is a newly remodeled mobile home and water is available. The land has not been sprayed for several years and consists of an open field of grass. Rent is \$200 per month, plus utilities. Contact: Wendy Haan, wenderful73@yahoo.com, 612-709-8223

◆ Linda Hutchinson has for sale 19.5 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's Dodge County (near Hayfield)*. It consists of 12 tillable acres, which has not been sprayed for several years. The land is fenced and water is available. The land has been used for pasture and making hay. It is located near Highway 30 and 56, between Rochester and Austin. The house is a tear-down. Contact: Linda Hutchinson, 651-214-1853.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Eric Sannerud is seeking to purchase 25-150 acres of farmland in *central Minnesota (within 30 minutes of Foley)*. Sannerud is planning on raising perennials (nuts, fruit, trees and flowers) and pastured pigs. Land with some tillable, heavy forest, hills and potential water is preferred. No house or outbuildings are required. Contact: Eric Sannerud, ericsannerud@gmail.com, 952-201-4227.

◆ Greg Patterson is seeking to purchase 1 tillable acre of farmland in *Wisconsin*. Land that is certified organic and that includes an outbuilding for hanging garlic in is preferred. No house is required. Contact: Greg Patterson, 920-479-8901, gregoryipatterson@gmail.com.

◆ Erika is seeking to purchase 1 acre of tillable farmland in *southeastern Wisconsin (Milwaukee area)*. Land with fencing, electricity and water is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Erika, eneirafour@gmail.com.

◆ Steven Vistad is seeking to rent 80

acres of farmland in *Minnesota's Twin Cities region (Hennepin County)*. Land with pasture is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Steven Vistad, 612-296-0236, Svistad@hotmail.com.

◆ Molly Gaeckle is seeking to rent .5 to 1 acre of tillable farmland *near Minnesota's Twin Cities* for a flower operation. Land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has access to water and a greenhouse is preferred. Access to a shed, pack house and tractor would be ideal. Contact: Molly Gaeckle, mgaeckle@gmail.com, 605-366-1691.

◆ Devin Murray is seeking to purchase 80+ acres of farmland in *Wisconsin*. Murray wants to start a CSA and a tree nursery, and has a strong interest in land conservation. Land with toolsheds, a silo, a small barn for livestock and a house is preferred. Contact: Devin Murray, dmurr570495@gmail.com, 414-758-3586.

◆ Daniel Englert is seeking to rent 1 acre of tillable farmland in the *western portion of the Twin Cities (Minn.) Metropolitan Area*. Land with a shed and access to water is preferred. No house is required. Contact: Daniel Englert, 952-393-5706.

◆ Jessica Anlauf is seeking a lease or rent-to-own situation with 40+ acres of farmland in *Minnesota or Wisconsin*. Land with pasture and that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. A house and outbuildings are also preferred. She would like to use the land for a natural/organic crop farming/orchard operation. Contact: Jessica Anlauf, 320-396-2133.

◆ Kerri Gburek is seeking to rent 10 or more acres in *southeastern Wisconsin's Kenosha County*. Land with fenced pasture, water and electricity is preferred; no house required. Contact: Kerri Gburek, 847-809-8240.

◆ Daniel Wilson and Rachel Stoll are seeking to rent 2-10 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota's Winona County*. They have farming experience and are looking to start a small, diversified organic farm. Land for raising vegetables and animals is preferred. They would prefer property that has a house or apartment and is within 30 minutes of the town of Winona. Contact: Daniel Wilson, wilson.a.daniel@gmail.com, 507-329-0507.

◆ Brittany Santiago is seeking to rent 2-5 acres of farmland in *southeastern Wisconsin (near Racine)*. Land with pasture, water and electricity is preferred; no house is required. Fencing preferred but could put up own. Contact: Brittany Santiago, 414-399-8554, quarterhorseovr@yahoo.com.

◆ Austin Langley is seeking to purchase farmland in *North Dakota*. Land with pasture is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Austin Langley, 701-947-5400.

◆ Cory is seeking to purchase 1-10 acres of farmland in *southeastern Wisconsin's Jef-*

erson or Dodge County. Land with water and sandy loam soil is preferred; no house required. Contact: Cory, 386-631-7600.

◆ Jacey Miller is seeking to rent 10-20 acres of tillable farmland in *southeastern Iowa's Muscatine or Louisa County*; no house is required. Contact: Jacey Miller, 563-260-1117, Jaceyterrillphotography@gmail.com.

◆ Reuben and Sarah Liebe are seeking to rent 2-5 acres of tillable farmland in *southeastern Minnesota (within 45 minutes of Rochester)* for the 2017 season. They would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has an infrastructure for raising vegetables. No house is required. They each have four years of experience working on and managing successful vegetable farms. Contact: Reuben and Sarah Liebe, reuben.liebe@gmail.com, 615-305-4416.

◆ Joyce and Philip Monari are seeking to rent 2-4 tillable acres of farmland in *Minnesota* for the 2017 season. Land with water is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Joyce and Philip Monari, 612-203-6500.

◆ Ryan Kingston is seeking to purchase 15-80 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin's Chippewa County (near Lafayette)*. Land with pasture and a water source is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Ryan Kingston, 715-933-2974, Ryankings-ton@hotmail.com.

◆ Chris Monterrubio is seeking to rent 1-20 acres of farmland in *southeastern Minnesota*. Land with fencing, water, grazing land and a house is preferred. Barns or a shop to store machinery in, as well as shelter for a small herd of cattle, a plus. Contact: Chris Monterrubio, 409-626-4473, Holstein85@hotmail.com.

Seeking Farmer

◆ RedHeart is seeking a crop-sharing partner (single or couple) to help with the production of holistically-managed, grass-fed animals (poultry, goats, sheep, hogs and beef) on a 40-acre farm in *southeastern Minnesota's Goodhue County*. About 5 acres of the 40 are available for garden and grain crops. The land consists of 30 acres of actual pasture. A small log cabin with a loft, electricity, heat and running water is available as private housing. No farm experience is required; there is no pay. This position requires a one-year commitment. The application form is at <http://moreearthwisdom.net/farm-partner-opportunity-job-description-application>. Contact: RedHeart, 952-250-8299, 20redheart@gmail.com.



The Future of Family Farms Practical Farmers' Legacy Letter Project

Edited by Teresa Opheim
2016; 140 pages
University of Iowa Press
www.uiowapress.org

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Teresa Opheim explains in the first chapter of *The Future of Family Farms: Practical Farmers' Legacy Letter Project* that this book is about farmland, and it's about getting farmers to think about their goals for the future of that land. It's about transferring land to new owners with guidance from those goals. It's about farmers putting those goals in the form of farm legacy letters and then turning the letters into stories that appear in this book.

The timing for setting such goals is critical. According to the USDA, 10 percent of farmland nationwide is due to transfer to different owners in the next five years. Iowa State University reports that the owners of 56 percent of Iowa farmland are over 65-years-old, which means a big turnover of acreage is overdue.

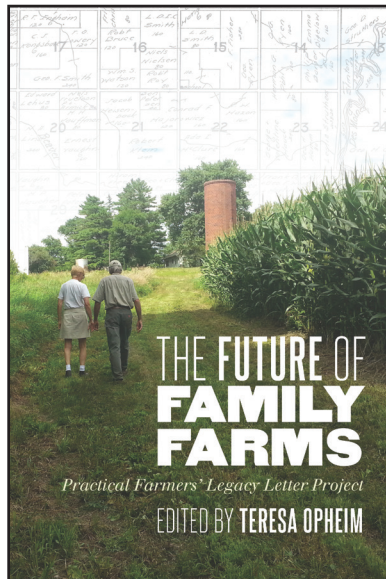
That's why Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), like the Land Stewardship Project and Kansas Rural Center, as well as other family farm-centered organizations that advocate sustainable farming practices, are so concerned about keeping the land in family farms and helping new farmers get access to that land. PFI instituted the Legacy Letter Project as an attempt to help farmland owners slow down and think through goals, and help transitioning farmers begin making decisions based on what really matters most to them. Opheim, who recently stepped down as PFI's executive director, has pulled together a collection of these letters.

Because the storytellers followed a certain format, parts of chapters repeat parts of other chapters and the book contains fewer ideas and perspectives than I expected. This book is meant to engage PFI farmers and will appeal more to those who know the people in the stories than to a general reading audience.

Although many of the ideas and stories shared in these writings are specific to each family, numerous themes addressed will strike a familiar chord with anyone who has

had to wrestle with a farmland transition situation.

To further stimulate farmers to think more about the future of the land they farm, PFI engaged Mary Swander, distinguished professor of English at Iowa State and Iowa's poet laureate in 2009, to write a play about farmland transfer. One of the most interesting chapters in this book is her description of the playwriting process. She and a graduate assistant interviewed many PFI farmers and found the Biblical themes of Cain and Abel (two family members fighting over a piece of land) and the prodigal son (a relative returning after a long absence to claim an inheritance) occurring often in their stories. They also interviewed bankers and lawyers, researched old newspaper stories about



land disputes and studied the history of agricultural land transfer (even in medieval times) to develop a main conflict and central character (a mediator) in the play. As the script for *Map of My Kingdom* evolved, so did Swander's understanding of land transfer. In the final analysis, she writes in the book that it was really about the meaning of owning a piece of the earth, "a sense of the sacred in connection to land," about—land stewardship (*information about the play and how to schedule a performance is at www.maryswander.com*).

Most farmers in *The Future of Family Farms* do include land stewardship, or "conservation," as a major goal in their stories. Northeastern Iowa farmer Deb Tidwell writes: "My top goal for our farmland is to use it to conserve or improve soil, increase

• • •
'Family harmony' is first on the list of top goals PFI farmers named for their farmland.'
• • •

biodiversity, improve water quality and other conservation." Del Fick's goal is "to restore and improve the soils back to the way God intended," which led him to convert row crop acres into pasture and plant cover crops. And then there are the moving words of Mary Damm, who bought the land of her friend Dan Specht—a former LSP board member—after he was killed in a farming accident: "I will try to maintain the integrity of the grasslands and improve biodiversity and habitat, just like Dan was trying to do."

But most farmers' goals have more to do with family relationships than conservation. Farmers and children of farmers often have a sense of "belonging" to their land that makes selling it traumatic. This bond can exacerbate family quarrels if one member insists on keeping the land in the family when others want to divide, sell or lease it. The question of "fairness" can also be an issue, with families debating whether equal division of land is actually fair if one child has already been farming family land and taking care of the parents as they age. The potential conflict generated by such situations is probably why "family harmony" is first on the list of top goals PFI farmers named for their farmland. Other goals on the list included providing heirs with greater financial stability, using the farmland to benefit a charitable cause and keeping it in the family.

Southwestern Iowa native and agricultural law expert Neil Hamilton describes selling his portion of the family farm to the man who had been renting it because he recognized that for new farmers to get started, landowners "need to get out of the way." Hamilton believes an agriculture system is more sustainable when farmers are owners, not tenants.

Tom Frantzen's number one goal, to "stem the tide of land consolidation," and his desire to keep his family's farm acres intact, led him and his wife Irene to decide that upon their death, their 320 acres would go to PFI, with their son James as the preferred tenant.

The Frantzen name and sustainable farming practices will stay with the land in perpetuity. In these uncertain times, who could ask for more? □

Former Land Stewardship Project associate director Dana Jackson co-edited the 2002 book, *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*.

Fracture Essays, Poems, and Stories on Fracking in America

Edited by Taylor Brorby &
Stefanie Brook Trout
Introduction by Pam Houston
2016; 469 pages
Ice Cube Press
www.icecubepress.com

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

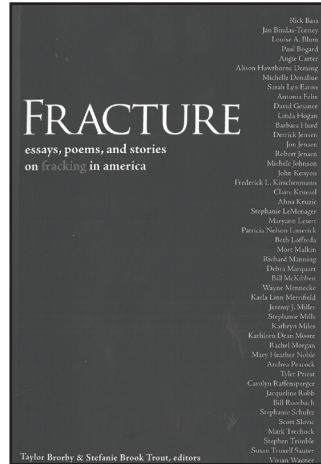
Fracture is an exhaustive work that takes on the issue of hydraulic fracturing—otherwise known as “fracking”—using the written word in a wide array of formats: everything from essays and fictional prose to poetry is included. Almost 50 authors contributed to this impressive work, bringing with them backgrounds in environmental science, biology, geology, agriculture and literature, among other areas.

But no matter how or by whom these reflections are presented, they all draw on the real experience of living in a world where oil and natural gas can now be squeezed out of geological formations by pumping a mix of sand, water and chemicals into the ground at high pressure. The negative results of this extreme energy extraction are evident in rural communities from southeastern Minnesota (where companies want to strip mine the frac sand) to the wellheads of Pennsylvania and Wyoming and beyond.

This work does an excellent job of addressing the history, development, components and issues surrounding fracking. As several writers point out, environmental impacts such as groundwater contamination and air pollution are well documented. But we hear less about the societal impacts, such as the increase in sexual assaults and suicides in areas like the Bakken oil fields of North Dakota.

Although this collection addresses fracking from a national scale, it contains several works that would be of interest to residents of the Upper Midwest. Jon Jensen, who teaches at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, contributes an essay titled, “Sand in My Backyard,” a wonderful piece that describes the impact of frac sand mining on his family in the Driftless Region. He concludes with a call for people to seriously consider an economic structure that moves us away from a fossil fuel based economy to one that is more environmentally sustainable and community oriented. In the essay “Epic Fail,” Land Stewardship Project member Robert

Jensen provides a stunning tribute to his late friend and frequent LSP volunteer Jim Koplin. Even though this essay describes the many failures of our current society and our relation to the natural world, Jensen sees Koplin’s life of grace and service as hope and an inspiration that could serve to create a more sustainable tomorrow. This essay alone makes this book a worthwhile and valuable read for anyone who knew Koplin and experienced his presence at LSP.



It’s easy to vilify the energy companies and policymakers who are decimating our landscape, but this book reminds us that we all contribute to this fossil fuel based society, and by extension, the practice of hydraulic fracturing. Some of these connections are quite personal, such as when former geologist Rick Bass writes, “I loved to chase and hunt oil; I absolutely loved finding it.”

But, as Bass points out, once one be-

comes aware of the damage one’s profession or even daily lifestyle choices cause, it’s impossible to go back to an ignorant way of living. Says Bass, “*One of the penalties of an ecological education, wrote the American ecologist Aldo Leopold seventy years ago, is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.*”

In effect, it’s not enough to stop fracking—it’s just one tool used to advance an inherently unsustainable energy system, one that has all sorts of unintended (and intended) consequences. Sustainable farming pioneer and North Dakota native Fred Kirschenmann argues that fracking creates a two-pronged problem: it creates an illusion that an industrial economy based on cheap petroleum fuels can continue indefinitely, and it extends the practice of burning the fossil fuels that are threatening the very survival of the planet. This has all sorts of side consequences, including one that strikes close to home here in the Midwest.

“It is the continuing availability of relatively cheap oil that sustains the highly specialized, monoculture farming systems that now dominate the landscape and incentivize farmers to raise more livestock in confinement, instead of on perennial grasses, to produce more corn to feed the animals, and to develop more ethanol to produce more fuel,” Kirschenmann writes.

That type of agriculture has already proven it is not viable in the long term. That means any system that powers it is also not viable, and must be changed. □

LSP member Dale Hadler lives in southeastern Minnesota.

Wear Your Land Stewardship Project Pride

Show your support for the Land Stewardship Project with an official LSP cap. The baseball-style cap is union made in the U.S. of high quality 100-percent cotton. It comes in black with LSP’s green and white embroidered logo featured on the front. A fabric strap and brass clip on the back make this a one-size-fits-all cap. The price is \$15.

Caps are available in LSP’s offices in Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) and Minneapolis (612-722-6377). They can also be ordered online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/store.





Making a Legacy Gift to LSP

By Mike McMahon

“Keeping the land and people together” — it’s a legacy many Land Stewardship Project members believe in and want to pass on to the next generation.

The values we lived, the way we treated others and the land, and the priorities for our time and energy are part of our individual legacies. Making a legacy gift is also a way for our lives to continue to do good things after our death.

If LSP’s work for stewardship and justice on the land are part of the legacy you would like to leave, we would greatly appreciate you providing for the Land Stewardship Project in your estate planning.

There are many ways to provide a legacy. A few of the more common are:

- Designate LSP to receive a bequest in your will or living trust — state a fixed amount, a percentage of your estate or a remainder of your estate.
- Designate LSP as beneficiary of a life insurance policy or transfer ownership of a paid up life insurance policy to LSP.
- Designate LSP as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or IRA.
- Create a trust that provides an income while you are living, with the remainder going to LSP afterwards.

- Enroll in a Charitable Gift Annuity that pays you during your life with the remainder going to LSP.
- Make a donation of farmland or other property.

If you have already included LSP in your estate plan, thank you. Please contact us so we can make any preparations to facilitate the gift and personally express our gratitude.

If you choose to include the Land Stewardship Project in your estate plans, here is an example of specific language for including a bequest for LSP:

General Purpose Bequest:

“I give and bequeath to the Land Stewardship Project, Minneapolis, Minnesota (or the name of the city listed in the incorporation papers), the sum of \$____ (or the following property____ or ____ percent of the rest and residue) to support the general purposes of the Land Stewardship Project.”

501(c)(3) Number: 41-1466054
“Most recent 501(c)(3) verification date.”

Please consult your tax adviser for information regarding charitable gifts. Thank

you for considering a legacy gift to the Land Stewardship Project.

If you have any questions, would like further information or would like to discuss gift plans, please contact me at mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. □

Mike McMahon is the director of LSP’s Individual Giving and Membership Program.

Give the Gift of Stewardship

Gift memberships are a great way to introduce friends and family to the Land Stewardship Project while supporting the organization. When you purchase a gift membership, LSP will send the recipient a special card along with an introductory membership packet.

For more information, contact LSP’s Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org. You can also purchase gift memberships online at <https://landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate>. □

Membership Questions?

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

LSP Launches Future Impact Fund

This fall, in order to carry out strategic, high-impact initiatives that are important to our membership but not fully funded by grants from foundations or public programs, the Land Stewardship Project has established the **Future Impact Fund**.

The fund will support LSP’s work to have a profound impact on the greatest issues we face today — like the health of our very soil, climate change, the protection of our water, the healthcare crisis, access to good food for everyone, and racial and economic justice.

And thanks to the dedication and commitment of three LSP donors, the first \$44,000 in contributions to the fund will be matched dollar-for-dollar.

It will help LSP strengthen a progressive populism that advances the voice and will of the people over the agenda of major corporations. Advancing a new narrative, a new story about the love of the land and our belief in each other — that we can make a difference for our children and our children’s children — is one of the most powerful actions we can take together. Because by doing so, we will invite more and more people to join us, and take effective action for positive change.

If you have not made a contribution to the Future Impact Fund yet, please consider making a contribution before the end of the year. We have much to do, and your contribution of \$50, \$250, \$500, \$1,000 or another amount that works for you will go right to work for stewardship and justice on the land.

To make your contribution, you can use the envelope in the center of this *Land Stewardship Letter* to mail in your gift. You may also use LSP’s secure website (<https://landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate>) to make a contribution. When making your gift, please include a note that it is for the Future Impact Fund. As always, your gift is fully tax deductible. For more information, contact LSP’s Mike McMahon at mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377.

In Memory & in Honor...

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received the following gifts made to honor and remember loved ones and friends:

In Memory of Charles Cornillie

◆ Charlette Cornillie

In Memory of Henry G. Melzer

◆ Penelope Purtzer

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>.

Get Current With LSP's

LIVE WIRE

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.

The *Myth Busters* can be found at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/about/libraryresources/mythbusters>. For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@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.

Community Input

Land Stewardship Project members recently participated in a meeting in Wadena, Minn., where LSP organizers gathered input on changes people would like to see in federal and state policy, as well as healthcare. For the latest schedule on LSP community meetings around the region, see page 32 or log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org. (LSP Photo)



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



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT
821 E 35TH ST STE 200
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55407-2102

NONPROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 ROCHESTER, MN
 PERMIT NO. 289

Address Service Requested

Your timely renewal saves paper and reduces the expense of sending out renewal notices. To renew, use the envelope inside or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **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 21)
- **JAN. 9—Deadline for Farmers to Submit Listings to the 2017 LSP CSA Directory** (see page 7)
- **JAN. 12—LSP “Soil Health & Getting the Next Generation Started” event with Rick Bieber, Plainview, Minn.** (see page 17)
- **JAN. 12-13—Minnesota Organic Conf., St. Cloud, Minn.** Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx, Cassie Dahl, 651-201-6134
- **JAN. 14—LSP Farm Transition Workshop, Rochester, Minn.** (see page 25)
- **JAN. 19—LSP Farm Beginnings class session in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 21)
- **JAN. 20-21—Practical Farmers of Iowa Conf., Ames Iowa.** Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org/news-events/events/annual-conference, 515-232-5661
- **JAN. 26-28—Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Conf., Aberdeen, S. Dak.** Contact: www.npsas.org/npsas-calendar/2017-winter-conference, 701-883-4304
- **JAN. 27—LSP Soil-Building Workshop with farmer/researcher Jerry Ackermann, St. Charles, Minn.** (see page 17)
- **JAN. 28-29—Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conf., St. Paul.** Contact: www.imfconference.org, Moua Meng Yang, 651-495-1528
- **JAN. 31—MNSure open enrollment deadline for 2017 health insurance plans in Minnesota** (see page 11)
- **FEB. 2-4—GrassWorks Grazing Conf., Wisconsin Dells, Wis.** Contact: Heather Flashinski, 715-289-4896, <http://grassworks.org/?110340>
- **FEB. 3—Conservation Stewardship Pro-**

gram application deadline. Contact: your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office, www.nrcs.usda.gov

- **FEB. 11—LSP Farm Transition Workshop, Rochester, Minn.** (see page 25)
- **FEB. 11—Sust. Farming Assoc. of Minn. Conf., St. Joseph, Minn.** Contact: www.sfa-mn.org/conference, 1-844-922-5573
- **FEB. 18—LSP Farm Beginnings class in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 21)
- **FEB. 23-25—MOSES Organic**

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

Farming Conf., La Crosse, Wis. Contact: <https://mosesorganic.org/conference>, 715-778-5775

- **MARCH 11—LSP Farm Transition Workshop, Rochester, Minn.** (see page 25)
- **MARCH 11—LSP Farm Beginnings class in Northfield, Minn.** (see page 21)

A Contrast in Coverage

Two contrasting landscapes were on display this fall in much of the Upper Midwest. Despite a generally wet autumn, many corn and soybean farmers were able to get into the fields post-harvest and undertake extensive tillage (*bottom photo*), exposing the soil to the elements, releasing carbon and all but eliminating biological activity for the next several months.

However, informal windshield surveys in farm country also revealed an increasing number of acres sprouting cover crops (*right photo*) after corn and soybeans were removed. Such continuous living cover cuts erosion, builds soil health and sequesters



carbon. See pages 13-17 for details on the Land Stewardship Project’s work to help farmers balance soil health and profitability. (Photos: top, *Caroline van Schaik*; bottom, *Terry VanDerPol*)

