

# *The Land Stewardship*

*Keeping the Land & People Together*

## *Letter*



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

Vol. 28, No. 1

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

Winter 2010



Farmer Greg Erickson stopped using atrazine to create a safer environment for future generations (*see pages 12-17*).

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—*Farm Workers & Sustainability*—

—*CSP's Rocky Road*—

—*Local Food for Local Retirees*—

—*Pizza & Low-Risk Farming*—

—*Mad Moms, Spiritual Guides, Table Rules*—



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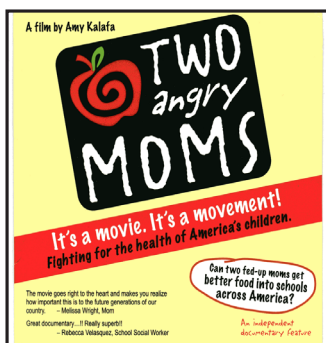
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## Commentary !?!?!?

# A view from the headwaters

**Editor's Note:** In November, the Land Stewardship Project co-sponsored a showing of the film *Big River* at the Riverview Theater in Minneapolis. *Big River* is Curt Ellis' follow-up to his Peabody-winning documentary, *King Corn*, which examined in an entertaining and personalized manner the various impacts of our corn-centered food/agricultural system. *Big River* goes one step beyond *King Corn* to investigate the environmental impact that corn has on the people and places downstream on waterways such as the Mississippi River. Before the showing, LSP member Loretta Jaus, who, along with her husband Martin farms within a couple dozen miles of the Minnesota River (which drains into the Mississippi), viewed a DVD of *Big River* and wrote down some of her reactions, which are featured here. For more information on *Big River*, see [www.bigriverfilm.com](http://www.bigriverfilm.com). You can read more about the Jaus farm on pages 16 and 26.

By Loretta Jaus

First, *Big River* challenges us to open our eyes and take a broad, hard look at agriculture—a view that from a farmer's perspective looks beyond the goal of bushels per acre. And from the eater's perspective, looks beyond price per pound or gallon. It begs us to consider the broad subject of health—as it relates to rural economics, the environment, human and animal health, and social, cultural, and political considerations. Without that perspective, we go on our merry way, “living with the illusion that there's nothing wrong” as the movie states.

For me, coming into farming pretty well grounded in the macro foundational principles of ecology, I was trained to think big-picture. I understood the concept of interdependence. However, I also had little or no farming experience. As I studied the farm periodicals and the practices on neighboring farms, the disconnect between what I saw there and what I knew about natural systems was troublesome. Could I really apply a pesticide that destroys an organism's neurological system and be assured it wouldn't affect my nervous system, or that of my children? And even if we were to be spared in that way, what about the fact that those so-called lower life forms are the very foundation for all higher life forms depending on them? How would the food chains/food webs be impacted?

That thinking is what led us into organic farming. Even so, I was still operating within the bubble of our farm boundaries. *Big River's* canoe trip down the Mississippi and the conversation with the Gulf fisher-



**Martin Jaus shows off the results of the kind of soil-building that improves water quality. (LSP photo)**

man reminded me of my epiphany that came one rainy day in June 2004.

There had been three inches of rain in a couple hours time. Martin charged into the house and says, “You gotta come see this!” He took me to the beginning of the drainage ditch a half-mile down the road. The heavy rain flowed across the neighboring row-cropped field and carried with it its load of topsoil. The water gushing out of the tile outlet was brown and frothy. We proceeded 200 yards farther along the ditch, and found the second tile outlet that drained the adjacent field, spewing its load into the already

brown water. There was the beginning of a river of thick chocolate-colored paste. The deterioration in water quality in just 200 yards was startling. I wondered just how many of these tiles were emptying into this ditch system between here and the Minnesota River, 25 miles away—how many more along the banks of the Minnesota as it flows into the Mississippi where how much more sediment with its load of fertilizers and toxic chemicals was pouring into the river? So in 200-yard increments of sickly brown slop, my mental canoe trip down the Big River had carried me away...all the way...to the DEAD ZONE!!!!

Marty and I then crossed the road to check the tile exiting our pasture. Perennial vegetation was holding the soil in place and soil organisms had built a living soil structure. That meant the pasture was slurping up the rainfall and holding it in place for the plants to use later. The crystal clear trickle of water leaving the pipe was reassurance that the choices made by one farmer, or by one consumer supporting a farmer, are indeed significant.

I don't worry so much anymore about being labeled as backwards, anti-progress, anti-technology. *Big River* teaches us to be cautious—to make sure that when we take one step forward, we aren't actually taking two steps back, or worse yet, stepping off the precipice to our demise. *Big River* shows how land use decisions can have negative impacts on not just the environment, but people as well. But I'm hopeful because messages like the one delivered by *Big River* show us another way.

Sometimes we plant the trees, restore a prairie, dig a waterhole for wildlife or work a little harder on the farm than we might have to. I don't know that we always understand why we do some of the things we do here. Building biodiversity and strengthening the natural systems on the farm have really for us become an act of faith. We've learned to do what we can, then step back and watch in amazement as the natural world returns the favor, reaching out to lift us up and sustain our family, our farm. □

## Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Loretta and Martin Jaus, (episode 25), see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11).

## Farmwork, farmworkers & sustainability

By Jack Hedin

Americans have a newfound interest in the origins of our food, the agricultural practices that produced it, and the sustainability of it all in an era of diminishing resources and climate change. We increasingly recognize that we vote daily with our food dollars; we can be values eaters whether or not we consider ourselves values voters on Election Day. More of us than ever demand organic foods, produced locally, even in a down economy. We want both to understand and to feel good about the food on our plates, and this gives me hope.

But any assessment of the true sustainability of our meal would be incomplete without consideration of the farmers that produce it, and their future as a species. Specifically, we need to come to terms with the fact that our modern system of agriculture has become as unsustainable as it is in large part through a decades' long process of substitution. Technology and fossil fuel dependent (i.e. labor saving) mechanization has replaced careful, hands-on human management (i.e. farmers) on the modern farm, in a series of shortcuts that inevitably leave the system less sustainable. And any hope of reversing this trend and restoring balance will require more farmers on the land—lots more. As a society, we need to add the idea of promoting and creating more farmers to the modern agenda of sustainability.

On my own farm—an organic truck farm of 100 acres in the Upper Midwest—I confront a lack of other vegetable farmers in our area and farmworkers to support them all the time. I consider this to be as great a threat to the sustainability of my way of life as water contamination, soil loss or any of the other environmental impacts of farming.

My great-grandfather was an early conservationist, a tree planter and an extraordinarily thoughtful farmer. There were huge environmental downsides to the kind of agriculture practiced on the prairie in his time, of course, but my grandfather saw many of them clearly and took great pains to address them on his farm. Moreover, his model is at least somewhat relevant in the modern era because it produced nearly all its own raw materials, fertility and energy (through windmills, no less!). But none of the children that he and my great grand-

mother raised on the farm stayed on the land to continue what their parents had started. The family farm labor cycle ended with his death in 1941, and with him died the accumulated knowledge of 70 years of careful observation and experimentation.

Fast forward 70 years, and America's farmers constitute scarcely 1 percent of the nation's population. Our food system is utterly dependent on petroleum and petrochemicals, and a vast population of undocumented Spanish-speaking fieldworkers and food processors who we scarcely recognize as members of society. Our nation is not producing new farmers quickly enough, but more importantly, it is not inspiring enough idealistic young farmers. My neighbors on conventional grain and dairy farms are thoughtful, practical folks. But they are too few, they are generally aging (the high price of land is a huge deterrent to young farmers) and they are too constrained by low commodity prices and the demands of off-farm jobs to risk rocking the boat with some new conservation practice that will most likely cost them time and money in the short term.

The national shortage of hired farm labor is similarly vexing. My great-grandfather's farm could not have survived without the threshing crews that moved about the countryside at the turn of the 19th century. Hiring neighbors as farmhands worked well for him most of the time, as it does for me now. But at certain times his farm required—as my farm does now—extra hands to help bring in the harvest. In the modern era, these farm hands are almost invariably from Mexico.

Like my Scandinavian ancestors in the 1850s, these folks arrived on the Midwestern prairie not speaking the language, but with a real working knowledge of a way of farming that is arguably more sustainable than what I

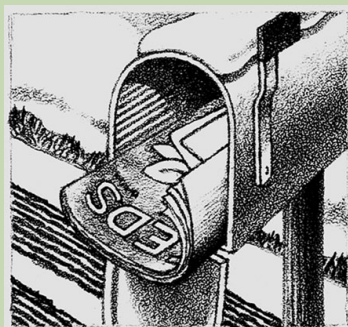
practice on my farm today. Their work ethic, their experience, their hands-on technique, their sheer determination—all of these qualities are an unbelievable inspiration to me and to other employees from the local area. The Mexicans are literally showing me how to work, even as we show them tools and technologies that can improve their farms in Mexico, where they return each winter. It's a symbiotic relationship, and it helps make our small farm successful. We could not survive as a business without either group of employees, English-speaking or Spanish-speaking. But there are simply not enough of either, and this shortage is a huge challenge for sustainable agriculture, now and in the future.

Certainly we have to think of feeding untold billions of people in the new millennium, as we consider alternatives in agriculture. In my experience, however, reducing the adverse environmental effects of what we farmers do—without sacrificing yields—almost always requires more labor, management or otherwise.

So no effort to advance a greener, more sustainable agriculture will succeed without many more people engaged in the movement. And until we as a society value and reward and encourage more young farmers to take up this vital work—and embrace farmworkers of all nationalities—we will generally rely on unsustainable shortcuts. □

*Land Stewardship Project member Jack Hedin owns and operates Featherstone Farm, an organic Community Supported Agriculture and wholesale vegetable operation near the southeast Minnesota community of Rushford. He also serves as a mentor for LSP's Farm Beginnings program.*

### What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

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## Plowing Through the Numbers

Every five years, the USDA releases its *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, a statistical compilation that provides a snapshot of trends in this country's food and farming system. The 2007 Census was released to the public in 2009, and Land Stewardship Project member Chris Vanecek has combed through the numbers for us. The *Land Stewardship Letter* is periodically featuring summaries of some of that combing. The 2007 Census is available at your local library, or by visiting [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

### Livestock: More mega-farms, but...

The growth of factory livestock farming has been especially evident in the pork and dairy sector in recent years, and the 2007 Census reflects that.

- ◆ In 2002 there were 1,256 farms nationwide with 1,000 or more milk cows; by 2007 that number had grown to 1,582.

Dairy operations of 50 to 99 cows and 100 to 199 cows are going in the opposite direction. The former category shrunk by 25 percent between 2002 and 2007; the latter by 17 percent. In Minnesota the percentage drops for these two categories were 14 percent and 30 percent respectively.

As far as hogs go, it was a bloodbath for moderate-sized farmers between 2002 and 2007. During that period nationally, the number of operations with 500 to 999 hogs dropped 47 percent to 2,382.

Meanwhile, hog operations with 5,000 or more animals grew from 957 in 2002 to 1,128 in 2007. (The Minnesota hog industry mirrors national trends of more hogs on fewer farms.)

Not every hog farm category followed the trend toward mega-farming: it turns out that in 2002 there were 38,210 farms with hog herd sizes of 24 animals or less. By 2007, the number of farms in that size range had grown by 15 percent. □

## Myth Buster Box

*An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them*

### → Myth: Genetically modified crops have reduced pesticide use.

#### → Fact:

When genetically modified crops came on the market almost 15 years ago, biotechnology giants like

Monsanto eased the public's concerns over " Frankenfoods " by promising that these products would reduce pesticide use and thus would be a boon to the environment. For example, soybeans genetically engineered to resist being killed by the Monsanto herbicide Roundup would only need to be sprayed once during the growing season, said biotech's boosters. Roundup is the commercial name for the weed killer glyphosate, which has a chemical formulation that is very volatile. That means it kills on contact and then dissipates into the atmosphere, making it less of a long-term threat to water quality. An herbicide like atrazine, on the other hand, can be used as a pre-emergent weed killer, meaning it can be applied before plants emerge. This provides long-term weed control but it also means such herbicides stay active in the environment longer, giving them more time to cause problems.

But genetic engineering's promise of fewer crop production chemicals isn't quite

working out. In an extensive analysis of USDA chemical use released in November, scientist Charles Benbrook found that genetically modified crops have increased pesticide use by 318 million pounds since 1996, compared to what would have probably been used in the absence of GMO varieties. Herbicide use on crops genetically engineered to resist weed killers rose over 31 percent from 2007 to 2008 alone.

That makes the overall chemical footprint of GMO crops "decidedly negative," concludes Benbrook. One main reason is that the overwhelming popularity of glyphosate has meant a whole lot of weeds are getting exposed to that chemical. And just as overuse of an antibiotic can spawn superbugs, exposing weeds to the same kind of chemical time-after-time is producing plants that can take a spraying and keep on playing.

As Benbrook points out, glyphosate-resistant weeds were practically unknown in this country before the introduction of Roundup Ready crops 13 years ago. Today at least nine such superweeds infest millions of acres of cropland in this country. This winter the farm press was full of reports of herbicide-resistant weeds emerging across the Midwestern and Southern U.S.

Defenders of biotech argue, somewhat

rightly, that more of glyphosate is better than less of some of the nastier herbicides that were used in the old days. Remember, glyphosate doesn't stick around long in the environment, making it less of a long-term threat. However, their argument is losing steam as more resistant weeds pop up. Farmers sometimes find they need to spray crop fields numerous times with glyphosate. And even if the weed killer is as benign as the agrichemical industry would have us believe, it's still a pesticide that kills living things, and putting more of it in the environment is not a good thing.

Perhaps even more troubling is the fact that chemical company agronomists are recommending that farmers deal with superweeds by going back to more of the nasty pre-emergent chemicals glyphosate was supposed to help them avoid in the first place.

#### → More information:

To read Charles Benbrook's report, "Impacts of Genetically Engineered Crops on Pesticide Use in the United States: The First Thirteen Years," see [www.organic-center.org/reportfiles/13Years20091126\\_ExSum-FrontMatter.pdf](http://www.organic-center.org/reportfiles/13Years20091126_ExSum-FrontMatter.pdf).



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# LSP News

## LSP named an *Edible Twin Cities* 'Local Food Hero'

The Land Stewardship Project has been voted a "Local Food Hero" for 2010 by the readers of *Edible Twin Cities* magazine. LSP won the honor in the "Best Non-Profit Organization" category.



*Edible Twin Cities* is a quarterly publication that promotes the abundance of local foods in the Twin Cities area and surrounding communities. It celebrates the farmers, chefs, food artisans, farmers' market vendors and other food-related businesses for their dedication to using the highest quality, seasonal, locally-grown products. It is available in Twin Cities area coffee shops, restaurants, co-ops and other retail outlets that support

local food.

Besides Best Non-Profit, the magazine's readers had four other categories to vote on for the 2010 Local Food Hero Awards: "Best Farm/Farmer," "Best Chef/Restaurant," "Best Food Artisan" and "Best Beverage



LSP Executive Director George Boody accepts the 2010 Local Food Hero award from *Edible Twin Cities* publisher Carol Banks. (photo courtesy of Edible Twin Cities)

Artisan." For more information on the Local Food Hero Award, see the Spring 2010 issue of *Edible Twin Cities*.

To subscribe to *Edible Twin Cities* and its electronic newsletter, see [www.edibletwincities.net](http://www.edibletwincities.net) or call 612-229-0498. □

## LSP's 2010 *Twin Cities CSA Directory* available

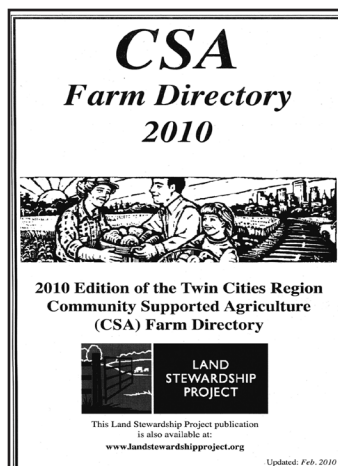
Twin Cities-area consumers who want to receive fresh, sustainably-produced vegetables on a weekly basis during the 2010 growing season can reserve a share in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm before the first salad greens emerge this spring. The Land Stewardship Project's *Twin Cities Region CSA Farm Directory* can help consumers find the farm that's right for them.

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). Subscriptions are often sold out by

early spring and vegetable lovers are encouraged to reserve their shares early.

The details of the share arrangements such as how much and what kind of produce is offered vary from farm-to-farm. The 2010 edition of the *CSA Farm Directory* provides detailed information on 54 farms that deliver to the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Most of the farms focus exclusively on fresh produce, although a few also offer meat shares.

For a free copy of the *Directory*, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html) or call 612-722-6377. Paper copies are available at the Land Stewardship Project's South Minneapolis office, 821 E. 35th St., Suite 200. □





# LSP calls for new review of atrazine to be unbiased

The Land Stewardship Project has joined family farm groups across the Midwest in calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prioritize independent science as the agency begins reviewing the health and environmental threats posed by the herbicide atrazine. In a letter sent to U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson on Jan. 5, over a dozen groups maintain that only a completely transparent process that rejects biased research produced by the herbicide's primary manufacturer, Syngenta, will result in a review that serves the interests of farmers, the general public and the environment.

"As farmers on the front line of chemical exposure we need EPA to make science-based decisions in the interest of our health, our family's health and the health of our community," says Paul Sobocinski, a southwest Minnesota crop and livestock farmer and an LSP organizer. "Unfortunately, EPA has a track record of allowing agrichemical companies like Syngenta to hijack the process with bad science."

The letter to Jackson was accompanied by a new report, *The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine: The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy*, jointly produced by LSP and Pesticide Action Network North America (PAN). The report provides farmers with information about the health risks of atrazine and documents Syngenta's attempts to suppress science that shows it to be harmful. It also features real-world examples of farmers who are raising corn without the herbicide.

Since it first went on the U.S. market over 50 years ago, atrazine has become one of the most widely used corn herbicides in the country. An estimated 76.4 million pounds of atrazine are applied in the U.S. each year, with 86 percent used on corn.

Over the years, atrazine has also become one of the most common pesticide contami-

nants in U.S. surface and groundwater. A monitoring program coordinated by the U.S. EPA in 10 states between 2003 and 2005 found that 94 of 136 public water systems tested had atrazine concentrations above levels that the U.S. government considers "safe."

The U.S. Geological Survey found atrazine present in streams in agricultural areas approximately 80 percent of the time, and in groundwater in agricultural areas around 40

into groundwater, making them particularly vulnerable to atrazine contamination.

"For those of us in farm country we have to have well water that is safe to drink," says southeast Minnesota dairy farmer and LSP member Bonnie Haugen. "As a farmer I have the expectation that the EPA's recommendations on pesticides will protect human and environmental health and be based on sound science, but there are indications that this may not be the case when it comes to atrazine. It is time to do a valid review so the EPA can regain our trust."

In October 2009, EPA announced a new scientific review of atrazine's safety; the agency will spend the next several months reviewing the health and environmental risks of the chemical. The results of that review will determine if use of the herbicide should be more tightly restricted in this country.

"This is a chance for EPA to get it right and to use science in the public's best interest," says Tyrone Hayes, a biologist at University of California-Berkeley who studies the impacts of atrazine on amphibians (see page 13). Concerns over atrazine's safety have led to it being banned in the European Union. In states like Wisconsin, its use has been banned in certain areas where water resources are vulnerable to contamination.

The Jan. 5 letter submitted to EPA asks that the current review of atrazine set a standard for decision-making in the interest of farmers and the public (see sidebar below).

"Syngenta has a track record of interfering with and undermining the scientific review process at EPA," says Kathryn Gilje, executive director of Pesticide Action Network North America. "This is simply wrong. It puts farmers and the public at risk, and we want to be sure it doesn't happen this time around." □

## More on report & letter

*The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine: The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy* is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/AtrazineReportJan2010.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/AtrazineReportJan2010.pdf). The farm groups' letter to U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/EPA\\_Letter\\_Syngenta\\_Atrazine\\_1-5-10.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/EPA_Letter_Syngenta_Atrazine_1-5-10.pdf)

See pages 12-17 for an excerpt of the LSP/PAN report.

For more information on LSP's atrazine work, contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org).

percent of the time. In states like Minnesota, Syngenta's atrazine is pervasive — from groundwater in agricultural communities to the pristine lakes of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Scientists report that atrazine is an endocrine disruptor, meaning it can interact with the hormone system and have negative health impacts at extremely low levels of exposure. Most farmers and other rural residents in the Midwest get their drinking water directly from private wells that tap

## The review process should be 100% transparent...

On Jan. 5, the Land Stewardship Project and Pesticide Action Network North America submitted a letter to the EPA asking that the current review of atrazine take the following actions:

- ◆ The process should be 100 percent transparent. There should be no closed-door meetings of any kind, especially with industry representatives, and summaries of all interactions between U.S. EPA and stakeholders on this topic should be included in the official record (i.e. the

docket) and made publicly available.

- ◆ Studies funded by Syngenta should be discounted in the review process. Studies the corporation has submitted in the past have been deeply flawed and have hampered good decision-making. Publicly-funded and peer-reviewed science should be given primary consideration.

- ◆ All scientific studies supporting the continued registration of atrazine should be made available for public scrutiny or removed from consideration. Syngenta and other atrazine registrants should not be permitted

to hide critical data from independent scientific examination by claiming "confidential business information." For the sake of transparency and to ensure farmer and farmworker confidence in its decisions, U.S. EPA should only rely on studies that are publicly available.

- ◆ If after review the science indicates atrazine is a threat to human health or the environment, U.S. EPA should take swift and clear action to protect farmers and the general public.



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# LSP News

## '10 Things' greenhouse workshop in SE MN

Winter greenhouse production was the focus of a Land Stewardship Project workshop held in December at Whitewater Gardens Farm near the southeast Minnesota community of Elba. Speakers included host family members Sandy and Lonny Dietz, as well as Chris Blanchard of Rock Spring Farm and Laurie Timm of Fairview Farm.

The Dietzes have grown vegetables, seedlings and herbs for farmers' markets in Winona and Rochester for 13 years on their ridge-top farm near Whitewater State Park. They are in the process of establishing a greenhouse to allow vegetable production year-round. The production and packing/storage sections will be heated and cooled with the use of a geothermal system and passive ventilation. Participants were able to tour the nearly-completed structures and learn about innovations such as a 32-degree storage room. The Dietzes grow vegetables on eight to 10 acres of their 136-acre farm. They operate two other high tunnel facilities for season extension and starter production.

The workshop was the second one to be organized by LSP to help address some of the "10 Things to Re-Think as You Build a Greenhouse and Grow." For a copy of



a fact sheet related to this topic, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/10\\_Things\\_To\\_Rethink\\_Greenhouse.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/10_Things_To_Rethink_Greenhouse.pdf) or contact LSP's Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).

The workshop was organized by LSP in cooperation with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota/SE, University of

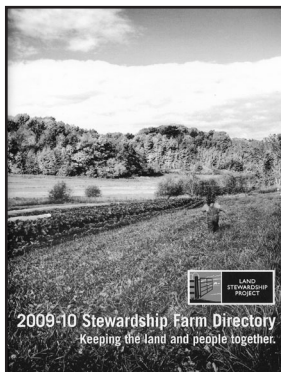
Minnesota Organic Ecology Program, U of M Extension, and the Local Foods Committee of the Winona County Economic Development Authority, with partial support from the Sow the Seeds Fund of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

## LSP's 2009-2010 Stewardship Farm Directory available

The 2009-2010 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's *Stewardship Farm Directory* is now available. It 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 so consumers can communicate with them directly to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

A pdf version of the directory can be downloaded from LSP's website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd). You can get a paper version from one of our offices, or by contacting LSP's Abigail Liesch



at 612-722-6377; [aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org).

This edition of the directory was produced with the financial support of Tracy Singleton of Birchwood Cafe and Karl Benson of Cooks of Crocus Hill.

### Do you want to be listed?

If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed in a future edition of the *Stewardship Farm Directory*, contact Abigail Liesch. ☐



## Bacigalupo new LSP FB Director

**Amy Bacigalupo** is the new Director of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program. For the past decade, Bacigalupo has worked as an organizer for the program, helping to develop curriculum, organize classes and field days, and coordinate outreach to new groups of beginning farmers.

Bacigalupo is succeeding **Karen Stettler**, who has directed LSP's Farm Beginnings program almost since it was launched a dozen years ago. Under Stettler's direction, Farm Beginnings has graduated over 350 beginning farmers in Minnesota and become a national model for beginning farmer-training initiatives. She also helped coordinate the licensing of Farm Beginnings courses in half-a-dozen states.

Stettler is currently taking on the role of coordinating the "Community Engagement and Impact Initiative." This new LSP initiative is aimed at increasing community engagement in achieving the goals and societal impacts of the Farm Beginnings program in the Upper Midwest. The initial focus of this work will be on land access.

Bacigalupo is based out of LSP's office in Montevideo, Minn., and can be contacted at [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org) or 320-269-2105. Stettler is based in LSP's office in Lewiston, Minn., and can be contacted at 507-523-3366 or [stettler@landstewardship-project.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardship-project.org). □



**Amy Bacigalupo**



**Karen Stettler**

## Friauf FB intern

**Matthew Friauf** is serving an internship with the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program. He is doing his LSP internship as part of his final project for a

## John Mesko new SFA head

John Mesko is the new executive director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Mesko raises and direct-markets grass-fed, organic beef, lamb, pork, chicken and poultry on his family's farm near Princeton, in east-central Minnesota. He was a Purdue University Extension educator and county director in Indiana before returning to his home state of Minnesota in 2006. Mesko has several years of experience in local food systems development, including working with farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture and direct marketing. Mesko also has a background in small farmer and beginning farmer education and support.

He succeeds Mary Jo Forbord, who served as the organization's executive director for six years. Forbord, who farms in western Minnesota's Pope County, stepped down earlier this year to spend more time with her family and to work more with local food systems in her community.

Mesko can be reached at 763-389-2316 or [john@sfa-mn.org](mailto:john@sfa-mn.org).

The Land Stewardship Project helped launch the Sustainable Farming Association in 1989. More information on the Sustainable Farming Association is at [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org).



**John Mesko**

master's degree from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Colorno, Italy. Friauf has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and spent a summer at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Friauf has worked in food service and for the University of Wisconsin Press. During his LSP internship, he is surveying farmers in Farm Beginnings regions about access to land and other issues. □



**Matthew Friauf**

tation project in Costa Rica. She is currently working as a videographer for the U of M's Office of Media Relations.

During her internship, Van Pelt is working on both state and federal policy. She is based in LSP's Twin Cities office. □



**Emma Van Pelt**

## Van Pelt serving LSP internship

**Emma Van Pelt** is serving an internship with the Land Stewardship Project's Policy and Organizing Program. She is studying political science at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and was recently awarded the A.I. Johnson Scholarship in Political Science so that she could complete a fulltime internship in policy.

Van Pelt has worked on Earthrise Farm in Madison, Minn., and Blue Heron Farm in Lincoln, Mass. She has also worked as a local foods research and policy intern for a Massachusetts state representative and on a refore-

## 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*." □

## 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. □

## The revamped CSP's test-drive: A few potholes along the way

By Adam Warthesen

The initial sign-up for the revamped Conservation Stewardship Project (CSP) was held in 2009 from Aug. 10 to Sept. 30. CSP was created by the 2002 Farm Bill and strengthened in the 2008 Farm Bill through additional funding and a process that makes all farmers eligible every year. The program's aim, which the Land Stewardship Project supports, is to create a new approach to agricultural policy: instead of punishing farmers for raising anything that is not a commodity crop like corn and soybeans, CSP would reward farmers for utilizing diverse, conservation-friendly systems.

While final results are still being compiled, preliminary findings are that Minnesota was well represented in the 2009 CSP sign-up. According to the Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), more than 1,200 farmers completed the sign-up process, and around 730 were expected to be offered five-year contracts. Minnesota will end up enrolling over 400,000 acres, which is actually more than the state was originally allocated. The state qualified for almost 90,000 additional acres because of strong interest in CSP.

Now, compare those numbers to CSP sign-ups from 2004 to 2008: during that period Minnesota had a total of just over 700 contracts covering nearly 208,000 acres. So in 2009 alone we almost doubled the amount of Minnesota land covered by CSP contracts in the previous five years combined.

How did the 2009 sign-up go where it really counts: on the farm level? We're hearing widely varying accounts from farmers and below are two examples, one member who received a contract and one member who did not.

### A base to start with

When talking about his experience signing-up for the new CSP, southeast Minnesota dairy farmer Bill Gorman takes a "making progress but could-be-better" attitude.

"It was a bit of a learning experience both on my end and as far as the local NRCS office because of the newness of it," says Gorman, adding that he started the paperwork necessary to sign-up for the program early last fall, wrapped it up in December and

signed the actual contract in mid-January. "It dragged out a bit, but it wasn't too bad."

It should be noted that although the first CSP sign-up was in 2004, it was limited to a handful of watersheds across the country, and 2009 marked the first time the program was available in Gorman's region.

In Bill Gorman's case, the 2009 sign-up started with his pulling together records of what types of conservation farming practices he already had implemented on his farm. He then outlined in detail what enhancements he is willing to put in place during a specified timeline. A local NRCS staffer came out to the farm last fall to verify what type of farming systems Gorman has in place—then maps designating various land uses were drawn-up.



**Bill Gorman on CSP: "It's not perfect, but it's important just to have a program like this set up, providing a base for building a better ag policy model." (LSP photo)**

Gorman utilizes managed rotational grazing on his 160-acre certified organic dairy farm in Goodhue County. He also raises hay and cover crops such as oats. Gorman received a relatively high CSP score for the existing conservation he has in place on his farm. He then increased that score by agreeing to a few new activities or enhancements: such as recycling all his oil and lubricants, moving his cattle feeders on a regular basis

to protect vegetation and soil, and utilizing a flushing system on his hay mower to protect wildlife. NRCS staff will visit the farm periodically to document if these enhancements have been implemented.

"I didn't go overboard on the enhancements just because we already had a lot of other things going on," says Gorman. "None of these will be too hard to do."

In the end, Gorman will receive \$3,100 to \$3,200 a year in CSP payments. The farmer concedes that may not seem like a lot of money, but it's better than pre-CSP, when his pasture and hay ground qualified for no commodity payments.

"Is it worth checking out? Yeah, we'll take it. At least we got on the plus side of zero," he says. "It's not perfect, but it's important just to have a program like this set up, providing a base for building a better ag policy model."

### Conservation farm left out

In some respects, the way the 2009 CSP sign-up was executed is a head-scratcher. Some farms that by any measure are con-

sidered highly stewardship-minded were inexplicably not offered contracts.

John and Marge Warthesen operate a diverse crop, vegetable and livestock operation in southeast Minnesota's Wabasha County. They farm around 300 acres of owned and rented land and have been lauded by environmental experts for their conserva-

**CSP, see page 11...**



tion measures (see the Winter 2009 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 25).

The Warthesens put in place contour strips more than 30 years ago with the help of Wabasha County's Soil and Water Conservation District office, and have kept more marginal ground in pasture. Through other NRCS programs the Warthesens have established wildlife habitat, constructed ponds to control erosion and developed a nutrient management plan, as well as implemented managed grazing systems on the farm.

In short, it would appear to be just the type of farm CSP was created for: one that takes extra efforts to implement practices which protect and improve water and soil quality, as well as wildlife habitat. However, the Warthesens were not successful in the 2009 CSP contract application process.

"We had been waiting for CSP for a number of years, thinking this program would be a good fit for us," says John, who uses a seven-year crop rotation for most of the farm, which includes corn, soybeans, small grains and alfalfa or hay. "We were pretty surprised to find out we were not being offered a contract because our score was too low. After all the conservation we've done on this farm, I'm pretty frustrated."

In the case of Gorman and the Warthesens, as it is for all applicants, whether you are offered a CSP contract or not is based on a score. That score is calculated by points that are accrued by quantifying existing conservation measures on the farm, and then new activities or "enhancements" to be implemented by a farmer throughout the life of a contract.

"I really lost points on my rented pasture land. The other struggle we had was trying to find enhancement practices that made sense on the farm," says Warthesen. "I'm still interested in the program and hopeful we can get in next time around, but having a diverse operation presents challenges to utilizing farm programs."

### Working to improve CSP

CSP received a huge boost in acres during 2009, but as far as LSP and our allies are concerned, significant problems still exist with how individual contracts are being implemented. As the examples cited in this article show, there are questions as to how ongoing conservation is accounted for compared to new activities or enhancements. The scoring and payment balance is 40 percent for existing measures and 60 percent for new activities. This ratio needs to be at least 50/50 or even flipped to give

## We'd like to hear from you on CSP

If you went through the 2009 CSP sign-up process, let us know what your experience was—whether you received a contract or not. Farmer feedback is the best way to assess and work to improve this program. Contact LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).

existing practices greater priority. Discounting what farmers have maintained for years undermines the main goals of CSP and jeopardizes opportunities for securing ongoing conservation already in place.

The next CSP sign-up is expected to be later in 2010; watch for updates via the *LIVE-WIRE* and LSP's website. If you have questions or ideas, contact us as we continue to engage in making CSP more practical, useful and fair for family farmers and sustainable agriculture. □

*Adam Warthesen is an LSP organizer working on federal policy issues. More on CSP is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_csp.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html).*

## Beginning farmer program: LSP & allies work on improvement

The Land Stewardship Project and allies are continuing to work to make the precedent-setting Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) live up to its promise. We have been meeting with high-level USDA officials as well as participating in an in-depth analysis of the program's implementation so far.

As was reported in the Autumn 2009 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (pages 6-7), in November LSP hosted the national announcement of the new beginning farmer initiative's first round of grants. BFRDP is aimed at providing \$75 million over the next four years in dedicated funding to organizations and other entities assisting with new farmers.

Following the announcement of the first year of \$17 million in grants, LSP and allies conducted a deeper analysis of the program's outcomes. After interviews with 25 of the 29 awardees, as well as reviewing data on each project, a clearer picture and apparent bias became evident. The big recipients of BFRDP in terms of number of grants, the total share of funding and largest awarded projects were universities and a handful of other academic or institutional players. All

told, projects led by community-based groups like LSP received only around 30 percent of the dollars awarded.

When BFRDP was created, Congress wrote into the law that the priority shall be given to projects led by or that include partnerships or collaborations with community-based or non-governmental organizations. There is a great deal of concern from leaders in beginning farmer education and training around the country that this priority was not met or exercised by USDA.

"Some great projects received support in 2009," says Brett Melone, director of the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), a California-based sustainable agriculture organization. "In fact, ALBA received crucial support for our beginning farmer education and incubation programs, with a particular focus on serving immigrant farm workers. However, we will continue to work with USDA to ensure that more community-based organization-led projects get funded in future award rounds."

On Jan. 22, ALBA hosted Deputy USDA Secretary Kathleen Merrigan at its Rural Development Center headquarters, where the group's beginning farmer education and in-

cubation programs take place. Deputy Secretary Merrigan shared what she believes is the great promise that BFRDP holds for supporting aspiring and beginning farmers, as well as the organizations that serve them.

Also in January, LSP and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition met with the USDA's Molly Jahn, acting Under Secretary of Research, Education and Economics. The group presented Jahn with its analysis of the 2009 grant awards, and discussed improvements to BFRDP that should be implemented before the next round of grants.

The focal point of the meeting was around orientating the program so it meets the intent of Congress and truly rewards community-based approaches to helping new farmers get started and succeed.

The deadline for the next round of BFRDP applications is April 6. For more information, see [www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm) or contact LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).

For more information on LSP's efforts to improve the program, contact Warthesen.

# Holding a herbicide's manufacturer accountable

## Report documents attempts to suppress research, putting farmers at risk

By Bobby King

On Jan 5, a special report, *The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine: The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy*, was issued by the Land Stewardship Project and Pesticide Action Network North America (PAN). The report provides farmers with information about the health risks of atrazine, and documents Syngenta's attempts to suppress science that shows it to be harmful. It also features real-world examples of farmers who are raising corn without the herbicide. The report was made public the same day a letter was submitted to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson calling on the agency to conduct a transparent analysis of atrazine's safety that rejects biased research produced by the herbicide's primary manufacturer, Syngenta (see page 6).

The LSP/PAN report describes how, despite evidence of serious health and ecosystem problems associated with atrazine, the U.S. government has taken minimal action to protect the welfare of the American people, and how Syngenta has undermined independent science and the democratic process to keep the pesticide on the market. This report shares concerns from farmers, farmworkers and scientists, and also tells the stories of farmers who have found that atrazine is not, as its defenders claim, an irreplaceable crop protection tool.

LSP believes that the Syngenta corporation, through its aggressive marketing and lobbying, should be held primarily responsible for atrazine's widespread use in the U.S., and for its prevalence in our water. It is important to keep in mind that Syngenta—not farmers—benefits most from atrazine.

Many LSP farmer-members use pesticides, including atrazine, as part of their farming operations. If chemicals are used, stewardship of the land demands that they be used judiciously and that only appropriate and safe chemicals be used. However, a persuasive, growing body of science indicates that atrazine may not be safe to use because of its prevalence in the water and its potential negative impacts on human health

and the environment. This report is in part written to help farmers make more informed decisions about atrazine.

LSP became involved in the atrazine issue in 2007 when Paul Wotzka, a hydrologist employed by the state of Minnesota,

the issue to our members and the response from both farmers and non-farmers was supportive of LSP's continuing to research and organize around this topic. One thing made clear by our survey is that farmers want more information about atrazine, the Syngenta corporation and other alternatives to using this herbicide.

LSP wanted to partner on this work with an organization familiar with the science of pesticides, and one that understands the role of large agribusiness in promoting and profiting from pesticides. PAN is interested in working with—not blaming—family farmers. PAN knows that the increase of industrial, large-scale farming has led to a handful of giant corporations reaping large profits while farmers often struggle to make ends meet—and the health of farm families, farmworkers and ecosystems suffer. Since the mass introduction of pesticides into agriculture 70 years ago, control over the knowledge and tools needed to grow food has been shifting from farmers to the laboratories and marketing divisions of multinational corporations. PAN wants to see farmers around the world regain control of food production.

The following five pages feature excerpts from the report that describe Hayes' research and some of the methods farmers are using to produce corn without atrazine. □

### The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine

#### The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy



A report by the Land Stewardship Project  
and Pesticide Action Network North America  
January 2010

• • •  
***"It is important to keep in mind  
that Syngenta—not farmers—  
benefits most from atrazine."***  
• • •

was fired after a state legislator requested he testify about his research into the high levels of atrazine present in southeast Minnesota waterways. Wotzka is a long-time LSP member and a strong advocate for stewardship of the land. As a result of his sudden dismissal, he filed a federal whistle-

blower lawsuit and LSP helped organize a fundraiser for his legal defense on October 10, 2007. During a presentation at the event, well-respected biologist Tyrone Hayes detailed his research into how very low levels of atrazine-emasculated frogs, and how the Syngenta corporation tried to suppress this information.

Over 200 people attended this event, and the feedback from many LSP members was very positive. Later, LSP mailed a survey on

Bobby King is an LSP Policy Program organizer specializing in state and local issues. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org).

## To read the full report

*The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine: The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy* is available at [www.landstewardship-project.org/pdf/AtrazineReportJan2010.pdf](http://www.landstewardship-project.org/pdf/AtrazineReportJan2010.pdf). Paper copies of the report are also available in LSP's offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) and South Minneapolis (612-722-6377).



## Tyrone Hayes: This time, science has a chance to take precedence

Tyrone Hayes, a biologist from the University of California who has studied atrazine for years, came to Minneapolis on October 10, 2007, to take part in a legal defense fundraiser for fellow scientist Paul Wotzka's federal whistleblower lawsuit (see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/atrazine\\_whistleblower.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/atrazine_whistleblower.pdf)).

Like Wotzka, Hayes has withstood efforts to suppress his science. In 1998, Dr. Hayes was retained by a company called EcoRisk on behalf of the Syngenta corporation to do research into the effects of atrazine on amphibians. His research found

that extremely low doses of atrazine—30 times lower than federal drinking water standards for the chemical—caused feminization of male frogs. Syngenta, however, blocked Hayes from publishing the data, reminding him that under his contract these findings were confidential. Frustrated at Syngenta's attempts to bury his science, Hayes ended his relationship with EcoRisk, reproduced the studies on his own and published the results in the scientific literature. EcoRisk then attempted to discredit Hayes' science by producing its own studies that supposedly contradicted his findings.

Hayes' work has been highlighted by *National Geographic* magazine and he has published more than 40 papers in many prestigious scientific journals, including *Nature* and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

In a recent interview, Tyrone Hayes talked to the *Land Stewardship Letter* about his current research on atrazine, his reaction to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's announcement in October 2009 that it was opening a new review of the herbicide, and Syngenta's attacks on his scientific credibility.

**LSL:** What are you researching now?

**Hayes:** In the past two years we have been able to look at the long-term reproductive effects of atrazine. A high profile journal is about to publish our research showing that male frogs are permanently chemically castrated. In about 10 percent of the cases, they actually become females. In a follow-up study we showed that male frogs exposed to atrazine actually show a preference to mate with other males. We have confirmed that atrazine reduces testosterone in male frogs.

These are both field and lab studies that this research is based on, and they involve the same low levels of atrazine that showed negative impacts before.

Some of our research on atrazine levels and reproductive abnormalities uses U.S. Geological Survey water samples from across the country. It covers samples from the Mississippi, Missouri and North Platte rivers, for example. States like Minnesota, New York, Iowa, Montana, Wyoming and Utah are covered in this sampling, so it's pretty extensive.

In addition, I have a student that's looking at the effect atrazine has on breast cancer rates. The student is taking actual human cells and tissues and studying them.

**LSL:** Are you focusing only on atrazine?

**Hayes:** Actually, we're trying to look at not just the effects of pesticides like atrazine on amphibians, but also look at it in context of other pesticides the frogs are being exposed to, as well as other environmental factors such as the infections and parasites that amphibians are vulnerable to. Research is being done on how other factors such as pesticides may weaken amphibians to the point where they are more vulnerable to parasites. We want to know what role pesticides such as atrazine play in the array of factors that affect the health of amphibians.

**LSL:** What do you think of the Envi-

ronmental Protection Agency's October announcement that it is opening up atrazine for review again?

**Hayes:** I feel that now we have a more scientifically objective system there at EPA, and it's just more indicative of what they should have been doing all along. In terms of the science, I don't know how they cannot do a review. There's more and more evidence that's showing that this is a compound that is damaging biological systems. One study released earlier this year shows a connection between when a baby is conceived, birth defect rates and the time of year when atrazine and nitrates are at their highest level in surface water.

### Give it a listen

To listen to the talk Tyrone Hayes gave during a 2007 Land Stewardship Project fundraising event for fired atrazine researcher Paul Wotzka, see LSP's podcast web page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3) (episode 42).

It's also becoming harder for the government to ignore because of all the media attention atrazine is getting. If they do a review and don't utilize the good science out there, it's going to be very hard for them to justify that. It's just getting too much attention right now. We have a better chance now than we ever had of having the science take precedence and leading to some real regulation of atrazine.

**LSL:** Are you concerned that the replacement herbicides for atrazine may be just as bad or worse for the environment and human health?

**Hayes:** Yes. I think the best thing about atrazine is that we actually have a lot of information. The information isn't good

news for atrazine, but there's a lot of it. For a lot of these compounds, we know very little about their environmental impacts. It cautions us to study the effects of such compounds before they go on the market.

**LSL:** How do you answer critics who say that when you call for the banning of atrazine, you are attacking farmers and threatening their livelihood?

**Hayes:** I think what's happened is the polluters are good at raising the emotions of their customers so that farmers go out and say, "You are attacking us. You are threatening our livelihood." Those people who are exposed the most are the ones who are out on the farms. There are a number of farmers who are on the wrong side of the debate because industry put them there. There are farmers out there raising corn without atrazine. They sure are doing it in Europe.

**LSL:** Is the industry fighting so hard to keep atrazine from being regulated because it has been such a keystone herbicide for so long, and banning it would raise a lot of questions about other herbicides out there?

**Hayes:** I've always said it's the poster child for our different philosophy about regulation. It's getting harder and harder to ignore the evidence that it's a problem because we know so much about atrazine. We don't know as much about a lot of other pesticides out there, and this controversy over atrazine should draw attention to these other compounds.

**LSL:** What is the status of your academic freedom? Is Syngenta still attacking your credibility?

**Hayes:** Yes, that's not going to stop. They still write letters to my dean. I don't expect that to stop. As long as we continue to do science, they are going to keep attacking that science. □

# Life beyond atrazine

## *It's not an irreplaceable corn production tool*

Since it came onto the market half-century ago, atrazine has become one of the most widely used corn herbicides in North America. Its relatively low cost and ability to kill broadleaf weeds and grasses without harming corn plants have made it popular with Midwestern farmers for decades.

Atrazine's creator and main producer, Syngenta, claims there are no viable alternatives to their best-selling herbicide and has estimated that the chemical provides farmers an economic advantage of \$35 per acre. Various studies have estimated that banning atrazine nationwide would result in as much as a 6 percent yield loss for corn farmers.

But in fact there are many viable ways to produce corn without relying on the controversial chemical. That has been proven in European countries such as Germany and Italy, which both banned atrazine in 1991 (a European Union ban went into effect in 2005 and a handful of extensions for limited use expired in 2007). Since the ban, corn yields and acres of corn harvested in Germany and Italy have risen, not dropped, an indication that atrazine use was not as integral to crop production as its manufacturer would like the public to believe.

According to recent analyses, the experience in Europe and the introduction of alternative herbicides during the past few years shows that dropping atrazine would result in yield losses of more like 0 to 1 percent.

For the report *The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine: The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy* LSP member-farmers were featured who are producing corn without the herbicide atrazine. Their reasons for not using the herbicide vary, but they all agree on one thing: it is not the irreplaceable production tool its manufacturer makes it out to be. Here are excerpts of those farmer profiles.

### **Paul Sobocinski:** **A southwestern Minnesota farmer learns about the dangers of atrazine & decides not to use it**

Southwest Minnesota farmer Paul Sobocinski started using atrazine in 1987, and from the beginning liked its ability to control grass and broadleaf weeds for a relatively low cost. In particular, Sobocinski liked the chemical's residual quality — it could be applied after the corn was planted and would hang around in the soil long enough to kill weeds well into the growing season.

"It was fairly effective," recalls Sobocinski.

Then one day before the 2007 growing season, Sobocinski was in Saint Paul, sitting in on a legislative hearing. There he heard biologist Tyrone Hayes talk about his research, which showed that low levels of atrazine caused major health problems in frogs (see page 13). Sobocinski, who is an organizer for the Land Stewardship Project, was also aware of efforts within the state government to keep hydrologist Paul Wotzka from testifying at the capitol about his atrazine research. Wotzka was eventually fired.

"Tyrone's research got me to thinking about how farmers like me are being put on the front line when

it comes to the health risks of a chemical like atrazine," says Sobocinski. "It made it clearer than ever to me that farmers needed more information on the chemicals they were handling, and here the state fires a researcher who was trying to provide that information. It was like a cover-up."

So that spring Sobocinski directed the co-op that custom applies his chemicals to take atrazine out of the tank mix. Unfortunately, the farmer learned later that year that in fact atrazine had been included in his tank mix. This is a common problem in the Corn Belt. Because of the complications and risks associated with applying chemicals, a growing



Paul Sobocinski (LSP photo)

### **The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine** **The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy**



A report by the Land Stewardship Project  
and Pesticide Action Network North America  
January 2010

number of farmers are hiring professional applicators to do their spraying. The trouble is, having a custom applicator do the job makes it harder to control what is included in the spray tank once it makes it to the field.

"There was not an intention on the part of the co-op manager to deceive me," says Sobocinski, adding that he has since made sure there is no atrazine in his yearly tank mix. "I learned you need to communicate with the applicator and get the message across."

Making sure farmers have as much information as possible on what chemicals they are using, as well as the effects of those chemicals, is important to Sobocinski.

"We're the closest to this and so are the most susceptible to any negative effects. But unfortunately we don't have very good answers about the effects of atrazine or the other chemicals we might use to replace it," he says. "There's not a question in my mind there needs to be more research."

The farmer says there not only needs to be more research on the impacts of chemicals like atrazine, but also alternative weed control methods. Diverse rotations and mechanical weed control — both methods Sobocinski uses — can help control plant pests with little or no herbicides. But when the soil is heavy and holds moisture during spring planting, as Sobocinski's does, it can be difficult to control weeds without chemical help.

"Are there alternatives to chemicals? You just can't go cold turkey overnight," he says.

Unfortunately, just as the risks of herbicides are coming to light and farmers like Sobocinski are seeking alternatives, budgets for state and federal programs that would help crop producers research and adopt alternative cropping methods are being cut. For example, during the 2009 session of the Minnesota Legislature, budgets for

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two key sustainable and organic agriculture programs at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture were cut up to 90 percent.

"How ironic that these cuts come at a time when we farmers need this information the most," says Sobocinski.

### **Greg Erickson: A southeastern Minnesota farmer finds atrazine in his well & takes action**

Several years ago, Greg and Jeanne Erickson had their well on their southeast Minnesota dairy and crop farm tested for contaminants. The results weren't good: the nitrate readings were quite high and there were trace amounts of pesticides such as atrazine in the water. Greg, who at the time used atrazine to raise corn on the farm, eventually decided to spend \$23,000 to drill a 550-foot well—200 feet deeper than the existing borehole.

Tapping into a deeper aquifer put the family's mind at ease—somewhat.

"Problem solved. I drilled a new well and now I can keep using chemicals," recalls Greg on a recent fall morning while taking a break from chopping corn. "But problem not solved—because my neighbor across the road has a 280-foot well and he's still drinking my chemicals. I decided it wasn't acceptable."

So in 2000 the Erickson family started weaning their farm off of chemicals entirely. This was no easy task: Greg bought the farm from his father in 1978 and for several years relied on intensive conventional methods.

"Churn it and burn it is what I did," Greg admits.

But over time the Ericksons got the sense that conventional crop production methods were not sustainable in their part of Minnesota, with its highly erodible, rolling landscape above-ground, and porous contaminant-prone geological formations (called karst) below. In fact, soon after Greg started farming the land, a four-inch rain fell on a hillside of row crops he had planted. There were no strips of alfalfa hay or other deep-rooted plants on the land to soak up and slow the water flow. As a result, a horrific amount of the Ericksons' topsoil ended up in a neighbor's pond.

"There may have been 30 tons of soil that went into that pond," recalls Greg. "In the first year I lost more soil than dad had lost in 25 years. I had gullies in my fields. My first reaction was, 'Boy, that was a bad rain. It wasn't my fault.' But then this awareness dawned on me of, 'Who are you

to squander this resource?'"

Since that catastrophic event, the Ericksons have been mindful of ways to improve their soil's quality while keeping it in place. They were original members of LSP's Stewardship Farming Program back in the 1980s. This initiative brought together stewardship-minded farm families to learn innovative conservation techniques from each other.

The family eventually brought dairy cows back to the farm. Having the bovines on the operation means they have an economic justification for raising cattle forages



**Greg Erickson, with his granddaughter  
Gracie (LSP photo)**

such as alfalfa and grass—perennials that build soil while naturally breaking up pest cycles. Their complete conversion of the land and the dairy herd to certified organic was just the latest decision that fit with the family's desire to be sustainable economically and environmentally.

"I went organic for two reasons: economics and it's the right thing to do," Greg says.

Today Greg farms with one of his four grown children. They milk 110 cows and farm 450 acres of owned and rented ground. The Ericksons' chemical-free production system relies heavily on good rotations to build the soil and naturally break up weed cycles. A typical rotation may consist of corn one year, followed by oats or another small grain the next, and then two years of hay. They use a rotary hoe to kill emerging weeds five to seven days after the corn is planted. The farmers will then follow that up with two rounds of cultivation once the corn is four to five inches tall.

The Ericksons have been certified organic for seven years now, and Greg says they are still learning. Wet springs can play real havoc with an organic weed control system, since they give the plant pests a jump on the corn. There are other, non-agronomic barriers

as well. For example, federal commodity programs punish farmers for diversifying their cropping systems, often forcing them to focus on raising just one or two row crops such as corn and soybeans. Such a narrow rotation is inherently more reliant on chemicals.

But producing organically certified milk means the Ericksons are eligible for price premiums. That means they are receiving an economic incentive to put up with the extra trouble of raising the chemical-free corn and other crops they feed to their cows. In addition, the Ericksons are considering signing up for the Conservation Stewardship Program, a new federal initiative that provides financial rewards for farming methods that produce positive environmental results (see page 10).

But as he loads two of his granddaughters (he has eight grandchildren living within a few hundred yards of the home farm) into the pickup truck for a trip to the field to check on this year's corn crop, Greg makes it clear that his desire to protect the land, his family and his neighbors trumps any economic considerations when it comes to figuring out which crop production tools to use.

"I'm here to protect this land," says Greg.

### **Mike Phillips: A south-central Minnesota farmer applies his own herbicides and raises corn without atrazine**

Mike Phillips raises corn and soybeans on 240 acres in southern Minnesota using a no-till system, which reduces soil erosion and cuts fuel usage dramatically. But because he can't rely on tillage to control weeds, Phillips says having a good herbicide is important to the success of his system.

For about a dozen years he used atrazine on his corn. He would spray it after the corn had emerged, killing weeds on contact as well as gaining a residual effect which kept weeds from germinating later in the growing season.

"For a low cost, you really got some results with it," says Phillips. "It was a very effective herbicide and you didn't seem to get too many resistant weeds."

But about five years ago, he dropped atrazine from his weed-control arsenal. The farmer, who is certified by the state to apply his own chemicals, didn't like handling the pesticide because its consistency made it difficult to clean tanks and spray booms properly.

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Cleaning pesticide application equipment can be a messy and dangerous chore.

Since dropping atrazine, Phillips has switched to mesotrione, which is marketed under the brand name "Callisto" and is manufactured by Syngenta.

Callisto is a post-emergent herbicide, meaning it is applied after weeds appear. He says it provides just as good of weed control as atrazine without fouling up his spraying equipment. He uses a lot less of the new herbicide—about two ounces per acre, as opposed to one to one and a half pounds of atrazine per acre.

"It's very similar to atrazine and a residual so once it rains it keeps weeds from germinating," says Phillips, adding that having a residual herbicide is important in a no-till system where mechanical weed control is not an option.

Because Phillips does his own spraying, he can tailor application amounts according to how much weed pressure certain parts of his farm are facing. "You don't always need the full rates," he says. Phillips also makes sure he doesn't spray on windy days.

He says the major disadvantage to mesotrione is the cost: \$5 to \$8 per acre; he could kill weeds with atrazine for around \$1 to \$2 per acre. But the farmer doesn't miss the hassle of handling atrazine. "I didn't like working with it," says Phillips.

### Loretta Jaus:

#### A west-central Minnesota farmer utilizes an innovative tool for herbicide-free weed control

The Jaus farm may be certified organic, but that doesn't mean the family takes a kinder, gentler approach to weed infestations in their cornfields.

"You can go in and fry everything," says Loretta, who farms some 400 acres with her husband Martin in west-central Minnesota's Sibley County. "It's pretty intimidating at first."

The Jauses "fry everything" with an innovative tool called a "flame weeder"—basically a set of propane nozzles mounted on the frame of an eight-row cultivator. This

technology, which was first used in cotton fields in the southern U.S., takes advantage of corn's ability to withstand a certain amount of abuse when it comes to a high-temperature, short-duration singeing.

Flame weeding is just one of the strategies the Jauses use to control weeds without herbicides like atrazine. Their farm has a long history of utilizing as few chemicals as

possible. In the mid-1960s, Martin's father, Roman, started using atrazine on the farm. He noticed almost immediately that when he fed atrazine-treated corn to his milk cows, they experienced an unusually high abortion rate.

"Even though there was no official connection made, in his mind the abortions and the atrazine were related," says Loretta. A connection was also made that in general pesticides were not worth the risk they posed to animal and human health.

Over the years mechanical cultivation and diverse crop rotations began to replace chemicals as tools for keeping weeds in check. Agrichemicals were

used only sparingly on the farm by the time Martin and Loretta took over the operation in 1980.

"The transition to chemical-free started with Marty's dad even before we got to the farm," Loretta recalls.

By 1990, the Jaus farm's crop acres and dairy herd were certified organic. Mechanical cultivation and soil-building crop rotations that include alfalfa and small grains like oats and barley continue to play key roles in controlling weeds. In addition, they plant corn two to three weeks later than what's normal for the region. During that delay, the first flush of weeds comes along, making it easier to control them and giving corn a jump-start once it's planted.

"There is a pretty dramatic difference in weed pressure as those plantings stretch out later," says Loretta.

In the mid-1990s Loretta and Martin added a flame cultivator to their weed control arsenal. They run the cultivator through the field when corn is around eight inches tall. The tractor is driven at a pace that exposes weeds to a 2,000-degree flame for around a tenth of a second. That's all it takes to heat up the liquid inside of a typical weed to the point where it bursts the cell walls.

"To test whether the flame weeder



Mike Phillips (LSP photo)

#### The Syngenta Corporation & Atrazine The Cost to the Land, People & Democracy



A report by the Land Stewardship Project  
and Pesticide Action Network North America  
January 2010

worked, you can pinch the weed's stem and if your finger leaves a wet imprint, that shows the cell wall is burst," says Loretta.

The flames may hit the corn plants as well, but because maize's "growth area" is wrapped in a whirl of leaves, it can recover from the singeing. The corn may look dead



Loretta Jaus (LSP photo)

after a pass with the flame cultivator, but it recovers within a few days.

Depending on weed pressure, the Jauses may run the flame cultivator through the field a second time, when the corn plants are as tall as two or more feet; they've even used the flamer when corn was as much as four feet tall. The flames often kill the weeds outright, but even if they just set them back, it provides the corn a chance to out-compete

Post-Atrazine, see page 17...



the weeds.

The learning curve for running the equipment can be steep at first. Early on, the Jauses got some bad advice on the best timing for using the equipment.

They also found their flame jets weren't adjusted at the right angle for their purposes. But through trial and error the farmers figured out at what stages during the growing season the flame cultivator can be used, as well as how to adjust the jets to produce the most effective results.

And an increasing number of crop farmers are utilizing the equipment, which means more practical, on-the-farm information is becoming available on how to use it under varying agronomic conditions.

The Jauses strongly urge anyone considering taking up flame weeding to attend on-farm field days that showcase the tool, and to talk to farmers utilizing this strategy. "It's just one more tool you can use," says Martin.

Martin and Loretta have found flame weeding to work on most broadleaf weeds under varying conditions. Although giant ragweed is still a problem on the farm, the farmers feel most years they can keep a tight enough rein on weeds to produce a good corn crop.

"There have been times when our fields were cleaner than the neighbor's field that had been sprayed," says Loretta.

### **Duane Hager: A farmer in the upper reaches of the Mississippi River whose attention to the soil means pesticides aren't necessary**

It all starts and ends with the soil, says southeast Minnesota crop and livestock farmer Duane Hager. In his quarter-century of farming just three miles from the Mississippi River, Hager has never used atrazine or any other herbicide. Yet his corn yields are competitive with his neighbors'. In fact, the soft-spoken farmer is a bit of a legend among producers in the region who are trying to figure out how to raise row crops without chemical weed control.

Hager and his wife Susie milk 40 cows



**Duane Hager (LSP photo)**

and raise 30 beef brood cows. They farm 200 acres of corn, soybeans, alfalfa hay and small grains such as wheat, oats and barley. Hager is not certified organic, but he says he's never been tempted to utilize herbicides to control weeds.

"When you don't use chemicals you don't have the cost," Hager says. "Also, I feel if you can maintain the health of the soil you shouldn't need the crutch of chemicals."

Hager is working constantly to build his soil using diverse rotations and natural mineral amendments.

He doesn't see his soil as simply a plant stand for the corn and other crops, but as a living environment that affects everything from what weeds are present to how the finished product influences the health of his livestock.

Soil tests are important to Hager, and he's learned over the years that such tests can show not only that fields differ from each other, but also that soil characteristics can vary within the same field. For example, he's recently been having a problem with jimson weed. ("It's nasty, real nasty," he says.) It tends to cluster on only certain parts of his fields, although Hager knows the seed

bank for that pest plant is probably spread throughout his farm.

"We tested the soil last week where jimson weed really likes to grow, and then tested where it's not a problem at all," says Hager. "I'm going to compare those soil samples to see what minerals are different. I've read it could be a calcium deficiency that jimson thrives on. I guess jimson doesn't like calcium."

Hager monitors his soil's health in less scientific ways as well. He knows it's healthy and not compacted when it's crumbly and implements pull easily during fieldwork. He also looks for signs of life.

"I watch what's going on in this soil pretty hard. When I check the planter, I can always see earthworms," says Hager. "Once I walked no more than six feet into my neighbor's field and I couldn't find any earthworms. It was amazing I could walk that short a distance and it made that much of a difference."

Of course, even the healthiest soil produces weeds. Hager controls weeds during the growing season by, among other things, waiting until around May 20 to plant his corn—a full month after many of his neighbors. This means the soil is warmer and the corn plants get a jump on the weeds, providing a healthy canopy that can shade out the plant pests.

Hager runs a rotary hoe across the corn four to seven days after planting. Then he will cultivate the first time typically 10 days after that first run with the rotary hoe; he does a second cultivation six to eight days after that.

"I'll throw dirt that first cultivation and it will cover a lot of weeds," he says. "And then with that second cultivation the weeds didn't respond fast enough and you throw more dirt on them and finish them off."

Hager feels he can farm the way he does without herbicides because of his relatively small scale. It allows him to manage each field individually and to adjust his methods accordingly.

"I'm always tweaking things and learning," he says. "When I have a weed problem, my first question is, 'What's wrong with the soil?'" □

## **Fact sheet on alternatives to atrazine**

The Land Stewardship Project has developed a fact sheet for farmers who are interested in reducing or eliminating their use of the herbicide atrazine. A

pdf version of "Atrazine—Alternatives to a Controversial Herbicide" can be downloaded from [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/18\\_atrazine\\_alternatives\\_2009](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/18_atrazine_alternatives_2009).

pdf. Paper copies can also be obtained by contacting LSP's offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) or Minneapolis (612-722-6377).

# Farm Beginnings

## 2010-2011 Farm Beginnings deadline Sept. 1

### *Classes to be held in southeast & south-central Minnesota*

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is now accepting applications for its 2010-2011 session. The deadline for registration is Sept. 1.

Classes will begin this fall and be held in the southeast Minnesota community of Winona and in St. Joseph, which is in the south-central part of the state.

Check [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org) for more information and application materials. More information is also available by contacting LSP's Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or [lpse@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lpse@landstewardshipproject.org). □

Opportunities



Resources

### Interns: Twin Cities

Cramer Organics ([www.cramerorganics.com](http://www.cramerorganics.com)) is looking for two to three interns for its 2010 growing season. The farm is a certified-organic Community Supported Agriculture operation located in Delano, west of the Twin Cities. The 80-member CSA is planning to expand to 100 shares this year. These are paid internships and will run from approximately May to October. Housing is not available on the farm, but an abundant portion of the weekly produce share is provided.

For more information, e-mail Joey Cramer at [racramermn@yahoo.com](mailto:racramermn@yahoo.com) or call 763-972-6647. □

### Farm help: SW WI

Harmony Valley Farm in Viroqua, Wis., is looking to fill positions for the 2010 growing season: a field and harvest coordinator; seasonal farm chef; assistant farm chef; shop and field crew member; delivery driver; and packing shed coordinator. The farm is also hiring an assistant production manager with potential for farm ownership shares.

For more information on these positions and their requirements, visit [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com) or send a resume and cover letter to [bookkeeper@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:bookkeeper@harmonyvalleyfarm.com). □

### Part-time help: NE IA

Erik Sessions is looking for someone to work on his five-acre vegetable operation



Farm Beginnings graduate and diesel mechanics instructor Lyle Kruse led a basic tractor maintenance workshop in December. During the hands-on workshop, participants had the opportunity to complete basic maintenance on a tractor. It included checking and changing fluids, tire upkeep and basic operating techniques. Kruse, who farms and operates a maintenance shop near the western Minnesota community of Canby, also offered advice on points to consider when purchasing a tractor. The workshop was part of a series Farm Beginnings offered this winter to class participants and members of the public. (photo by Nick Olson)

in northeast Iowa during the 2010 growing season (May through October). This is a half-time position and it involves assisting with all market vegetable farm duties, from planting through harvest. The pay for this position is \$8 per hour, and housing is not provided.

The farm, which is near the town of Decora, is not certified organic but has not been sprayed in 20 years. For more information, contact Sessions at 563-387-0837 or [eriksessions@earthlink.net](mailto:eriksessions@earthlink.net). □

### Seasonal help: NW WI

Hermit Creek Farm ([www.localharvest.org/farms/M6812](http://www.localharvest.org/farms/M6812)) in northwest Wisconsin's Ashland County is seeking three employees for the 2010 growing season. Hermit Creek is a certified organic farm; the total operation is 120 acres with five acres in vegetables. Employees will be involved with everything from planting seed in the greenhouse to harvesting crops from the field.

The pay is \$8.50 to \$9 per hour, depending on experience. Priority will be given to applicants who already have received some basic agricultural training. Housing is not provided.

For more information contact Landis Spickerman at 715-492-5969 or [landis\\_hcf@yahoo.com](mailto:landis_hcf@yahoo.com). □

### Intern needed: West-central MN

Ploughshare Farm, a certified organic vegetable operation near the west-central Minnesota community of Alexandria, is seeking an intern for the 2010 growing season. Ploughshare ([www.ploughsharefarm.com](http://www.ploughsharefarm.com)) has 25 acres in vegetables and markets its produce through Community Supported Agriculture.

The intern will be involved in all aspects of operating a certified organic vegetable farm. The stipend is \$800 per month and housing is provided. For more information, contact Gary Brever at [gjbrever@midwestinfo.net](mailto:gjbrever@midwestinfo.net). □



# 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 of charge 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:

## Land Available: Twin Cities Area

Sam Kedem has available for rent eight acres of certified organic land near the Washington/Dakota County, Minn., community of Hastings, south of the Twin Cities. The land is currently planted to an alfalfa cover crop and would be suitable for cropping or grazing. Contact: Sam Kedem, 651-437-7516 or [sam@kedemroses.com](mailto:sam@kedemroses.com).

## Land Needed: Twin Cities Area

David A. Hicks would like to rent or purchase approximately 640 acres in the Pine County area north of the Twin Cities. He would like tillable and pastured land that has been conventionally farmed. Contact: David A. Hicks, 651-253-5002 or [david-hicks0311@msn.com](mailto:david-hicks0311@msn.com).

## Land Available: Twin Cities Area

Theresa Zeman has 40 acres of certified organic land available for sale near the Rice County, Minn., community of Northfield. Over 36 acres of the property is tillable and there is no house or outbuildings available. The land is a 50-minute drive from the Twin Cities and is close to a growing community of small-scale organic and sustainable farmers. It is on a paved road near Nerstrand Big Woods State Park. The asking price is \$5,000 per acre for a conventional farmer and \$4,500 for an organic producer. Contact: Theresa Zeman, 507-330-2151 or [theresazeman@gmail.com](mailto:theresazeman@gmail.com).

## Land Available: NE MN

Shirley Larson has for rent 87.4 acres of land in northeast Minnesota's Pine County (near Hinckley). The land consists of tillable, pastured and forested acres, as well as a creek. The land has not been sprayed in 18 years; outbuildings available include a small garage, chicken coop, large barn and shop. It has a private well and is on a dead-end road. A house can be made available for an extra rental charge. The price is \$100 per acre for just the land; \$1,250 to \$1,500 per month with the house and 30-40 acres of tillable land. Contact: Shirley Larson, 612-669-0975.

## Farmer Needed: SE MN

A farmer is being sought to raise vegetables on approximately five to 11 acres of certified organic land in southeast Minnesota's Winona County. Five acres of the operation is fenced, and it exists within the Zephyr Community near the town of Rushford and 25 minutes from the city of Winona. Housing is available. The owners of the farm are seeking someone who is hard-working; experience and/or training in the business of farming is desirable; farm mentoring is available. Contact: Jan Taylor, [mnhherbster@gmail.com](mailto:mnhherbster@gmail.com) or 507-454-5587; Rhys Williams, [rhystracy@gmail.com](mailto:rhystracy@gmail.com) or 612-724-4301.

## Farmland Available: SE MN

Mary Doerr of Dancing Winds Farm has 15 acres of land for rent in southeast Minnesota's Goodhue County (one hour south of the Twin Cities, 30 minutes southeast of Northfield, four miles east of Kenyon). Ten acres is currently planted to mixed grass hay, and the remaining five acres has been rotationally grazed since 1986. No chemicals have been used on the land in 27 years. Also available for rent are two outbuildings: a 10 x 30 chicken coop and a 60 x 40 passive solar barn. References are required; call for an interview. Contact: Mary Doerr, 507-789-6606.

## Farmland Needed: NW Iowa

Bruce Willems is seeking to rent or buy approximately 320 acres in northwest Iowa's Ida or Woodbury County. He would like the parcel to have tillable and pastured acres, and does not require a house on the property. Contact: Bruce Willems, 712-389-5615; [willemsb@gmail.com](mailto:willemsb@gmail.com); 3785 160th St., Correctionville, IA 51016.

## Farmland Available: SW WI

Katie Sherman and John Strand have 23 acres for sale in southwest Wisconsin's Richland County. It consists of seven acres tillable, 14 forested and two pastured, and it has not been sprayed in four years. No house or outbuildings are on the property; there is a small spring. The asking price is \$79,000. Contact: Katie Sherman, 612-824-1140 or

[katie.sherman@gmail.com](mailto:katie.sherman@gmail.com).

## Land Needed: Twin Cities Area

Scott Linge is seeking to buy 40-80 acres of land in or around Minnesota's Goodhue County south of the Twin Cities. He would like a minimum of 40 acres tillable land as well as pasture, and does not require a house. He would prefer the parcel be within a 30-mile radius of the community of Cannon Falls. He plans on converting it to organic, but will consider land that is already certified organic. Contact: Scott Linge, 763-971-8129 or [sglinge@yahoo.com](mailto:sglinge@yahoo.com).

## Farmland Needed: NW Iowa

Scott D. Robbins is seeking to rent 500 acres of conventionally-farmed, tillable land in northwest Iowa's Buena Vista or western Cherokee counties. He does not require a house. Contact: Scott D. Robbins, 712-299-1444 or [USAwrestler\\_08@hotmail.com](mailto:USAwrestler_08@hotmail.com).

## Farmer Needed: Twin Cities Area

Little Foot Farm and Greenhouse is looking for farm help. Little Foot is a 35-acre operation that has greenhouses and an apple orchard, as well as poultry and hogs. The operation has not been sprayed for three years. Duties will include managing livestock, including watering, feeding and animal husbandry. Orchard management is also involved; small engine and diesel tractor familiarity is a plus. Contact: Karen Weiss, [karen@littlefootfarmandgreenhouse.com](mailto:karen@littlefootfarmandgreenhouse.com) or 651-436-4238.

## Land Needed: SE MN-SW WI

Hannah Friedrich is seeking to buy 40 to 80 acres of land in Dakota or Goodhue counties in Minnesota, or Pierce or Pepin counties in Wisconsin. She is hoping to split the land between two families and would like at least 20 acres of tillable land, and at least 10 acres of timbered land. She would like the land to have not been sprayed for at least two years. A house is not required. Contact: Hannah Friedrich, [hannahgfriedrich@yahoo.com](mailto:hannahgfriedrich@yahoo.com).

# Farm Beginnings

**Heather Smith**

## Making ag a profitable happening

**H**eather Smith wades through 17 inches of new snow, makes her way past a dormant raspberry patch and stops in front of a hoop house, humped-up in the white landscape like a giant, anemic bale of hay. She digs out the drifted-in door, and slips inside. A December blizzard the day before has engulfed an area covering 23 states, including Smith's corner of southwest Wisconsin. The storm has left in its wake a cold front that sends the mercury down to a handful of digits above zero. Despite no artificial heat source, it's around 40 degrees in the hoop house—warm enough to steam up eyeglasses and cause one to remove hats and gloves. Beams of an early winter sun stream through the double-layered plastic, providing enough light to sustain a carpet of spinach and kale, which will be picked for one final delivery to members of the farmer's "winter" Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enterprise.

"It's amazing how warm a hoop house can be," the 31-year-old Smith exclaims. She picks a few fat leaves of spinach and takes a bite, savoring the sugars that are accentuated by the cold. The greens represent the last gasp of a successful 2009 growing season for Smith Gardens, a farming operation near the community of Cochrane. Smith, who graduated from the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program in 2004, says 2009 was a "make-or-break" year for the farm. A business plan Smith worked up while a student in the course called for the 16 acres of picturesque property she owns to be a self-sustaining farming operation within five years.

"So the farm had to stand on its own this year," she says. "And we had a good year."

Not that it's been an easy five years. During that time she's not only launched a farming operation but had two children, built a house, barn and other outbuildings on the property and gone through a divorce. Even "launched a farming operation" is oversimplifying things by quite a bit. Smith Gardens is a diverse mix of CSA vegetables, pick-your-own raspberries, preserved jams and wood-fired pizza. Smith has added each enterprise in piecemeal fashion, keeping her financial risk low while being mindful of the limitations imposed by having two young children.

### No way

Smith grew up just a few miles from her current home on a 60-cow dairy farm. As an only child, she was quite involved with the operation, and enjoyed it. "I was my dad's hired hand," Smith recalls.

But when she graduated from high school and her parents offered to sell the operation to her, Smith's response was one of incredulity.



### Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

"I said, 'You're kidding—no way.'"

Smith went on to college and got degrees in biology and psychology. She was accepted into veterinary school but decided to take a year off from academics to think about her

future. She hiked the Appalachian Trail for seven weeks, worked on a ranch out West and in general fell back in love with living and working on the land.

"I didn't realize when I left home I would have that connection to the land and a desire to farm later," she recalls.

After getting married, Smith returned to southwest Wisconsin in 2003 and bought 16 acres of land tucked between two coulees. Both she and her then-husband Jeremy worked off the farm as they slowly began erecting buildings on the land.

That fall Smith enrolled in the Farm Beginnings course. Twice a month from October to March she traveled to southeast Minnesota to participate in sessions on low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course emphasizes goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. The classes are taught by established farmers and other ag professionals 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 techniques.

Smith says she found the business planning, enterprise analysis and goal setting segments of the class particularly helpful.

"I knew I had 35 ideas for what I wanted

**Fresh Faces, see page 21...**



**Heather Smith:** "It's very alluring to just keep growing shares, but often it's exponentially more work." (LSP photo)



to do on the farm. Farm Beginnings helped me narrow it down and put numbers on things financially and figure out what was physical possible from a labor and time perspective," she says. "I only have 16 acres to work with so I had to be very careful in what I chose to do. Farm Beginnings helped me evaluate all the potential small enterprises that are part of the big picture on the farm."

She says it was also inspiring to be around farmers who were proving that smaller agricultural enterprises are viable businesses, and not just "hobbies," and were willing to share insights about the realities of making a living on the land.

"Farming can be a very romanticized idea you know," says Smith, adding in a falsetto whisper: "Working on the land, day-in, day-out, la, la, la."

In 2004, Smith Gardens ([www.smithgardensfarm.com](http://www.smithgardensfarm.com)) cultivated one acre of vegetables and sold most of the produce at a local farmers' market. By 2005, the operation was a CSA, selling shares in the farm before the growing season. In return, shareholders receive a weekly delivery of produce during the growing season. The Smith Gardens CSA enterprise has grown steadily over the years: from 12 family members in 2005 to 60 in 2009. The demand for shares outstrips the supply, and Smith says it's tempting to expand the CSA operation. But doing that would mean more labor and increased mechanization, two things Smith doesn't want to take on for financial and quality of life reasons.

Any decision to increase income on the farm must be guided by the reality that Smith's two sons—Ashlan and Ethan—are under the age of 5 and she is farming the land by herself.

"It's very alluring to just keep growing shares, but often it's exponentially more work," she says, adding that expanding the enterprise would also probably mean taking on farm members that are more than 30 miles away, reducing the "local" feel of the operation and possibly reducing the quality of the CSA experience for current members.

## A happening

So the young farmer has made a conscious decision to increase cash flow by adding value to what she already produces. In 2009 she began offering a winter CSA share that consists of storage crops like potatoes as well as leafy greens such as spinach that she raises in the winterized hoop house.

One future project is to build a 16 x 30 greenhouse on top of an existing root cellar to help move her seed-starting area from the

basement. She would also like to start a community kitchen. The idea: people would come to the farm to process fresh produce, and would leave with a supply of preserved local food.

Smith also makes preserves made from raspberries on the farm. This latter enterprise has allowed the farmer's marketing acumen to shine. After noticing

## Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Heather Smith (episode 73) see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2). On that web page you will find other interviews featuring Farm Beginnings graduates.

that her raspberry preserves were being stocked at the local food co-op with jams that were not produced in the area ("Where it just blends in."), she talked co-op personnel into putting her raspberry preserves in the produce section as a local, fresh product. "It's summer in a jar, I told them." It worked. The preserves are now selling briskly as a "local product."

But perhaps the farmer's most successful value-added enterprise is a wood-fired pizza business. Once a week from May to October she bakes pizzas in an oven facility set up next to the barn for some 350 people who come out to the farm. People either simply drive out to the farm or call ahead to order 16-inch pizzas, which are made from vegetables grown in Smith's garden, as well as pork from neighboring Farm Beginnings graduates Jim and Alison Deutsch, cheese from local farmers and flour from an organic grain mill—Great River Organic Milling—that sits next to Smith Gardens.

While the pizza is baking, people can pick raspberries, watch the fires of the pizza oven or just relax. Farming can be a lonely business, and the pizza nights allow Smith to interact with people who enjoy good food and being out on the land. "It's a chance to work with the public and get to talk about the farm and just see them enjoy the valley," she says. "It's really a happening."

This "happening" has doubled in size in just a few short years, thanks to word-of-mouth, the Internet and some well-placed publicity in Wisconsin tour-

ism literature. Smith also sets up a "farmers' market" table on the farm during the pizza nights where she sells her preserves and handcrafted soaps, along with produce. "I sell as much as when I went to the farmers' market," she says. "I think people are surprised at all that's available locally."

Smith says the pizza nights have helped her come to terms with an important reality: products offered to farm customers don't have to be 100 percent sourced on that particular farm. The pork, cheese and flour that go into the pizzas are being produced by people who are good at what they do. The pizza serves as a delicious, colorful platter for highlighting all those skills.

"I felt my time could be better used working with other people who had their specific areas of knowledge," she says. "It makes sense to support them and they in turn can come here and cross-market their product on the pizza nights. We can all work together to showcase our local foods and what we have available as a region."

## Personal interest vs. what's practical

One thing Smith has learned during the past five years is that it's important to differentiate between what one has a personal interest in, and what can be done for a living day-in-and-day-out. For example, growing up on a dairy farm, Smith has always had an interest in livestock. When her farm was first launched, she began raising pastured chickens for local markets, growing up to 400 birds at one point. But processing all those chickens on the farm became a major labor issue for an operation that already had other enterprises going.

Smith still recalls her first butchering experience with a chuckle: "I had never butchered a chicken so I was holding a book on chickens in one hand and a chicken under my arm. That book is still blessed with some speckles from that first butchering."

She's since reduced bird numbers down to 100. She may eventually increase chicken production again, but only if a custom processor becomes available in her area.

"It's just kind of an obvious choice: until maybe another processor comes along that enterprise won't be one that I do on a commercial scale."

Or maybe a neighbor who has the inclination to raise and process chickens will show up at the next pizza night. □

## More FB profiles

To read more Farm Beginnings profiles, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html).

# Community Based Food Systems

## The business of local food

On November 12, the St. Croix River Valley chapter of *Buy Fresh Buy Local*, the River Market Community Co-op and Minnesota Food Association hosted two workshops in Stillwater, Minn., about growing the business of local foods. The workshops were attended by 46 farmers, institutional food service directors, chefs and restaurateurs, as well as 12 staff from sponsoring organizations. The St. Croix River Valley chapter of *Buy Fresh Buy Local* is coordinated by LSP.



For more information on the workshops and other efforts to promote local food systems in the St. Croix River Valley, contact LSP's Dana Jackson at 612-722-6377 or [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org). More information is also available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/bfbl). (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

## Opportunities



## Resources

### 'Buying Directly' fact sheet

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). □

### Local food handling guidelines

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. They're available in pdf format on our website:

- **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 Gro-**

**cery Stores & Restaurants in Minnesota** ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/Meat-PoultryGuidelines12-09.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/Meat-PoultryGuidelines12-09.pdf)).

- **Providing Safe, Locally-Grown Produce to Commercial Food Establish-**

**ments & 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. □

## Big farmers on campus



Last fall, the farmers' market in Winona, Minn., moved to the campus of Winona State University for one Saturday in October. The effort, which the Land Stewardship Project helped coordinate, was part of WSU's year-long Sustainable Foods Project initiative. That evening, a meal sourced from LSP farmer-members within 40 miles of the campus was served in the campus dining hall. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



# Local food in SE MN

**BELOW:** “Shake the Hand That Feeds You” was a major theme at this year’s Frozen River Film Festival, held during January in Winona, Minn. Land Stewardship Project staff took the lead in sourcing food for three meals and a reception during the event. LSP staff worked with graphic design students and members of the Sustainable Food Project committee at Winona State University to develop a series of banners featuring statements on local food. The banners (*shown*) were hung between exhibitor tables and on floor stands throughout the Film Festival at the WSU campus.



**RIGHT:** In February LSP staff met with Ridgeway Community School’s Environmental Club to jump-start the establishment of a garden there.

It’s part of the “80-Bites Pilot” to introduce the concept of local food (and some good fun along the way) to the school’s new kitchen and its focus on good health. The student club meets weekly to address forestry and energy, as well as garden matters. Last fall students pored over seed catalogs, made lists, and went home to research plants they would like to grow. The plan is to have early edibles ready to eat before school ends in mid-June.

During the February event, a dot survey (*shown*) was conducted with students on their attitudes toward local carrots that have been served at the school since last fall. Local farms have also provided the school potatoes, squash, cabbage, bison, green beans, corn, blueberries and broccoli. (*photos by Caroline van Schaik*)



**ABOVE:** Winter markets, minimum prices, entertainment, location and regulations were some of the issues discussed by 19 farmers’ market vendors in southeast Minnesota during the “Growing Better Markets” workshop in Winona in late January. The results of a rapid assessment dot survey (*shown*) indicated what priorities participants see for the Winona Farmers’ Market: pursuing a winter market option, training on regulations and food safety, careful siting of more demonstrations, better attention to insurance, and anything else that leads to more shoppers.

The Local Foods Committee of the Winona County Economic Development Authority, of which LSP is an active member, is examining the survey results and working on the issues brought up by the survey. Participants in the workshop represented not only the Winona Farmers’ Market, but also the markets in La Crosse, Wis., as well as the Minnesota communities of La Crescent, Rochester and Lewiston. The group included 11 local Hmong farmers, some of who are in need of land for the upcoming growing season.



*For more information on LSP’s Community Based Food Systems work in southeast Minnesota, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).*

# Community Based Food Systems

**‘...you might as well buy something that people are going to eat.’**  
*A retirement community proves serving local food isn't an old-fashioned idea*

Bartels Lutheran Home in the north central Iowa community of Waverly is setting out to prove that food served in an institution does not always have to be a bland, tasteless product shipped in from hundreds, or even thousands of miles away. The 200-bed facility provides retirement, nursing, assisted living, skilled and Alzheimer's care in the midst of some of the richest farmland in the world. However, before 1999 next to none of the 600 meals served daily were sourced locally. This is particularly ironic considering that many of the residents are former farmers.

During the past decade, Robin Gaines has worked to change that. Gaines, who is an assistant administrator and vice president for support services at Bartels, started out buying tomatoes and sweet corn. Their local food efforts got a kick-start several years ago when the facility started working with Kamyar Enshayan at the University of Northern Iowa's Local Food Project. The project helped them figure out how to find farmers who could provide the quantity and quality of food they were looking for.

Bartels' original goal was to buy at least 10 percent of its food from local farmers. By 2004, the facility had spent 15 percent of its raw food budget on local products. By 2008, that percentage was well over 25 percent. Almost all of that local food travels less than 25 miles to get to the facility's kitchen. Bartels now buys a variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as beef and dairy products, from at least 17 different farms.

It hasn't always been easy. Significant obstacles such as seasonality, transportation efficiencies, processing, and even food safety concerns have limited the facility's ability to increase its local food purchases even more.

But Bartels remains committed to buying as much food from the community as possible. The kitchen is getting rave reviews from residents on the taste and quality. In addition, the care facility's staff feels good about the fact that they are supporting the local farm economy. Other health care facilities in the Midwest have approached Gaines about ways they can begin sourcing more of their food locally.

Gaines and Bartels chef Tracy Wilson recently sat down with the *Land Stewardship Letter* to discuss some of the challenges and rewards of serving locally produced foods in an institutional setting. Below is an excerpt of that conversation.

## On the higher cost of local food

**Gaines:** We're in the habit now of buying [local] and there isn't any way to compare, because you're not comparing apples and apples. Homegrown and off the truck—they're not the same. They never will be, I don't care what they cost. You're money ahead to buy the local food that your residents are going to eat, rather than spend the money on the item that comes off the truck that you're going to end up throwing out. It's wasted money and it sends your food costs up. So you might as well buy something that people are going to eat.

## On obtaining a steady supplier

**Gaines:** We found that some of the farmers, some of the producers, are into that farmers' market scene, and we're second. So they have to have enough for the farmers' market before they have it for us. We don't see things that way because we want to be first and the farmers' market second. That's where they want to be, that's the program they want to run—so then we look for somebody who can supply both of us.

## Barriers to buying more local food

**Gaines:** One thing is the lack of farmers, and the lack of diversity in growing things. And the other thing preventing us from buying more local food is that we can't buy local produce year-round. I mean it's not going to happen in Iowa. And we're not

going to can tomatoes because I'm not going to get into that. And you can freeze tomatoes but no, we're not going to do that either. We will freeze things like squash. But other than that, we're not going to do that.

The other thing that is preventing us from buying more locally is that we have to use pasteurized eggs because we have a susceptible population. We can't buy any eggs that are grown locally and there are chicken farmers all over the place. And pasteurized eggs are hideously expensive. We're held hostage by that.

## The safety of local food

**Wilson:** I feel confident about the food safety because I know the farmers. Having that one-on-one contact makes a big difference. And to see them looking at their produce out on the tables out there says a lot.

## Getting started in local food

**Gaines:** I guess I would say to the producer, do not walk in the back door—get an appointment. Most food service people are very busy and I tend to not see people who walk in the door and want to see me. People need to have an appointment. I know sometimes it's hard for farmers to do that but they need to get an appointment.

For a facility I would say, start small. If you are in a hospital, start with your staff cafeteria or something. If you're in a nursing home or retirement facility or something

like that, start with the lettuces early in the spring, the fancy lettuces or the strawberries. Those things are easy to handle. People love it, and it makes a really big splash—start that way. Then maybe work up to the tomatoes and then on to the sweet corn.

But don't go into it like, okay, this year we're going to buy all of our produce from June 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> or whatever, locally, because it will kill you. You won't even know where to go, where to start.

**Wilson:** I also think that food service supervisors need to get out and go to the farmers' markets and see what is out there, what food can fit into their system.

## The relationship

**Gaines:** It's kind of like we're invested in the farm too. I guess we are. We're invested in the farm, we're buying from them, we're helping them to succeed.

For more on the University of Northern Iowa's Local Food Project see [www.uni.edu/ceef/foodproject](http://www.uni.edu/ceef/foodproject) or call 319-273-7883.

## Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Robin Gaines and Tracy Wilson (episode 69) see [www.landstewardship-project.org/podcast.html?t=9](http://www.landstewardship-project.org/podcast.html?t=9).



# Making local food *really* local

## A new community garden sprouts in the city

By Sarah Claassen

Since December 2008, several residents of the Standish-Ericsson neighborhood in South Minneapolis have been organizing a community garden. The garden they envision would be over an acre in size and tucked into a vacant lot near a major public transit route. It would be a sunny, peaceful spot that is easy to get to by walking or biking, and it would bring beauty and space to grow food, as well as be a place to gather in an under-utilized corner of the community. "Community gardens don't ever detract from property values—they only add value," says Rachel Fang, who belonged to a community garden in Saint Paul before moving to the Standish-Ericsson neighborhood five years ago.

But for all of the good things that will result, truly transformative gardens like this one require time, work and navigating a lot of public institutions to bring them to life.

In December 2008, the idea of creating a community garden was raised on a local e-mail listserv, and it sparked a flurry of responses. People were excited for many reasons. Some wanted to grow food but didn't have sun or room in their own yards, others weren't homeowners and had no yard at all. Some had visited thriving gardens in other neighborhoods, and saw the richness that it brought to the area. Others wanted a way to get to know neighbors that they might not otherwise talk to, and knew that gardening and food can start conversation like few other subjects.

Representatives with Gardening Matters, a Twin Cities-based organization that supports community gardens, met with these residents to talk about the basics of starting a garden and to offer their support. The residents started working with me soon afterwards, and in the year since, 10 residents have been identifying good sites, talking with landowners, and organizing all aspects of what is now the Southside Star Garden.

The list of potential sites was quickly narrowed down to one: 4100 Hiawatha Ave. This site is large (one and a half acres), flat, sunny, accessible and peaceful—all impor-

tant elements of a good garden location. But finding the owner of the site was difficult. After six months of sleuthing, the group found that the Minnesota Department of Transportation was the owner and partnered with the Standish-Ericsson Neighborhood Association to apply for a one-year permit for use of the site. In November, the Department of Transportation approved the permit. Now residents have settled in to a busy winter of preparing for a successful first season in 2010. They formed a steering committee



**Members of the Southside Star Garden organizing steering committee (left to right): Susan Fall, Laura Hansen, Rachel Fang, Ginny Bach, Liz Van Derlofske, Dana Tuss and Sarah Claassen.** (photo by Katherine Harris, courtesy of Seward Co-op)

and are planning a community meeting, garden sign-ups, outreach, fundraising, and organizing the resources they need to break ground in May.

Working with Standish-Ericsson residents to organize this community garden has been a big part of the Land Stewardship Project's urban food systems' organizing during the past year. A successful, stable Southside Star Garden will be a part of the food system we seek—where communities collaborate to grow food for themselves and support a good quality of life. Ideally, this will be a food system where residents are able to work with public institutions and governments in a constructive way, and these institutions respect and respond to the power of communities. It will mean that there is

public and community investment in food in a core urban community, where investment in food systems is often lacking. Through this project, LSP is learning more about the opportunities that lie in urban agriculture, and the barriers facing people who work to do something good in their community.

The process of organizing the Southside Star Garden has demonstrated how food and farming activities are often not prioritized or valued by local governments. As cities work to generate the revenue they need, food and farming activities are seen as an interim use of space and are displaced by housing or traditional business development. But in order to ensure that residents of all races, income levels and housing situations have a source of good food that is under their control, cities need to invest in food and farming as a valuable part of infrastructure.

Just as enrollment in LSP's Farm Beginnings program and numbers of stewardship farms are growing, community gardens in the Twin Cities have waiting lists, and over 20 new gardens were started in 2009. Innovative urban agriculture business models are starting in the region, drawing inspiration from Growing Power in Milwaukee, Wis.

LSP is listening to our members, building relationships with partners, and exploring organizing opportunities that build the food and farming system we need. Our practice of building power through organizing, coupled with our belief in the potential of people working in relationship with each other and the land, make urban food systems work a natural extension of LSP's mission.

Our urban and rural communities are deeply connected, and we are strongest when we work together.

We face many challenges that are unique, but many that are common, and the need for strong economies, environmental stewardship, and racial and economic equity affects us all. As LSP works in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, we remain committed to food and farming that is grounded in stewardship practices, fair treatment of farmers and rural communities. Organizing the Southside Star Garden is one way we are investing in a vibrant Twin Cities food system that works in concert with rural farmers and communities, together building the food and farming system we need. □

*Sarah Claassen is an LSP organizer working on urban food systems in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org).*

# Wildly Successful Farming

## The third 'P'

### *A passion for the land can be a powerful thing*

By Brian DeVore

While leading a group of natural resource professionals through one of his dairy pastures, Martin Jaus makes it crystal clear he farms the land for more than a milk check. "Every day we see something that just amazes us," he says with a smile. "One day I was making hay and I had four raptors strike mice within 20 feet of the tractor. It was two red-tails, a swainson's and a kestrel. A lot of people don't get to see that."

In his characteristically understated way, Martin is describing the passion that drives him and his wife Loretta to get up every morning on their west-central Minnesota farm and milk some 70 cows twice-a-day, seven-days-a-week, while managing over 400 acres of pasture, hay ground, field crops and assorted "natural areas."

It's those natural areas that make it worthwhile to put up with long days in the barn and field, say the Jauses. And it was those natural areas that had brought a dozen or so folks from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office to the Jaus farm for a Land Stewardship Project tour last fall.

LSP and the Jaus family saw this as an opportunity to show that working farmland can be a haven for wildlife. But they also wanted to hold an open-field discussion on what it would take to spawn more farms like this, particularly in western Minnesota, which is viewed as a "black desert" of corn and soybean fields by a lot of people concerned about the environment.

Such a discussion is important in this part of the Midwest. Mark Matuska, the DNR's regional director for 32 counties in southern Minnesota, told the tour participants it's become quite clear that in farm country, relying on publicly-owned land to preserve the environment isn't enough. Of the 13 million acres of land in his part of Minnesota, only 200,000 is managed by the DNR.

"The overall impact we have with the land that is publicly managed is not a whole lot," he says.

During the fall tour, the Jauses provided natural resource professionals an inside look

at just how much of an impact one working farm can have in a localized area, and ignited a lively discussion about how to spread such environmental benefits over a wider region. It turns out, not surprisingly, that

## Wildly Successful Farming



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

government policy and market forces are big, often overwhelming factors here. But as the day progressed, the farmers also made it clear that a passion for the land is the key component that keeps stewardship farmers going day-in, day-out. In an ideal world, two powerful "Ps"—profits and policy—are subservient to that third "P": passion. But that ideal world isn't a reality just yet.

### Abrupt feedback

The Jauses lead off the day with a tour of the habitat they've woven amongst their crop fields and grazing paddocks during the past three decades. Specifically, the participants take a look at tree shelterbelts, restored prairie and wetland habitat, and a few small touches like a pond dug for amphibians and another for mourning doves.

"I grew up on the farm and I always loved wildlife," says Martin. "We've done a lot of little things. Somehow it's all come together." It's come together enough to make a farm that is not only financially viable, but a place where over 200 species of birds have been recorded.

Both he and Loretta have college degrees in wildlife management, and they never thought their love for wild critters—birds in

particular—would find a home on the farm they took over from Martin's family in 1980.

"I figured well, that was a waste of my wildlife degree," recalls Loretta of her early career as a farmer.

But little-by-little over the years, the Jauses started making the conventional dairy operation into a wildlife haven. Some of their efforts had a very "practical" aspect to them, like when they planted five miles of shelterbelts. These lines of trees provide wildlife habitat, but they also dramatically cut wind erosion while providing shelter for their dairy cattle.

Other habitat restoration efforts are a little harder to justify agronomically, especially in a region that's one of the top corn and soybean producing spots in the state. For example, an 11-acre mix of prairie and wetland the family restored in 1993 is purely an expression of their love for wild things.

"You get feedback from neighbors, some of it abrupt," says Loretta with a nervous laugh.

The participants take a hayrack out to a seven-acre tract of Conservation Reserve Program ground that runs along a county drainage ditch. It's in a triangle shape, and Loretta and Martin concede it was always hard to farm and that it was a relief to allow it to go back to nature. At one end is a small pond the Jauses dug. "We'll get 400 to 500 doves in here on a summer evening," Martin tells the crowd.

Early on, it's clear to the natural resource professionals that this is no ordinary western Minnesota farm. But all the good produced by the habitat on the Jaus farm threatens to be wiped out by the sea of corn and soybeans that swirls around them. For example, Martin is frustrated that his land isn't home to more meadowlarks, even though they have good habitat for the grassland birds.

"You definitely are an oasis," DNR non-game wildlife biologist Lisa Gelvin-Innvaer tells him.

"The 10,000 pound guerilla is the commodity programs. They've taken all the risk out of raising corn and soybeans," says the DNR's agricultural policy director, Wayne Edgerton. "All the risk is in doing what these folks are doing. Did you get any government incentives to do what you're doing?"

To be fair, the Jauses have received *some* government help to establish environmentally-friendly habitat. They've utilized programs like Reinvest in Minnesota to make up for the lost crop and pasture acres that resulted from these restorations. Over the years they've also benefited from the expertise of local SWCD and NRCS personnel.

**Wildly Successful**, see page 27...



But despite a little money and advice passed their way periodically for conservation projects, for the most part the farmers have had to absorb the economic penalty that results from taking land out of the federal commodity program. That hurts, especially when one considers all of the extra management it takes to run a farm that is not just 400 acres of one or two row crops.

Some of that financial sting has been

there are plenty of winged denizens around to keep harmful bugs in check.

"These systems are so complex," Loretta tells the farm tour participants. "The way our organic systems feed into the ecosystem and vice versa is exciting."

After the farm tour, the Jauses and ecologists sit down between a pond and the pastures and discuss how to make more farms like this the norm. Two of the "Ps"—reforming commodity policy and making stewardship farming profitable—soon domi-

attain their goals. Matuska describes how the DNR is going to allow farmers to graze one of its wildlife areas in southwest Minnesota. Ideally the farmers will be required to utilize conservation measures on their own farms in return for the grazing.

"That would extend those benefits across the landscape," he says.

One idea tossed around is to place future public wildlife management areas in regions where organic and sustainable farms like the Jause operation predominate. Under such a scenario, both could benefit: the wildlife area would get its environmental benefits extended onto private land, and the farms would have access to grazing areas, for example.

### A take-home image

Creative solutions like this are going to be needed if working farmland that benefits the environment is going to become the rule, rather than the exception. But what keeps stewardship farmers going while solutions like that get worked out? In the case of the Jauses, it's a passion for the land that sustains them through all those times when the other two "Ps"—profitability and policy—aren't pulling their weight. It may not pay the bills, but it can provide the kind of gumption needed to put up with poor prices and counterproductive government policies.

It can also provide a spark to people who aren't farming, but care for the land nevertheless. At one point during the day, Martin uses a potato fork to turn over a fragrant, double-handful of black, black soil. It's seething with organic matter and people step up to eye it and take in the sweet fragrance like it was some sort of vintage wine.

Such images can stay with people long after they've gone back to their office cubicles to wrestle with the daunting task of protecting the landscape. On the ride back to the Twin Cities, a DNR staffer discusses why it's so important that natural resource professionals see how excited a farmer gets over good soil quality and witnessing a rap-tor strike just a few feet from the tractor.

"They have to realize farmers are out there on this land *every day* observing what's going on." □

See page 3 to read a commentary by Loretta Jaus. For more on the Jaus farm's organic weed control system, see page 16.



**Martin Jaus describes how his family's grazing system dovetails with their desire to protect and improve the environment: "Every day we see something that just amazes us." (LSP photo)**

alleviated by a price premium they receive for selling certified organic milk through the Organic Valley Cooperative. The Jauses began selling to the organic market a dozen years ago, and it's helped cover the costs of all that extra management, while making it possible for them to not farm fencerow-to-fencerow in order to stay solvent. In fact, the increased profitability of the farm has given them enough confidence to consider bringing their son Kevin into the operation.

They've also discovered that organic milk production and treating a farm as a natural habitat work hand-in-hand, providing mutual benefits. For example, by building their soil's organic matter with rotational grazing and diverse crop rotations, the Jauses find their crops are healthier and the water leaving the land is cleaner. And because they don't use chemicals, there are more beneficial insects such as pollinators on the land, while all that bird habitat means

nate the conversation.

In addressing the latter topic, LSP organizer Terry VanDerPol talks about bringing eaters to the discussion. "Reconnecting people to the agricultural landscape through food is important," says VanDerPol, who directs LSP's Community Based Food and Economic Development Program.

How can that be done? At one point, LSP Executive Director George Boody describes modeling research conducted by the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project showing how diversifying farm landscapes can benefit the land, the farmers, even rural economies and eaters. Such connections can help people see how their food buying choices affect the number of meadowlarks or pheasants they see on the land, says Boody.

A big part of the discussion is how natural resource agencies and farmers can work together in a manner that helps both groups

### Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Loretta and Martin Jaus, (episode 25), see [www.landstewardship-project.org/podcast.html?t=11](http://www.landstewardship-project.org/podcast.html?t=11).





## Two Angry Moms

A movie by Amy Kalafa  
& Susan Rubin

2009; Feature DVD 86 minutes;

Conference DVD 60 minutes

Two Angry Moms

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

*Reviewed by Susan Maas*

Last fall, I attended the first evening of a two-day school food conference: a gathering of food service directors convened by a Minnesota-based nutrition foundation. Among my souvenirs from the evening was a fact sheet on Solae Chicken Shreds: “A tasty, whole-muscle-like product featuring a blend of chicken and SUPRO(R) MAX structured vegetable protein product.” If that doesn’t whet your appetite, I don’t know what will.

The workshop’s attendees included about 20 school food service professionals, several nutrition researchers, an award-winning organic restaurateur, two interested parents (I came with a friend, another freelance writer) — and 10 or 12 representatives of corporate agribusiness, energetically hawking their employers’ latest feats of engineering. Clearly, industrial ag is concerned as ever about the health and well-being of America’s schoolchildren.

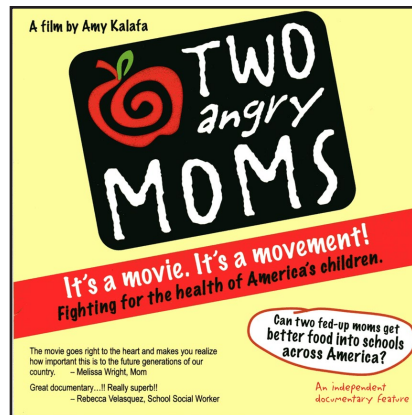
The impetus for the conference was a preliminary set of recommendations from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) for updating nutrition standards in school meals; one of the IOM’s recommendations was that at least half — or 51 percent — of grains in school lunches be from “whole grain-rich foods.” At the conference I picked up a Superkids Wholegrain Sampling Program directory, touting a host of ConAgra products — from pretzels to cookie dough to macaroni noodles — now containing *exactly* 51 percent whole grain.

My family is fortunate in that my husband and I are able to buy nutritious, sustainably-produced food and have the time to pack healthy home lunches for our kids. But, of course, they’d rather eat the sugary breakfast cereals, chocolate milk and nachos that many of their classmates get at school. In any case, it strikes me as unjust that millions of American kids simply don’t have access to wholesome meals. So it was with great interest that this angry mom watched Amy Kalafa and Susan Rubin’s new documentary, *Two Angry Moms*, a film examin-

ing “big food profits vs. children’s health.” Noting that the obesity epidemic is just one symptom of declining children’s health in the U.S., Kalafa sets out to explain “what parents need to know and do to get better food in schools.”

The film opens with the image of potato strips being dunked in a deep fryer, and a barrage of alarming statistics on childhood obesity, Type II diabetes, allergies, heart disease, decreasing life expectancy and more. After addressing head-on the myth that school lunch reformers are dour, humorless “food police,” determined to take cupcakes out of children’s birthdays (Rubin is even shown savoring a cupcake — a real cupcake, made with butter and sugar and

...it’s the ugliest kind of politics,  
being fought over our kids’ health.



flour — outside a bakery), the filmmakers quickly move to the root of the problem.

As author, researcher and New York University nutrition professor Marion Nestle points out, the USDA, whose primary purpose is to “promote American agriculture,” has a fundamental conflict of interest in its secondary charge to feed America’s schoolchildren healthy, wholesome, balanced meals. After all, “American agriculture” is dominated by large agribusiness firms that are in business to maximize profits, and that means selling as much product as possible, regardless of its nutritional value. Chips, snack cakes, hot dogs and soft drinks: That’s what kids want to eat, big food companies tell us. “We’re just supplying that demand,” they argue. School lunch directors, constrained both by tight budgets and picky customers with deeply ingrained habits, feel pressure to offer lucrative, packaged “a la carte” items — “competitive food” that will reliably sell.

In short, this is what you call an uphill battle. But it is winnable — and worth fighting. The filmmakers exhort parents to organize, to band together; to learn about the challenges school administrators, school

board members, and food service directors are up against; and to take charge of writing meaningful, community-authored wellness policies that firmly articulate the school district’s needs. Widespread parent support and community buy-in are essential, they emphasize.

There are allies out there — school-food pioneers, models for improvement — and the film introduces us to some of them: food service director Rodney Taylor of Riverside, Cal., who brought local

farmers’ bounty to urban public school salad bars; school lunch chef Tony Geraci of New Hampshire, whose own battle with diabetes prompted him to create a “prevention model” that includes healthy, kid-designed meals for students in his district; and Chez Panisse founder Alice Waters and rebel lunch lady Ann Cooper, who revolutionized the Berkeley United School District’s lunch program. Their experiences show that American children will in fact eat wholesome, nutrient-rich meals — especially if they’re involved in growing, cooking, preparing and composting the food.

The film is informative and encouraging, but pretty coastal-centric. Real and important progress is being made here in the Midwest, too. Farm-to-school programs are connecting a growing number of school districts with food from local farms (and providing new and exciting opportunities for nutrition education). The Saint Paul, Minn., district, for instance, has attracted national attention for its farm-to-school effort; in the first six weeks of the academic year, the district purchased 110,000 pounds of locally grown produce for school lunches. The Farm to School Minnesota Toolkit for Food Service ([www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu](http://www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu)), which is based on materials developed in the Willmar, Minn., school district, provides guidelines for getting healthy, local foods into cafeterias.

These are not easy changes to implement; such efforts need vocal, sustained public support. “This is politics, and it’s the ugliest kind of politics, being fought over our kids’ health,” Nestle says. “If there aren’t angry moms pushing [reform], it’s not going to happen.” □

*LSP member Susan Maas is a Minneapolis-based freelance writer who specializes in health and environmental issues. She recently contributed to Our Neck of the Woods: Exploring Minnesota’s Wild Places (University of Minnesota Press, 2009).*



## All My Bones Shake Seeking a Progressive Path to the Prophetic Voice

By Robert Jensen

2009; 196 pages

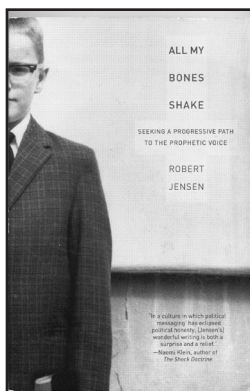
Soft Skull Press

www.softskull.com

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

**A**ll My Bones Shake is the latest work by Robert Jensen, a University of Texas-Austin professor of journalism. Jensen, who serves as the director of the university's Senior Fellows Honors Program of the College of Communication, is well-known for his writings on media, power, women's rights and racial justice—all big world issues. But he takes a more introspective approach with this book. Here he describes his journey back to the church, some of the difficulties surrounding his unconventional theology and his view of the Christian faith and Christ's teaching as a call to community and social justice.

Jensen begins the book by describing his faith journey, a journey that began as a child in a Presbyterian church in Fargo, N. Dak.,



led him to leave the church for many years, and finally saw Jensen returning to the fold by joining a progressive Presbyterian congregation in Austin. He describes the challenges he faced due to his theology, which emphasizes a social justice mes-

sage of Jesus over a belief in God. Jensen then explains the unique way in which this dispute was resolved.

The author elaborates on what he sees as the core message of Jesus: the importance of community and social justice. He develops these ideas by drawing on, among others, the work of Wes Jackson at the Land Institute in Kansas, the writings of Wendell Berry whose novel *Jayber Crow* Jensen uses as a text in one of his courses, and the research of Elaine Pagels, a New Testament scholar. Jensen uses these ideas to develop the concept of a community that includes both humanity and the natural world. Because of this definition of community Jensen sees Christian social justice as a cause that not

only addresses human issues such as poverty and war, but environmental issues such as land and water, as well as general environmental degradation. In a sense Jensen is calling on Christians to look at their faith as not only a belief system, but as a call to social and environmental justice. In fact, Jensen seems to emphasize Christian social justice over all other parts of the Christian faith.

This book does an excellent job of explaining and defending Jensen's view of Christianity as a call for social action as well as describing the author's journey that brought him to that conclusion. However, some of the theological language is very academic and may lose those without an interest in academic theology. In spite of this limitation, Jensen does an excellent job of describing Christianity as a call to social and environmental justice, in a sense a faith of action as well as a faith of belief. □

*LSP member and frequent volunteer Dale Hadler has a master's degree in religion and theology from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. He reviewed Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation for the Summer 2009 edition of the Land Stewardship Letter.*

## Food Rules An Eater's Manual

By Michael Pollan

2009; 140 pages

Penguin Books

www.michaelpollan.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

**W**hat has the world come to when one of our leading food and farming writers is moved to pen a book with the subtitle, "An eater's manual"? That was my first thought when I heard about Michael Pollan's latest work, *Food Rules*. Now we need a list of rules on how to eat? What's next: *A Human's Guide to Breathing*?

The title and subtitle of Pollan's new book are not meant to be ironic—from its physical size (it's small enough to fit into a pocket) to its pithy writing (few of the 64 "chapters" are longer than 200 words; a few are only a sentence and it took me less than an hour to breeze through the whole thing), it's clear this is a book meant to be used as a quick reference. But I don't think Pollan means for people to keep the book in the kitchen or the shopping cart like some sort of culinary field guide, referring to it every

time a food choice emerges.

Rather, these rules are meant to be internalized. The secret to that is to come up with phrases that are easy to recall, even in today's world of information overload. To do that, Pollan relies on a mix of old standards you may have heard your parents or grandparents mouth and new ones he's apparently made up. An example of the former is, "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach." One of Pollan's own phrases he uses here was actually introduced in his book *In Defense of Food*: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

But do we really need such clever phrases to remind us how to eat? Yes, unfortunately. As Pollan made clear in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, and, before him, Eric Schlosser in *Fast Food Nation*, we've made our food system way too complicated—an estimated 17,000 new products show up in supermarkets annually.

And there's a lot of money to be made from the

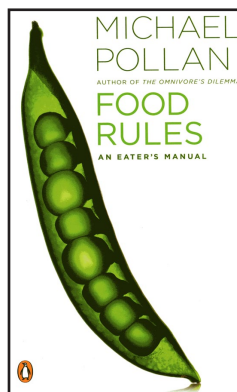
hurly-burly that greets eaters whenever they walk into a grocery store, turn on the television, flip through a magazine or even drive down the street. The more you process food, the more profitable it is for the processor.

"Don't take the silence of the yams as a sign they have nothing valuable to say about your health," Pollan writes, providing a clever way of describing the importance of avoiding foods that are backed by mega-advertising campaigns.

So yes, we do need a reminder of the basics: eat whole foods as much as possible, consume them sitting down at a table (preferably with other people), and know the source of those foods.

But, for the sake of our sanity, we need to also keep in mind Pollan's last rule: "Break the rules once in a while." An occasional Twinkie won't kill you, and when it is eaten as a treat rather than as a regular part of your diet, then it's much more enjoyable anyway. As Pollan writes: "'All things in moderation,' it is often said, but we should never forget the wise addendum, sometimes attributed to Oscar Wilde: 'Including moderation.'" □

*Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.*





LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

## Membership Update

# Sustain LSP through regular pledges

By Anna King

We are already off to a busy start in 2010. The Land Stewardship Project recently released a report on the environmental and health threats posed by the herbicide atrazine (page 7), held its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Farm Breakfast to gather citizens and legislators over locally produced food and policies, and is starting to schedule workshops and field days for this summer (page 32). Your membership is making all of this happen.

I want to say thanks to everyone we talked to during LSP's December phone bank. We do two phone banks per year, and they are an important part of funding for the work. This year, we were awarded a grant from the McKnight Foundation that matched first-time \$100 and \$500 donations dollar-for-dollar, which was a great way to maximize giving. A combination of volunteers and staff talked with a lot of LSP members during these calls—updating them on our goals and accomplishments and hearing what issues are important to them. We talked with many people who are facing tough financial times, and were humbled by the many who were able and willing to dig deep and support LSP with a gift.

Your support is critical to LSP's success and leadership. Being supported by members involved and affected by the work puts LSP's values and actions in direct alignment, and we are grateful for your support in being able to do this.

Another great way to support LSP is by making a monthly or quarterly pledge. Here are some reasons why you should pledge to LSP:

- ◆ Less time and money spent on membership renewal and retention (postage, paper, and processing).
- ◆ Reduced mail and paper.
- ◆ A reliable source of income for LSP—we can count on your donation to advance stewardship and justice for people and the land.

◆ Flexibility in scheduling and amounts—pledges can be started or stopped at any time and you can choose to pledge any amount of \$10 or more, monthly or quarterly.

◆ Ability to make a larger donation, as it is spread out over time.

◆ No interruption of membership services, your pledge automatically renews until you decide to change it.

How does it work? Fill out the envelope at the center of this *Land Stewardship Letter* with an amount and schedule of pledging that works for you. LSP can set up the pledges to run monthly, quarterly or annually from your credit card or your checking account in any amount of \$10 or more.

These withdrawals (or charges) happen on a set date, with no paperwork, phone calls or postage involved. At the end of the year, you will receive a summary of your giving for tax purposes. Your pledge will continue to support the work until you decide to make a change or end it. I encourage you to consider this as a way of giving to

LSP. Please call LSP's Minneapolis office if you have any questions.

Thank you all for your support. I am looking forward to a great year in food and farming. □

Anna King is an LSP membership assistant. She can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [annak@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:annak@landstewardshipproject.org).

### Employer matching grants: Ask today

Many employers offer matching donations 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 20 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 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. In upcoming

issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we will be 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 first installment in this series:

## Did you know...

Donors can contribute real estate to a charitable remainder trust and take back a stream of income for life. Donors receive an immediate tax deduction for a portion of the fair market value of the property and are not taxed on the gain when the property is sold. This can be an ideal solution for a donor wanting to benefit a charity but needing a retirement income from the value of the property. Real estate is an under-utilized charitable gifting vehicle which offers significant tax benefits.



## Thank you!

*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 Helen DeVore*

- ◆ Sherry Christiansen
- ◆ Sandra Hough
- ◆ Sheila Armsworth
- ◆ Rod DeVore
- ◆ Brian DeVore

### *In memory of Vic Ormsby*

- ◆ Neil & Margaret Claus
- ◆ Donna Kamann & Eric Christensen
- ◆ Kathleen & David Palmquist
- ◆ Robert Stuber & Mary Eischen
- ◆ Bonnie Austin
- ◆ Alyce Jo McGrath
- ◆ Dana Borkowski
- ◆ Sally Beck
- ◆ Joyce Belgum & John Gabbert
- ◆ Cheri Hales
- ◆ Donald Nelson & Mary Perrin
- ◆ Kathy & Robert Redig
- ◆ Kevin Possin
- ◆ Bernard Frisch & Gail Bradbury
- ◆ Deborah Niebuhr
- ◆ Helen Jameson
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- ◆ Pat & Bob Finley

- ◆ Ron & Diane Stevens
- ◆ Virginia Fallon
- ◆ Gayle Goetzman
- ◆ Julie Johnson & Jack Honeywell
- ◆ Sheila Cunningham
- ◆ Vicki English
- ◆ Mary Farrell
- ◆ Pauline Antons
- ◆ Robert & Patsy Finley
- ◆ Rolf Kragseth

### *In memory of Charles Pederson*

- ◆ Joyce Pederson

### *In honor of Alan Hoffman's retirement from the Mayo Clinic*

- ◆ Burton & Florence Sandok
- ◆ Marjorie & Bernard Birnbaum

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). More information on donating special gifts to LSP is also available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

## LSP blog

The Land Stewardship Project writes weekly on food and sustainable agriculture issues for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's *Loon Commons* 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, consumers, scientists and activists who are working to create a more sustainable food and farming system. We now have over 70 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.

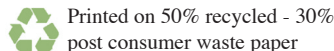
To listen in, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), and click on the **Podcast** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. □



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## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **MARCH 18—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on vegetable farm record keeping**, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105; [nicko@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:nicko@landstewardshipproject.org)

→ **MARCH 19—Getting organized for organic certification workshop**, East Troy, Wis., Contact: [www.michaelfieldsagainst.org](http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org); 262-642-3303

→ **MARCH 20—Introduction to beekeeping workshop**, East Troy, Wis., Contact: [www.michaelfieldsagainst.org](http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org); 262-642-3303

→ **MARCH 20—Fruit tree grafting workshop**, Cold Spring, Minn.; Contact: Dave Griffin, 320-685-4104

→ **MARCH 22—Chef-to-Chef Local Food Workshop**, Craftsman Restaurant, Minneapolis; Contact: <http://cheftochef.eventbrite.com>; Annalisa Hultberg, [ahultberg@mnproject.org](mailto:ahultberg@mnproject.org); 651-789-3328

→ **MARCH 26—8th Annual Lake Superior SFA Farmers Take the Stage**, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: <http://lssfa.org>; 218-389-3306; [joel@lakesuperiorfarming.org](mailto:joel@lakesuperiorfarming.org)

→ **MARCH 26—Minnesota Farmers' Market Association Conference**, Shoreview, Minn.; Contact: Lake Superior SFA, [www.mfma.org/mfma\\_upcoming\\_events.php](http://www.mfma.org/mfma_upcoming_events.php); John Ulland, 507-437-2642

→ **MARCH 26—Strawberry, raspberry & currant production workshop**, East Troy, Wis., Contact: [www.michaelfieldsagainst.org](http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org); 262-642-3303

→ **MARCH 27—Twin Cities Community Garden Spring Resource Fair**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis; Contact: [www.gardeningmatters.org](http://www.gardeningmatters.org); 612-492-8964

→ **MARCH 27—Youth Sustainability Confabulation Conference**, Winona State University, Winona, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366

→ **SPRING—LSP's Farm Beginnings public field days begin** (check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) or call LSP's Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 for details)

→ **APRIL 1—Free showing of the film *The Read Dirt on Farmer John***, Bell Museum, 7 p.m., U of M-Minneapolis; Contact: [www.bellmuseum.org](http://www.bellmuseum.org); 612-624-7083

→ **APRIL 6—Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program 2010 application deadline**; Contact: [www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm); Adam Warthesen, LSP, 612-722-6377, [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org) (see page 11)

→ **APRIL 10—Youth Sustainability Confabulation**, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 320-226-6318

→ **APRIL 11—CURE River Clean-Up**, Wgdahl, Minn.; Contact: [www.cureriver.org](http://www.cureriver.org); 877-269-2873

→ **APRIL 11—Book Reading by LSP member Gayla Marty, author of *Memory of Trees: A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm***, University Baptist Church, Minneapolis; Contact: 612-331-1768; [www.upress.umn.edu/Books/M/marty\\_memory.html](http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/M/marty_memory.html)

→ **APRIL 13—Book Reading by LSP member Gayla Marty, author of *Memory of Trees: A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm***, U of M-Minneapolis; Contact: 612-625-6000; [www.bookstores.umn.edu/genref/authors.html](http://www.bookstores.umn.edu/genref/authors.html)

→ **APRIL 18—Eat Local Eden Prairie Fair as part of a community reading of Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle***, Eden Prairie, Minn.; Contact: [www.epreads.org](http://www.epreads.org)

→ **APRIL 24—Seward Co-op Twin Cities CSA Fair**, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., 2823 E. Franklin Ave., Minneapolis; Contact: 612-338-2465; [www.seward.coop](http://www.seward.coop)

→ **MAY 1-2—2010 Living Green Expo, Minnesota State Fairgrounds**, St. Paul; Contact: Kristi Gray Shepherd, 952-920-5875; [Kristi@eventarch.com](mailto:Kristi@eventarch.com); [www.livinggreen.org](http://www.livinggreen.org)

→ **MAY 14-16—18th Annual River & History Weekend in Upper Minnesota River Watershed**, Chippewa River, Minnesota River, Lac qui Parle River, Yellow Medicine River, Pomme de Terre River & Hawk Creek; Contact: CURE, 877-269-2873; [www.cure-river.org](http://www.cure-river.org)

→ **MAY 15—The Gift of God's Creation: An Environmental Education Workshop for Christian Educators of Young Children**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, New Brighton, Minn.; Contact: Dale Hadler, 763-218-3265; [dale\\_hadler@hotmail.com](mailto:dale_hadler@hotmail.com)

→ **JUNE 19—Grazefest**, Mill City Farmers' Market, Minneapolis; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 320-226-6318

→ **JULY 10—SFA Festival of Farms**, various locations throughout Minnesota; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); 320-226-6318

→ **AUG. 14—Minnesota Garlic Festival**, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org); Jerry Ford, 320-543-3394; [jerry@marienne.com](mailto:jerry@marienne.com)

→ **AUG. 20—Managing cover crops workshop**, East Troy, Wis., Contact: [www.michaelfieldsagainst.org](http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org); 262-642-3303

→ **SEPT. 1—Registration deadline for 2010-2011 session of LSP's Farm Beginnings program** (see page 18 for details)

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