

# The Land Stewardship



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

*Keeping the Land & People Together*

## Letter

Vol. 28, No. 4

[www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org)

Autumn 2010



The Ideker brothers are finding that it takes a community to launch a new farming operation. (see page 18)

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—*How Much Land Will it Take?*—

—*Why Should We Care About Immigrant Rights?*—

— *One Land Grant's Censorship Problem* —

—*The New CSP Hits the Ground Running*—

—*Permanent Roots for Community Gardens*—

—*Farm Beginnings Deadline Aug. 1*—

— *Reviews: Diet for a Hot Planet, Moral Ground* —



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

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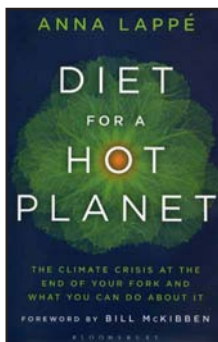
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## Letters

### Building community with family farming

I appreciate Land Stewardship Project Executive Director George Boody and farmer/farm educator Atina Diffley responding in the last *Land Stewardship Letter* to my commentary (Spring 2010 *LSL*) on the importance of appropriate size and diversity within our sustainable agriculture community. I know it's not an easy subject and, as one can see from Mr. Boody's and Ms. Diffley's responses, it can really hit a vein.

In my look at history, bigger farms have meant less farms—it doesn't matter if they're certified organic. In our shared vision of getting many more independent farmers on the land, I see appropriate size as the biggest issue. How to address this should be part of our constant dialogue.

I am very disappointed that the decision has been made to censor commentaries submitted to the *Land Stewardship Letter*. Given the context, this comes across to the reader as something to placate big players within the local foods community. It also cuts off a valuable sounding board for members and small producers who have valid concerns.

I think that as people become more in touch with their food and the land, they will choose small-scale farms. I already see this happening in many areas of the marketplace.

This naturally makes big farms, those who have expanded past the model of diversified family farming, defensive. I agree with Ms. Diffley's proposal that we all "work together."

As many of us know, if we are committed

to small-scale, diversified family farming, we have no choice but to intimately work together.

While this can be heavy lifting, I believe it's the way to build real community and reinvigorate rural America.

— Daniel Miller  
Millville, Minn.

*Miller recently concluded his first season of farming on his own and is in the process of buying farmland.*

### Less support for family farms?

As a longtime member and supporter of the Land Stewardship Project's vision and efforts, I was puzzled and dismayed by the heavy-handed response to Daniel Miller's Spring 2010 commentary.

My first concern is with the letter from Land Stewardship Project Executive Director George Boody. Did Miller's raising the issue of scale in regard to a few large growers require so dramatic a defense? And was it really necessary to set a new policy for commentary contributions, requiring that they pass through the gauntlet of the executive director and three program directors before they can be approved for publication? Will the LSP newsletter continue to be a forum for diverse ideas — or will it be censored against any creative thinking contrary to an organizational line determined by four of its leaders?

My second concern is that the reaction to Miller's article seems to signal a new emphasis in LSP's direction — with less support for small-scale family farms.

This is puzzling, because from early on the Project has promoted and supported such

farms and farmers. Miller's article seemed precisely to be in that tradition, with its theme of "small is beautiful."

The reasons for such a preference are clear. First, small-scale family farmers are at an advantage in caring for the land because they can have an intimate knowledge of its contours and characteristics — very simply, more "eyes to the acre."

Secondly, many small farms make possible the kind of mutual aid that can support and sustain the ethic of land stewardship. As we know, caring for the land isn't simply a collection of techniques that can be implemented under any agricultural model. Land stewardship requires the healthy cultivation not only of the land, but of people and communities. Small family farms are uniquely positioned to do this, especially when there are a number in the same area.

Contrariwise, we have seen the destructive consequences of the industrial model of agriculture that has devastated our rural communities over many years, driving farmers off the land and leading to the closure of schools, businesses, churches and other community institutions.

To get more farmers on the land will require a turnaround of our society's economic model of "bigger is better — and necessary." The Land Stewardship Project has been, and can be, a leading player in this rural renaissance of small-scale agriculture.

But if LSP retreats from its preferential option for the small-scale model and gives equal encouragement to farms with managers and employees, the forces of expansion could choke out the tender shoot of healthy, locally grown food on family-sized farms.

May we who have long supported LSP hope that it is not so.

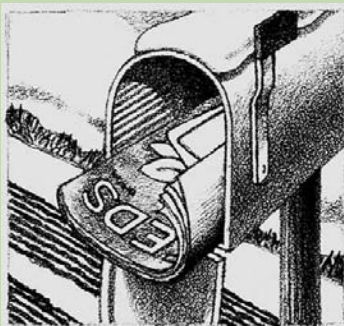
— Jack Miller  
Millville, Minn.

*Miller is a retired Lutheran pastor.*

## Submitting commentaries & letters

The *Land Stewardship Letter* welcomes unsolicited commentaries as well as letters-to-the-editor related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for content, length and clarity and to decide not to publish. Work published in the Commentary section of the *Land Stewardship Letter* does not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

Commentaries and letters-to-the-editor submitted to the *Land Stewardship Letter* will be reviewed by the Land Stewardship Project's executive director and the directors of the organization's various programs before they are considered for publica-



tion. These people are: George Boody, Executive Director; Mark Schultz, Associate Director/Policy Director/Director of Programs; Amy Bacigalupo, Farm Beginnings Director; and Terry VanDerPol, Community Based Food Systems Director.

To submit a letter or a commentary, or for more information, contact: Brian DeVore, 821 East 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 612-722-6474; e-mail: [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org).

# Letters

## Educators as learners

I am writing this letter to compliment you on your work towards a sustainable and wise world. I am a professor of mechanical engineering and have taught this for over 40 years. I am also a consulting engineer, and most dear to me, a land person. I have lived on farms since 1972 in Ohio, the Peace River Country in Northern Alberta, and for the past 30 years in southwest Wisconsin.

The most recent *Land Stewardship Letter* contained an article about professor Dennis Johnson and it surely struck a chord with me. Too many people think educators, and education, are irrelevant and dull. The true educators are nothing more than learners and good listeners, and wise learning comes from everything we do, including farming and other hard work. But reading the library is also good, and I keep coming back to the truly sustainable system that existed in the Midwest before the European.

I am restoring a 25-acre portion of my small farm to a native prairie with the hope that it will become a true prairie. Your article

on professor Johnson and his relationship to the farmers associated with LSP mentions going back to pastures to nurture livestock. The “designed” pasture mix of 13 varieties of grasses, forbs and legumes sounds like a step in the right direction. Why not encourage native prairies for pastures such as mine, which contains more than 50 varieties? And why not encourage larger, communal cooperative pastures? Here in southwest Wisconsin there are at least two groups, The Prairie Enthusiasts and The Driftless Area Association, who are seeking to restore native prairies. Why not couple this with farming? Keep up the good work.

—Kurt Rolle  
Platteville, Wis.

## When the land teaches linguistics

By Brian DeVore

For years, I thought the term “sidehill” was a figment of my late father’s ignorance. I knew what he meant. We farmed the rolling hills of southwest Iowa, so there was a lot of opportunity to use a term that referred to slopes:

“Go rake that hay on the sidehill, Brian.” “That sidehill was so damned greasy with mud I could barely keep the tractor from sliding sideways while spreading manure.” “Go up that sidehill pasture and chop those thistles.” “The rain ran down that sidehill like shit through a tin horn.”

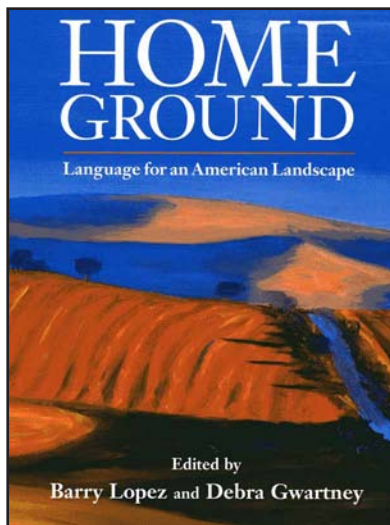
But then I left the farm and went off to college, where I majored in arrogance and assumed all that time my father had been too illiterate or linguistically lazy to say the “proper” term: side of the hill. Even now, whenever I write the word sidehill, my computer’s spell-check marks it with the scarlet tag that means it’s not a proper word. But the other night I was perusing a wonderful book, *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*, and there it was, a definition for the word I grew up with: “A sidehill is the side or slope of a hill—the sloping ground or descent.”

Sorry Earl, you were right. It bothers me that it took a book to teach me that someone who had spent his entire life on the land was in fact quite literate when it came to naming the elements that make it up. I’m reminded of Wendell Berry’s essay on “Nate Shaw,” the pseudonym for an African-American farmer from Alabama whose oral history reveals a son of the soil who “speaks always in reference to a real world, thoroughly

experienced and understood.”

As I leafed through *Home Ground*, I was reminded time and time again of the beauty of language that’s formed by our experiences with the land—not by a Madison Avenue advertising campaign.

*Home Ground* is a brilliant idea: a kind of topographical “dictionary” containing 850



landscape terms and definitions penned by some of the country’s leading writers. It’s the belief of the editors, Barry Lopez and Debra Gwartney, that “to know the land is to love it,” and one way to know it is to be aware of the evocative terms for various landforms. It’s one of those books you can either hopscotch through at your pleasure, or purposely search for certain terms dictionary-style. Some writers provide straightforward definitions, and leave it at that. Sometimes that’s all it takes to remember a

phrase or word. Other writers go beyond the simple definition to provide a bit of history or literary reference—which can often be much better memorization tools. “Tiny essays in the guise of definitions...” is how one reviewer described them.

For example, the sidehill definition, which is written by Iowa writer Mary Swander, quotes James Galvin’s *The Meadow*: “As he drove past the sidehill where the winter road attacks the ridge he just glared; he had fought that hill for forty winters. Every winter it rose white against him and he fought it, sidling down the sidehill into deeper drifts, digging out, grinding in again.”

I happened upon “sidehill” accidentally, and after that I went hunting for other terms from my farming youth: cistern, oxbow, slough, back forty, beaver slide, grove, gumbo (the soil, not the food), terrace, woodlot, windbreak, boondocks, creek, cutbank, fallow, grade, hardpan, hollow, loess, meander, pond, ravine, seep, shelterbelt, tornado alley, washboard.

Leafing through this book was a reminder that we are shaped more by our landscape than we realize. Literary references are great memory tools for unfamiliar terms to a Midwesterner who didn’t grow up around buttes, hoodoos or seracs. But for the terms that had been buried deep in the substrata of my grey matter all these years, simply seeing them in print triggered a memory avalanche—of the land forms and the people formed by them. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. For more on *Home Ground*, see [www.homegroundproject.com](http://www.homegroundproject.com).

# Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Producing clean water in rural areas will require taking the majority of our farmland out of production.

→ **Fact:** Whenever people raise the concern that, for the sake of water quality, perhaps we've converted too much of

our landscape to annual row crops which cover the soil just a few months out of the year, supporters of large-scale monocultural agriculture hit the panic button. They argue that any questioning of fencerow-to-fencerow planting is automatically a vote for returning our entire breadbasket to a vast expanse of prairies, trees and wetlands, dooming us all to choose environmental quality over filling our stomachs.

But a growing pile of research shows that farming practices that utilize perennial plant cover on just a small percentage of a watershed's landscape can produce major water quality benefits.

For example, a preliminary study in Iowa has shown that strategically planting just 10 to 20 percent of a crop field to strips of deep-rooted prairie grasses cut sediment loss by 95 percent. Measurements taken during the spring of 2008 showed the average loss during precipitation events from areas without prairie strips was 8.5 tons per acre. The areas with prairie plantings interspersed amongst corn averaged only a .5 ton-per-acre loss.

In western Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed, scientific studies and on-the-farm experience suggest that introducing more diverse cropping systems, pasture-based livestock production, small grains and forages into this intensely farmed region could result in dramatic reductions in water pollution. According to a modeling

study done in the watershed a few years ago by the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project, which the Land Stewardship Project helped lead, sediment loading was cut almost in half when farms were diversified.

The study used modeling to predict what would happen to sediment loading in the Chippewa based on four land use scenarios. The scenarios ranged from extension of current farming trends in each watershed (Scenario A: fewer and larger farms, with increased acreage in row crops and the loss of small and medium-sized livestock farms) to conversion of some row crop acres to year-round permanent plant cover such as grass, hay and trees (Scenario D). Under this last scenario, land would be rotationally grazed for livestock production, diverse cropping rotations would be implemented to build soil quality, and prairies and wetlands would be restored.

By getting more perennial vegetation on the land in the form of grasses, hay crops and trees, water runoff was reduced as much as 35 percent in the watershed, according to the modeling study, which simulated land use activities over a 50-year period. That meant more water was percolating into the soil and less was rushing to the waterways, carrying soil and other contaminants along the way.

Overall, a more diverse agricultural landscape led to reductions in sediment loading of up to 49 percent in the Chippewa River. These land use changes also produced other water quality benefits such as reductions in nitrogen pollution.

Keep in mind this diversification was done while keeping corn and soybeans a major part of the planting mix.

There is a caveat, however: just placing

soil-friendly plant cover anywhere in a watershed may not do the trick. In order to attain significant environmental benefits, such cover must be targeted at fields (steep slopes, adjacent to water, etc.) that are particularly sensitive to erosion and runoff. Using market incentives to target such areas is one of the things the recently launched Chippewa 10% Project is trying to do.

One other thing to keep in mind is that it's often those most vulnerable areas that are the least productive as far as row crops are concerned. That helps make them more attractive places for replacing corn and soybeans with perennials such as grasses—especially if those perennials can produce income via grass-fed livestock production or biomass fuel generation.

## → **More information:**

- For more on the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mba.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html).

- To read more about Iowa State University's research on prairie strips, see [www.leopold.iastate.edu](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu) and type in the search phrase "prairie strips."

- See pages 22-23 for more on the Chippewa 10% Project.

## **Myth Busters on the Internet**

- You can download pdf versions of *Myth Busters* at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.htm). For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org).

# 40% ...

...That's the CR4, or "Four-Firm Concentration Ratio," when it comes to a competitive market. According to conventional economic wisdom, when four firms control more than 40 percent of a market, it's no longer a competitive one. U.S. livestock agriculture passed the CR4 danger threshold long ago, according to the University of Missouri ([www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/07contable.pdf](http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/07contable.pdf)). The top four packers slaughter well over 80 percent of the nation's cattle. And over 65 percent of the nation's hogs are slaughtered by just four firms. See page 10 for information on the Land Stewardship Project's work to reduce concentration in livestock markets and make them more accessible to family farmers.



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## LSP News

# Winona County ordinance passes

By Doug Nopar

After more than three years of heated debate, on Dec. 14 southeast Minnesota's Winona County Board voted 4-1 in favor of a new comprehensive land use ordinance. Land Stewardship Project members were extensively involved in pushing for an ordinance that benefits family farms and the environment, while protecting rural communities.

The new ordinance will allow for older farms that have not recently had animals to be re-stocked, creating opportunities for beginning farmers. It will also maintain the limits set in the 1990s on the size of factory farms (1,500 animal unit cap). In place is an open public hearing process and County Board vote on proposals involving new livestock facilities over 300 animal units in size.

The ordinance will require county staff to report large liquid manure spills (over 10,000 gallons) to neighbors within 24 hours and report on causes and environmental affects to the County Board within two weeks. It protects prime farmland from housing developments and preserves native burial grounds and pioneer cemeteries.

For over a decade, LSP has been fighting to maintain local government's ability to enact restrictions on "unwanted development," and in particular on factory farms. The passage of this ordinance re-affirms the importance of local control.

LSP Winona County organizing committee members Joe Morse, Kaye Huelskamp, Kyle Colbenson, Phyllis Frisch, Frank Kreidermacher, Arlene Nelson and Darline Freeman logged many hours strategizing, coordinating and lobbying for passage of the ordinance. Outgoing Winona County Planning Commission members Barb Nelson and Greg Erickson, along with the late Vic Ormsby (all LSP members), played a crucial role in moving the ordinance forward. When the ordinance faced stiff opposition in recent months from property rights activists, LSP members Bob Redig, Margaret Walsh, Jim Gurley and Harrisen Ornes, along with many others, provided significant organizing assistance. LSP partnered with two key organizations — the Bluff Land Environment Watch and the Winona Dakota Unity Alliance — in pressing for passage. □

*Doug Nopar is a Policy program organizer based in LSP's southeast Minnesota office. He can be reached at 507-523-3366 or [dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## LSP presents play on helping the next generation of farmers

### Performances scheduled for this winter & spring

The Land Stewardship Project has developed *Look Who's Knockin' On Grandma's Door*, a professionally-acted, one-act educational performance that promotes rural community dialogue throughout the Upper Midwest. The 30-minute play raises questions of land ethics and the moral dilemma posed by wanting to get top dollar for selling one's land while desiring to help the next generation of farmers get started farming.

Created out of numerous interviews and stories of both beginning and retiring farmers in recent years, the play uses humor, story-telling, and the common everyday tension in an elderly farm couple's relationship

to prompt personal reflection and community discussion in the audience.

The play was written by LSP Policy program organizer Doug Nopar and directed by LSP member Eva Barr.

At each of the play performances, LSP will provide resources and first-step guidance for those landowners interested in learning more about renting or selling their land to a beginning farmer.

"*Look Who's Knockin' On Grandma's Door* and the discussion that follows will provide both the inspiration and the means for retiring landowners to begin to connect with aspiring, young, conservation-oriented farmers," says Nopar. □

• • •

*"Ever since retiring farmer Gerald Dietrich heard about the pastor's sermon on "legacy," he has been troubled. If he could make the decision about what to do with the farm on his own, the answer would be easy. He'd just rent the farm to Wilsons, the biggest cash grain farmers in the county. But Gerald's wife, Nettie, grew up on this award-winning conservation farm, and they've worked side-by-side there, raising a family and farming for more than 50 years. That means that he's got to keep Nettie's perspective in mind — and Nettie doesn't like the way Wilsons farm. A visit by Gerald and Nettie's three children is only a day away, and Nettie is pressing to have a talk about the farm's future with them." — from *Look Who's Knockin' On Grandma's Door**

• • •

### Scheduled performances of *Look Who's Knockin' On Grandma's Door*

- Feb. 17: St. Charles (Minn.) Borromeo Catholic Church; 1:30 p.m.
- Feb. 17: Assisi Heights, Rochester, Minn.; 7 p.m.
- Feb. 20: St. Mary's Catholic Church, Chatfield, Minn.; meal at 5 p.m., followed by performance.
- Feb. 25: MOSES Organic Farming Conference (two performances), La Crosse, Wis.
- March 3: St. Paul's UCC/ELCA Church, Lewiston, Minn.; 7 p.m.
- March 19: Hassler Theatre, Plainview, Minn.; 7:30 p.m.
- April 8: The Crossing, Zumbrota, Minn.; 7 p.m.
- April 10: Theatre du Mississippi, Masonic Temple, Winona, Minn.; 2 p.m.

For more information, contact LSP's Doug Nopar at 507-523-3366 or [dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org).

# LSP celebrates food, farming, culture in SE MN

Over 150 Land Stewardship Project members gathered outside of Winona, Minn., Aug. 15 for LSP's southeast Minnesota summer cookout and celebration.

The "Celebration of Food, Family and Farming" was hosted by Jim and Cheri Crigler and Bryan Crigler and Kate Foerster. In a tribute to farmers from many lands who built and now contribute to the region's food supply, participants brought dishes reflecting their cultural heritage to share at the "All-American All Ethnic Potluck" meal (*top photo*). Ice cream from Castle Rock Organic Dairy was also featured during the meal.

Restaurant owner Chong Sher Vang, along with his wife Yang Vue (*middle photo*), hosted a cooking demonstration while talking about Hmong agriculture both in Laos and in this region. In addition, the history of innovative land management in Winona County's Gilmore Valley was illustrated through stories and photographs from some of the valley's conservation pioneers. Finally, a "Seeking Farmers Seeking Land" workshop was held to discuss the issue of land access for beginning farmers and land transition by retiring farmers.

Bryan Crigler (*bottom photo*), who is a graduate of LSP's Farm Beginnings program, led tours of his family's various farming enterprises, including a bed and breakfast, shiitake mushroom logs, a herd of Scottish Highland beef cows, a walnut grove, and several large gardens. (*photos by Caroline van Schaik*) □



## LSP FB classes for 2011-2012 announced; deadline Aug. 1

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course for 2010-2011 filled in record time and classes are in full swing. LSP staffers are already planning the 2011-2012 course, which will take place in the Minnesota communities of Rochester and Hutchinson. The application deadline is Aug. 1.

If you'd like information on the next classes, contact LSP's Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or [lpse@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lpse@landstewardshipproject.org). More information is also available at [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org). See the *Land Stewardship Letter's* Farm Beginnings section—pages 16-20—for the latest news and resources related to the program. □



**LAND  
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# LSP News

## Finley joins LSP Farm Beginnings staff

**Aimee Finley** has joined the Land Stewardship Project staff as a Farm Beginnings program organizer. Finley is a Farm Beginnings graduate and holds a bachelor's degree in secondary agricultural education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

She owns a grass-based dairy operation and a Curves business in St. Charles, Minn. Finley has worked as a student teacher, pharmaceutical sales intern and a dairy/4-H intern.



**Aimee Finley**

She has served as the Winona County American Dairy Association vice-president and the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Dairy Club president. Finley's dairy herd was named "Top 100" for low somatic cell count and she was named the National Dairy Shrine Outstanding Student.

Finley is based in LSP's southeast Minnesota office in Lewiston and can be reached at 507-523-3366 or [aimee@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aimee@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Terk joins LSP food systems work

**Rebecca Terk** has joined the Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food Systems staff in western Minnesota.

Terk has master's degrees in English and history and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of South Dakota-Vermillion. She has worked as a teacher, produce manager and greenhouse/



**Rebecca Terk**

farmworker.

Terk currently raises and direct markets vegetables and serves as board president of the Vermillion Area Farmers' Market. She also helped found and coordinate the Vermillion Community Garden. Terk is a member of the Dakota Rural Action Small Farms Committee and has worked on legislation and policy issues affecting family farms, land stewardship, environmental issues, and direct-to-consumer marketing of locally-produced foods.

She is working as an LSP organizer focusing on healthy food systems in Big Stone County with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Eating Minnesota. Among other things, Terk is developing strategies for growing a local food system that is profitable for farmers and provides improved access to fresh fruits and vegetables in one of the state's more sparsely populated counties.

Terk can be reached at 320-305-9685 or [organicpeas@hotmail.com](mailto:organicpeas@hotmail.com). □

## Bobbitt conducting community based food research

**Bradley Bobbitt** is serving as a research assistant with the Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food Systems program and the Chippewa 10% Project.

Bobbitt is currently pursuing a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and is focusing on issues related to economic development, food systems and rural issues. Bobbitt has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and urban studies from Hamline University. He has worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer, a research assistant in the U of M's Department of Soil, Water and Climate, and a natural resources intern for the City of Burnsville, Minn.

With support from the U of M's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Bobbitt



**Bradley Bobbitt**

is researching the market potential and infrastructure questions for community based food systems. He is reviewing models for regional food distribution systems and estimating market capacity for farmers in western Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed. LSP will use Bobbitt's research to help develop preliminary plans for a viable food distribution system.

For more information on LSP's Community Based Food Systems program and the Chippewa 10% Project, see pages 21-25. □

## Eger working on urban ag for LSP

**Andrea Eger** is working as an intern with the Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food Systems program.

She has a bachelor's degree in theatre arts from the University of Minnesota and an associate of arts from Century Community College. Eger has done volunteer work on community gardens in Guatemala and interned in Peru and Ecuador on a coffee co-op and at a national park, respectively. She has also worked as a wait assistant, flower shop employee and at the University of Minnesota costume shop.

During her internship, Eger is helping develop, among other things, a set of fact sheets on zoning issues related to urban agriculture (see page 21). She is working out of LSP's Twin Cities office. □

## Anna King leaves LSP

**Anna King** has left the Land Stewardship Project to pursue an art education career in Wisconsin.

King joined LSP's staff in autumn 2009 as a membership assistant and during the past year has streamlined LSP's membership services and helped organize numerous fundraisers and other member outreach events.

King has also lent her artistic skills to LSP's work, providing original etchings for thank-you cards and promotional materials for such events as the Nov. 14 Farm Art Bowl (see page 30).

In November, King published the book *Chickens in the City*. See page 29 for more information. □



**Anna King**



# LSP's *CSA Directory* expands reach beyond Twin Cities

For over 15 years, the Land Stewardship Project's *Directory of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farms* has been the go-to resource for eaters in the Twin Cities area looking to take part in a more sustainable relationship with their food and the producers of that food. In recent years, farmers and consumers have asked that the *Directory* include operations that deliver to locations outside the Twin Cities. The 2011 edition will do exactly that—for the first time the *CSA Directory* will list farms that deliver to communities throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin, as well as the Twin Cities.

The *Directory* will be available March 1 on LSP's website ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html)). Paper copies will be available at the LSP's South Minneapolis office, 821 E. 35th St., Suite 200; or by calling 612-722-6377. Subscriptions are often sold out by early spring and people are encouraged to reserve their shares early.

Community Supported Agriculture is an arrangement where consumers "put a face on their food" by buying shares in a farming operation on an annual basis. In return, the farmers provide a weekly supply of fresh, natural produce throughout the growing season (approximately June to October). Most of the farms focus exclusively on fresh produce, although a few also offer meat shares and other products. The *CSA Farm Directory* provides contact information for the farms and details of the share arrangements, such as how much and what kind of produce and other products are offered.

## Want to be listed in the *CSA Directory*?

Are you a CSA farmer who would like to be listed in the 2011 *CSA Farm Directory*? Contact LSP's Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org).

## Want to be listed in the *Stewardship Farm Directory*?

In early 2011, the Land Stewardship Project will be updating another important resource for sustainable eaters: the *Stewardship Farm Directory*. The 2009-2010 edition of the *Stewardship Farm Directory* ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd)) lists over 160 LSP member-farms in the Upper Midwest that are direct-marketing their products straight to consumers. Also listed are LSP member-restaurants, co-ops and other businesses that are playing key roles in advancing a community based food system.

The *Directory*'s listings provide information about the farmers and other businesses so consumers can communicate with them directly to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

If you are an LSP member and have been listed in previous editions of the *Stewardship Farm Directory*, in January you should receive an invitation to be included in the 2011-2012 version. If you are new to the *Directory* and would like to be listed, contact LSP's Abigail Liesch at 612-722-6377 or [aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Jack Johnson sings LSP's praises



Musician and environmental activist Jack Johnson (*middle*) invited the Land Stewardship Project to have a booth at his concert in Somerset, Wis., last summer. Johnson provided \$2,500 to match donations that support LSP's work, and during the concert members and staff collected over 300 signatures on a petition to Congress supporting the passage of mandatory funding for farm to school lunch programs. Signatures were also collected for a petition opposing the construction of a 3,800-cow dairy in nearby Richmond, Wis. Pictured with Johnson are (*l to r*) LSP volunteers Kay Haggerty, Maggie Stern, Emily Taylor and Chris Vanecek. LSP Policy organizer Sarah Lesnar is next to Vanecek, along with volunteer Ari Peterson. (*photo courtesy of Jack Johnson*)

## State Fair gothic



Land Stewardship Project staff and members participated in the Minnesota State Fair Eco Experience Healthy Local Food Exhibit on Aug. 29. LSP's exhibit helped fair attendees make connections between family farms, local foods and healthy eating, and featured an "American Gothic" photo cutout. (*photo by Tom Taylor*)

# LSP calls for enforcement of strong GIPSA rule

By Adam Warthesen

On November 22, USDA concluded the public comment period for the proposed Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) rule, which is being written in order to clarify and strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921. The Packers and Stockyards Act is the nation's cornerstone law for preventing unfair practices by meatpackers against America's livestock producers. Providing better enforcement criteria through the existing Packers and Stockyards Act is a major goal of the Land Stewardship Project and allied farm groups which advocated for the inclusion of a rulemaking directive in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Along with hundreds of farmers and other stakeholders, LSP submitted comments on the proposed rule, which was released on June 22. (LSP's comments can be viewed at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/GIPSAComments.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/GIPSAComments.pdf).)

A central purpose of this proposed rule is to rectify the major imbalance of power

between large corporate meatpackers and America's farmers and ranchers that has persisted for decades and is now increasing throughout the entire livestock sector. In the beef sector, the top four packers (JBS, Tyson, Cargill and National Beef) slaughter 88 percent of the nation's cattle. Today, 20 percent of market hogs are directly owned by the biggest packers and another 57 percent controlled through captive supply contract arrangements. And as this consolidation has compounded for the past 20 years, we've seen a persistent drop in farmers' share of the retail dollar in both hogs and cattle.

Consolidation and vertical integration have created a playing field ripe for abuse in which corporate meatpackers and large integrators manipulate markets, deny or severely restrict market access to independent livestock producers, and use unfair practices like confidentiality clauses to the detriment of both contract producers and independent producers.

The Obama Administration should be commended for taking unprecedented action in developing and releasing the proposed rule. This rule, when fully implemented, can

improve competition and prices throughout the livestock supply chain, resulting in a fairer market and real benefits for cattle, hog and lamb producers at all levels of production, as well as the rural communities in which they live and the eaters who buy their products.

While not a cure-all for the ills of excessive corporate power and abuse in the livestock markets, the proposed rule represents a step in the right direction. Simply put, a final rule is needed that:

- 1) Allows family farmers and ranchers to find out what prices and terms of sale are being offered for livestock. This currently does not exist for most independent family farm livestock producers and it must be addressed.
- 2) Increases and ensures better market access for family farm livestock producers.
- 3) Identifies violations of the Act and leads to improved enforcement and curtailment of the most abusive and unfair procurement practices used by corporate meatpackers.

USDA is expected to publish an interim final rule following their review of submitted comments and any additional analysis deemed necessary. LSP strongly encourages USDA to begin enforcing the rule as swiftly as possible—it is in the best interest of farmers, rural communities and our nation's food system. □

*Adam Warthesen is a federal policy organizer with the Land Stewardship Project. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).*



Land Stewardship Project member Tim Henning testified at a USDA/Department of Justice workshop Aug. 27 in Fort Collins, Colo. The workshop represented the first time two Presidential cabinet members—in this case U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder—have taken input directly from farmers on livestock concentration issues. Henning, who raises cattle near Adrian in southwest Minnesota, testified that if laws governing the livestock markets aren't enforced, beef and pork farming could go the way of poultry, which is almost completely controlled by a handful of firms. "I've seen what's happened in the poultry industry, and I don't want to see the poultry industry tactics and rules come into being in the cattle industry," he said. (photo by Adam Warthesen)

## Money Pit report

The Land Stewardship Project's report on how factory farms in Minnesota qualify for special property tax breaks on their manure lagoons and pits is now on our website.

For a copy of *The Money Pit: How Minnesota Property Taxpayers are Subsidizing Factory Farms*, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/MoneyPitReport.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/MoneyPitReport.pdf). For a paper copy, contact LSP's Bobby King at 507-523-3366 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org).

For more on the study, check the Summer 2010 *Land Stewardship Letter*.

# The new CSP: putting conservation on the ground

*But as budget cuts loom, farmers need to show continued demand for this working lands program*

By Adam Warthesen

When the Land Stewardship Project and other organizations pushed for the 2008 Farm Bill to rejuvenate the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), our argument was simple: there was a pent-up demand from farmers for federal programs that reward working lands conservation.

That argument has been confirmed by the statistics. Since the 2008 Farm Bill strengthened CSP, states like Minnesota have made impressive use of the program and shown that demand far outstrips supply. In one recent sign-up, over 2,300 Minnesota farmers submitted initial applications to enroll some 837,200 acres. That's three times the number of contracts and double the acres that were ultimately available for enrollment during that particular sign-up.

As the chart on the 2010 fiscal year sign-up shows, the number of Midwestern acres being affected by CSP is starting to add up. Consider this: since 2004 CSP has enrolled only 20 million acres in total. In contrast, the new CSP has an enrollment goal of nearly 13 million acres per year, and since it's receiving \$12 billion in funding over the next 10 years, that goal is quite attainable.

The huge demand for the revamped CSP shows a real commitment to farmland conservation around the country, a commitment that promises to pay real dividends for our soil, water and wildlife long into the future. It shows that when given the chance, farmers here are quite willing to use innovative techniques to not only protect, but also improve, the environment.

These contracts are helping farms that are producing everything from milk, beef and pork to corn, soybeans, vegetables and forages get rewarded for implementing and managing practices that produce conservation benefits. Grazing, resource conserving crop rotations and wildlife habitat restoration are just some of the practices CSP is helping propagate. I've been on many of the farms that have CSP contracts, and it's exciting to see some of the creative ways they are balancing conservation with food production.

Steadily we are making strides in the way the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is implementing the program, as well as the way farmers are utilizing it to support conservation on the land.

## A few flaws

Nothing is perfect, and the new CSP is no exception. For example, farmers have expressed frustration that CSP tends to be weighted too heavily in favor of what farmers promise they'll do, instead of rewarding them for environmental benefits they've already delivered.

In addition, LSP and other sustainable agriculture groups are concerned that when contracts are awarded, there is a bias against diverse farming operations that are raising a variety of small grains, forages and live-stock.

CSP's ultimate success depends on how it's implemented by NRCS officials on the

are producing. A results-based conservation program represents the future of sound, sustainable farm policy.

We should also keep in mind that programs like CSP will only be made available as long as lawmakers see a demand for them. CSP sign-up is now continuous, meaning conservation-minded farmers can approach their local NRCS office anytime to begin the process of applying (*see sidebar below*).

There has been talk of balancing the federal budget by cutting farm conservation programs like CSP. Such cuts would be short-sighted and end up costing our land and communities far more than they save.

## 2010 Fiscal Year CSP Contracts in Select Midwestern States

	# Contracts	Acres	\$\$ Obligated over 5 Yrs.
Illinois	542	402,697	\$8,696,724
Iowa	1,480	797,605	\$20,255,574
Minnesota	1,575	915,761	\$21,377,320
Missouri	1,939	976,001	\$16,557,469
Nebraska	1,106	1,836,928	\$20,152,534
North Dakota	627	1,280,729	\$19,486,721
South Dakota	505	1,294,391	\$14,873,702
Wisconsin	968	359,990	\$6,650,195

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, November 2010

local level. We have joined with a dozen other groups to fully investigate how such tools as the CSP ranking system are being utilized by NRCS staffers.

Despite some shortcomings, there's no doubt CSP is a giant step in the right direction, given the history of federal commodity programs penalizing farmers for diversifying out of row crops.

But it's important that the new CSP is available to all agricultural producers, regardless of where they live or what they

LSP will be working during the next several months to make it clear to lawmakers and USDA that this working lands conservation program is an important investment in the future. □

*Adam Warthesen is a federal policy organizer with the Land Stewardship Project. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.*

## Want to enroll in CSP?

Sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program is now continuous. For details on applying to the program, check with your local NRCS office or see LSP's newly updated fact sheet at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSPFactSheet1.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSPFactSheet1.pdf). You can also get details from LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.

# Immigrant worker rights & legalization – what’s in it for us?

By Doug Nopar

*“From the beginning of time, the human being has migrated to where it could survive.”*

— from *The Guardians*, by Ana Castillo

For the past several years, Land Stewardship Project members and staff have been working to build an understanding of immigrant worker issues and how those issues intersect with building a healthier food and agriculture system. We’ve invited immigrant farmworkers to our events, and we’ve attended presentations on the issues they face in their daily lives. We’ve attended workshops and marches organized by Centro Campesino (the Farmworker Center) in Owatonna, Minn., and have begun the long, slow process of creating friendship and understanding between our LSP members and the members of the farmworker community, working across culture and language to lay the early groundwork for future work together.

We’ve been led to this work for several reasons:

1) Rural southern Minnesota communities have become much more diverse in the past 15 years. The passage of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1994 helped cause a huge increase in migration of Mexicans to the U.S. Mexican farmers put out of work by this trade agreement headed north to find work on dairy, livestock

and produce farms, as well as in food processing facilities. The state demographer anticipates that by 2030 Minnesota’s population will be comprised of 25 percent people of color, compared to 14 percent today.

2) Many of our farmer-members have hired, or are thinking about hiring, immigrant workers.

3) Many of those migrating to rural Minnesota from other countries are farmers and rural people displaced by the very same U.S. trade and farm policies that have done damage to family-sized farms, the environment and rural communities in the U.S. We have a common enemy.

4) To date, we’ve done a poor job of integrating these newcomers into our communities. Huge disparities persist in the education, health care, employment, agricultural and criminal justice systems between our native-born population and immigrant communities. These disparities are more glaring in Minnesota than almost any other state in the country. Within LSP, we place a high value on creating healthy communities and these disparities prevent us from creating the kind of communities that we want.

Our early conversations with immigrant workers have helped us identify and begin to tear down the numerous myths about immigrants that are perpetuated throughout our culture. Both in the *Land Stewardship Letter* and in opinion pieces submitted by our

members to southern Minnesota newspapers, we’ve de-bunked myths about immigrants exploiting our health care system (they don’t), about getting welfare and food stamps (they can’t), about immigrants being more prone to criminal activity (they’re not), about immigrants not paying taxes (they do pay taxes), and about immigrants just needing to get in line to immigrate legally (next to impossible due to the paltry number of visas available).

As for our members in recent years that have hired immigrant workers—for some it has worked out well, for others not so well. They are to be applauded for taking some risk, and trying something new in an effort to make their farms viable.

## A middle ground?

Opinions vary widely among LSP members on immigration policy. We’ve heard some LSP members suggest that the U.S.- Mexican border should be opened up to allow for a more free flow of labor (we’ve opened the border for corporations to move goods, capital and factories, why not open the border for labor too?). Others have suggested that all undocumented workers should be immediately deported (factory livestock farms really couldn’t exist without immigrant labor — getting rid of these workers would create better opportunities for family-sized farms).

The stark political reality is that we won’t be opening up the border with Mexico, nor will the U.S. be sending all undocumented

**Immigration, see page 13**

## Summaries of pending federal immigration legislation

→ **The AgJOBS Act** ([www.farmworkerjustice.org](http://www.farmworkerjustice.org)) would allow many undocumented farmworkers to obtain temporary immigration status with the possibility of becoming permanent residents through continued agricultural work.

Eligibility is restricted to immigrants that have: 1) worked in U.S. agriculture for at least 150 days or 863 hours during the past 24-months; 2) have not been convicted of any felony or a misdemeanor that involves bodily injury, threat of serious bodily injury or harm to property in excess of \$500; and 3) paid an application fee and small fine.

The AgJOBS Act also would revise the existing agricultural guest worker program, known as the “H-2A temporary foreign agricultural worker program.”

→ **The DREAM Act** ([www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)) would provide qualified undocumented students that have lived in the U.S. for at least five years, have a high school diploma and no criminal record the opportunity to secure legal permanent status, and pursue a college degree or enlist in the military.

→ **Comprehensive Immigration Reform** ([www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)) includes border and worksite enforcement, detention reform, adjusting employment-based visas to better match the need for workers, immigrant integration and English literacy, and provisional legal status for undocumented workers that register with the government and have never committed a serious crime.

immigrants home. But what if we took a middle ground approach and made some significant reforms to our nation's immigration system, helping legalize the undocumented workers that are here now and ensuring a more orderly situation that better matches availability of worker visas with our need for immigrant workers? And what would such reforms mean for the long-term ability of LSP to accomplish its mission?

Here are some benefits to these "middle ground" options that could be in the best interest of all of us:

### ✓ **Boost access to professional farm laborers**

Many of our LSP farmer-members are looking for reliable help, and would like to hire experienced immigrant farmworkers. Yet they are stymied by the complex and unworkable rules embodied in the current immigration system. Some LSP farmers already employ immigrant workers, but fear that their workers will be targeted by immigration authorities and local police, rounded up and deported. Instances of racial profiling already occur on a regular basis in rural Minnesota, with immigrant workers being stopped by local police for no other reason than they "look Mexican." These kinds of disruptions significantly affect the day-to-day viability of family-sized farms hiring immigrant workers. Legalization of immigrant farmworkers, such as what is proposed in the AgJOBS Act (*see sidebar on page 12*), would lessen the fear and uncertainty of those employing immigrant workers, as well as create greater trust and communication between farmers and workers.

### ✓ **An end to "wage theft" & a more level playing field for family-sized farms**

LSP continues to hear about instances of "wage theft" on factory farms. "Wage theft" refers to a variety of practices (*see sidebar on this page*) that deny workers their fully deserved pay. Along with being illegal and immoral, when these practices are used on factory farms they give these farms yet one more additional financial advantage over family-sized farms that pay wages according to the law and treat workers with dignity and respect. Wage theft also prevents workers from making their full contribution to state tax revenue and decreases their ability to purchase goods and services in the local community. Wage theft depresses wages not only for immigrant workers, but also for all workers throughout rural communities,

regardless of race or where they are from. If undocumented workers were legalized and no longer feared immediate deportation, it would help end a practice that not only hurts workers, but small- to mid-sized farms that treat their workers fairly.

### ✓ **Increase English language skills & community participation**

The level of anti-immigrant rhetoric and enforcement actions in the U.S. has increased dramatically in the past decade. The fear of authorities and deportation has resulted in undocumented workers and their families minimizing their participation in rural community activities and in English classes. Their legalization would begin to lessen these fears and would promote greater integration into the local community, and build trust and friendship between immigrant workers and the native born.

### ✓ **More licensed & insured drivers**

Thousands of immigrant workers in Minnesota drive to their jobs without a license and without insurance. Ironically, Minnesota and many other states allowed undocumented workers to have a license until the early 2000s when anti-immigrant politics began to surge, and this opportunity was taken away. The legalization of these workers could rectify this situation, and create a demand for not only the licenses (and the associated state fees associated with them), but also for automobile insurance, as well as economic and community activities that require a valid photo ID.

### ✓ **More producers of local food for local institutions**

Interest among schools, hospitals and nursing homes in purchasing locally produced fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products has begun to grow in recent years. Among other things, this effort needs a tremendous expansion of infrastructure in transportation, processing and storage. When the institutional demand for local foods truly does take off, it will also need a tremendous expansion in supply of local foods produced by both existing and new producers. The legalization of immigrant farmworkers could help lay the foundation for these already-skilled producers (previously farming in other countries) to begin renting and buying land and creating the food production enterprises that our communities will need in the future.

### ✓ **Making LSP's vision come true**

LSP's vision is of a well-cared for land, of prosperous communities across our coun-

## 'Wage theft' & other labor violations

The practices below are examples of wage theft, and they are violations of Minnesota's wage and hour law, regardless of the employee's legal status (documented or undocumented):

- Failure to pay for all hours worked.
- Failure to pay wages due after resignation, termination or facility closure.
- Failure to provide breaks for meals and restroom use.
- Failure to pay minimum wage.
- Wage deductions for damages to equipment and facilities incurred during workday.
- Failure to pay overtime.

An increasingly common practice is to routinely dismiss higher paid workers (without justification) in favor of lower paid new hires. While this practice may be legal, it is highly unethical. Some employers have also created their own personnel policies, some of which are not in compliance with the law.

Some employers fail to inform their workers of workers' compensation rules, and fail to ensure that employees get the medical coverage they need for workplace injuries through workers' compensation.

tryside, of widespread ownership of the land by thriving family farmers, of understanding and cooperation between the racial and ethnic groups that make up our communities, of robust local and regional food systems, of a free people turning away from fear, greed and hatred. We envision a transformed food and farming system, one that delivers abundant social, environmental, health, cultural and economic benefits.

But to achieve these changes, we need to build far greater community power than we now have. It will take enormous people power to challenge the corporate control of the food and agricultural system we're living under. We will need the skills, experience and perspective which immigrant rights groups, indigenous communities and people of color bring to the table from rural and urban communities throughout our state, nation and world. □

*Doug Nopar is a Policy program organizer in LSP's southeast Minnesota office. He has a long history of working with Latino worker groups like Centro Campesino. Nopar can be contacted at [dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org) or 507-523-3366.*

# Clearing up *Troubled Waters*

*The U of M's attempted censorship of a film on agriculture & water pollution highlights the land grant institution's bias in favor of corporate, large-scale, industrialized farming*

On Dec. 10, it was announced that the University of Minnesota's vice-president of University Relations had resigned. This marked the latest chapter in a controversy that began two months before when that same official canceled the screening of a film on the connection between Midwestern monocrop agriculture and pollution in the Gulf of Mexico.

In the intervening weeks, the turmoil swirling around the attempted censorship of the film churned up some ugly truths about the tenuous position of academic freedom at a major land grant institution, the negative view some officials have of alternative farming systems, and the lengths to which educational leaders will go to appease corporate agricultural interests.

## Unpopular science

On Sept. 15, it was revealed by Molly Priesmeyer, a reporter for the online newspaper *Twin Cities Daily Planet*, that Karen Himle, vice-president of University Relations, had abruptly canceled the October premiere of *Troubled Waters: A Mississippi River Story*. The original reason given for cancelling the broadcast on *Twin Cities Public Television* as well as the screening at the U of M was that the film needed to undergo "further scientific review."

That was surprising, given that the film was made by Larkin McPhee, a Peabody and Emmy award-winning director whose credits include NOVA, National Geographic

Explorer, Smithsonian World and the Discovery Health Channel. The film was made on contract for the U of M's highly respected Bell Museum of Natural History and it provides a straightforward account of an issue that's been in the news off and on for several years (see sidebar below). Before it was finalized, the film was reviewed by 27 scientists, as well as 17 resource managers and extension educators, 10 farmers and nine science writers and communication specialists, according to documentation provided by Bell officials.

When asked by reporters what "science" was questionable in the film, U officials said the film needed to be reviewed by one of the major funders, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). However, within 24 hours of the *Daily Planet's* original story, LCCMR officials announced that they had already reviewed the film and found it "scientifically balanced."

## The Agri-Growth connection

According to internal e-mails and other documents obtained by the Land Stewardship Project through the Minnesota Data Practices Act (see sidebar, page 15), Himle pulled *Troubled Waters* on Sept. 7 without consulting the film's director, executive producer or its public and private funders. She wrote in an e-mail that "...the vast majority of the piece is an anti-nitrogen/anti-farm bill/pro-organic farming advertisement."

It turns out Himle has a considerable con-

flict of interest when it comes to judging a film dealing with agricultural pollution. She is the wife of John Himle, who is CEO of Himle Horner Inc., and a former executive director (1978-1982) of the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council. Himle Horner, a public relations, "crisis management" and public affairs firm, has had numerous agribusiness clients over the years, including the Agri-Growth Council, which is the prime promoter of industrialized farming in the state

## Crisis situation?

The hundreds of e-mails that were generated before and after Himle's last-minute cancellation show U of M officials were quite concerned about the reaction of corporate agriculture to the film. Martin Moen, the communications director for the Bell Museum, sent an e-mail on Aug. 10 that contained the draft of a communications plan that would, among other things, inform "agricultural leaders about the film's broadcast so they are not taken by surprise." The most telling element about the e-mail is that Moen, a former communications director for the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS), calls it a "crisis communication plan."

In an Aug. 13 e-mail, CFANS dean Al Levine provides an "historical" explanation for why "crisis" was considered a proper moniker for the plan: "Things rise to [U

*Troubled Waters, see page 15...*

## Why was *Troubled Waters* so controversial?

Perhaps the biggest irony of the *Troubled Waters* controversy is that the film doesn't break much new ground in terms of the debate over agricultural pollution. The connection between large-scale monocropping and water quality problems has long been known. (*The Land Stewardship Letter first reported on the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone problem as early as 1999; see www.landstewardshipproject.org/lsl/lspv17n4.html#COVER*).

The film uses interviews with experts and an historical overview to describe how replacing diverse farming systems with monocultures of soybeans and corn has

caused major water quality problems in Minnesota and all the way down the Mississippi to the Gulf. It describes the role farm policy, biofuel markets and "cheap food" economics have played in creating this environmental catastrophe. The film goes on to feature farmers—everyone from large-scale row croppers to a grass-based livestock producer—who are taking concrete steps to reduce agriculture's impact on the environment.

The overriding take-home message of *Troubled Waters* is that policy reform, scientific innovation and the average consumer can do much to help foster and support such environmentally friendly farming.

So what prompted officials within the U of M's agriculture college to attempt to brand the film as a work that "vilifies" agriculture?

The film may simply present some troubling truths that even the most knowledgeable agricultural experts would just rather not see discussed in public. Susan Thornton, director of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, may have hit the nail on the head when she told the *Star Tribune* newspaper, "I think [*Troubled Waters*] presents a balanced approach. I think it might also speak to some things that people don't want to know about or think about."

President Robert Bruininks'] office and we have meeting after meeting for weeks on end. It's much worse than most would understand." Levine goes on to describe a meeting involving Bruininks: "I can remember when we had to meet [face-to-face] with the President and the soybeans [sic] and corn growers. The claims were that articles in *Science* had no peer review!"

In April, Kristin Weeks Duncanson, vice-chair of the Agri-Growth Council's board of directors, reviewed a cut of the film given to her by Levine. She didn't like what she saw.

Duncanson is a past president of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, which in 2008 temporarily pulled \$1.5 million in funding from the U of M (this is the incident Levine referred to in his e-mail about meeting with commodity groups in Bruininks' office). At the time the group was upset about research conducted by U scientist David Tilman on how perennial crops have greater energy potential for biofuel than row crops. An interview with Tilman is featured in *Troubled Waters*.

In an April 14 e-mail to Levine, Duncanson said of the film, "The comments regarding the Farm Bill could be very dangerous for the University." Duncanson also criticized its positive portrayal of organic and sustainable agriculture. As far as Tilman's presence in the film, she wrote: "No matter what the guy says the Corn and Soybean folks will be upset—He could be delivery [sic] money from the 'Prize Patrol' and those guys will slam the door."

In media interviews after the film was yanked, some CFANS officials were highly critical of the film, saying at one point that it "vilifies agriculture" and "made agriculture look very bad." But according to e-mails obtained by LSP, none called for killing it outright. In fact, at one point Levine warned Bruininks in an e-mail that "stopping the film will appear as censorship."

## Public outcry

Soon after it was revealed that the University's head of public relations had pulled the film, citizens from across the state flooded President Bruininks' office with e-mails and calls expressing outrage that scientific and academic freedoms were being squashed. LSP members who contacted Bruininks' office were told that in fact the Bell Museum was responsible for yanking the film, even though e-mails later verified that it was Himle who had made the decision.

At one point, LSP and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, along with 15 other organizations, submitted a letter to Bruininks calling on the film to be shown, for Himle to resign and for a full investigation of the incident to be undertaken. The groups emphasized that the controversy over the film highlights the need for the U of M to increase research and education on sustainable and organic agriculture.

On Sept. 23, after two weeks of intense pressure from LSP, other groups, various media outlets and the general public, the U announced that in fact the film would be premiered at the Bell and on *Public Television* as originally scheduled. When making the announcement, U officials conceded that in fact the film had been vetted properly.

Before the Oct. 3 screening of the film at the Bell Museum, LSP and IATP held a press conference outside of the theater calling on University officials to conduct a full review of how the film controversy was handled, for the dismissal of Himle and for a commitment to conduct more research and outreach related to sustainable and organic farming systems.

Two weeks later, Himle issued a public apology and Bruininks said he was "particularly disappointed in the turn of events surrounding the release of the film."

## Accountability

During the Dec. 10 meeting of the Minnesota Board of Regents, Bruininks announced Himle's resignation, saying, "I have

every confidence in Vice President Himle and her integrity."

In the aftermath of the resignation, LSP continues to call on University officials to put in place reforms to make sure this type of attempted censorship does not happen again. This includes undertaking a thorough review of the incident.

"What really motivated people to hold vice-president Himle and the University accountable was the unacceptable action of censorship in the corporate interest by an officer of our public land grant institution," says LSP Associate Director Mark Schultz. "Accountability was needed and now we need to move on to make sure the University meets the needs of our state's family farms, consumers and the land."

LSP is continuing to engage U officials in making a full commitment to research and education on sustainable farming systems, says Bobby King, an LSP Policy organizer. The University has well respected faculty doing cutting-edge, long-term research on organic and sustainable agriculture. This includes the organic crop and dairy research taking place at experiment stations in southwest and west-central Minnesota (see the *Summer 2010 Land Stewardship Letter*).

"The University can build on such initiatives and become a national leader in this area," King says. "But to do this, it needs to shift resources to support research and outreach on sustainable and organic farming systems—the same systems that could help solve the water quality problems portrayed in *Troubled Waters*."

The controversy over *Troubled Waters* garnered national media attention and LSP Executive Director George Boody says this may have sent a chilling message to students and faculty who have an interest in sustainable and organic agriculture research and are considering coming to the U of M.

Says Boody, "The University needs to clearly show top students and researchers it welcomes and will support their creativity and expertise." □

## Read the documents, see the film

### The documents

Land Stewardship Project staff members have sorted through over 2,000 University of Minnesota documents related to the *Troubled Waters* controversy. Released as a result of LSP's Data Practices Act request, the majority of the documents are internal e-mails. The most compelling documents have been pulled out, organized chronologically and by selected topics, and posted on LSP's website. All are Adobe Acrobat documents that are capable of being searched by keywords or phrases.

The documents are available at, [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/10/newsr\\_101029.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/10/newsr_101029.htm). To read an LSP analysis of the docu-

ments, see the Minnesota Environmental Partnership *Looncommons* blog called, "Industrial Ag Pressure at the U—An Inside Job."

### The coverage

The *Troubled Waters* controversy received extensive media coverage locally, regionally and even nationally. For links to the coverage, see our "LSP in the News" page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html).

### The film

*Troubled Waters* can be viewed on the Twin Cities Public Television website at [www.tpt.org/?a=programs#20610](http://www.tpt.org/?a=programs#20610). DVDs can be purchased from the Bell Museum by calling 612-626-4440.

# Farm Beginnings

## FB cover crop field day



Late season cover crops and rotations were the focus of a Farm Beginnings field day on Aug. 24 at Riverbend Farm near Delano, Minn. Riverbend, which is operated by Greg and Mary Reynolds, raises certified organic vegetables. (photo by Nick Olson)

## Public workshops Jan.-March

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program will be holding a series of winter workshops for the public this winter:

- Jan. 22: **Post Harvest Handling of Vegetables with Atina Diffley**, Twin Cities, Minn.; contact: Parker Forsell, LSP, 507-523-3366; [parker@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:parker@landstewardshipproject.org).
- Jan. 29: **Options for Making \$45,000 from Raising Hogs**, Redwood Falls, Minn.; contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; [rness@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rness@landstewardshipproject.org).
- Feb. 5: **How to Generate \$45,000 with Grass-fed Beef**, Glenwood, Minn.; contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; [rness@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rness@landstewardshipproject.org).
- Feb. 17-18: **Planning for Success: Introduction to Holistic Management**, St. Cloud, Minn.; contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; [rness@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rness@landstewardshipproject.org).
- March 2: **Record Keeping for Vegetable Farms**, Rochester, Minn.; contact: Parker Forsell, LSP, 507-523-3366; [parker@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:parker@landstewardshipproject.org).
- March 7-8: **Holistic Mgt. Financial Planning Class**, St. Cloud, Minn.; contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; [rness@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rness@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Listen in on a FB class

To get a taste of a Farm Beginnings class, listen to a recent course presentation on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2) (episodes 85-93). □

## Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland? Or are you an established farmer/landowner who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program has simple application forms available for people seeking farmland or farmers. Once the form is filled out, the information can be circulated by LSP via the *Land Stewardship Letter*, the *LIVE-WIRE* and online at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/land\\_clearinghouse.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/land_clearinghouse.html). This service is free for LSP members. To obtain a form and for more information, e-mail LSP's Parker Forsell at [parker@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:parker@landstewardshipproject.org) or call 507-523-3366. You can also download the forms from our *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* section on the LSP website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land). Here are the latest *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* listings:

### Seeking Farmland: WI

Ashley Romero and two partners are seeking to rent or buy 70 acres or more of farmland in Wisconsin. They are looking for tillable, forested and pastured acres, and require a house. Outbuildings such as a barn as well as fencing would be preferred. Contact: Ashley Romero, [arfrostbite.kore@vfemail.net](mailto:arfrostbite.kore@vfemail.net); 262-271-7050.

### Seeking Farmland: SE MN

Sarah Stai is seeking to purchase 5-10 acres of farmland in Dakota, Rice or Goodhue counties in southeast Minnesota (she would prefer that it be within 20 miles of the town of Northfield). She would like the land to be tillable with pasture and possibly forested acres. Stai hopes to grow fruits and pastured poultry, as well as offer opportunities for agri-tourism. Existing orchards,

berry patches or grapevines on the land would be a bonus. A house is preferred, as well as outbuildings such as a barn, greenhouse or hoop house. Buildings that could be used for on-farm classes or sales would be ideal. She is open to a gradual farm transition situation. Contact: Sarah Stai, 651-492-0414; [info@sunkissgardens.com](mailto:info@sunkissgardens.com).

### Seeking Farmland: Twin Cities

Jason Schulz is seeking to rent one acre of tillable land in Minnesota's Wright County, beginning in April 2011. He would prefer that it be near the community of Albertville, and does not need a house. A water source is preferred. Contact: Jason Schulz, 612-423-3157.

### Seeking Farmland: Minnesota

Jenny Lee is seeking to rent five-plus acres of tillable land in Minnesota. She would like it

to have a water source, fencing and for it to not be on a busy road. Contact: Jenny Lee, 651-208-3866; [lee0420@my.century.edu](mailto:lee0420@my.century.edu).

### Farm Available: Twin Cities

Jill and Jeff Bobrowsky would like to get a beginning farmer started through the sale of their small farm in Minnesota's Carver County, which is in the southwest Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The farm is located on seven acres with the option to rent additional land at \$35 per acre from retired neighbors (at some point the neighbors want to put their 235-acre farm up for sale). The farm is located near Hamburg and it has been involved in a Community Supported Agriculture/farmers' market initiative for the past 13 years. The five-bedroom farm-

Clearinghouse, see page 17...



## ...Clearinghouse, from page 16

house has been restored. There is also a new barn and fencing. They also have other items that can be sold separately, including a tractor, farm truck and organic hay from the 2010 cutting. There are also three registered Lowline Black Angus cows. The asking price is \$279,000 for the farm (equipment, hay and cattle not included), but they are open to a fair negotiated price. Contact: Jill and Jeff Bobrowsky, 15425 Yale Ave., Hamburg, MN 55339; phone: 952-452-4705.

### **Farmland Needed: W WI**

Anna Racer and Peter Skold are seeking 40 acres of land to rent or buy in western Wisconsin's Pierce or Pepin counties. They are seeking tillable, pastured and forested land, and require a house. They would also like a barn and have no preferences as far as land history is concerned. Contact: Anna Racer, anna.racer@gmail.com.

### **Farmland Needed: NW MN**

Jay Drechsel is seeking land to rent or purchase in northwest Minnesota's Ottertail County near Fergus Falls. He is seeking 40 to 80 acres of conventionally farmed land to raise grass-fed beef on. He would like the land to consist of tillable, pastured and forested acres. Drechsel does not require a house but would like outbuildings, fencing, water and electricity. Contact: Jay Drechsel, jdminsco@yahoo.com.

### **Organic Farmland Available: W MN**

Stan Herdina has for rent 114 acres of certified organic farmland in western Minnesota's Renville County, near the community of Olivia. All of the land is tillable. No house is available but outbuildings include a solar grain dryer/storage unit. Contact: Stan Herdina, 612-865-0957; saherdina@rswb.coop.

### **Farmland Available: SE MN**

Phil Dybing has available 80 acres of land for sale or rent in southeast Minnesota's Fillmore County, about 12 miles southeast of Lanesboro. This land has been

chemical free for 19 years and must stay that way for the renter or buyer. About 48 acres are tillable, 15 pastured and 14 wooded; the current home and farmstead occupy three acres. The farm is on a dead end road, is surrounded by forest and has good fencing. For the past 10 years, all open acreage has been haying and grazing for beef cows with seven semi-permanent paddocks. Options include buying the entire farm with the building site, buying a portion of the farm that would include zoning to build the purchaser's own farmstead, or renting all the open land for the renter's preferred operation. The purchase or rental price is negotiable. Contact: Phil Dybing, 507-743-8511; pdybing@acegroup.cc.

### **Farmland Available: Twin Cities Area**

Jim Esler has for sell 10 acres of farmland near the western Wisconsin community of River Falls, a 30-minute drive from downtown Saint Paul, Minn. Eight acres is tillable and it has not been sprayed in 20 years. There is no house or outbuildings, but there is a well, as well as telephone and electrical service. The land is 1.5 miles south of River Falls on a newly paved road, is approved for agricultural use and includes a pre-approved home site. Esler is willing to discuss the rental of an additional 80 acres across the road, which includes a pond and 45 acres of open land. The asking price is \$95,000. Contact: Jim Esler, 651-983-8260; jamesler@gmail.com.

### **Farmland Available: Central MN**

Linda Stewart has farmland for sale in central Minnesota's Meeker County, 50 miles west of the Twin Cities and 25 miles south of St. Cloud. Land available includes a 15-acre farmstead with an optional 25 acres. There is also a separate 43-acre parcel for sale. All parcels are adjoining.

The farmstead includes a 30x50 renovated wood barn with a 30x30 air conditioned and heated meeting/gathering space and a lower level 30x30 heated work space. A heated and insulated 30x50 workshop is located in the 100x30 pole barn, which includes lean-tos on both sides that are 100x16 each. There is a screened 20x75 picnic building also.

The 1900s era farmhouse has been updated, including mechanical, well and septic. It is a licensed bed and breakfast. Three acres near the house and barns are tillable with about seven acres pastured and the remaining in ponds, wetlands and woods. The optional 25 acres can be sold on a contract for deed basis and includes eight acres tillable and the remaining in woods, wetlands, pond and creek. The 43-acre parcel is cash or contract for deed with 17 acres tillable and the remaining pastured woods and wetland. It has nature preserve and hunting features.

The asking prices are \$440,000 for the 15-acre farm site and \$120,000 for the 43 acres. The price for the 25-acre parcel is to be determined. Contact: Linda Stewart, 952-261-7495; kingstononthecrow@gmail.com.

### **Farmland Needed: SW MN**

Adam Olson is seeking 40 to 400 acres of tillable land to rent in southwest Minnesota's Cottonwood County. He does not require a house. Contact: Adam Olson, 952-210-7562 or aolson10@gmail.com.

### **• Farmland Available: W WI**

Fred Nelson has for rent 42 acres of tillable farmland in western Wisconsin's Polk County, near the community of Balsam Lake. The land has not been sprayed in six years and has no house. It is available May 2011. Contact: Fred Nelson, 715-338-4490.

### **• Seeking Farmland: W Iowa**

Brad Renze is seeking to rent or buy land in western Iowa's Carroll, Crawford, Audubon or Shelby counties. He is seeking 40 to several hundred acres of tillable land and does not require a house or outbuildings. Contact: Brad Renze, 712-830-4663; b\_renze19@hotmail.com.

### **Greenhouse/Garden Space Available: Twin Cities**

Mark Friederichs has for rent greenhouse and commercial garden space in Maplewood, Minn. The location is at 1958 Rice Street North, but call before you visit the site. Contact: Mark Friederichs, 763-591-1642; sellerusa@comcast.net.

## **Crew supervisor needed for MN organic farm**

Land Stewardship Project member Ploughshare Farm ([www.ploughsharefarm.com](http://www.ploughsharefarm.com)), a 400-member CSA operation in Alexandria, Minn., is seeking a field crew supervisor. A minimum of three seasons on

a diversified vegetable farm is required, and supervisory experience is strongly preferred.

Compensation includes a competitive hourly wage (based upon experience) and housing in a three-bedroom home. Long-

term job opportunities are a possibility after a trial period of one year. Couples and families are welcome to apply.

The application deadline is Feb. 1. For more information, e-mail Gary Brever at [gjbrever@midwestinfo.net](mailto:gjbrever@midwestinfo.net). □

# Farm Beginnings

*Jim & Alan Ideker*

## Forging links in the farming chain

If sweat equity is a key ingredient in launching a farming enterprise, then Jim and Alan Ideker have enough venture capital to fire-up half-a-dozen enterprises.

"This is our second herd we've milked this morning," says Alan as he emerges from a dairy parlor on a crisp October morning, stifling a yawn that's been coming since 4:30 a.m.

The brothers have just milked 34 of their own cows on this place, which is owned by western Wisconsin farmer Gene Hansen. Before that they had done the milking on a farm a few miles away with its own 75-cow herd. A few weeks from this day they will be milking a dozen of their own cows on yet a third farm across the road.

"I guess we'll have to get up even earlier then," says Jim nonchalantly.

Jim is 22 and Al 21 — both have that young farmer's ability to work atrociously long hours under harsh conditions. But they are also savvy enough to know that one cannot sustain a farm in the long term on brawn and caffeine alone. Without some sort of infrastructure in place, all that sweat equity just takes a one-way trip—like so much fertilizer poured onto barren land.

That's why these recent graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program have created a support network of sorts as they make their move into farming. It's a network that has brought together established and retiring farmers, lenders, and even another young farmer to help them channel all that energy toward their ultimate goal: the creation of an agricultural enterprise that's sustainable from an economical, environmental and quality of life standpoint.

There is no magic formula for launching a successful agricultural operation, but the Idekers' experience provides a glimpse at some of the key links needed by beginning farmers—links that are forged by community support.

### 1st link: Farm Beginnings

Jim and Al did not grow up on a farm, but frequently helped out on the dairy operations owned by relatives and neighbors near their hometown of Hokah, in southeast Minnesota. That was all it took.

"It just kind of sticks with you," says Jim of farming.

"You can see it grow," adds Alan. "Even if you're working for someone else, you feel you've accomplished something at the end of the day."

At the suggestion of Matt Fendry, a 2001 Farm Beginnings grad from nearby Lanes-



boro, the Idekers took the course in 2007-2008 while Alan was still in high school.

During the fall and winter, they traveled to La Crosse, Wis., twice a month and sat in on classes taught by established farmers and other agricultural professionals from the community. For 14 years, LSP's Farm Beginnings program has been training beginning farmers who are interested in innovative management systems. The course emphasizes goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and low-cost production techniques. The classes are taught by people representing a range of enterprises: from grass-based livestock production and organic cropping to vegetables and specialty products. Farm Beginnings participants also have the opportunity to attend on-farm events where they see firsthand the use of innovative management systems.

The Idekers say the most helpful part of the course was the financial training and the creation of a business plan.

"We really didn't know a lot in that area," says Jim. "Setting up the cash flow, profit and loss statements, was helpful."

How helpful? Well, when asked how many cows they will need to milk on a regular basis in order to be financially viable, they are confident enough in their business planning to answer without hesitation: 75. The Idekers decided early on they wanted to produce milk organically. Their number crunching has shown that organic milk premiums, combined with low-cost production methods such as managed rotational grazing,

can make a 75-cow herd pay its own way, despite the conventional wisdom that dairies can only survive if their herds number in the hundreds or even thousands.

As Farm Beginnings graduates, the Idekers were eligible for an interest-free livestock loan from Heifer International. They each got 15 dairy heifers through the program, which has served as a basis for building their herd toward that eventual 75-cow number.

### 2nd link: the established farmer

Farm Beginnings graduates say one of the invaluable aspects of the program is the opportunity to create networks with established farmers—networks that pay off down the road when the grads are ready to head out on their own. Indeed, the Idekers have struck gold in that department. During one of the last sessions of the Farm Beginnings course, western Wisconsin dairy farmer Paul Olson spoke on a panel and mentioned he was looking for someone to help milk his cows. That proved to be the next link in the chain.

Paul and Judy Olson produce certified organic milk with a herd of about 75 cows on the farm Paul grew up on near Taylor in Jackson County. They sell their milk through Organic Valley, a cooperative that is headquartered some 90 minutes south of them. When the Olsons went organic eight years ago, they were some of the first to do so in their area. Paul says he never liked dealing with chemicals and "it just makes you feel better farming this way."

Olson is the president of the National Farmers Organization (NFO), which keeps him away from the farm more than he would like, and means he must rely on hired help. When he met the Idekers at the Farm Beginnings class, he was impressed with their enthusiasm for farming and commitment to good herd management.

He invited the brothers to the community of Taylor, which is a little over an hour's drive from Hokah, and rented them a farmhouse. The young men then set to work putting into practice what they had learned in Farm Beginnings.

"Jim and Al have been just superb in helping us," says Olson, who adds that in the past hired labor has not always worked well on the farm.

But the Idekers are more than hired hands—for two years they've milked the Olsons' cows, but they've also traded labor with the established farmers and shared equipment. And in general, they've become members of a community that respects hard-working, competent farmers.

**Fresh Faces**, see page 19...

Paul Olson grew up in the area and has been farming for 42 years. This deep background, along with his connections through NFO and Organic Valley, makes him an invaluable touchstone for someone just getting started farming in the area.

This area has become a bit of a hot spot for organic dairy production. Olson estimates there are 12 to 15 organic dairy farmers in the county alone. Some of them are aging and have stopped milking cows, but the land is still organic.

“And many of them would love to help a younger farmer get on the land and keep it organic,” he says.

Olson himself is 59, and isn't considering retirement soon. But he's the kind of person who, within a few minutes into a conversation, will invariably ask, “Do you know of anyone who wants to dairy farm?” Further conversation reveals he's asking the question because he knows of opportunities in the community for people who are interested in such an enterprise, and he's more than willing to serve as a go-between.

The Olsons have three grown children, but none have shown an interest in farming.

“We think about it a lot—about what we will do here in the future,” says Olson. “I'd like to see the farm continue as organic.”

It was through Olson that the Idekers came to milk their own 34 cows on Gene Hansen's farm. Before the brothers came along, cows had not been in the barn in over eight years, but Hansen wanted livestock back on the operation to help build soil fertility and to put the milking parlor back into use. (It cost them around \$3,000 in used milking equipment to get the parlor back in working order).

Olson has been renting the Hansen cropland for the feed, but the Idekers will be taking over that rental agreement in the spring. A neighbor who was getting out of farming sold the brothers a full line of implements on a four-year interest-free loan. While milking cows on the Hansen farm, the brothers learned of a farm across the road that was for rent—its owner stopped milking just two years ago so the barn was still in good shape. That's where they started milking a dozen of their own cows in November.

### 3rd link: the peer

Matt Fendry is only 28, but he's already looked up to by other young farmers like the Idekers. After graduating from Farm Beginnings in 2001, Fendry established a 35-cow organic dairy operation on his family's hobby farm near Lanesboro. He set up everything from scratch—from the step-up milking parlor to the foul-weather housing to the rotationally grazed pastures. But a few years ago it became clear that in order for he



Alan (left) and Jim Ideker have combined sweat equity and a community network to launch their farming career. (LSP photo)

and his wife Rebekah to expand the farm to the point where it could sustain them financially, they needed to move to an area where they could have access to more contiguous acres of pasture, hay ground and cropland. In December 2009, the young couple bought a farm some 20 miles from the Idekers, where they now milk 75 organic cows.

When Fendry first visited the farm he now owns, he stopped by to pick up the Ideker “boys,” as he calls them, so they could provide some advice on the place. They now trade field work and Fendry recently sold some heifers to the brothers to help them further build their herd.

“It's been real nice having Matt in the area,” says Jim.

Fendry may appear to be a self-made farmer, but he's the first to admit that no one can do it alone, especially when it comes to a management-intensive production system like organics. “You do need a little help getting started,” he says on a recent winter evening while doing the milking. “My parents helped me and Jim and Al got help from area farmers.”

### 4th link: financing

The Idekers' interest-free livestock loan through Farm Beginnings not only served as a foundation for starting their dairy herd, but primed the pump for obtaining credit to build an even bigger one.

“Fifteen cows alone does not cash-flow well,” says Jim. “But lenders give you more credit when they see you've qualified for a program like that. It tells them you are accountable and someone else believed in you.”

And having a business plan in hand was a huge plus as well, says the Idekers' lender, Loren Rausch. He's the agricultural loan officer for the Union Bank, which is down the road from Taylor in Blair. As with any good banker, a key business guideline for Rausch is, “You have to find the right credit risk to lend to.”

The banker has tried to follow that philosophy since he was working in Minnesota's Renville County, where he loaned money to large-scale corn and soybean farmers.

Dairying is a capital-intensive enterprise, and Rausch says farmers who have a business plan that sets five- to 10-year goals and projections is important.

Rausch says he's particularly excited when a dairy farmer finds a way to reduce a major

cost of production like, for example, feed. That's why he likes to see loan applications from farmers who are utilizing managed rotational grazing to feed the cows during the growing season.

“Definitely rotational grazing reduces investment and equipment,” he says. “During the high production months it supplies feed. It's good for the cows and the environment.”

### 5th link: the market

Lenders also look at how the final product will be marketed from the applicant's operation and whether the farmer can guarantee an income throughout the year, says Rausch. The consistent premium organic dairy farmers get makes them an attractive credit risk, especially in an area where Organic Valley and other organic processors have had a long presence.

“With organics you can build your cash flow and build a marketing plan,” says Rausch. “Initially, people thought organ-

# Farm Beginnings

...Fresh Faces, from page 19

ics was going to be a fad, but there's a real demand in the market sector. That's what you look for."

Paul Olson agrees: "It's not just about the premium, but I've appreciated a lot more stability with organic dairy prices."

## 6th link: the cheerleader

Bankers like Rausch may be convinced of organic's financial viability, but it's still a hard sell in the ag lending community in general, says Paul Dettloff, a veterinarian who has served on Union Bank's board of directors since 1982.

"They can't believe that the organic milk price is going to stay that way all year," he says.

Dettloff is a major reason the Union Bank first took a chance on lending to organic dairy farmers. About 20 years ago he started taking an interest in organics when he noticed that his clients who converted to the system had their vet bills drop as much 80 percent. Dettloff, who is now a staff veterinarian for Organic Valley and who runs his own vet supply business, is a vocal advocate for organics, which he sees as an excellent lending risk for small, rural banks in his area.

"These loans cash flow very well—they are building equity," he says.

In some ways, Jackson County's location and geography make it an ideal place for organic dairying. The rolling landscape and in some cases lower quality soil makes it difficult to do large-scale cash cropping there, which keeps land prices relatively low. This means smaller dairies—both conventional and organic—tend to predominate. It also means the land lends itself well to low-cost production methods such as managed rota-

tional grazing.

And despite the hesitancy of the general ag credit industry to embrace organic dairying, it turns out organic milk prices have proven fairly resilient, even during tough economic times. Recent prices paid to organic farmers in Wisconsin have averaged around \$5 per hundredweight more than what their conventional counterparts receive. Even in 2009 and 2010, when consumer demand for organic products flattened, prices paid to Wisconsin organic farmers dropped a few dollars per hundredweight. In comparison, conventional prices paid to farmers plunged as much as \$9.

"It's a market that's here to stay," says Rausch.

A study done by the University of Wisconsin's Center for Dairy Profitability found that on average organic dairy farms retained 21 percent of their business earnings, once the bills were paid (extensive use of rotational grazing increased earnings even more). Conventional confinement farms retained 14 percent of the farm's total income.

Such statistics give people like Dettloff hope for dairy farming communities. On a recent December afternoon, he was preparing to travel the next day to a western Wisconsin organic dairy to help work out the transition of the operation from a 65-year-old producer to a younger farmer.

"It's going to be kind of a fun morning," he says enthusiastically.

## 7th link: a positive environment

All these links in the chain loop together to create what for want of a better term is simply a positive environment for farming.

"The previous generation has to be positive about agriculture to really make it possible for the next farmers," says Fendry.

Surprisingly, that's not always the case in rural areas. Many retiring farmers are not willing to help beginners because they don't see a future in agriculture and don't want to set them up for failure. Oftentimes the

dominant philosophy is that the days when a moderate-sized family farmer could make it are long gone, and the future lies with large-scale corporate-controlled agriculture. Being a good farmer isn't enough anymore, goes this thinking.

But the Idekers and Fendry say in their particular community farmers and non farmers alike seem to believe young producers with modest operations can turn a consistent profit. "The biggest thing around here is people know good herd managers can do well," says Jim

Such a supportive environment doesn't pop up overnight, says Faye Jones, executive director of Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service. She says organic farmers, for example, need support services—everything from soil consultants, grain companies and lenders to veterinarians, milk haulers and seed dealers—that cater to their needs. And of course, they need established farmers who are willing to serve as mentors.

"It comes from all angles and they all kind of feed on each other," she says.

## Making an impression

It may be some time before the benefits of being in a supportive community fully bear fruit, and the Idekers are fully established on their own farm. But they continue to take key steps. The brothers have been thinking recently of ending their milking arrangement with the Olson family in the near future and concentrating on building their own herd. That sort of entrepreneurial ambition is respected in a farming community, and promises to pay dividends long into the future.

Says Jim as he and Alan wrap up chores on the Hansen place and prepare to check out the latest farm they've rented, "Once you get into an area, get a foot in the door and people see you work hard and are a good manager, they just kind of put you in the back of their mind when they're ready to hang it up or move on." □

## LSP's Community Engagement & Impact initiative

Land Stewardship Project organizer Karen Stettler says the widespread support that has helped Jim and Alan Ideker (*see story above*) take their first steps into farming is something that should serve as a model for revitalizing agriculture and rural communities in other regions.

That is one of the goals of a new LSP initiative, Community Engagement and Impact (CE & I). Among other things, the initiative is working to help beginning farmers gain access to land, which has emerged as a major barrier to getting viable farming enterprises launched. It's hoped that creating a community of support, much as what the Idekers have found in the Jackson County, Wis., area, will help make such access easier, says Stettler, who was formerly the director of LSP's Farm Beginnings program. She has been meeting

with LSP members and a CE & I steering committee has been formed to engage people and institutions in the broader community to work together to change the societal conditions that undermine new farmers getting started successfully.

"We've realized that all the training in the world won't do any good if in the end these farmers can't get access to land," she says. "Such access requires the support of farmers, institutions, businesses—the entire community."

*For more information on the Community Engagement and Impact initiative, contact LSP's Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.*

# Community Based Food Systems

## An apple a day...

Land Stewardship Project staff and volunteers promoted the connections between local food and healthy eating during the Washington County Bluegrass Festival Sept. 11 in Lake Elmo, Minn. The St. Croix Valley *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapter, which LSP coordinates, gave away some 1,000 locally produced apples with stickers on them saying, "Living Healthy in Washington County." Apples were also pressed on-site and cider was handed out. This event was part of the Washington County Statewide Health Improvement Program. For more on *Buy Fresh Buy Local*, contact LSP's Dana Jackson at 617-722-6377 or [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org). Details are also available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl). (LSP photo)



## LSP 'Buying Direct' fact sheet updated

The Land Stewardship Project has updated its fact sheet on how eaters can begin getting more of their food directly from local farmers. A pdf version of "Buying Directly From a Farmer" is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/19\\_buying\\_directly\\_from\\_farmer\\_2009.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/19_buying_directly_from_farmer_2009.pdf). For a paper copy, contact LSP's offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) or Minneapolis (612-722-6377). □

## Urban ag fact sheet

The Land Stewardship Project has developed a fact sheet on how better zoning laws can support the establishment of "urban agriculture" in cities. Urban ag is a way of growing and sourcing fresh food in metropolitan areas and includes community gardens, urban farms and farmers' markets.

Unfortunately, outdated zoning rules in many cities have served as deterrents to establishing such systems. LSP's Community Based Food Systems program is working on developing zoning rules in the Twin Cities that will be more urban ag friendly.

To download the fact sheet, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/21-Urban-Ag-Zoning.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/21-Urban-Ag-Zoning.pdf). For a paper copy, contact LSP's Sarah Claassen at 612-722-6377 or [sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Reaching out on local foods



Land Stewardship Project member Lucia Watson hands out a sample during a cooking demonstration she gave at the Winona (Minn.) Farmers' Market in September. Watson, who owns Lucia's Restaurant in Minneapolis, put on a cooking demonstration based on what she found at the market during a 30-minute shopping spree. The event was organized by LSP and other members of the Local Foods Committee of the Winona County Economic Development Authority. For more information on LSP's community food systems work in southeast Minnesota, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org). (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

## Safe food handling

The Land Stewardship Project has updated a series of three fact sheets that provide guidelines on legally and safely selling food into local Minnesota markets:

- **Sale of Shell Eggs to Grocery Stores in Minnesota** ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/EggGuidelines12-09.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/EggGuidelines12-09.pdf)).
- **Sale of Meat & Poultry to Grocery Stores & Restaurants in Minnesota** ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/MeatPoultryGuidelines12-09.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/MeatPoultryGuidelines12-09.pdf)).
- **Providing Safe, Locally-Grown Produce to Commercial Food Establishments & The General Public in Minnesota** ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/ProduceGuidelines12-09.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/ProduceGuidelines12-09.pdf)).

For paper copies, contact LSP's Tom Taylor at [ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org) or 320-269-2105. □

# Working the percentages

## Farmers, scientists & citizens discuss the environmental & economic future of a watershed

On the last day of September, Don Berheim stood atop a knoll and looked out over his 200-acre western Minnesota farm. Berheim's observation post was where the original homesteaders had built the house and barn over a century ago. Today, all that remains of that first farmstead are the buildings' foundations hidden in a stand of grass. Such evidence of time's passage set the farmer to musing. "When I stand up here I oftentimes think, what were people here 130 years ago thinking?" Berheim said to the 50 or so farmers, scientists, natural resource professionals and others gathered on the hill with him. "And what will people 130 years from now be thinking?"

What participants in a new initiative called the Chippewa 10% Project are hoping is that future residents in western Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed will think this: there are ways to make grass, trees and other plant systems that cover the land year-round—perennials in other words—pay off in the marketplace while providing environmental benefits to the community.

Since agriculture is such a dominant factor in the Chippewa watershed (almost three quarters of its 1.3 million acres is farmed), it must also play a major role in improving its economic and environmental health, says George Boody, Executive Director of

the Land Stewardship Project. LSP and the Chippewa River Watershed Project (CRWP) are co-leaders of the 10% Project.

"The 10% Project is a recognition that it takes farms to support rural communities, and vice-versa," says Boody, adding that one way to do that is to diversify the landscape with more grasses, forages, trees and other perennial plant systems.

During the September field day, which was hosted by Berheim and his wife Helen, the discussions that took place provided insights into the potential, and challenges, of getting more of the Chippewa River watershed planted to perennials for decades to come.

### How much is enough?

As Abdullah Jaradat, supervisory research agronomist for the USDA's North Central Soil Conservation Research Lab, explained to the field day participants, in recent years great strides have been made nationally to cut soil erosion levels on cropland, thanks in part to the adoption of conservation tillage methods. However, there are concerns that in very intensively farmed areas erosion has not gone down. In some cases nitrogen contamination of water is going up as farmers feel pressure to increase per-acre yields by utilizing extra fertilizer.

Crop prices have gone up as demand for products like corn-based ethanol rise, making every acre of land in places like western Minnesota all the more valuable.

"More yield per acre means the farmers have to plant more plants per unit area and feed these plants more so that they can produce the higher yield," said Jaradat. "We know that crops, especially corn, are not efficient users of nitrogen."

So more plant diversity is needed in our

### Give it a listen

Two recent LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcasts (episodes 83-84) feature interviews with participants in the Chippewa 10% Project. See [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=10](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=10).

rural watersheds, but how much is enough? How much corn and soybeans will need to be replaced with pastures, hay and other perennials in order to produce a significant difference in water quality?

CRWP scientist Paul Wymar explained how in 2007 a farmer came into his office and asked that exact question. CRWP is a citizen-based partnership that is focusing on improving water quality in the Chippewa and its tributaries. As part of this work, CRWP does regular monitoring of water in the basin; the farmer's question prompted Wymar to look over eight years of data that had been collected.

He found that increasing the watershed's perennial plant cover by 10 percent in key areas could help reduce sediment and nitrogen contamination levels to a point where they aren't a major threat to environmental health.

But, Wymar pointed out, even just 10 percent of the Chippewa watershed is 130,000 acres. When considering conventional conservation practices such as easements or cost share payments to support changes, 130,000 acres adds up quickly to a lot more money than could probably be obtained through local, state or national government programs.

"We realized that the only way this kind of change can occur is if we can find land uses that allow landowners to make profit off it while at the same time improving our water quality," said Wymar.

### Homegrown energy

That's why the Chippewa 10% Project is focusing on developing profitable markets for farmers who choose to grow more pasture, hay and other perennial plant systems. One possible way to make perennials pay is by selling them as biomass fuel. James Barbour told the tour participants that in some ways biomass energy generation is a good fit for a community looking to improve its landscape health and the local economy. Barbour, who is a staff scientist with the Biomass Gasification Project at the University of Minnesota-Morris, explained that unlike oil or coal, biomass lacks enough density to be transported more than 20 to 50 miles economically.



Farmer Don Berheim (left): "...what will people 130 years from now be thinking?" (LSP photo)

Chippewa 10%, see page 23...

“That has some real advantages though, because it means if the biomass is being produced locally, processed locally and used locally, the money stays in the community,” he said.

Barbour described a future scenario where just as today rural communities have a grain elevator where the farmers bring their grain at harvest, they could eventually have a processor/aggregator who takes crop residues or grass harvested from grasslands and provides it to a local utility or industry that turns it into energy or heat.

“It’s that really tight knit, integrated community infrastructure that we need here,” said Barbour as he held out fuel pellets derived from prairie plants. “But one of the biggest barriers to the use of biomass fuels right now is there simply isn’t the infrastructure to handle it.”

### Local food-local benefits

Another avenue for providing incentives for water-friendly farming systems also suffers from a lack of infrastructure, said Terry VanDerPol, Director of LSP’s Community Based Food Systems program. She told tour participants that one of the most exciting options out there for making diversified farming systems profitable is by marketing products from grass-based livestock operations to local markets. Such a system can help local eaters make the connection



Research has shown that adding 10 percent more perennial plants such as grass to the Chippewa watershed could help increase water quality significantly. (LSP photo)

between clean water and farming that relies on more perennials.

LSP and other organizations have been working on promoting local food systems in places like western Minnesota, but are running into a major barrier: distribution of locally produced food within an infrastructure better suited for movement of massive quantities of commodities long distances.

“There are farmers supplying local food already,” said VanDerPol, who raises grass-fed beef herself. “But they are basically being the whole supply chain themselves and are getting strung out pretty thin. How can we help farmers get access to markets profitable enough that they will consider adding an enterprise to diversify?”

Amy Bacigalupo, Director of LSP’s Farm Beginnings program (see pages 16-20), said new farmers could play a major role in operating the kind of diverse farming systems that can improve water quality. Surveys show the majority of Farm Beginnings graduates are utilizing farming systems that are soil and water friendly. Bacigalupo explained that such systems are management-intensive, and require more farmers on the land.

“Communities choose their path and there are results from those choices,” she said. “We have to choose a community of more farmers, not less.”

Recent Farm Beginnings graduates Andrew and Bonnie Wirth said one way to choose such a community is to provide key opportunities for beginning farmers. They talked about established farmers who have invited the couple onto their operations to get a first-hand glimpse at how they do things.

“They’d say, ‘I don’t know if I’m doing it right but you’re welcome to come out and see what I’m doing,’” said Andrew. “That’s priceless. The most valuable thing for the young farmer is experience.”



Participants in the field day discussed their environmental and economic goals for the Chippewa watershed. (LSP photo)

### Community connections

VanDerPol said that in the end all of these efforts—from creating infrastructures that benefit local food and energy production to providing support for beginning farmers—will require an acknowledgement on the part of community leaders that such relative short-term steps are an investment in a long-term, positive future.

Already, officials in the city of Benson, which lies on the Chippewa River a few miles from the Berheim farm, have started to make the connection between lack of perennial ground cover in the watershed and flooding problems in the community. What if community leaders went one step further and started seeing the link between markets for local food, for example, and healthier watershed hydrology?

“These communities need to learn how they can help bring about the infrastructure that’s needed for farmers to make changes on the land,” said VanDerPol. “Because the community will benefit from these transitions.” □

**Want more information on Chippewa 10%?**

- Julia Ahlers Ness, Land Stewardship Project, 320-269-2105; [janess@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:janess@landstewardshipproject.org).
- Kylene Olson, Chippewa River Watershed Project, 320-269-2139, ext. 116; [Kylene.olson@charterinternet.com](mailto:Kylene.olson@charterinternet.com).
- Website: [www.chippewa10.org](http://www.chippewa10.org).
- Read more about the Chippewa 10% Project in the Summer 2010 *Land Stewardship Letter*.

## When it comes to community gardens, roots must run deep

By Megan Smith

How many times have you wandered through a community garden and noticed its beautiful smells, creative architecture, stunning colors and abundant produce? Each garden is a wonderful and productive part of our metro areas. This summer, one thing that became clear to me is the central importance in the Twin Cities of the land itself, the land on which community gardens are planted and more and more of our food is raised. Without the land, community gardens and urban farms would not be there for us to enjoy.

Right now, the Twin Cities is home to over 200 community gardens and several urban farms. They provide food for families, beautify neighborhoods, protect our water, educate youth, create stable neighborhoods by decreasing crime and increasing social connections, and empower community leaders.

While community gardens and urban farms are now a growing part of our city, they are a much smaller part than they were in recent history. Take for example the 1940s, when Victory Gardens were tended by city dwellers and occupying everything from vacant lots to school grounds to railroad rights-of-way, and provided as much as 40 percent of the fresh produce consumed locally. There is so much potential in the land around us.

### Land in the long-term

I am a member of the Land Stewardship Project, which, in conjunction with Gardening Matters, is focusing on the importance of securing access to land for community gardening and urban agriculture in the Twin Cities. Recently, I met with 20 community garden leaders. In these conversations, I heard from gardeners about land access arrangements that work well for them and the benefits that come when they have long-term stability.

Unfortunately, I have also talked to many

gardeners who are at risk of being shut down because of land tenure uncertainty. Questions about future access to a plot of land fractures the relationship between the grower and the soil that is key to a sustainable food system. Struggling to make sure the garden will not be shut down takes valuable energy away from other garden activities.

Yet a significant challenge for community gardens and other types of urban agriculture is gaining long-term access to land.



**Long-term, stable access to land allows gardeners and farmers to invest their time and talents in the ongoing success of their garden or farm as a vibrant part of the community, local environment and our food system. (LSP photo)**

Everything from economics and misperceptions about food production, to outdated or misapplied government policies threaten the permanency of community gardens and urban farms. It is clear to me that gardeners and urban farmers need clear options for gaining long-term access to land.

As energy costs rise and our economy shifts, locally grown food will increasingly become a viable, healthy and popular option. But that requires securing land for urban agriculture — literally transforming our landscapes to promote a more sustainable food system.

Long-term, stable access to land allows gardeners and farmers to invest their time and talents in the ongoing success of their garden or farm as a vibrant part of the community, environment and our food system.

When land is available year-after-year for growing food, gardeners are better able to develop the soil through cover cropping and perennials, host bees and other beneficial insects, and build systems for composting and water collection. When gardeners are able to create permanent spaces for people to gather in, strong relationships are cultivated through familiarity and stability.

When people have long-term access to land, they are able to invite more people into the garden, and people can trust that such community spaces will be there for many years to come.

The Twin Cities is home to a wide range of gardens, farms and markets, and each will need a unique approach that works best for them. Not every garden or farm needs long-term access, but those that do require clear strategies to get there.

Community gardens have found secure land access through developing long-term leases with landowners, and through strong relationships with the community that they call home. They have found good partners in neighborhood associations, churches, schools and parks all around the metro area, and these partners are sometimes open to hosting a community garden for many years. Gardening Matters offers training and assistance for developing these vital community relationships.

Developing the many potential pathways for land security requires a collaborative effort. One working group, which includes LSP and Gardening Matters, as well as several other local organizations, urban gardeners and farmers, has been exploring strategies for long-term access to land.

I want to see the goal of long-term access to land realized for the community gardens and urban farms of the Twin Cities. Reaching this goal will be a key step toward transforming our local food system and our urban landscapes. So the next time you walk by a community garden, stop in and learn more about the food it produces and the people who are making it happen. □

*Megan Smith recently served an internship with LSP's Community Based Food Systems program. For more information on the initiative to help community gardens with land access or to get involved, contact LSP's Sarah Claassen at 612-722-6377 (sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org) or Gardening Matters at 612-821-2358 (www.gardeningmatters.org). See page 21 for details on LSP's new urban agriculture zoning fact sheet.*



# Levers, loyalty & long-term sustainability

## *A key ingredient in making community foods a success? Relationships*

When food system pioneer Ken Meter set out to do an analysis of an entire state's food system, he figured he'd unearth some impressive statistics and gain a few insights into the complicated nature of producing, processing, transporting and marketing all those fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy products.

Indeed, the report that resulted from his research, "Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry," does present some startling numbers. For example, the state's households buy more than \$12 billion of food annually and Minnesota has 80,000 farms and 17,000 food-related businesses that hire a combined 316,000 employees. Of the state's top 20 manufacturing firms, seven are food manufacturers and distributors, and these seven earn \$114 billion of revenue each year—that represents 65 percent of all sales made by the state's leading firms.

But when Meter looked beneath the hard numbers and interviewed some of the most successful players in Minnesota's food industry—everybody from small processors to CEOs of major companies—he was surprised to gain an insight about the key role one "soft" element plays in the success of businesses of all types and sizes.

"What really struck me was how each business told me their survival depends on building strong human relationships," says Meter. "They told me, 'If we have loyalty from our suppliers and customers, if they understand we're going to have tough times and may have some dilemmas to face, we'll have a stronger business than if we're simply addressing the bottom line.'"

### Healing a sick system

Meter is fascinated by the role relationship building could play in creating a food and farming system that produces healthier food and that builds a more economically and environmentally sustainable community. And change is needed, judging by some of the other statistics highlighted in "Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry." For example, two of every three Minnesotans are overweight; nearly a third of all residents are obese. The annual cost of treating obesity-related diseases in the state is an estimated \$1.3 billion. Food-related medical conditions have become a leading cause of death, rivaling tobacco in its impact.

The farm economy is sick as well. Despite doubling productivity, Minnesota farmers earned \$1.1 billion less from production in 2007 (the latest year ag statistics

were available when Meter did his study) than they did in 1969. In 2007, Minnesota farmers spent \$465 million more in production expenses than they earned by selling their products.

Nationally, farm income rose in 2008, due to speculators who bid up the price of grain, but these prices collapsed a year later. Even when the farm economy was relatively good in 2008, national net cash farm income was lower in 2008 than it was (in inflation-adjusted dollars) in 1929. Net cash income for farmers fell to zero in 2009. There was a slight rebound in 2010, but overall income was still less than it was in 2008.

Meter's Minneapolis-based Crossroads Resource Center has done 56 studies over the past decade that reveal how rural communities throughout the country are losing billions of dollars by relying on a farm economy to export massive amounts of raw commodities like corn and soybeans while

### Direct marketing of food in MN

- ◆ In 2007, Minnesota farmers sold \$23 million worth of food directly to eaters.
- ◆ The good news is direct sales represent a bigger market than either the oat, apple or sheep markets, and are nearly as large as sunflower sales. Direct sales are also rising faster than sales of other farm commodities.
- ◆ But \$23 million represents only 0.3 percent of the total farm commodity market in the state.

importing highly-processed foods to eat.

His analyses show that "community based food systems"—clusters of business and civic networks that produce and distribute a variety of foods to loyal local customers—could build wealth and connection in our communities, providing a solid foundation for sustainable economic development. In addition, such systems could encourage people to turn away from a diet that's reliant on unhealthy, highly-processed foods.

Community leaders often embrace Meter's conclusions, but then raise a hard question: how do we go about making changes within a system so huge and complicated? After all, despite the exploding interest in community based food systems—food co-ops in Minnesota alone now have annual sales of \$129 million, according to Cooperative Development Services—the state's community-based food trade has a long way to go before making a major dent in the overall economy (*see sidebar above*).

### Gaining leverage

Meter says one way to make those changes is through the strategic use of "levers" that can cause larger shifts in the food industry. Such a method can accomplish a lot with fewer resources. For example, if you want to move your hand from point A to point B, you can either move the muscles in your hand or move your shoulder. As Meter explains it, the latter strategy is subtler and takes less energy, but it's just as effective at moving the hand.

If your goal is to produce beef, you can either apply brute force to animal husbandry by hauling energy-intensive corn to cattle in a feedlot (and in turn hauling out manure as a waste product), or you can manipulate a subtle "lever" by planting grass and allowing the animals to rotationally graze.

Such a use of levers can produce a multitude of positive outcomes. For example, by raising beef on grass rather than a corn-intensive diet, a farmer can provide a perennial plant system that protects the soil and water, and produces food that is leaner and less likely to contain harmful bacteria.

"In this single act of planting grass pasture for cows and cattle, you get all these outcomes that are really positive," says Meter. "It's a very dense way of thinking and operating a farm."

The relationship building Meter uncovered while doing his "Mapping" research could be a key lever in building a more sustainable food and farming system, he says. Farmers who direct-market already know the value of building relationships with everyone from the local meat locker owner to the patron of a farmers' market.

"And for community based food to become a bigger player, even more relationship building will be needed," says Meter. "These human connections are particularly important when local food is involved, since we all need to eat and it's a business that is so vulnerable to the vagaries of weather, economics, even politics." □

*For a copy of "Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry," see the Crossroads Resource Center's website at [www.crcworks.org/mnfood.pdf](http://www.crcworks.org/mnfood.pdf).*

### Give it a listen

Episode 77 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast features Ken Meter talking about his "Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry" study. See [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=9](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=9).

## A spring runs through it

By Brian DeVore

**S**prings—those places where groundwater exposes itself to the sunlight of its own accord—are fascinating. There's something special about seeing firsthand an entity that's recently been lurking underground in dark mysterious places, flowing from who knows where and through who knows what.

Northeast Iowa farmer Jeff Klinge shares that fascination. Klinge's interest was piqued when as a child his parents took him to a nearby trout hatchery where Big Spring, the biggest cold water spring in that state, emerges from the ground like some sort of upside-down waterfall. Over the past four decades, that interest has evolved from mere curiosity to a major motivation for the way Klinge farms.

"Yes, I was interested in the trout," he says while standing on his crop and livestock farm eight miles from Big Spring on a stormy June afternoon. "But I was really interested in the spring. And then I found out our home farm was in the Big Spring basin,

and so it made me think that what we do on this farm affects the water that comes out of Big Spring."

Sometimes it's difficult to make a direct connection between farming practices and their impact on the environment. This is particularly true when it comes to the effect crop and livestock production has on groundwater, which even scientists will admit keeps a lot of secrets from we surface dwellers.

But farmers and other rural residents in Jeff Klinge's neighborhood have a better idea than most about the relationships between farming systems and water quality. That's because the Big Spring basin is one of the most well known and studied sites in the U.S. when it comes to information on groundwater contamination in a landscape dominated by porous limestone rock, otherwise known as karst.

Research in the basin has turned up some bad news: since the 1960s nitrate levels in the basin's water have been a consistent and growing pollution problem. This is a direct result of more of the watershed's land area being planted to corn, which relies on

### Wildly Successful Farming



*An occasional series on farms & their role in the natural environment*

nitrogen fertilizer. These corn plantings have come at the expense of pastures, woods, small grains and hay fields—all plant systems that help maintain good water quality.

### A barometer

Klinge hosted a field day on that June afternoon as part of an attempt to get farmers and natural resource professionals to make the connection between what's placed on farm fields and what shows up in a place like Big Spring. The field day, sponsored by Practical Farmers of Iowa and Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, among others, started out at the place where the spring itself comes roiling out of the ground before traveling a few hundred yards overland and emptying into the Turkey River.

And roils it does: water flows range from 20,000 to 30,000 gallons per minute, and can spike to 115,000 gallons per minute during heavy rainfall because of the 400 some sinkholes that dot the 103-square mile watershed that feeds the spring. Scuba divers attempting to explore the depths of the spring find themselves fire-hosed back above ground by the force of the flow.

The spring's frigid average temperature—48 degrees—makes it an ideal place to rear rainbow and brook trout, and that's what the Iowa Department of Natural Resources does. The Big Spring Trout Hatchery stands in the narrow spit of land that separates the spring from the Turkey River, and produces roughly 150,000 trout annually for cold water streams in the area.

While standing next to the spring, hatchery fisheries biologist Gary Siegwath explains that the spring, as well as the nearby Turkey River, are barometers of what is taking place on the surrounding landscape. These days, that barometer is calling for a



Farmer Jeff Klinge: "Whenever I do something on the farm, it's because of the Big Spring Basin." (LSP photo)

Wildly Successful, see page 27...



**Fisheries biologist Gary Siegwarth: “It definitely makes me feel good that these people are out there—they’re trying to do the right thing.” (LSP photo)**

**...Wildly Successful, from page 26**

good chance of cloudy water.

“For example, we had just a little over an inch of rain last night, and even with that relatively small amount of rain that water looks so turbid,” he says.

Sure enough, on this day the spring has the transparency of washing machine gray water, and the river is chocolate brown.

“That’s not sustainable,” says Siegwarth.

Before studying to be a biologist, Siegwarth farmed in eastern Iowa during the 1980s. He concedes that he mostly focused on raising a crop back then.

“The things we did on the land, I never made a connection to what was happening in the stream,” the biologist says sheepishly.

But working next to a spring and a river every day has changed all that. Siegwarth shows the field day participants various charts tracking the relationship between decreased water quality and the trend of “fencerow-to-fencerow” corn and soybean farming.

**‘Because of Big Spring...’**

Over the years, the Big Spring Basin Demonstration Project, a multi-agency research and education initiative, has worked with farmers to reduce nitrogen fertilizer contamination through such practices as conservation tillage, diverse crop rotations, better fertilizer management and rotational

**Give it a listen**

Episode 80 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast features interviews with Jeff Klinge and Gary Siegwarth. See [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11).

grazing systems. It has also helped communicate to farmers the importance of viewing manure as a source of fertility, rather than just a waste product, making it possible for them to apply less additional fertilizer that might just end up in the water anyway.

Too much of the watershed is still planted to row crops year-after-year, says Siegwarth, but it’s obvious the Big Spring Project has had some success. Farmers have reduced per-acre fertilizer rates significantly, and there’s no doubt it’s had a huge influence on farmers like Klinge.

“Whenever I do something on the farm, it’s because of the Big Spring basin,” says the farmer. He says he was particularly struck by research showing that applying nitrogen above 130 to 140 pounds per acre actually had little positive impact on yields of corn, which is a nitrogen-hungry plant.

During the past few decades Klinge and his wife Deb Tidwell have taken several steps to reduce harmful runoff, including diversifying their crop rotation and converting to a certified organic system. They recently dropped soybeans from their cropping sys-

tem because they felt they were too erosive in this hilly part of Iowa

Farmers who are utilizing sustainable crop and livestock systems in the area make it clear during the field day that they want to do their best to be good stewards of places like Big Spring, but that they face significant economic, policy and cultural challenges.

Klinge and Tidwell have partially overcome one economic challenge by finding local markets for soil-friendly grains like barley (a dairy farmer and a chicken producer in the neighborhood use it for feed).

“Having the market for small grains is not always the case for farmers,” Klinge admits.

Klinge is particularly aware of the challenges to stewardship farming posed by policy. As a former member of the Land Stewardship Project’s Federal Farm Policy Committee, he’s seen firsthand how federal ag initiatives promote monocrops while penalizing farmers for diversifying into pasture, hay and small grains.

“If you want the kind of changes that Gary was talking about today, you need to get involved in the policy arena,” he tells his fellow farmers.

Just as daunting to farmers looking to make water-friendly production techniques part of their operations is the cultural challenge: peers, family members, agricultural experts and others in the community ridiculing or dismissing outright any system that deviates from the norm. Siegwarth makes it clear that he’s aware such a barrier is no small thing.

“It definitely makes me feel good that these people are out there—they’re trying to do the right thing,” Siegwarth says of farmers like Klinge. “Now how do we connect them further and help them battle against the bigger machine?” □

*For more on the Big Spring Basin Demonstration Project, see [www.igsb.uiowa.edu](http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu).*

Opportunities
☰
Resources

**Pollinator fact sheet**

The Land Stewardship Project has developed a fact sheet on pollinator insects, the problems they face, and what can be done on the farm and around the home to help them. The “Pollinators in Peril” fact sheet is based on an article that appeared as part of the *Land Stewardship Letter*’s “Wildly Successful Farming” series (Summer 2009).

For a copy of the fact sheet (no. 20), see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-factsheets.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-factsheets.html). □



## Diet for a Hot Planet

*The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do about It*

By Anna Lappé  
Foreword by Bill McKibben  
2010; 336 pages  
Bloomsbury USA  
www.smallplanet.org

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Who better to write a foreword to Anna Lappé's book about climate change than Bill McKibben, who wrote the first book for the general public about climate change, *The End of Nature*, published in 1989. That book, and all of McKibben's books on climate change published since, say that humans must quit burning fossil fuels that emit greenhouse gasses and cause global warming.

"And, as Anna Lappé demonstrates here better than anyone ever has," McKibben writes, "that means fixing not just our cars and our power plants, but also our menus."

Every day we witness the impact of global climate change on agriculture as the increase in extreme weather events causes droughts and floods that reduce harvests throughout the world. But this book is about the impact of agriculture—or more broadly, the modern industrial food system—on global climate change.

"The global system producing and distributing food—from seed to landfill—likely accounts for thirty-one percent of the human-caused global warming effect," Lappé writes. Furthermore, a 2006 United Nations report attributed 18 percent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions to the livestock sector alone.

"Move over Hummer. Say hello to the hamburger," Lappé quips.

Though Anna Lappé invites readers to "jump in and around this book," the reader will benefit by starting at the beginning and reading the four sections—"Crisis," "Spin," "Hope" and "Action"—in their logical order.

In "Crisis," Lappé uses well-documented facts about food production and energy use to show us the dire straits we are in. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, agriculture comprises only 13.5 percent of all emissions in carbon dioxide equivalents. This includes use of fossil fuel in creating and applying synthetic fertilizer and other chemicals, most of it to produce

grain crops fed to livestock. In the U.S., 80 percent of soybeans and two-thirds of our corn goes to feed animals (mostly on factory farms), not people.

Methane emissions from the manure pits in CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) are soaring, according to data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Dairy cow manure emissions grew by half in the past 15 years, which explains the increased interest in anaerobic digesters of manure that capture methane for use as an energy source.

Methane digesters are promoted by the supporters of industrial dairying as a way to greenwash the massive greenhouse gas emissions of the whole corn-bean-feedlot-machine supporting mega dairies. One Wisconsin CAFO dairy near the St.

Croix River uses methane from a digester (considered a renewable fuel) to warm a greenhouse growing hydroponic lettuce that Twin Cities food co-ops are buying. Have the co-ops considered what the total carbon footprint of one head of that lettuce would be?

Lappé's main point is that food production is only the first step in the industrial food chain. Fossil fuel is also burned in processing, distributing, consumption and managing waste.

In the second section called "Spin," Lappé describes how food industries have reacted to climate change. She reports on the annual conference of the Food Marketing Institute and the American Meat Institute in spring 2008, where "the words global warming were never uttered," and the 2008 Cattle Industry Annual Convention where the evidence that the beef industry contributed to global warming was presented as hogwash. The beef industry's denial of any connection to global warming gasses is "supported" by evidence from the father and son team, Dennis and Alex Avery, professional obfuscators of truth. Their Center for Global Food and its parent Hudson Institute are heavily supported by contributions from companies, foundations and individuals connected to every aspect of the confinement beef production industry.

Lappé describes seven strategies compa-

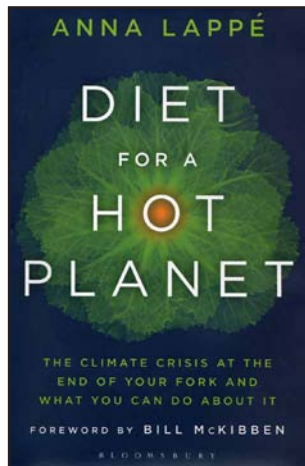
nies use in their playbook to spin themselves green. To me the most odious is using their connections with nonprofit organizations working for the public good as "fig leaves" to cover the essential unsustainability of their products. An example is Syngenta, the largest manufacturer of the weed killer atrazine, which has been linked to all kinds of negative biological effects. Syngenta publicizes its connections to Ducks Unlimited and the Wisconsin Fish Lake State Wildlife Area, which received donations of Touch-down Hi Tech herbicide worth \$21,000 (tax deductible) to control an invasive plant.

Lappé is a journalist, and she collected information for the book by interviewing people all over the world. The third section on "Hope" focuses on Mark Shepard's 106-acre New Forest Farm in Wisconsin's Kickapoo Valley. To Lappé, Shepard's operation exemplifies five ingredients of climate friendly farming: nature-mentored, restorative, regenerative, resilient and community empowered. This hilly, curvy farm was ill-suited to big grain fields and large machinery, but it provides optimum niches for a large number of perennial and annual crops in Shepard's organic permaculture system. Nut and fruit trees are mixed with berry bushes and asparagus, alternating with acorn squash and peppers and more in a very complex system that builds and conserves soil. Organic Valley Cooperative Produce Pool provides the cash flow that keeps the farm going by buying annual vegetables in any amounts for their new processing plant in nearby Cashton, Wis. Lappé recognizes that all climate friendly farms won't look like Shepard's, but must develop in harmony with "local climes and needs, with local cultures and tastes."

In her last section, "Action," Lappé advocates for individual readers seven principles of a climate friendly diet, cleverly phrased like Michael Pollan's *Food Rules*.

Influencing individual choice to create population level and corporate change is a process in which I have less and less faith. However, climate change is the greatest threat to a livable planet, and unless we reduce carbon in the atmosphere from the current 390+ parts per million (ppm) to at least 350 ppm, future generations will experience extreme physical deprivation and social and political discord. We must put a price on carbon to seriously lower emissions, and perhaps following Lappé's seven principles of a climate friendly diet will help us realize how to do this. □

Dana Jackson coordinates the St. Croix River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local chapter ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl)) out of LSP's Twin Cities office.



# Moral Ground

## Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril

Edited by Kathleen Dean Moore  
& Michael P. Nelson  
Foreword by Desmond Tutu  
2010; 504 pages  
Trinity University Press  
www.moralground.com

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

**M**oral ground: *Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* is a collection of writings addressing global climate change and other environmental issues by over 80 writers in the fields of theology, philosophy, natural resource management, politics and literature.

These voices from a wide range of political, religious and ethnic backgrounds came together in this collection to share their concerns about the deteriorating condition of the Earth's environment and the implications of one of the planet's leading challenges—global climate change and the impact it will have in areas such as agricultural production, air quality, fish, wildlife and water resources. Several of these authors are extremely concerned about the impact these changes will have on future generations. President Obama speaks directly to his concern for the well-being of his daughters, and poet Alison Hawthorne Deming writes

of her concern for her granddaughter who may not have many of the wonderful natural experiences that Deming has been able to enjoy.

This book not only discusses the problems of global climate change, it is also a call to action, especially to those of us in the “developed” world, who Archbishop Tutu points out have reaped many of the benefits of modern society while consigning the consequences to the world's poor.

Not only is this book a challenge to all of us to examine our lives and the impact of our lifestyle on the rest of creation, but it's a work that points out that change for a better future is possible. Each of us must look at our personal choices and their consequences, not only from our own perspective, but

from the perspective of the rest of creation. This book is a worthwhile read for anyone concerned about environmental issues from a political, literary, scientific or religious perspective. □

*LSP member and frequent volunteer Dale Hadler has a master's degree in religion and theology from the United Theological Seminary in the Twin Cities.*

## Love God, Heal Earth

### 21 Leading Religious Voices Speak Out on Our Sacred Duty to Protect the Environment

Edited by Sally G. Bingham  
Foreword by Desmond Tutu  
2009; 227 pages  
St. Lynn's Press  
www.theregenerationproject.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

**L**ove God, *Heal Earth* is a collection of 21 articles written by Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian-Universalist, Buddhist and Christian writers. Even though the book primarily focuses on global climate change, it addresses a number of environmental issues, including agricultural and food production problems.

The contributors hail from a variety of religious traditions, but they have two things in common: 1) they agree that creation care is a religiously significant issue for all believers; 2) they have been involved with Interfaith Power and Light, an organization begun in California by the Reverend Canon Sally Bingham, who edited this volume. This group is committed to educating people from a variety of faith backgrounds about the need to care about creation by creating both environmentally sustainable places of worship and community programs such as the sustainable food and lifestyle program initiated by the Chicago based Interfaith Environmental Ministry.

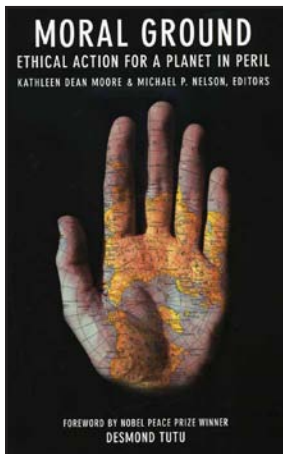
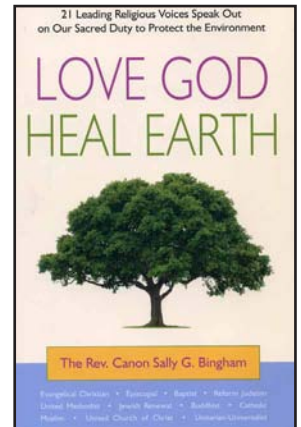
*Love God, Heal Earth* also contains accounts of personal struggles and revelations that many of the writers had to contend with, including the story of the Reverend Richard Cizek, the former vice-president of the National Association of Evangelicals, who struggled to bring creation care to the attention of his peers. Also described is the experience of Joel Hunter, the pastor of the Evangelical Northland Church in Florida, who had to deal with parishioners who were skeptical of global climate change and felt that Hunter had naively fallen for some sort of “liberal” media hoax. Rev. Hunter

describes how he addressed these detractors with respect while pursuing what he felt was the path God wanted him to travel.

Evangelical Christians were not the only contributors to have personal struggles with faith-based environmental care. Imam Achmat Salie of the Michigan based Muslim Unity Center describes his own struggle as an Eco-Muslim from his South African homeland to his adopted community in Michigan. This was a struggle that prompted him to re-frame his love of the natural world from the perspective of love of nature to understanding it as a Muslim mandate from God to care about creation.

This re-framing directed him to pursue higher education in areas that address environmental sustainability, a journey that he describes as his Jihad. This is a term, he explains, that has been misrepresented in the modern media as a violent war-like endeavor. It actually means a faith struggle, something he believes all environmentally conscious people of faith—Muslim or otherwise—need to engage in.

*Love God, Heal Earth* addresses faith based environmental concerns from a number of different perspectives, including practical issues such as worship space, seminary design and personal lifestyle. It's a worthwhile resource for anyone concerned about addressing environmental issues from a faith perspective. □



## Chickens book on display until Feb. 6

Former Land Stewardship Project membership assistant Anna King (*see page 8*) has created *Chickens in the City*, a collection of urban chicken lore and art.

The handmade book is on display at Minnesota Center for Book Arts ([www.mnbookarts.org](http://www.mnbookarts.org) or 612-215-2520) in Minneapolis until Feb. 6. Copies are also for sale at the Center.





LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

## Membership Update

### Eventful support for LSP's work

The Land Stewardship Project has benefited greatly in recent months from the generosity of numerous businesses that hosted special fundraising events for the organization:

◆ On Aug. 31, LSP member Alex Roberts hosted an LSP fundraiser at his Brasa Premium Rotisserie Restaurant in Saint Paul, Minn. Roberts, winner of the James Beard Foundation's 2010 award for Best Chef in the Midwest, prepared a three-course meal sourced from local farmers. Over 140 people participated in this event, which featured a later seating the same evening when the first meal sold out. Besides owning two Brasa restaurants in the Twin Cities, Roberts owns



**Alex Roberts**

Restaurant Alma in Minneapolis. He has long been committed to sourcing sustainable, locally-produced food.

◆ On Nov. 14, LSP board of directors member Kim Bartmann hosted the Farm Art Bowl at her Bryant Lake Bowl in Minneapolis. More than 150 people came to this event, which was a fundraiser for LSP's Farm Beginnings program. It featured live music, art, hors d'oeuvres and locally-produced art. Bartmann's three restaurants — Bryant-Lake Bowl, Café Barbette and Red Stag — have long sourced food from local producers.

◆ On the evening of Nov. 22, the Ten Thousand Villages store in Saint Paul donated 20 percent of all sales to support LSP's work.



Ten Thousand Villages, which has over 75 stores throughout the country, features Fair Trade items sourced from artisans from around the world.



LSP would like to thank these businesses for their support. If you'd like to host a fundraising event for LSP, contact Mike

McMahon at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

### LSP on Facebook

LSP has expanded its presence on the Internet by launching a Facebook page. Check it out for the latest on what we're up to, become a "Fan" and share the link with your friends and family.

### Get current with

**LIVE  WIRE**

Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* to get monthly e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. To subscribe, call Abigail Liesch at 612-722-6377 or e-mail [aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org), and put in the subject line, "Subscribe *LIVE-WIRE*." □

### Joining or renewing?

You can join LSP for the first time or renew your membership online at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), or by mailing the envelope included with this *Land Stewardship Letter*. If you have questions about the status of your LSP membership, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org). □

### Employer matching grants: Ask today

Many employers offer matching donation programs to their employees. These programs will often match donations made by employees to nonprofit organizations like the Land Stewardship Project. Ask your employer if they have such a program and if your LSP donation could be matched.

## Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 23 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place 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.



**MINNESOTA**  
*Environmental Fund*

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, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377, or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

# Continue your land's legacy by donating it to LSP

The Land Stewardship Project has launched an initiative that allows property owners to continue their family's legacy on the land while supporting the work of the organization as well as beginning farmers. This is a gifting opportunity for people who have a vital connection to a piece of land and want to maintain that legacy while supporting the work of LSP.

"When people have dedicated themselves to a given piece of land, their investment of stewardship transcends any given value," says former LSP board member Dan Guenther.

Through *Land & Stewardship Legacies*, LSP can accept gifts of farmland and other real estate. The *Stewardship Legacy* secures financial resources to support the work of LSP now and into the future. The *Land Legacy* is distinguished by accepting gifts of suitable parcels of farmland to serve as incubators for beginning farmers, or sold outright to promising graduates of LSP's

Farm Beginnings program. For details, check the *Land & Stewardship Legacies* web page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus-land-legacies.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus-land-legacies.html), or call LSP Executive Director George Boody at 612-722-6377.

LSP is partnering with the Minnesota Real Estate Foundation, which has excellent resources and guidelines for people who are interested in exploring various avenues for donating real estate to charities. The *Land*

*Stewardship Letter* is featuring a "Did you know..." series from the Real Estate Foundation that highlights ways of making charitable real estate gifting a satisfying, sustainable experience. Below is the latest installment in this series:

## Did you know...

Donors can contribute real estate to a charitable lead trust and benefit their favorite charity while saving estate and gift taxes. If you own high basis income producing real estate with good appreciation potential and are interested in ultimately transferring the value of that asset to your children or grandchildren at a significant discount, a lead trust may be the answer. The IRS discount rates haven't been this low in decades, resulting in significant opportunities to save gift and estate taxes.



## Display your LSP membership with pride

If you have a website and want to display your Land Stewardship Project affiliation, we have two "membership" versions (*right*) of our logo available: horizontal and vertical.

To request a copy, contact LSP's Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org). □



## In memory & in honor...

*The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received gifts made in the name of loved ones over the past few months.*

### In memory of Curtis Anderson

- ◆ Lee & Ione Loerch

### In memory of Deon Stuthman

- ◆ Judy Stuthman

### In memory of Rev. Loren Nelson

- ◆ Lee Korby
- ◆ Nancy Jackson

### In honor of the marriage of Jamie & Angela Schwesnedl:

- ◆ Corrie Bastian
- ◆ Joann Blohowiak
- ◆ Nicholas Colten
- ◆ Melvin Eisen (PawPaw and Grandma)
- ◆ Sheryl Faintich

- ◆ Rachel Gerber
- ◆ Megan Holm
- ◆ Jenifer Kaminsky
- ◆ Brooke Nunn
- ◆ Peter Montgomery
- ◆ George Schweser
- ◆ Gordon Schweser
- ◆ Scott Schweser
- ◆ Lee & Rachel Speck
- ◆ Keven Strawn
- ◆ Mary Nell McPherson
- ◆ Mollie & Rose Strawn

For details on donating to LSP in the name of a loved one, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

## LSP blog

The Land Stewardship Project writes weekly on food and sustainable agriculture issues for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's *Looncommons* blog.

To view the blog, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and click on the **Blog** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. You can sign up for an RSS feed at <http://looncommons.org/category/food-and-sustainable-agriculture/feed>. □

## Listen in on the voices of the land

For the past few years, the Land Stewardship Project's award-winning *Ear to the Ground* podcast has been showcasing the voices of the farmers, eaters, scientists and activists who are working to create a more sustainable food and farming system. We now have over 90 episodes online and have organized our podcasts by category.

The categories are: Ag and Food Policy  
 ◆ Beginning Farmers/Farm Beginnings  
 ◆ Culture and Agriculture ◆ Global Ag  
 ◆ Grassroots People Power ◆ Innovative Farming and Farmers  
 ◆ Innovative Marketing  
 ◆ Local Food Systems ◆ Multifunctional Farming  
 ◆ Stewardship Farming/Farming with the Wild.


To listen in, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), and click on the **Podcast** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. □



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## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **NOW-FEB. 6—Display of Chickens in the City**, Minneapolis (*see page 29*)  
→ **JAN. 13—Mob grazing workshop, featuring Terry Gompert**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 651-201-6012; [www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic)  
→ **JAN. 13—Workshop on native pollinator habitat on the farm, featuring Jennifer Hopwood & Jackie Hoch**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 651-201-6012; [www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic)  
→ **JAN. 14-15—211 Minnesota Organic Conf.**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: [www.mda.state.mn.us/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic); 651-201-6012  
→ **JAN. 20-21—Upper Midwest Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conf.**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 763-434-0400; [www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org)  
→ **JAN. 22—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on post harvest handling of vegetables**, Twin Cities, Minn. (*see page 16*)  
→ **JAN. 22—Annual meeting of Crow River Chapter SFA**, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 763-972-3295  
→ **JAN. 27-28—Midwest Value Added Conf. featuring Joel Salatin**, Madison, Wis.; Contact: [www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.html](http://www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.html); 715-579-5229  
→ **JAN. 29—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on options for making \$45,000 raising hogs**, Redwood Falls, Minn. (*see page 16*)  
→ **FEB.—5th Annual LSP Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol**, St. Paul, Minn. (*date TBD*); Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 507-523-3366; [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org)  
→ **FEB.-MARCH—St. Croix Valley Food Film Fest.**; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 612-722-6377; [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org)  
→ **FEB. 4-5—6th Immigrant & Minority**

**Farmers Conf.**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: [www.mnfoodassociation.org](http://www.mnfoodassociation.org); 651-433-3676; 651-222-0475  
→ **FEB. 4-5—Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conf.**, Fargo, N. Dak.; Contact: [www.npsas.org](http://www.npsas.org); 701-883-4304  
→ **FEB. 5—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on generating \$45,000 with grass-fed beef**, Glenwood, Minn. (*see page 16*)  
→ **FEB. 17—LSP performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** St. Charles, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **FEB. 17—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** Assisi Heights, Rochester, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **FEB. 17-18—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on Introduction to Holistic Mgt.**, St. Cloud, Minn. (*see page 16*)  
→ **FEB. 18—LSP Farm Beginnings “Farm Dreams” class**, in conjunction with SFA Conf. (*see below*), St. Joseph, Minn.; Contact: Amy Bacigalupo, LSP, [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org); 320-269-2105  
→ **FEB. 18-19—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conf.**, College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn.; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 320-226-6318  
→ **FEB. 20—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** Chatfield, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **FEB. 24-26—MOSES Organic Conf.**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org); 715-778-5775  
→ **FEB. 25—LSP performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse, Wis. (*see page 6*)  
→ **MARCH 1—Panel discussion on “To Join or Not to Join a CSA,”** Stillwater, Minn.; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP-BFBL, 612-722-6377; [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org)

→ **MARCH 3—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** 7 p.m., Lewiston, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **MARCH 7-8—LSP Farm Beginnings Holistic Mgt. Financial Planning Class**, St. Cloud, Minn. (*see page 16*)  
→ **MARCH 12—6th Annual Winona Local Foods Forum & Expo**, Winona, Minn.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366; [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org)  
→ **MARCH 12-13—CSA Fair at River Market Co-op**, Stillwater, Minn.; Contact: [www.rivermarket.coop](http://www.rivermarket.coop); 651-439-0366  
→ **MARCH 12-13—Beekeeping short course for first-time beekeepers**, U of M, St. Paul; Contact: [www.extension.umn.edu/honeybees](http://www.extension.umn.edu/honeybees); 612-624-6740  
→ **MARCH 19—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** 7:30 p.m., Plainview, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **SPRING—LSP’s Farm Beginnings public field days in Minn. & Wis. begin**; (*see pages 16-20 for more on Farm Beginnings*)  
→ **APRIL 2—Twin Cities Community Garden Resource Fair**, Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis; Contact: [www.gardeningmatters.org](http://www.gardeningmatters.org); 612-821-2358  
→ **APRIL 8—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** 7 p.m., Zumbrota, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **APRIL 10—Performance of “Look Who’s Knockin’ On Grandma’s Door,”** 2 p.m., Winona, Minn. (*see page 6*)  
→ **AUG. 1—Registration deadline for 2011-2012 session of LSP’s Farm Beginnings program**; (*see page 7*)  
→ **AUG. 13—6th Annual Minn. Garlic Festival**, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 320-543-3394

Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) for the latest on upcoming events.