

# The Land Stewardship



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

*Keeping the Land & People Together*

# Letter

Vol. 25, No. 3

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Summer 2007



The farm of Greg and Jeanne Erickson served as the setting for the Land Stewardship Project's recent 25th Anniversary celebration in southeast Minnesota. (see page 14)

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—*Spots Still Available in Farm Beginnings Class*—

—*A Photographic Tour of LSP's 25th Anniversary Events*—

—*2007 Farm Bill Debate in Final Weeks*—

—*The Organic Research Investment Begins to Pay Off*—

—*Anguish Over Atrazine*—

—*Poetry: Berry, O'Reilley, Paddock*—



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

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## Memos of understanding

*Gordon King's written gifts span the years.*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** When longtime Land Stewardship Project member Gordon King sends in a donation, it often comes with a bonus: a neatly typed or handwritten note describing his take on life, the land or a recent meal he enjoyed with his wife Peg. The Kings, who live in the northern Wisconsin town of Merrill, have a deep passion for the land and land stewardship, a passion they have passed on to their daughter Jennifer Rupprecht, who, along with her husband Mike, has long pioneered sustainable agriculture on Earth-Be-Glad Farm in southeast Minnesota. Lucky for us, Gordon has also passed along that passion through his writing. The Kings have been generous enough to allow the *Land Stewardship Letter* to share a sampling of those writings from over the years with our readers.

### Pleasing peas

Herewith, our contribution to assure the right of free speech—not to mention free farming (pesticide, herbicide and fungicide free) and all the many benefits accruing there

from...like the fresh peas Grandma King got at the farmers' market a couple hours ago. I had almost forgotten how good fresh

peas are for BREAKFAST! The pods are also good rabbit bait; I have a cottontail in a trap now, waiting to be transplanted across the river. When it's frozen (about mid-November, usually) the rabbit will be grown, and if he comes back he'll be big enough to eat...very good, too. And why not? Part of their diet is Granny's cosmos.



### Deep-six the Jet Ski

I am pleased to note that the news (both TV and paper) quite frankly now contains items regarding the success of paddock grazing, especially for dairy

cattle. As a member of Trout Unlimited (25 years or so), I am aware of the advantages of limiting access to streambanks. Some, yes. Perpetually, no. We work to restore maximum biodiversity and provide streambed travel paths for a great host of fauna. These interconnections are vital if the landscape is to harbor anything approaching former species, and numbers, thereof. To settle for LESS than we now have is unthinkable.

Meanwhile, down with Jet Skis!! (Aka "personal watercraft," a euphemism as bad as "sleeping" is for death). A junk (fools') tool that puts ORV's to shame.

It's hard to beat "progress" when you're having "fun." Perhaps the loonies do not perceive pleasure.

### A dunk in the dust

I don't know much about the Secretary of Agriculture, but almost anyone off the street would be a better Secretary of the Interior than the James Watt protégé now occupying the chair. I fear for the rivers after the dewatering for irrigation—unless we can develop a fish like the Siamese mud crawler...but I don't think they navigate too well in dust.

### The good life

We just had a rather filling stay at Earth-Be-Glad Farm last Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. It is always "filling" when you get your feet under Mike and Jenny's table. What eggs! The jonquil yokes make white eggs look sick.

The last watermelon also fell victim to our eating tools, not to mention our appetites. I picked the last bucket of grapes and Jenny made a half-gallon of

tart juice which we brought home, finding a mix of half and half (grape and apple) to be very much to our liking. You guys know how to farm. More importantly, you know how to LIVE.

Now I must add local produce to the diet. Three rock bass and a northern pike await the fillet knife...last evening's catch. Don't worry—we know how lucky we are; no SUV to fuel, and only two headlights to annoy the oncoming motorist. It's all about living better, for less—and WITH less.



### Right track

Of course you are on the right track...I should say the ONLY track, to a livable and enjoyable future. Further, I want to encourage people like my daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter to continue what also proves to be a boon to their parents/grandparents: poison-free meat and vegetables. I've had some experiences with a few candidates for the loony bin, who think that by killing more earthworms you can somehow grow better grass (or better sod along the highways with liberal applications of salt!).

### Podcasting

You get a very familiar airplane stamp with this letter. From 1942 through 1947 I had about 35 jumps from that grand old Airframe, military designation C-47. Thousands were zebra-striped (or I could say "wore zebra stripes") for rapid identification in the three large airborne operations of WW II. My unit, the 506th Parachute Infantry, was near the front of the incredible sky train heading into the Contentin Peninsula of Norway. About 1 a.m. on June 6, 1944, after we left the British shore and the aircraft lights went out, those few of us in VIP seating (opposite the open door, carrying loads of radio and or demolition equipment) were cheered by the endless pods of great gray whales trailing along behind us, in Vs of nine at a time, perhaps a dozen Vs in view before the twilight deepened.

What memories! □







# Passing on an environmental legacy

By Carla Inderrieden

I grew up in the heart of Minnesota, surrounded by farmland and small towns populated by my German relatives. My mother and father both grew up on farms, near the town of Greenwald, only a half a mile apart. Born in 1947 and 1940 respectively, my mother and father have seen the world change exceedingly over time. As a child, I would listen to my parents talk about how the fields surrounding our home used to be the “Big Woods,” and how the house we live in used to be the schoolhouse for all the children within walking distance.

The busy corner we now live on used to be only a dark path in the woods, where buggies would make their way to town to sell their milk and eggs and to buy flour and sugar. Much of what they spoke of was a combination of what their parents remembered and what they had seen, but it all blended when they reminisced. Growing up, I would go to the farm my mother grew up on and the farm my father grew up on to help with chores. In the time that I was there, they converted trees into agriculture and the cows were sold. My uncles had to grow corn or soybeans as their only crops to compete and would work normal jobs in addition to farming. It was no longer the way of life my parents’ knew, but a second job.

My father’s first language was

German, but my mother, who was seven years younger, was taught English. The world they knew was peopled only by Germans and farmers; my world by all

• • •

*From a very early age, I was taught a very basic lesson: this earth was the only one we were given and whatever is done to it cannot be undone.*

• • •

racers and occupations. Growing up, my mother reminded me whenever possible how her mother would never waste a bit of food, metal, twine, or paper; everything was saved, waste was almost unheard of. In everyday situations, my mother found ways to show me how wasteful society was becoming. We would look at where clothes and food came from, taking note every time something had to travel a very long way to get to us. She always told me how cars were polluting our air, pesticides were polluting our water and how someone needed to study these things and stop them before the planet was destroyed. On a daily basis she would ask me where people think their trash is going, for it can only go back into us, in one way or

another. When the railroad, which had run past her home and ours since she had been a child, was taken out, she mourned for it, telling me that the impacts of the railroads were far less than what would replace them. I have never forgotten it. From a very early age, I was taught a very basic lesson: this earth was the only one we were given and whatever is done to it cannot be undone.

This past summer, my mother and father took me out to the forests we own down the road from our home. It is land my father’s grandfather came to own in the 1850s. The trees have never been harvested; the land is still much as it was then. They took me to the area of the land where a small valley opens up, and my father shared with me the stories his grandfather told him about when the Indians used to pitch their teepees in that valley. He showed me exactly where the holes from the teepees went into the ground and wanted me to remember it for my children.

My parents’ respect and love for the land their families came here for have been instilled in me. I hold the natural environment higher than any invention of humans. It is in the spirit of my parents and the values they passed on to me that I strive to work on environmental policy in the hope that I can preserve the integrity of this planet for as many generations as there will be. □

*Carla Inderrieden is a student at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and is majoring in environmental science, policy and management, and minoring in scientific and technical communication. Inderrieden wrote this essay as part of her application for a Morris K. Udall Scholarship.*

*“The total economy is an economy in which people do nothing for themselves. It’s an economy in which they pay for everything; they are total consumers. A local economy is one that exists by virtue of people’s willingness to take back a certain amount of economic initiative and do things for themselves. It’s a way to recapture economic choice. It’s self-determination.”*

— Author/farmer Wendell Berry, quoted in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (7/11/07)

NOTE: Visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html) for these and other articles related to LSP’s work.

## Worth repeating

*“Industrial food has left people wanting. When we’re out harvesting, we think of people and faces.”*

— Dan Guenther, CSA farmer & Land Stewardship Project Board member, quoted in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* (6/17/07)

*“Family farms trade downtown and use the local bank, stores, feed mill, and they generate local processing. It’s a way to keep wealth at home and revitalize the rural economy from the inside out. Instead of chasing smokestacks, look at what we have locally and build on it.”*

— Terry VanDerPol, beef farmer & LSP staff member, quoted in *Ag Innovation News* (July-Sept. 2007)

# A side order of bird nesting ground, please

*And would you like that with or without erosion control?*

By Caroline van Schaik

Side dish or main course, food as shorthand for a better environment is finding its rightful place at the table. While eating local is creating quite a buzz, there is nothing like a grassland songbird to put a pointed edge to the conversation. All “local” is not created equal, and a songbird, we’ve learned, can tell the difference.

The Land Stewardship Project and its partners have for years been interested in practical tools that help family farmers be more sustainable. Along with the home-made soil probes and coffee can percolator tests, modeled predictions might serve as a surrogate for long-term performance. This led us to investigate the utility of Geographic Information System-based tools that could provide environmental indicators of good farming—in particular, bird habitat.

At the same time, nothing matters as

much as making good farming pay. “It’s all theoretical until you can create an economic market,” said one of the region’s most successful new entrepreneurs. He was specifically addressing pastured beef cows—grass-finished meat is a classic example of how carnivores pay for the erosion control and other environmental attributes inherent in permanent pastures.

But back to the birds. The Coordinated Conservation Planning (CCP) analysis tool was developed by the U.S. Geological Survey to predict bird success within refuges, but we tried applying it to both a farm and a watershed in southeastern Minnesota. Based on a detailed land cover spatial database and 280-bird matrix that incorporates the Upper Mississippi, the model calculates how well a designated bird or group of birds will do under specified conditions.

As a component of LSP’s research for the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative ([www.landstewardship](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html)

[project.org/programs\\_mba.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html)), the CCP program was applied to “what-if” scenarios to see how birds and land use intersect together. Scenarios included the dramatic conversion of the entire watershed’s cropped land to pasture/hay, and the more moderate conversion of just the cropped land with greater than a six-degree slope to pasture/hay.

The initial goal was to learn if this tool could predict the state of bird habitat at a quicker rate than what biological systems normally permit. Performance-based farm payments could then be tied to such predictions based on real land management. That is, a landowner would receive a payment for practices that should, according to the predictions, lead to watershed-wide environmental outcomes.

As expected, converting some or all cropped (corn and soybeans) land to pasture/hay has a significantly positive impact on grassland birds, improving nearly all the low ranked acreage to a medium or high ranking for species occurrence. This relation between land use and the public good of wildlife clears the way to choices that make sense to our bellies and are environmentally and economically smart. In fact, when the public demands pasture-raised products, grassland and wildlife conditions become part of a region’s economic market drivers. There is nothing theoretical about the premiums being paid for grass-fed meats and dairy, or in the circulation of those premiums within miles of where they are earned. This is a regional economy at work.

There is also a good correlation between water quality and bird habitat. For example, changing 20 percent of row crops to pasture was predicted to improve most of the low ranking grassland bird habitat and reduce field edge nitrogen losses. The findings suggest that if landscape goals include a thriving grassland bird population or better groundwater, cropped acreage in this particular watershed would be limited.

So, too, our shopping carts would get a second look. Cows and carnivores are part of an appropriate Midwestern food system. Songbirds and grass, it turns out, are part of it, too. □

*Caroline van Schaik is an LSP organizer and southeast Minnesota farmer. She can be reached at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## The big dig



From within a five-foot pit on the edge of Land Stewardship Project members Roy and Carol Michaelis’s cornfield, Bruno Borsari and others spoke about feeding the soil rather than merely the plants during a field event Aug. 14. Borsari is a biology professor at Winona State University with a passion for biodiversity below as well as above ground. Participants were able to climb into the pit and view the soil profile, along with markers indicating earthworm activity and roots. The role of oxygen and other nutrients in combination with rotations, tillage and other management decisions and their impact on soil life and development were the main topics of conversation. LSP co-sponsored the event with the Southeast Minnesota Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

# Letters

## Dust to dust

The book review of *The Worst Hard Time* by Timothy Egan in the Winter 2007 *Land Stewardship Letter* brought to mind the works of my father, Charles Burns, which were published in the July/August 2001 *LSL*. They're worth re-reading together.

— Persis Suddeth  
Bowie, Md.

**Editor's Note:** We agree. You can read Burns' essay, "The peeling of the pelt," in the July/August 2001 *LSL* at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html). The *Worst Hard Time* review can also be found at that web address by downloading the Winter 2007 issue.

## Logo lacking

Perhaps I'm blind or maybe just didn't follow clearly but you have a new logo now. You attributed the old one to an old friend, Patrick Moore (which I always liked). This new one is attributed to who? It has that computer-generated feel to it, with the feel of opening the gate to let the cattle out—or in, is it? Maybe it's just too sophisticated for someone like me, who believes in logo stewardship too.

— Jay Fier  
Donnelly, Minn.

**Editor's Note:** The new *Land Stewardship Project* logo was designed by John

*Seymour-Anderson of Triangle Park Creative* ([www.triangleparkcreative.com](http://www.triangleparkcreative.com)). *Triangle Park* specializes in designs for nonprofit organizations.

## The GMO gamble

The farmer, they say, is the biggest gambler of all. He gambles on the weather, on prices and on the possibility of disease and infestations. That leaves seed selection as one of the few variables under his control.

But who or what controls the genes in those seeds? Nature? Or the genetic engineering of the big, for-profit seed companies? And what happens to the genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the resulting corn or soybeans that are fed to animals or eaten by humans?

Find out before you plant. Read Jeffrey M. Smith's 2007 book, *Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods* (Yes! Books; 888-717-7000; [www.seedsofdeception.com](http://www.seedsofdeception.com)).

Otherwise, you gamble with your health, and you give up control of your

seeds—the two most important variables of all.

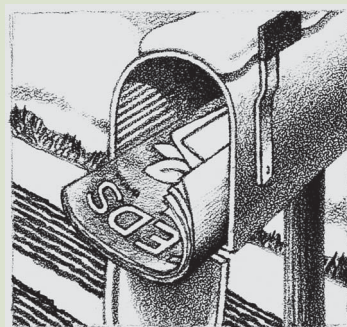
— Barbara Upton  
Fountain, Minn.

## Still going strong

We are 88-years-young, but still get dirt on our hands. We have land that has not had fertilizer or spray put on it for nine years. The corn is yielding way past 100 bushels an acre. We use a three-way rotation: corn, wheat and beans. In the corn and beans, vetch is broadcast over the top when the plants are one inch or one and a half inches high. Red clover is planted with the wheat. This land is on South Dakota Slope Soil. The inter-seeding has reduced water erosion considerably. Our average rainfall is 19 inches. In nine years, the profit on that land has been more than if we had applied 300 pounds of fertilizer each year.

— Winfred & Lyla Schmidt  
Marietta, Minn.

## What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? Of course you do.

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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## Get your LSP t-shirt

In these photos, Land Stewardship Project member Lois Nash proudly displays her stewardship ethic with LSP's new short-sleeved t-shirt. The organic, cream-colored shirt features our new green and black logo on the front and "Keeping the Land & People Together" on the back. These fashionable items are available in men's and women's sizes, and can be obtained from each of our offices. You can also have them mailed to you by calling our White Bear Lake office at 651-653-0618. Prices are \$13.50 for members, and \$15 for nonmembers. If you are ordering by mail, call 651-653-0618 for information on shipping costs. □





# Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

## → Myth:

Federal law makes it illegal to favor local farmers when purchasing food for public schools.

## → Fact:

Efforts to get more locally produced food into school lunch programs have been increasing in recent years. Such efforts are not yet widespread, but several urban, suburban and rural school districts have taken steps to replace at least a few of those chicken nuggets and chili dogs with fresh, local produce, dairy and meat products. Usually these efforts are spearheaded by concerned parents, who often go to great lengths to research what food is available locally and how it can be delivered to the cafeteria. Unfortunately, school officials often respond to such calls for a healthier lunch program by claiming that federal law bans them from favoring local farmers when making purchases.

The 2002 Farm Bill includes language that explicitly allows the procurement of local food for school cafeterias. In fact, Section 4303 of the Farm Bill does more than “allow” such efforts. The law says the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture “shall encourage institutions participating in the school lunch program under this chapter and the school breakfast program...to purchase, in addition to other food purchases, locally produced foods for school meal programs, to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate.”

According to a memorandum pro-

duced by the Harrison Institute for Public Law, some of the confusion around the legality of geographic preferences for school food can be traced to some older statutes, as well as past “hostility” shown toward such efforts by the USDA and federal Office of Management and Budget. Because school districts often commingle state and federal funds in their budgets, they believe they are bound to old federal regulations prohibiting geographic preferences. Even if older regulations did prohibit local preferences, and that’s open to interpretation, the Harrison Institute’s memo makes it clear that the 2002 Farm Bill trumps previous statutes.

In fact, in 2004 Congress provided even more support for local food purchasing initiatives when it passed the Child Nutrition and Reauthorization Act. In Section 122 of that law, it states that the USDA may provide assistance to programs “designed to procure local foods from small- and medium-sized farms for school meals...” The legislation is supposed to create a seed grant fund to cover the initial costs—equipment, nutrition education, school gardens, etc.—of Farm to Cafeteria projects.

Now comes the tricky part: so far the federal government has failed to back up this paper support with adequate money. It’s needed at a time when many schools lack basic food preparation facilities, and farmers hoping to supply these institutions need facilities and equipment to adhere to health regulations. The Land Stewardship Project is working with several other organizations to get funding for farm to school efforts put into the 2007 Farm Bill.

## → More information:

• Terry VanDerPol, Director of LSP’s Community Based Food Systems and Economic Development Program, can be contacted at 320-269-2105 or [tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org).

• The Jan./Feb./March 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter* ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html)) featured a special report on how schools are working with farmers to get more local foods in cafeterias.

• The Community Food Security Coalition has information on farm to school projects throughout the country. Visit [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org), or call 310-822-5410.

• Contact LSP’s Policy and Organizing Program about how to encourage Congress to support farm to school initiatives in the Farm Bill. Adam Warthesen, a federal policy organizer for LSP, can be contacted at 612-722-6377. LSP’s priorities for the 2007 Farm Bill, including support for farm to school programs, are available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_federal\\_policy.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_federal_policy.html).

## Myth Busters on the Internet

The *Land Stewardship Letter*’s popular *Myth Buster* series is available on our website. You can download pdf versions at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html). For information on obtaining paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org).

52%...  
110%...  
182%...

...That’s the percentage increase, respectively, in “gross sales revenue,” “value added” and “labor income” a 1,000-acre organic crop farm produced when compared to a 1,000-acre conventional farm, according to a recent Iowa State University study. The study, which was funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, examined whether it pays locally to help farmers convert from conventional to organic crop production. It used as its model the plan in Woodbury County, Iowa, to provide tax abatements for producers who transition to organic farming. The full report on the study is at [www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing\\_files/woodbury.htm](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/woodbury.htm). To read LSP’s special report on Woodbury County’s program, see the Jan./Feb./March and April/May/June 2006 issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. The LSP report is also available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/rural\\_develop\\_report.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/rural_develop_report.pdf).



## LSP Farm Beginnings classes begin this fall

*A few spots still available in La Crosse & Marshall*

There are still a few spots left in the 2007-2008 edition of one of the country's most successful beginning farmer training programs. The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings® program will be holding classes in La Crosse, Wis., and Marshall, Minn., beginning this fall.

In 2007, Farm Beginnings is celebrating its 10th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The program has its roots in southeast Minnesota's Wabasha County, where in 1997 a group of farmers approached LSP about developing a community-based initiative that would train a new generation of farmers.

The course consists of a series of classes that take place twice a month between October and March. After March, course participants have the opportunity to attend on-farm educational field days. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative

marketing and innovative production techniques.

During the past decade, over 300 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program, and 60 percent of them are actively farming, according to class data. In 2005, Farm Beginnings was extended to Illinois and Nebraska. Beginning this fall, Farm Beginnings classes will be held in North Dakota.

### More information

For more information on the La Crosse class, contact Karen Benson in LSP's Lewiston office at 507-523-3366. For details on the Marshall class, contact Susan Hurst at 320-269-2105 or fbwest@landstewardshipproject.org. Information is also available at [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org).

- In **North Dakota**, call 701-486-3569 or visit [www.farrms.org](http://www.farrms.org).
- In **Nebraska**, call 402-254-6893 or



**During a recent Farm Beginnings field day, Eric Klein of Hidden Stream farm near Elgin, Minn., described how he and his wife Lisa raise hogs in natural conditions and sell pork directly to consumers. (photo by Karen Stettler)**

e-mail [martink@cfra.org](mailto:martink@cfra.org).

- For information on the **Central Illinois** Farm Beginnings program, call 847-570-0701 or visit [www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu).

- The **Stateline** Farm Beginnings program (northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin) can be contacted at 815-389-8455. Its website is [www.csalearningcenter.org/farmbeginnings.html](http://www.csalearningcenter.org/farmbeginnings.html). □



**Mike Rupprecht led Farm Beginnings students on a pasture walk at Earth-Be-Glad farm near Lewiston, Minn., this summer. He and his wife Jennifer produce beef and chickens on pasture and sell them direct to consumers. They also raise certified organic crops. (photo by Karen Stettler)**

**BELOW: Jack and Marge Warthesen recently hosted a field day on their farm near Plainview, Minn. They gave Farm Beginnings participants a firsthand look at Community Supported Agriculture, as well as beef, chicken and egg production. Also featured were several farm conservation projects. (photo by Karen Stettler)**





## Own a piece of LSP history

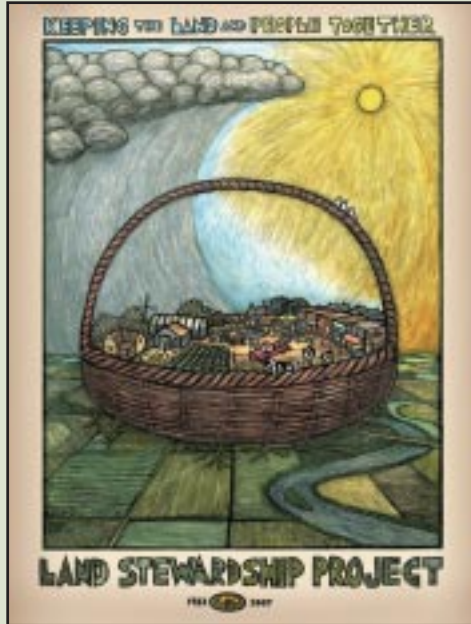
For its 25th Anniversary, the Land Stewardship Project commissioned a commemorative poster by artist Ricardo Levins Morales of the Northland Poster Collective. For almost three decades, the Northland Poster Collective ([www.northlandposter.com](http://www.northlandposter.com)) has featured the art of social justice, the tools of grassroots organizing and activism, and the craft of union workers.

For LSP, the Collective has created a piece entitled, "Keeping the Land and People Together." The colorful poster, which is pictured here, portrays a food and farming system that benefits the land, its people and our communities.

A 17 x 22 high-quality, laminated copy of the artwork suitable for framing can be purchased for \$15 (\$13.50 for LSP members; prices include sales tax) by contacting Louise Arbuckle in LSP's White Bear Lake, Minn., office at 651-653-0618 or [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org). Posters can also be purchased from our offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) and South Minneapolis (612-722-6377).

### Notecards

LSP is offering a set of blank notecards that feature our commemorative poster. The 4 x 5 cards come in packages of eight, and cost \$11 for members and \$12.50 for nonmembers. To order the cards, contact Louise



Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org).

### 25th Anniversary booklets

*25 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together* is a special commemorative booklet celebrating LSP's Anniversary and presenting our vision for the future. A 25-year timeline is also included. Copies of the 20-page, color publication are \$13.50 for LSP members, \$15 for nonmembers. For ordering information, contact Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org).

## Walk for justice & stewardship Sept. 16

On Sunday, Sept. 16, a fun team of Land Stewardship Project members will be participating in the Headwaters Walk for Justice to raise funds for LSP's work for stewardship and democracy.

You can help by joining the team yourself (time commitment is minimal) or by making a donation toward our goal of \$5,000. Of the proceeds raised, \$1,000 will go to support the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which supports LSP through its employee giving program to the tune of \$25,000 a year. Visit <http://walkforjustice.kintera.org/lsp> to join or donate online; or contact Cathy Eberhart at [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org) or 651-653-0618 for more information. □

## Barn-raising Oct. 6

On Saturday, Oct. 6, there will be a barn-raising event at the Brad and Leslea Hodgson farm near Fountain, in southeast Minnesota. This event will provide the Hodgsons, who are Farm Beginnings graduates, with a new barn. It will also help celebrate the Land Stewardship Project's 25th Anniversary. The "raising" will be led by Todd Juzwiak of DreamAcres Organic Farm. DreamAcres offers classes on timber framing, logging and other skills. On Sept. 28, Juzwiak will lead a special hands-on timber-framing workshop at the Hodgsons as a warm-up to the barn-raising.

For details on the barn-raising, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org).

To read a profile of the Hodgsons, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter*, or visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html). □

## CROP Walk

Land Stewardship Project members and staff participated in the 2007 Chippewa County CROP Walk on June 13. The theme of this year's CROP Walk ([www.churchworldservice.org/CROP/index.html](http://www.churchworldservice.org/CROP/index.html)) was "Home Grown Solutions for a Global Crisis," and the focus was on how climate change is affecting the world's ability to feed itself. Part of the proceeds raised went to support LSP's work in western Minnesota. For more information, contact LSP's Montevideo office at 320-269-2105 or [lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org). (photo by Michele Skogrand)





LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

## LSP News

### Science paper: Perennial plants could help spawn a sustainable bioeconomy

Industrial agriculture has made farming into a bit of a one-trick pony. Here in the Midwest, the majority of cropland produces monocultures of corn and soybeans, and not much else. This narrowly focused agriculture has produced record yields of raw commodities, but these yields have come with some steep environmental, economic and even social price tags attached.

A paper in the June 15 edition of the journal *Science* argues that we can make farming more multifunctional, and thus more sustainable. By adding perennial plant systems such as grass, for example, agriculture can produce multiple benefits, maintain the paper's 14 co-authors, including Land Stewardship Project Executive Director George Boody. The researchers examined the results of

numerous studies that have been done in farm country in recent years and concluded that diversifying agriculture could produce many benefits for our rural communities.

For example, establishing more pasture-based livestock production systems would keep soil in place and protect water quality, while providing wildlife habitat. In addition, since pasture-based livestock systems have proven to be low-cost, profitable ways of producing meat and dairy products, this type of farming can help build and maintain wealth in local communities. Finally, grass-based livestock systems are creating a buzz in the health and nutrition community because of their ability to produce a healthier food product.

That's one example of multifunctional

agriculture.

The *Science* paper's authors argue that it is imperative we take a serious look at the role perennial plant systems can play in a multifunctional agriculture as society increasingly looks to annual row crop agriculture to fulfill its energy needs. And although biofuels made from annual crops such as corn can be a good interim step, focusing exclusively on this as the answer to our energy needs will likely exacerbate the environmental, economic and social problems associated with all-out production of one or two row crops, say the authors.

Even the USDA is beginning to acknowledge that there are some drawbacks to promoting corn-based ethanol to the exclusion of everything else. A USDA study called, "An Analysis of the Effects of an Expansion in Biofuel Demand on U.S. Agriculture" reports that one potential outcome is: "...increases in soil erosion and nutrient loading..."

But, the *Science* paper concludes, perennial plant systems could help us develop a sustainable bio-economy. One option that is being explored is using diverse stands of prairie grass to produce cellulosic biofuels. Since these grasses don't have to be replanted, and can be grown year-after-year with few inputs, they could produce energy quite efficiently. Meanwhile, they could produce many other benefits, such as cleaner water, wildlife habitat, trapping of greenhouse gases and cheap livestock feed.

"We keep treating agriculture like it's an industrial system. That's a risky misrepresentation," says Boody. "Agriculture is fundamentally a biological system, and once we recognize that it can start producing multiple public goods." □

To listen to an LSP Ear to the Ground podcast (episode 34) featuring George Boody talking about the *Science* paper, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and click on the podcast link under **Take Action**. For a *Science* podcast featuring paper co-author and LSP member Nick Jordan, see [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org) and follow the links to their June 15, 2007, podcast page.

### LSP honored in the U.S. House

On July 18, Minnesota U.S. Rep. Timothy Walz honored the Land Stewardship Project's 25th Anniversary with a tribute on the floor of the House. The statement was printed in the *Congressional Record's* July 19 edition (Vol. 153, No. 116). Here is the text of the tribute:

I would like to applaud the outstanding work this organization does representing Minnesota's family farmers and promoting sustainable approaches to farming practices. From its very beginning, the Land Stewardship Project has advanced practical stewardship solutions and built widespread public support for an agricultural system in which family farms, small towns and a healthy environment can thrive.

Over the years, the Land Stewardship Project has fought to ensure a healthier food supply, preserve our soil, water and wildlife habitat, and support diversified and profitable family farming. The Land Stewardship Project has created a positive alternative for Minnesota producers and rural residents. And, as those of us elected in office know, the Land Stewardship Project is a strong, effective voice on behalf of members.

With their "Farm Beginnings Program," the Land Stewardship Project educates beginning farmers in the basics of financial management. This program has helped bring the next generation of farmers and ranchers into agriculture and has graduated over 300 students in the past 10 years.

For the 25 years of service to Minnesota's farmers and rural communities, I commend the members and staff of the Land Stewardship Project and I look forward to their bright future.



## LSP staff changes

As the Land Stewardship Project marks its 25th Anniversary and looks to the future, the organization has reorganized its management of various programs. Here are recent staff changes at LSP:

→ **Mark Schultz**, LSP's Policy and Organizing Director, has been named Associate Director/Director of Programs. He will continue as Policy and Organizing Director.

→ **Karen Stettler**, who has long worked with the Farm Beginnings® initiative in southeast Minnesota, has been named Director of that program.

→ **Terry VanDerPol**, an organizer in LSP's Montevideo, Minn., office, is now the Director of LSP's new Community Based Food Systems and Economic Development Program.

→ **Mike McMahon**, an organizer in LSP's Policy and Organizing program, has recently been named its Membership Coordinator. He succeeds Cathy Eberhart, who is cutting back on her responsibilities to focus more time on her family's coffee business. Eberhart will continue half-time with LSP, and will assist in its membership work.

→ **Dana Jackson**, a Senior Associate at LSP and its former Associate Director, now coordinates the St. Croix River Valley *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign,

which is part of the Community Based Food Systems and Economic Development Program.

George Boody, LSP's Executive Director, says the staff/program changes will help LSP better focus its attention on its three main program areas: Farm Beginnings, Community Based Food Systems and Economic Development, and Policy and Organizing.

"It's become clear in recent years that often these three areas of LSP's work hand-in-hand, increasing LSP's overall effectiveness," says Boody. "These staff changes will help us coordinate the operation of these programs even better as we move into some exciting initiatives in the future." □

## Golightly leaves LSP

**Lori Golightly** has left the Land Stewardship Project to focus on her graduate school work at the University of Minnesota. Golightly joined LSP in 2005 and has worked the past two years as its Database Manager. □



**Lori Golightly**

## 2 Farm Beginnings facilitators join LSP

**Heather Flashinski** and **Susan Hurst** have joined the Land Stewardship Project as Farm Beginnings® class facilitators.



**Heather Flashinski**

Flashinski will work with the class being held in La Crosse, Wis., and Hurst will facilitate the Marshall, Minn., course.

**Flashinski**, a Farm Beginnings graduate, raises beef cattle and chickens with her husband Mark in Cadott,

Wis. She also works for Grassworks, Inc., as a grant manager and tradeshow director for the Wisconsin Grazing Conference. Flashinski has also worked as the Executive Director of the River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in animal and plant systems and agricultural industries and marketing, with an emphasis on beef marketing. Flashinski is a Holistic Management instructor and certified as a USDA grazing planner.

**Hurst** is also a Farm Beginnings graduate and operates a organic hog and poultry farm near Ortonville, Minn., with her husband Michael. She is a project coordinator for Rausch Granite Interiors and has worked as a fundraising coordinator, food company receiving coordinator and fingerprint technician supervisor. Hurst has also worked in the health care field and as a development coordinator for Columbia Basin Domestic Violence Services in Kennewick, Wash. She has a degree in criminal justice with a minor in human



**Susan Hurst**

relations from Huron University. Hurst also has an associate's degree in respiratory care from Dakota State University and has been trained at the federal law enforcement center in New Mexico. □

## LSP Membership Assistant position

The Land Stewardship Project is looking for a Membership Assistant. The Membership Assistant will help grow LSP's membership through the maintenance of our database. The successful candidate will also assist with organizing.

Primary responsibilities include maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database. The Assistant will also help program staff communicate effectively with members by coordinating database use among four offices; creating thank you notes, reports, labels and mail merges; assisting with trainings; and other tasks as directed by the Membership Coordinator.

The Assistant will also work with LSP Policy Program organizers on mailings, volunteer recruitment, meetings, phone banks, member communication and other tasks as needed.

Candidates should have experience with word processing, spreadsheet and

database programs. Close attention to detail and a high level of data entry and overall accuracy, good organizational skills and the ability to communicate clearly verbally and in writing are required. The Assistant must also have the ability to explain computer/database techniques to others with less computing skills. Experience working in grassroots organizations is a plus.

This is a full-time position located at our office in White Bear Lake, Minn. There will be some evening and weekend hours required on an as needed basis.

**To apply, please submit a resume and cover letter to:**

Michael McMahon  
Membership Coordinator  
Land Stewardship Project  
2919 E. 42nd Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55406  
e-mail:mcmahon@land  
stewardshipproject.org



# 25 years of education, action & stewardship

It's been a busy summer of reflection and looking to the future as the Land Stewardship Project marks its 25th Anniversary:

- ➔ On June 29th, farmer/author Wendell Berry joined Minnesota writers Mary Rose O'Reilley and Joe Paddock for a "Keeping the Land and People Together" evening in Saint Paul, Minn.
- ➔ On July 22, a potluck picnic/Farm Beginnings® graduation ceremony was held on the Greg and Jeanne Erickson farm near Lewiston, in southeast Minnesota.
- ➔ On Aug. 2, a 25th Anniversary event in Minneapolis focused on the accomplishments and future efforts of LSP's policy and organizing work.
- ➔ On Aug. 19, LSP in western Minnesota marked the organization's anniversary with a special Farm Beginnings graduation and hog roast in Granite Falls, Minn.

Photos from the first three events are featured here on pages 12-15; photos from the Aug. 19 event will be in the next *LSL*.

## 'Keeping the Land & People Together' celebrates art, stewardship & LSP



Over 300 people attended the "Keeping the Land and People Together" event at the College of Saint Catherine in Saint Paul, Minn. "The Land Stewardship Project has made a difference. It's made a tremendous difference," Wendell Berry told the crowd. (*LSP photo*)

Berry read one of his poems and a short story during LSP's 25th Anniversary event. Also giving readings on June 29 were Minnesota authors Mary Rose O'Reilley and Joe Paddock. See pages 26 and 27 for samples of poetry from these three writers. For information on how to get an audio recording of the evening, see page 27. (*LSP photo*)





LSP co-founder Ron Kroese (left) facilitated a discussion about the role of art in stewardship. Writers Joe Paddock, Wendell Berry and Mary Rose O'Reilley fielded questions from audience members. (LSP photo)



LSP members Richard Handeen and Audrey Arner, who farm in western Minnesota, provided music during the Saint Paul event. (LSP photo)



RIGHT PHOTO: LSP Executive Director George Boody (left) and Ron Kroese stood for a photo with Wendell Berry. Berry's writings, particularly his 1977 book, *The Unsettling of America*, were the inspiration for the founding of LSP in 1982. (LSP photo)



The day after the "Keeping the Land and People Together" event, LSP members Dave and Florence Minar hosted Berry on their Cedar Summit dairy farm near New Prague, Minn. During the tour, the writer met Farm Beginnings graduates, learned about the Monitoring Project and tasted some Cedar Summit ice cream and milk. (LSP photos)





# ‘Food, Farming, Family & Fun’ in southeast Minnesota

Greg and Jeanne Erickson hosted LSP’s 25th Anniversary event in southeast Minnesota. They operate a certified organic dairy farm near Lewiston and are mentoring a pair of recent Farm Beginnings graduates.

(photo by Caroline van Schaik)



Farmer Eva Barr performed an excerpt from *Planting in the Dust*, a play written for LSP by Nancy Paddock during its early years. Paddock has recently updated the one-woman play. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



Culinary contributions from local members’ gardens rounded out the hog roast. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



The Ericksons provided a tour of their farm (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

RIGHT PHOTO: Steve O’Neil, LSP’s first community organizer, talked about the organization’s early history in southeast Minnesota. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



The next generation of LSP members were well represented at the event. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)





# LSP's Policy & Organizing Program 'Celebrates the Past-Moves into the Future'



Over 200 people came to Saint Joan of Arc Church in Minneapolis Aug. 2 to celebrate LSP's legacy of organizing for change and to eat food produced by local LSP members. (LSP photos)



LSP members from Dodge County, Minn., were recognized for their successful battle to keep a mega-dairy out of their community. (LSP photo)



Patty Wright (right), a member of LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee, recently participated in a farmer fly-in to Washington, D.C., to talk to lawmakers about reforms in the 2007 Farm Bill. Here she is shown talking to LSP members Joan and Rick Melerotto. (LSP photo)



LEFT PHOTO: Rhonda Perry of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center talked about working with LSP through the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment coalition. Among other initiatives, LSP has worked with the Campaign to make sure livestock farmers have access to fair markets. (LSP photo)



Mark Schultz, LSP's Policy and Organizing Director, as well as its Associate Director, talked about LSP's victories in the past and its plans for the future. (LSP photo)



Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie (center) talked to LSP Federal Policy Committee members Bill Gorman (left) and Jeff Klinge about public policy. Ritchie keynoted the Aug. 2 event. Shown in the background is LSP member Brad Trom. (LSP photo)

## 2007 Farm Bill: 1 down, 1 to go

*The House version includes support for beginning farmers and community based food systems, but CSP takes a major hit.*

When the U.S. House passed a new Farm Bill in late July, it marked the halfway point in development of a law that for the next five years or so will determine what and by whom food is grown in this country, what our children eat at school, food safety, what labels appear on packages, the cleanliness of our water and the amount of wildlife habitat available in rural areas. Increasingly, farm policy is even having an impact on what fuel your auto uses. This fall, likely in September and October, the Senate will develop their version of the Farm Bill. Then lawmakers from both bodies of Congress will get together in a conference committee to hammer out the differences between the House and Senate bills and send the end result to the President.

The House's version of the ag legislation contains some key provisions that support beginning farmers and local food systems, says Adam Warthesen, a Land Stewardship Project Policy Program organizer working on the Farm Bill. However, it falls well short in reforming the commodity subsidy system, adequately funding needed conservation programs and addressing the lack of competition and fairness in the livestock sector.

"The House bill is a good news-bad news type of situation. We made some progress but there is more work to be done," says Warthesen. "And as the Senate takes up the legislation, there are plenty of opportunities to take out the bad and fortify the good. Citizens have a great opportunity this fall to let lawmakers know what they want that final law to look like."

### How the House bill shapes up

First, the bad news. The House bill fails to make significant reforms to current commodity programs that give mega-agribusinesses and non-farmers the opportunity to rake in millions of dollars in subsidies, while family-sized farms get hung out to dry. The House also failed to address problems with concentration in the livestock industry.

Probably the greatest failure of the

House Bill is the massive cuts—\$4.8 billion or 44 percent over the next decade—to the Conservation Security Program (CSP). The working lands conservation program passed in the 2002 Farm Bill represented a major shift in farm policy. It rewards farmers for good conservation practices that produce cleaner water, healthy soil and more wildlife habitat, rather than just providing incentives to grow raw commodities. The



**Land Stewardship Project farmer-members (left to right) Lyle Kruse, his daughter Jessica and Mike Phillips joined 35 other farmers in Washington, D.C., in July to talk to policy-makers about the need for reforms in the 2007 Farm Bill. The fly-in was conducted prior to the House Agriculture Committee's full mark-up and debate of the House version of the bill. "One of the pieces we are very pleased to see in the House's bill is support for beginning farmer provisions," says Jessica, 14. The Kruses farm near Canby in western Minnesota, and Lyle is a Farm Beginnings graduate. Phillips farms in the southern part of the state. (photo by Adam Warthesen)**

44 percent cut means no new sign-ups for at least a few years, all but killing the program, says Warthesen. Senate Agriculture Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA), the original sponsor of the CSP legislation, has been critical of these deep cuts to CSP and vows to expand the program and make it a central theme of the Senate Farm Bill.

Studies conducted by LSP and other Midwestern farm groups show that CSP is proving to be an engine of conservation in farm country (see the Spring 2007 *LSL*, page 15).

"It's utterly unacceptable," Warthesen says. "The lack of funding for CSP really gives the House bill a black eye and threatens to continue the federal ag policy bias against diverse agricultural systems that produce multiple public goods for society."

Warthesen says the cuts to CSP are come at the same time that the House boosted funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) by 42 percent.

"It's appalling that EQIP was boosted at the expensive of probably the most promising conservation program ever," says Warthesen.

One pleasant surprise in the House Bill regarding EQIP was movement to more equitable distribution of cost-share grants to farmers implementing conservation practices. Unfortunately, this good sounding program has a dirty secret – it was changed in the 2002 Farm Bill to allow new and expanding factory farms to obtain up to a whopping \$450,000 to build huge manure lagoons in the name of conservation. To put that \$450,000 in perspective, during the 2007 fiscal year the average EQIP contract in Minnesota was around \$15,000; the largest one was \$284,000, according to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Factory farms have been using EQIP as an expansion tool to build multimillion gallon liquid manure facilities that engineering and environmental experts are increasingly criticizing as inherently flawed. The House Bill established a \$60,000 per contract payment limit, which is a change in the right direction. EQIP has the potential to support conservation on family-sized farms. For example, EQIP money can be put to better use for family farmers who want to put in fencing or watering systems for pasture-based livestock systems, and these cost-shares often amount to only a few thousand dollars per farm at most.

**Farm Bill, see page 17...**



Watershed studies show such low-cost systems provide a big environmental bang for the buck.

### Where the House bill shines

But there is good news. Perhaps the highlight of the House Bill is the inclusion of most provisions of the "Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act," a proposal LSP and other groups pushed hard for. In March, Karen Stettler, Director of LSP's Farm Beginnings® Program, testified before the U.S. House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research. She told the subcommittee that Farm Beginnings has shown there is a demand for community-based beginning farmer training programs. The program's graduates have also found there are lucrative opportunities available in farming via organic and grass-fed markets, as well as Community Supported Agriculture and direct marketing, Stettler said in March. LSP members who have graduated from Farm Beginnings have made trips to Washington, D.C., over the past several months to talk to lawmakers about beginning farmer issues.

In May, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act was introduced in the House and the Senate. It is authored by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD), a House Agriculture Committee member. The legislation also includes Senate co-sponsors Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Russ Feingold (D-MN), Ben Nelson (D-NE), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Max Baucus (D-MT) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH), as well as House co-sponsors Tim Walz (D-MN) and Betty McCollum (D-MN).

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Act is the first comprehensive policy approach to helping the next generation of farmers and ranchers take advantage of burgeoning opportunities in agriculture. The legislation includes several measures: support for beginning farmer and rancher training programs, beginning farmer lending provisions, and conservation incentives for beginning farmers and ranchers. A key component of the bill is the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which would support community-based organizations doing beginning farmer training initia-

tives. This competitive grants program would provide resources to community-based organizations that are working with beginning farmers and ranchers.

This legislation isn't just good news for rural communities and wannabe farmers, says Warthesen. Food firms that specialize in organic and sustainably-produced products are finding farmers who can consistently supply their needs hard to come by. A new generation of innovative farmers is needed.

"Getting beginning farmer provisions with dedicated funding in the final House

### Call your Senators now

U.S. Senators need to hear from their constituents during the next several weeks. In Minnesota, contact Senators Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar (both are on the Senate Ag Committee) and tell them the 2007 Farm Bill should not subsidize factory farms through programs like EQIP, and that the Senate should enact a \$100,000 cap. Support should be provided for community based food systems, beginning farmers and working lands conservation programs like the Conservation Security Program.

Coleman can be contacted at 651-645-0323; Klobuchar at 612-727-5220. Hearing from you in September and October will be critical.

For more information on how to make your voice heard in the Farm Bill debate, call LSP's Policy office 612-722-6377, or visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

bill is a huge win," says Warthesen. "LSP had a major hand in helping move these provisions forward. This is good news for anyone who supports family farming and wants to eat local, sustainably-produced food far into the future."

House Agriculture Committee Chair Collin Peterson (D-MN) played a key role in advancing beginning farmer policy and funding in the House Bill, along with Rep. Walz. Peterson was also instrumental in moving forward several proposals that would help make it easier for locally-produced foods to get into our communities. One example includes reauthorization and dedication of funding for the Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG) program, which provides grants to farmers looking to increase the value of agricultural products they produce on their farm. In addition, the VAPG

program was changed to also include support for value-chains, where farmers, processors and others can partner together in developing proposals that promote local food systems.

Other provisions included in the bill would encourage schools to create plans for procurement of local food, support "urban agriculture," promote farmers' markets, and require the "country of origin" to be included on meat and fresh produce. Funding for many of these programs is iffy at best, but it's hoped the Senate will create more solid financial backing once it takes up the Farm Bill, says Warthesen.

One of the more intriguing provisions in the House bill is a recommendation that federal agencies work together to research and eliminate "food deserts." These are areas that have limited or no access to good grocery stores. These deserts are common in urban areas dominated by convenience stores charging inflated prices for junk food. But they are also increasingly present in rural areas where a saying making the rounds is, "The closer to the land, the worst the food."

"There's a good chance research into food deserts will show how local food systems can help eliminate them while strengthening local economies," says Warthesen.

### Now, the Senate

How will the Farm Bill fare in the Senate? Warthesen says Senator Harkin has been a supporter of community based food initiatives in the past, and is a champion of conservation programs. And the fact that Harkin is the lead author on the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act will increase considerably the chances of that proposal making it into the final version of the bill. But Harkin can't do it alone, says Warthesen.

"Every Senator, and thus every citizen, has a say in the final product," he says. "The next month or so will be a key time for citizens to let their Senators know that they want a Farm Bill that's accountable to family farmers, rural communities, consumers and the land." □

### LSP Farm Bill priorities

The Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy page ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_federal\\_policy.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_federal_policy.html)) has fact sheets and summaries of our Farm Bill priorities.



## Alternative agriculture research

# An investment in farming's future

On an unseasonably cool day in early July, a cavalcade of tractor-pulled hay racks roll along dusty field roads near Lamberton, in southwest Minnesota, past unnaturally neat squares of corn, soybeans, alfalfa and small grains like rye and oats. The more than 100 farmers, researchers and government agency staffers on the wagons are touring the organic test plots at the University of Minnesota's Southwest Research and Outreach Center (SWROC).

The wagons stop at one point and Carmen Fernholz jumps off one of them, heads into a stand of alfalfa and addresses the crowd. He explains that this is a test plot showing how using alfalfa in a crop rotation can suppress infestations of Canada thistle. Fernholz is a pioneering organic farmer from up the road in Madison, Minn. Like many of the organic farmers in attendance, weeds are the bane of his existence as he struggles to control pests without chemicals (almost 60 percent of the farmers responding to a recent Minnesota Department of Agriculture survey cited "weed control" as a major challenge in 2006). But Canada thistle holds a special, symbolic place in Fernholz's heart. He tells about how 25 years ago he hosted his first meeting of organic inspectors. An hour before the meeting, the county weed inspector came and told Fernholz in no uncertain terms he had to get rid of the Canada thistle growing in one of his organic fields. Research on the SWROC plots shows that the alfalfa has reduced thistle populations from 6 percent of the field, to less than 1 percent.

"This is the best way we've found to control this perennial," Fernholz says. "I can't tell you how happy it has made me to know that alfalfa controls Canada thistle in my fields."

Judging from the discussion on the four wagons between tour stops, a lot of organic farmers are happy today—happy to have a research facility with a major portion of its acres dedicated to studying production of crops without chemicals. They talk excitedly about the test plots and how they compare to what they're seeing on their own farms.

When Fernholz and a lot of other organic pioneers were getting started two

decades ago, they had to rely on trial and error to perfect their systems. That was the old days. In states like Minnesota, organic agriculture has become a force to be reckoned with. According to a recent report by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, there were 525 certified organic farms in the state in 2006. Certified organic acreage in Minnesota grew 57 percent from 2000 to 2005, to slightly more than 129,000 acres. The Organic Trade Association estimates



**Farmer Carmen Fernholz and researcher Milt Haar give a presentation on organic soybean trials at SWROC. (LSP photo)**

nationally sales of organic food and beverages grew by just over 18 percent per year between 1997 and 2005.

Organic's new clout is one reason why during the 2007 session of the Minnesota Legislature, The Land Stewardship Project and other groups were able to get increased funding for alternative agriculture programs, including organics, at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (see Spring 2007 *LSL*). It is also why Carmen Fernholz is leading a tour at the SWROC on this summer day. Fernholz, who raises crops and livestock, is in his second year as Organic Research Coordinator at SWROC. Jim Riddle, a longtime south-east Minnesota organic inspector and farmer, is the center's Organic Outreach

Coordinator. Their connections to the organic farming community have helped SWROC do research that as much as possible reflects the needs of real farmers.

"It only makes sense," says Riddle. "The land grant is our research institution and it should be working for the public good. And part of that public good is organic agriculture."

SWROC is in the heart of conventional corn and soybean country, and indeed, most of its research is still dedicated to how to produce those crops using chemicals. However, of its 828 acres, 160 acres is certified organic. That 160 acres is called the Elwell Agroecology Farm, and since the early 1990s has been one of the largest certified organic tracts of land at any land grant facility in the country.

And as the tour on this July day shows, an impressive array of organic research is being done on those chemical-free acres. One stop along the way features integrating a third crop into a corn and soybean rotation. SWROC researcher Milt Haar discusses how crops like flax, field peas, dry beans, buckwheat, amaranth, sunflowers, spring wheat and clover fared in terms of breaking up pest cycles and building soil quality. It's worth noting that this research is funded by the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), which provides crop insurance to farmers. The agency has taken an interest in organics and ways of diversifying crop rotations because it's beginning to recognize that such systems could reduce the financial vulnerability of farmers.

After a stop at plots featuring organic soybeans, organic vegetables and forage crops, the tour participants head to the center's headquarters for a PowerPoint presentation by Jeff Moyer, Research Farm Manager at the Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania. A major concern is that organic cropping and no-till or conservation-type tillage systems don't mix. The thinking is that since organic farmers can't use chemicals to control weeds, they need to rely more on tillage, which results in increased soil erosion.

However, Moyer demonstrates how researchers at Rodale have developed a roller that kills cover crops such as hairy vetch and rye, producing a soil-saving mulch that crops can be planted in using a no-till planter.

Moyer explains to the tour participants that Rodale has gotten excellent corn yields with this system, and there are now

**SWROC, see page 19...**

farmers across the country using the roller with soybeans, vegetable crops, even cotton. A bonus to the system is that it cuts energy use by 70 percent. (Rodale will soon provide free machine-shop ready plans on their website at [www.newfarm.org/depts/notill/index.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/depts/notill/index.shtml).)

Next on the agenda is a presentation by U of M agronomist Craig Sheaffer on a new interactive website, scheduled for launching in fall 2008, that would allow farmers to calculate the risk of raising certain organic crops. This is also RMA-funded research, and, as Sheaffer explains, it is based on research being done at SWROC, as well as input from real organic farmers. Farmers will eventually be able to plug in information like location, soil conditions, type of crop being considered, management system,

type of rotation, etc., and the website will calculate how much risk they are exposing themselves to. It will also provide information on how to lower that risk.

As the agronomist goes through the web calculator PowerPoint, farmers in the audience throw out questions and suggestions. "How will companion crops be considered as a risk factor?" one asks. Sheaffer concedes: "We have a lot of work to do on this before it's launched."

The field day wraps up with Fernholz and Riddle taking feedback from participants on what kind of organic research they'd like to see done. Ideas range from the specific—dealing with giant ragweed and developing better genetics for grazing animals—to the bigger picture—the economic impacts of organic farming on local communities and the development of an infrastructure for local and regional organics processing. And let's see some

## Organic ecology

SWROC isn't the only U of M station doing research on organic farming. Research centers across the state are participating in an initiative called "Organic Ecology." For more information, see [www.organicecology.umn.edu](http://www.organicecology.umn.edu), or call 507-752-7373.

research on the "Rodale Roller" here in Minnesota, offers more than one farmer.

After the field day, Fernholz reflects on the changes that have occurred since he was starting out in organic farming. He recalls giving a talk at the U of M in 1982 when someone in the audience asked where he went for his information.

"I was quiet for about 15 seconds and then I said, 'I can tell you where I don't go. I don't go to the University.' But the great end to the story is today it's probably the first place I go." □

## LSP's proposal for an ongoing organic program at the University of Minnesota

In June, the Land Stewardship Project's State Policy Committee presented a proposal to the University of Minnesota that would greatly expand research and outreach in the area of organic and alternative livestock production. The proposal outlines a plan for creating an ongoing organic program at the U of M. The proposal came out of discussions with farmers, other participants in the organic industry, researchers and students. It seeks to address two missing elements in the existing work of the University. The first is a lack of an overarching programmatic approach to organic research and education that is ongoing and coordinates work across the various disciplines and departments at the University. The second is a centralized coordination that allows for easy input from the public, including farmers, buyers and students.

During the 2007 session of the Minnesota Legislature, LSP successfully worked to get increased funding for organic and sustainable agriculture at the University of Minnesota. This summer, LSP staff members have been in discussions with Beverly Durgan, Dean of Extension, and Allen Levine Dean of the U of M's College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, about how best to use those funds. Those discussions will continue in the fall. The University has indicated support for a funding level of at least \$400,000 of new money per year for an organics program and alternative

livestock work at the U of M's Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). This funding increase is good news for alternative livestock production and organic systems outreach and research, as it will become part of the base budget and is therefore an ongoing allocation. However, LSP and other sustainable agriculture and family farm groups would like to see at least \$500,000 for organics and \$150,000 for alternative livestock work at MISA. Below is a brief summary of LSP's proposal (the entire proposal is available on our website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/07/newsr\\_070809.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/07/newsr_070809.htm)):

### 1. Creation of an ongoing Organic Program Coordinator position

The Organic Program Coordinator, with the participation of the Organic Advisory Committee, will help to coordinate research, teaching and outreach activities on organic agriculture throughout the University. This person will also be a single point of contact for farmers and others wanting information about organic production at the University.

### 2. University Organic Advisory Committee

The Committee will provide input and guidance into how to direct resources available for the organic program at the University. The Committee will help facilitate the interaction between the University and the organic agriculture community. In some cases the Committee may make recommendations on resource

allocation. Its recommendations on priorities for organic research and outreach activities should be presented to the Director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station for funding on an annual basis. The Committee should meet at least four times a year. Its input should be sought in the development of the annual budget. The Committee should receive a summary of the budget allocations for organic agriculture research and outreach at the beginning of each fiscal year.

### 3. Initial set of recommendations to launch the work of an organic program

A. Five to 10 graduate research assistantships.

B. Two organic technicians. Additional technical support is needed.

C. Completion of conversion of an organic dairy herd at the West Central Research and Outreach Center at Morris (WCROC).

*We'd like to hear your thoughts on this proposal. To provide feedback, contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 ([bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org)) or Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 ([sobopaul@redred.com](mailto:sobopaul@redred.com)).*



## Local Fair Trade label debuts

The Local Fair Trade Network (LFTN) is a new initiative that is creating a label which certifies domestic food produced under stringent social justice standards. This summer, LFTN celebrated the debut of its label in Minnesota with events in Minneapolis and Winona. On-hand for the events were representatives of local farms that have received certification under the new program. Three of those farms—Riverbend Farm, Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables and Harmony Valley Farm—are Land Stewardship Project members. More on LFTN is available by visiting [www.localfairtrade.org](http://www.localfairtrade.org), or calling 612-879-7560. Former *Land Stewardship Letter* intern Joe Riemann serves on the steering committee of LFTN. To read Riemann's take on domestic fair trade, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter* at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html). □

## Minnesota Grown

The 2007-2008 edition of the *Minnesota Grown Directory* lists more than 660 Minnesota farms, farmers' markets nurseries and berry patches that offer local food and other agricultural products. A free copy is available from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture by calling 888-868-7476, or visiting [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com). □

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***“Purchasing from local growers does more than keep an American archetype in existence. Buying local food products yields economic, environmental and safety benefits.”***

— from a June 22 editorial in the *Park Rapids* (Minnesota) *Enterprise*

• • •

## Local food movement in U of M publication

The smiling faces of Land Stewardship Project members Annette and Kathleen Fernholz of Earthrise Farm appeared on the cover of the Summer 2007 edition of *M*, a publication of the University of Minnesota. They are featured in a story called “Eating Close to Home,” which describes how initiatives such as Pride of the Prairie and Food Alliance Midwest are making local food production and consumption economic drivers in Minnesota communities. LSP helped launch both initiatives. LSP Board member Sandy Olson-Loy's work to get locally produced food served at the University of Minnesota-Morris campus is described in the article. Terry VanDerPol, a western Minnesota beef farmer who is Director of LSP's Community Based Food Systems and Economic Development Program, is also featured. The article is available at [www1.umn.edu/twincities/pdf/M\\_Summer2007.pdf](http://www1.umn.edu/twincities/pdf/M_Summer2007.pdf). □

## Stewardship Food Network

The *Stewardship Food Network* is a list of Land Stewardship Project members who produce meat, dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruit, flowers, grain and other goods in a sustainable manner. The Network also lists LSP member-businesses selling or processing food produced by other LSP members.

Some of the production methods used by the Network farmers include certified organic, antibiotic and hormone-free, humanely raised and slaughtered, free of genetically modified organisms, pasture-based, integrated pest management to reduce pesticide use, deep-bedded straw livestock housing and conservation tillage. The listing provides contact information for the farmers so consumers can communicate with them directly to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

For a complete listing, see the Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter*, or contact our Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618. The list is also at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html). LSP periodically updates and makes corrections

to its Stewardship Food Network list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, call 651-653-0618, or e-mail [cathye@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathye@landstewardshipproject.org). Here are the latest additions:

### Northeast Iowa

□ **Grass Run Farm**  
Ryan & Kristine Jepsen  
236 Bear Creek Drive  
Dorchester, IA 52140  
Phone: 563-546-7954  
E-mail: [eatmeat@grassrunfarm.com](mailto:eatmeat@grassrunfarm.com)  
Website: [www.grassrunfarm.com](http://www.grassrunfarm.com)

→ Products: **Grass-finished beef, pastured veal & pastured pork available by the cut or in bulk year-round; many specialty items including Italian sausage & nitrite-free bacon; working toward organic certification**

✕ Also services: **Farmers' market in Decorah, Iowa; ship nationally & may deliver to Iowa City, Iowa, as well as Twin Cities & Rochester, Minn.**

### Twin Cities Metro

□ **Common Roots Cafe**  
2558 Lyndale Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
Phone: 612-871-2360  
Website: [www.commonrootscafe.com](http://www.commonrootscafe.com)

→ Products: **Foods made from scratch with an emphasis on organic ingredients from local farms**



# A busy summer for Food Alliance Midwest

*New standards, partnerships and certification options are moving forward.*

By Bob Olson

The Food Alliance certification program continues to expand throughout the Midwest among sustainably-oriented farms, ranches and food manufacturers interested in sharing their environmentally sound and socially responsible stories. Here's a rundown of what's been going on recently:

## **Food Alliance Midwest acquires first certified food handler**

Cedar Grove Cheese Factory in Plain, Wis., recently became the Midwest's first Food Alliance certified handler. This handler also facilitated the inclusion of 13 new Food Alliance certified dairy farms that supply raw milk for Cedar Grove's cheese-making operation. Assisting in this collaborative effort was the Value Added Dairy Initiative administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

## **First distributor applies for Food Alliance certification**

A Twin Cities produce distributor has applied to become the first Midwest distributor certified under Food Alliance standards. The distributor will seek certification around "Purity and Nutritional Value," "Quality Control and Food Safety," "Reducing Use of Toxins and Hazardous Materials," "Resource Management and Recycling," and "Safe and Fair Working Conditions."

## **Newly revised pork standard implemented**

Following an extensive review by Food Alliance's Stewardship Council, a revised pork standard has been unveiled. The new standard reinforces much of the previous criteria, and more clearly articulates our requirements affecting animal welfare. The new standard can be viewed via [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org).



## **Commercial broiler/egg standards under development**

Food Alliance is currently drafting a new commercial poultry standard designed to address sustainable poultry criteria. Food Alliance is addressing production and animal welfare issues for farms that do not fit the pasture-poultry model, yet are substantially differentiated from the factory farm technologies employed by most players in the market.

## **'Organic Plus' certification**

Food Alliance is actively collaborating with new and existing organic brands to add Food Alliance certification to their protocol. Many organic brands see Food Alliance certification providing increased value to their products through attributes that organic alone cannot provide. Brands are specifically drawn to Food Alliance's pasture requirements, fair labor practices, wildlife criteria and soil/water conservation criteria, all of which will distinguish them from competitors in the marketplace.

## **Dual certification options**

Food Alliance is increasingly offering customized certification and auditing services for business sectors that have developed specialized requirements. We are reviewing the audit requirements of produce distributors and retailers around "Good Agricultural Practices" that have been imposed by industry concerns around food safety on farms. We have also completed training to become one of the approved auditors for Whole Foods Market's "Animal Compassionate Standards." These special audit services are offered as an ad-on to Food Alliance certification and can be processed in one inspection. □

*Bob Olson is the Business Development Manager for Food Alliance Midwest. He can be reached at 651-265-3682 or [bob@foodalliance.org](mailto:bob@foodalliance.org).*

## **What is Food Alliance Midwest?**

The Food Alliance seal certifies that a farm is producing food using environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices. Food Alliance certification is available for all crop and livestock products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat products.

Food Alliance Midwest, based in Saint Paul, Minn., was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Ser-

vices. It is the Midwestern affiliate of the Food Alliance, which is based in Oregon.

Food Alliance certified products are available for sale throughout the United States and Canada in natural food co-ops and grocery stores, and in select restaurants and food service dining halls.

For details on Food Alliance Midwest, including a list of stores that carry its products, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs/mwfa.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs/mwfa.html), or call 651-265-3682.

## **Food Alliance is looking for farmers**

Food Alliance Midwest is looking for farmers in the Upper Midwest who produce fruit, vegetables and livestock using sustainable methods and are interested in getting those methods certified. Details on what it takes to get certified by Food Alliance are at [www.foodalliance.org/certification/index.html](http://www.foodalliance.org/certification/index.html). More information is also available by calling 651-265-3682.



## 10 years down the road

*A decade after graduating from the first Farm Beginnings class, a farm couple reflects on where they are at and what got them there.*

When Roger and Michelle Benrud graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, a decade ago, it looked like these two farm kids were going to be part of the brain drain that is rampant in the rural Midwest. Roger had a degree in physics and mathematical statistics; Michelle's degree was in management information systems and accounting. So, it was a bit of a surprise to their family and friends when they decided to take up production agriculture as a career. They returned to southeast Minnesota and signed up for a Land Stewardship Project initiative called Farm Beginnings. The program was new at the time—in fact, the Benruds were in the inaugural class.

When they graduated from Farm Beginnings, they had a five-year plan: have a farming operation that would support both of them financially without the help of off-farm income. A few years ago Michelle quit her job at IBM in Rochester, Minn., two months shy of that five-year deadline. Having a farm support an entire family—they have two children, Calvin, age 2, and Emily, age 7—is increasingly rare. And the couple's dairy enterprise isn't just surviving, it's thriving. They now milk some 100 cows on a grass-based operation they rent from Roger's parents near the town of Goodhue. They built that herd from 15 heifers they got through a Heifer International revolving livestock loan. The Benruds qualified for that loan as Farm Begin-

nings graduates.

Although people in their neighborhood didn't give the Benruds much of a chance of succeeding back in the late 1990s, these days they are considered valuable assets in the community. Roger and Michelle, who are in their mid-30s, were named Goodhue County Farm Family of the Year in 2006, and the butter that's made from their milk has won national awards. They belong to PastureLand, a small cooperative of southeast Minnesota farmers who market grass-fed butter and cheese under their own label. The Benruds and other PastureLand farmers are organic and are also certified by Food Alliance Midwest.

During the past several months, Roger and Michelle have been showing a young couple that recently graduated from Farm Beginnings the ropes of grass-based dairying.

The Benruds have attained many of their goals, but are still working to attain yet others: making their farm even more environmentally sustainable, and hiring someone so they can get away from the farm more often, for example.

One recent morning after their morning milking, the Benruds took time out to talk about where they are at a decade after graduating from Farm Beginnings.

**LSL:** *Why dairy farming?*

**Michelle:** When we were in the class we considered everything from grapes to the direct marketing of beef and poultry. As we ran financial numbers with all these enterprises it always came back that dairy would pay the bills a lot better than anything else if you were willing to put in the labor and be there twice a day to milk. Another reason we chose dairy is because neither of us are people people. If I want to farm I want to farm. I don't want to haul my butt to the farmers' market four days a week and have to talk to people. We farm because we love to farm.

**LSL:** *Why grazing?*

**Michelle:** Grazing is a lower cost method of getting started. We milk in a barn that hadn't been previously milked in since the 1940s. We couldn't get the financing to put up a big barn to dairy in. If we wanted to dairy farm here on this farm we had to find a way to do it given the parameters that were around us, and grazing was a good way to do it.

**Roger:** We also like the family aspect of it. There are varying degrees of risk in

any kind of farming, but I think our situation is pretty family-friendly. We've sent our 7-year-old out to get the cows already. It's amazing how she knows what's going on with the day-to-day operation.

**Michelle** (laughing): She said the other day, 'We should really graze this a little shorter Mom. You're giving the cows too much feed.'

**LSL:** *A decade later, what about Farm Beginnings has really stuck with you?*

**Roger:** The networking is probably the number one thing, but also the basic Holistic Management training on goal-setting and questioning. Often when working with another farmer I've forgotten how I met this person. Well, if you go back through that chain far enough it's somebody we met through Farm Beginnings.

**Michelle:** The goal-setting was a big part of it. I always told Karen Stettler, 'Oh, I hate goal-setting.' That was the worst part of the whole thing because it made us sit down and talk to each other and put it on paper, which is a scary thing

because if you put your goals down it's easier to realize when you don't meet them. We don't do it as often as we should and we don't do it formally necessarily, but Roger and I still very often will talk about okay what do we actually want and where are we going? We try to take into consideration the environmental aspects or how it affects other people, being Roger's folks or other people we are involved with through PastureLand or whatever.

**LSL:** *How valuable was it to have the Farm Beginnings classes taught by other farmers from your area?*

**Roger:** When you're talking about something that is out of the mainstream like grazing, it does add more credibility to see successful, happy people that are doing that teaching the class.

**Michelle:** It's different than a university where it's theoretical and this is how it's supposed to work. It is actually people doing it. And that was another big

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10 years, see page 23...

part of Farm Beginnings: encouragement. When we mentioned to the people locally that we wanted to start dairy farming, we'd get the, 'Well, why do you want to do that?' type of question, or 'You're nuts.' But through Farm Beginnings you'd get encouragement and would be exposed to people who were enjoying farming, not just counting the days until they could sell the cows or those types of things. It was encouraging and it was upbeat. There's still bad days when you farm, but all-in-all this is the way to do it.

*LSL: And now you're helping the next generation by mentoring a young couple?*

**Michelle:** We're starting to do the kind of giving back we'd always hoped to do. We're hoping to continue that on a larger scale someday. Down the road in the six miles between here and Goodhue there are three fewer dairy farms than there were when we started. We kind of started from scratch and I hope more people can get started this way. □



**Roger and Michelle Benrud, along with their children, Calvin and Emily, farm near Goodhue, in southeast Minnesota.** (photo courtesy of PastureLand )

**Give it a listen**

To hear a podcast featuring the Benruds, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and click on the podcast link under **Take Action**. It's episode 33.

## Carol Ford & Chuck Waibel The door into summer

**O**n a January evening in western Minnesota, Carol Ford braves 20-degree temperatures and a wind that's packing snow as she walks the few yards from her house to the garage. Once inside, she approaches a door with a colorful, hand-painted sign above it that reads: "The Door into Summer." She opens the door and, sure enough, steps into an 18 x 24 patch of pleasantness that, although not quite summery, could pass for a decent day in early spring. Fat green rows of garden greens—arugula, mustard greens, spinach, kale, broccoli, pok choy, kole rabi—are growing on the dirt floor and in rain gutters dangling from the ceiling of a passive solar greenhouse attached to the south side of the garage.

As snow hisses against the double-paned polycarbonate walls, Carol checks the thermometer on the wall: 50 degrees. That's 50 degrees with no help from artificial heat. It is what's left over from earlier in the day when the temperature in the greenhouse hovered around 80 degrees-plus. Super-insulation and small fans will easily keep the temperature above 40 degrees on this night. That means the 15 families that belong to the Garden Goddess winter Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation will be getting another delivery of greens later this week.

"This is the result of thinking outside the box of the box," says Ford.

That's Ford's diplomatic way of saying that a few years ago when she and her husband Chuck Waibel were first talking about the idea of growing greens in the middle of a Minnesota winter without the help of grow lights and supplemental heat, she was met with a bushel-basket full of skepticism. "The Door into Summer" is taken from the title of a Robert Heinlein novel. The novel is science fiction, and Carol concedes that when she was first talking about her idea some people thought she was from another planet. The Garden Goddess winter CSA may be based on a



little science, but it's far from fiction.

A lot of engineering, research, creative agronomic skills and business planning have gone into this winter CSA, which will begin its third season in October. Ford and Waibel credit the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course with giving them the ability to get this unusual enterprise up and running. Twice a month during the fall and winter of 2002-2003, they made the 20-minute

drive from their house on the edge of Milan to Montevideo, where established farmers and other ag professionals provided insights into low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course provides workshops on goal-setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. In addition, class participants have an opportunity to network with established farmers and utilize them as mentors.

"It was one of those things where it was the right thing at the right time," says Ford of Farm Beginnings.

Ford, a master gardener, needed an enterprise that would allow Waibel and her to maintain their regular jobs while keeping their financial risk low.

"One of the things they taught us in Farm Beginnings was risk management," says Ford. "And it felt safer to start something like this on a small enough scale that I wouldn't have to quit my job."

They struck on the idea of a small CSA operation that would fill a yawning gap in the local market: winter greens.

Through the course, Ford and Waibel learned how to research and create the kinds of information networks needed to develop an enterprise that is breaking new ground. They also learned how to create a business plan that would make it possible for a completely off-the-wall proposal to be taken seriously by lenders (Garden Goddess was rejected by three lenders before finally getting a loan).

Waibel has a collection of 1970s-era

**Fresh Faces** see page 24...



solar publications, and Ford used her computer research skills to track down every bit of information on passive greenhouses available. There were plenty of options that consisted of using gas heaters and grow lights. But they wanted to keep it simple and inexpensive and as



**Chuck Waibel checks on greens in the rain gutter planters. (LSP photo)**

low-energy as possible. They were told repeatedly—even by a Farm Beginnings instructor experienced in extended season vegetable production—that the system they wanted would not work. But the couple soldiered on.

They eventually combined thermodynamics and innovative organic vegetable production techniques to create a winter garden amidst thousands of acres of frozen corn and soybean fields. Greenhouse vegetable production is nothing new. But the design, operation and low-input nature of this one are fairly unique. Through the help of a clever system that utilizes insulation, heat storing rocks and fans, the greenhouse produces greens almost entirely without the benefit of supplemental gas heat.

“When I was designing this I was looking at it as if it was going to be on Mars,” says Waibel, showing a schematic that tracks the strength of the sun’s rays from early to mid- and late-winter. The key to the greenhouse’s success is the sharp angle of the southern-facing semi-transparent lean-to type roof. “We’re trying to gather every bit of sunlight available,” he adds.

Ford estimates they use about \$50 worth of propane per season to heat the greenhouse during unusually long

stretches of cloudy weather. The fans have raised their electric bill by about \$60 per season.

Like a traditional CSA operation, Garden Goddess sells subscriptions to consumers. In return, they provide a weekly delivery of fresh, organic produce (deliveries are supplemented with root storage crops like potatoes and onions that they raise outside during the regular season). But that’s where the similarities end. Garden Goddess is starting its season just as other vegetable operations are shutting down for the year: deliveries are mid-October to mid-April. Don’t get the wrong idea: the winter CSA isn’t a 100 percent replacement diet-wise—cold-tolerant members of the brassica family dominate here. But an impressive variety of herbs and greens can be produced in such a system.

The Garden Goddess winter CSA system has garnered attention from people other than greens-craving consumers. Ford recently presented at the Homegrown Economy Conference, an event sponsored by Collin Peterson, Chair of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee. The focus of the conference was how local food systems can fuel local economies. Ford’s presence at the event was a sign that local food production enterprises like Garden Goddess are being taken seriously by those interested in rural economic development. Ford and



**The extreme angle of the Garden Goddess greenhouse’s roof helps the building capture winter sunlight. (LSP photo)**

Waibel are also working with LSP’s Montevideo office and a group of other Milan area farmers who direct market food on a proposal to convert the cafeteria of an abandoned school into a value-added processing center. The greenhouse has even attracted the attention of groups looking for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by cutting energy use. Ford and Waibel are spreading the word on their winter



**Carol Ford says the greenhouse uses about \$50 worth of propane heat each season. (Garden Goddess photo)**

system any way they can—they recently received a grant to write a guidebook on how to set up and operate such a building.

The operation demands about five to six hours of the couple’s time weekly. Both Ford and Waibel have other jobs and although the CSA is breaking even—the total price tag for the greenhouse system was around \$18,000—it’s not their main source of income. They have no desire to do something like this on a mega-scale and supply all of western Minnesota with greens during the winter.

Ford and Waibel see this kind of enterprise as a perfect low-risk venture that could be dispersed throughout the countryside in a variety of forms. The simple, compact nature of their greenhouse design would be a perfect fit for farms that have other enterprises going. It could also work on the roof of a hospital or school, on the side of a nursing home, or in the back of a restaurant.

“This is obviously not something that anyone’s going to quit their bank job for,” says Ford. “But it could be one component of a diversified farm, and even at this size could provide enough income to make it so someone doesn’t have to go into town for an off-farm job. And that’s when it becomes exciting to me.” □

## Farm Beginnings profiles on the Web

To read other profiles of graduates of the Farm Beginnings® program, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html).

To listen to a podcast featuring Carol Ford, see *Ear to the Ground* episode 29 at [www.stewardshipproject.org](http://www.stewardshipproject.org) (click on the podcast link under **Take Action**).



## Animal, Vegetable, Miracle A Year of Food Life

By Barbara Kingsolver with Steven L. Hopp & Camille Kingsolver  
2007; 384 pages  
HarperCollins Publishers  
www.animalvegetablemiracle.com

*Reviewed by Dana Jackson*

The small farmers' market in Stillwater, Minn., where I love to shop on Saturdays was bustling the morning of July 28 with eager customers. For east-central Minnesota, it was almost the height of vegetable harvest, with such a variety that even picky eaters knew they could find a vegetable or fruit they liked, unless they explicitly wanted tomatoes, which wouldn't be abundant in this northern climate for a few more weeks.

Summer is the season to relish local foods, to base your diet on what you can buy in farmers' markets right in the area where you live, especially if you know how to have a "plant-based diet," as recommended by the food writer Michael Pollan. Of course, most established markets feature a local bakery stall (though the wheat flour may be from another state) and have vendors selling local honey, maple syrup, eggs, cheese, and grass-fed beef or free-range chickens. All of these, plus more dairy products and processed foods, are also regularly featured in consumer food co-ops. Twelve Minneapolis/St. Paul area food co-ops promoted an "Eat-Local Challenge" for 30 days in late summer (www.eatlocalchallenge.com), asking co-op members and shoppers to pledge that 80 percent of the food they eat from mid-August to mid-September would be from local sources. That's not hard to do in the Upper Midwest.

In her latest book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, acclaimed author Barbara Kingsolver, with help from her husband Steven Hopp and daughter Camille Kingsolver (18 at the time), relates how her family took their own "Eat-Local" challenge, not just during the height of the summer growing season, but for an entire year. That's much, much harder than eating locally for one month during the height of the growing season. They set out to grow what they could themselves, buy the rest from local producers,

or go without. However, they didn't anguish over what they had to leave out, but met as a family and listed all the products they could get locally, then planned accordingly. Their book describes delicious, healthful dishes and creative menus (written by Camille, with commentary) resulting from the challenge and expresses the great satisfaction they felt in growing their own food and buying from farmer neighbors. For Steven's bread baking, they acquired whole wheat flour from the closest mill they could and learned to make mozzarella cheese as a source of calcium for lactose intolerant members of the family. And, although they gave up bananas, they did allow themselves "one luxury item each in limited quantities," but "purchased through a channel most beneficial to the grower and the land." So it wasn't a year without coffee.

Wisely, before they began this challenge, the family moved from Phoenix, Ariz., to a more rain-blessed home in Virginia where they had spent several summers and planted gardens. They waited a year, learning about their land and the foods of their region, before they started the challenge in the month of April. The book describes 12 months of raising and harvesting vegetables and poultry, and what they bought at the farmers' market and from other sources as close to home as possible.

"My husband and I decided our children would not grow up without knowing a potato has a plant part. We would take a food sabbatical, getting our hands dirty in some of the actual dying arts of food production. We hoped to prove—at least to ourselves—that a family living on or near green land need not depend for its life on industrial food."

Barbara Kingsolver is the author of six best-selling novels, plus books of short stories, poems and essays, including *Small Wonders*, a collection of essays published in 2002 as responses to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* has a lighter tone, but running through the narrative (and in special side boxes) is a critique of the industrial food system, including wasteful energy use, polluting ag practices, diets shaped by corporate advertising and the stupidity of the federal Farm Bill.

Readers familiar with the indictment of unsustainable, industrial agriculture may wish to scan some of the sidebars. But you won't race through the humorous, personal stories of family life with Lily, her precocious, 9-year old daughter who started an egg business, or details in

the suspenseful final chapter that keep you reading to find out whether she will succeed in raising turkeys that reproduce without artificial insemination and hatch out eggs with proper motherly attention.

My favorite chapter is "You Can't Run Away on Harvest Day." Kingsolver makes the reader face the reality of taking life for food, as she describes the family's chicken butchering on "harvest" day. She articulates so well what I've frequently failed to explain to sanctimonious vegans, that humans evolved as a species that ate meat, and human civilization evolved along with our practice of domesticating animals for meat. On harvest day, Kingsolver says, "we reconnect with the purpose for which these animals were bred. We dispense with all delusions about who put the live in livestock and who must take it away." Yet Kingsolver is not endorsing confined feedlot livestock production and the misery it produces for animals, because consumers do have choices to buy meat from livestock raised humanely on pasture.

Thirty-some years ago, my generation was part of another kind of food challenge movement. As "back-to-the-landers," we challenged ourselves to produce as much of our own food as we could. There were few farmers' markets then, and most Americans were embracing the convenience of the industrial food economy, so our farms were truly "counter-culture." As my children grew up, they helped plant, weed, and harvest the fresh vegetables and fruits we ate in the summer and preserve what came out of jars and freezer packages in the winter. They fed and watered the chickens, pigs and cows that produced our meat, milk and eggs. I made bread, yogurt and ice cream and even kept three hives of bees for honey. It was hot, hard work without air conditioning in those sweltering Kansas summers, but we made a game at the table of counting the number of foods we produced on our place and relished our accomplishments together.

It's early fall and my freezer is filling up with produce from farmers' markets and pick-your-own berry patches in the St. Croix River Valley of Minnesota. I find the recent Eat Local Challenge much easier than the one I took in Kansas three decades ago. □

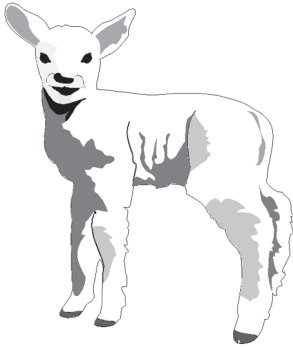
*Dana Jackson coordinates the St. Croix River Valley Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign out of the Land Stewardship Project's White Bear Lake office. She can be contacted at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org.*



# Poetry

## A night of word images

During the Land Stewardship Project's "Keeping the Land and People Together" 25th Anniversary celebration on June 29 (see page 12), Wendell Berry, Mary Rose O'Reilley and Joe Paddock read prose and poetry. The writers have generously allowed us to reprint a selection of their work here. Paddock's poem "Black Energy," and O'Reilley's poem, "Abandoned Farmhouse," were read the night of the event. The poem Berry read that evening was a "work in progress" and will be published in a future book of poetry. As an alternative, we are printing a poem from a previous book of Berry's. □



## Wendell Berry:

### III

They are fighting again the war to end war,  
And the ewe flock, bred in October, brings forth  
in March. This so far remains, this pain  
and renewal, whatever war is being fought.  
We go through the annual passage of birth  
and death, triumph and heartbreak, love  
and exasperation, mud, milk, mucus, and blood.  
Yet once more the young ewe stands with her lambs  
in the dawnlight, the lambs well-suckled  
and dry. There is no happiness like this.

The window again welcomes in the light  
of lengthening days. The river in its old groove  
passes again beneath opening leaves.  
In their brevity, between cold and shade,  
flowers again brighten the woods floor.

This then may be the prayer without ceasing,  
this beauty and gratitude, this moment.

—from *Given: Poems*, Shoemaker & Hoard Publishers, 2005  
([www.shoemakerhoard.com](http://www.shoemakerhoard.com))

## Mary Rose O'Reilley:

### Abandoned Farmhouse

Why did they walk away,  
leaving their house  
alive as a dog  
and desperate here on its own?

Maybe the Bank turned them out  
and the panicky house had to hear them  
pacing, pacing across its mind  
till the key pinned a meaning in place  
and left it there to go feral  
the garden tendrils slipping  
into the woods.

Or maybe the man couldn't take  
his wife's windows desecrating,

refusing communion,  
letting his soul's skin be the price  
for dragging his boots through a room.  
The fan of glass  
over the door  
shamed him, he had to head out.

The house has no will this winter  
to cover her face from the wind.  
So bent on collapsing  
into the cellar,  
resolving at last  
her agony there:  
the incomprehensible plumbing,  
the foot on the stair.

—from *Half Wild*, Louisiana State  
University Press, 2006

*Mary Rose O'Reilley's book of poetry, Half  
Wild, is available at [www.lsu.edu/lisupress](http://www.lsu.edu/lisupress).*

*Joe Paddock:*

## Black Energy

Life is seething in this soil  
which has been millions of years  
in the making.  
It has been forever  
in the making.

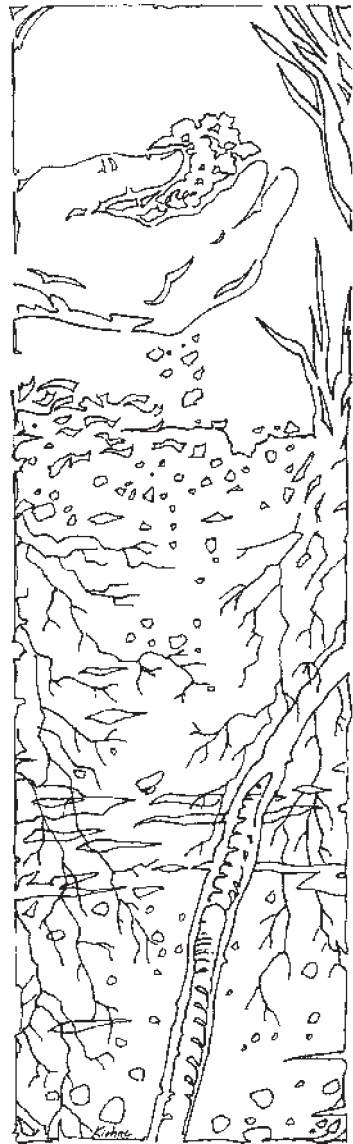
A mingling of everything  
which ever whistled here, leaped  
or waved in the wind.  
Plants and animals,  
grasses of this prairie.  
Buffalo and antelope grazing down  
into roots and back again  
into the sun.  
Birds and insects, their wings still hum  
in this soil.

And this swarm drinks  
sunlight and rain,  
and rises again and again  
into corn and beans  
and flesh and bone.

The quick bodies of animals and men  
risen from this black energy.

—from *Earth Tongues, Poems*  
by Joe Paddock,  
Milkweed Editions, 1985

Joe Paddock's latest book of poetry is *A Sort of Honey* (2007). It's available from Red Dragonfly Press at [www.reddragonflypress.org](http://www.reddragonflypress.org).



## June 29 'Keeping the Land & People Together' event recording

It's not as good as being there, but since the June 29 "Keeping the Land and People Together" event was sold out, listening to it via our *Ear to the Ground* audio podcast is the only option available for many of you. We've broken the evening down into five different podcasts:

- Episode 35—**Wendell Berry** reading
- Episode 36—**Mary Rose O'Reilly** reading

- Episode 37—**Joe Paddock** reading
- Episode 38—**panel discussion** (part 1)
- Episode 39—**panel discussion** (part 2)

You can listen to the podcasts and download them by going to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and clicking on the podcast link under **Take Action**.

If you would like a CD of the program, contact Louise Arbuckle in our White Bear Lake office at [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org) or 651-653-0618.

### **Berry in the *Star Tribune***

While he was in town for LSP's 25th Anniversary, Wendell Berry talked to *Star Tribune* editorial writer Dave Hage about local economies, local food and local communities. The resulting "Food and consequence" Q and A is at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-itn.html).



# The Whitewater whistleblower

*Paul Wotzka says he was doing his job by sharing his taxpayer-funded research with the public. So why was he fired?*

By Brian DeVore

Paul Wotzka's home sits at the base of one of those bluffs that overlook the Mississippi River in southeast Minnesota. From the top of the bluff, one can see the Mississippi's Weaver Bottoms marsh and the Whitewater River Valley simultaneously. But on a recent summer morning, Wotzka was more interested in how a patch of compass-plants was managing to thrive in a goat prairie on the side of the bluff in thin soil under droughty conditions.

"These leaves are like sandpaper," he exclaims as he stoops for a closer look.

Resiliency and toughness are on this man's mind a lot these days, as he takes on a battle that pits him against the State of Minnesota, and, by extension, against a sector of agriculture that would rather not discuss the downsides to a monocultural cropping system.

For over 16 years, Wotzka was a highly-respected hydrologist working for the state, doing cutting-edge research on pesticides in surface water. This spring, he was fired after he asked permission to testify about his research before a state legislative committee. Wotzka has filed a federal whistleblower lawsuit, claiming that his First Amendment right to free speech has been violated. Wotzka's former employer maintains that his firing is a simple case of an employee not following the rules. But this case is about a lot more than one civil servant who had a difference of opinion with his supervisors. At issue is how publicly-funded science is used to influence policy, the role industry plays in the regulatory system, and the public's right to know.

"Scientists tend to look at our shoes too much and say, 'I don't want to enter into the public policy arena,'" says Wotzka. "Well, somebody has to give the straight story."

## Atrazine & water

The straight story Wotzka feels he has to tell is this:

From 1990 to late 2006, he worked as a hydrologist for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) monitoring pesticide levels in surface water. What he found was that one of America's most popular weed killers is frequently finding its way off crop fields and into the water of the Middle Branch of the Whitewater River. The herbicide, known as atrazine,



**Hydrologist Paul Wotzka on a bluff overlooking the Whitewater River. "I'm taking public information and giving it to the public," he says. "I've always viewed that as part of my job: inform the public about how their tax money has been spent." (LSP photo)**

has been an inexpensive, effective killer of weeds for 48 years. That's why it was used on around 45 percent of the 7.3 million acres of corn planted in Minnesota in 2005, according to the USDA. In fact, more than 1.6 million pounds of the pesticide were used in the state that year alone. But the characteristic that makes it

an effective weed killer—its stability and ability to stick around for as much as 100 days in the soil—also makes it a pollution problem. Studies have shown that it can be carried away by surface runoff after application, or can be taken up into the atmosphere, only to return later, sometimes several states away, as precipitation. Once it leaches into groundwater—the water that is beneath the soil in subterranean aquifers—atrazine can remain there for decades. In states like Minnesota, atrazine is by far the most commonly detected pesticide in surface and groundwater.

Wotzka's research showed over the past several years levels as high as 30 parts per billion in the Whitewater after storm events. The Environmental Protection Agency's drinking water standard for atrazine is three parts per billion, and research conducted by the University of California-Berkeley's Tyrone Hayes shows that exposing frogs to as little as 0.1 parts per billion of atrazine causes severe health problems, including inducing a kind of chemical castration. There is mounting evidence that atrazine is an endocrine disrupter, a chemical that messes up hormonal activity in animals, and possibly humans, causing severe problems at extremely low levels.

The European Union has declined to re-register the herbicide because of concerns about its impacts on human and environmental health. The U.S. EPA re-registered the pesticide in 2006, but during the registration process acknowledged there were concerns related to atrazine's effect on amphibians. The EPA has since convened a panel of scientists and may release results on that additional research as early as October.

Wotzka has also found that nitrogen, a keystone fertilizer for row crop farming, is showing up in increasing amounts as a pollutant in the Whitewater.

Pesticides and nitrogen fertilizer take different paths to waterways—the former tends to run overland, while the latter percolates down through the soil profile. But Wotzka blames the same culprit for the increased contamination levels of both ag inputs: the growing prevalence of annual row crops that cover the land in the watershed only a few

**Whistleblower** see page 29...

months of the year. Corn and soybeans are replacing pastures, hay ground, wooded acres and other year-round plant systems. Since 1975, in a nine-county region in southeast Minnesota, corn and soybeans have gone from 64 percent of all farmed land to more than 82 percent. Combine that with the fact that in recent years more of our heavy rains are coming in the spring, when crop fields are most vulnerable, and it's a recipe for disaster, he says.

"I think the goal should be to keep soil, nutrients and pesticides in place," says Wotzka. "The pesticides, the nutrients, the soil do wonderful things to grow crops. But the minute they enter aquatic systems, they wreak havoc."

Over the years, Wotzka has not been shy about sharing his results with the public. He has given presentations on his research to farm groups, watershed organizations, physicians, fishing enthusiasts and the general public.

"I'm taking public information and giving it to the public," says Wotzka of these presentations. "I've always viewed that as part of my job: inform the public about how their tax money has been spent."

When talking about agrichemicals in water, Wotzka makes it clear he doesn't blame farmers. He knows they want to do the right thing, but are often forced to use something like atrazine in a vulnerable area because they feel they have no viable alternative for weed control. And many believe they've actually cut atrazine out of their cropping systems, only to find out later it's contained in a tank mix consisting of several chemicals.

"There are now over 90 tank mixes, maybe over 100, containing atrazine. Nobody keeps track of that stuff," says Wotzka.

He lays the blame on government policies that don't inform farmers of such issues, and, perhaps even worse, promote increased plantings of row crops like corn in environmentally sensitive areas. Between 2000 and 2004, as he watched atrazine levels go up in the Whitewater, the hydrologist became more adamant that the MDA take action.

"In 2004, we saw levels that we hadn't ever seen before," Wotzka recalls. "We were finding higher and higher concentrations, and I wouldn't let [MDA officials] forget about it."

Agriculture Department officials acknowledge that atrazine is in the water, but say it does not exceed health stan-

dards because it is not at those high levels for extended periods of time. The MDA sees as a solution the promotion of voluntary best management practices in cropping areas, such as suggesting that farmers don't apply atrazine within a certain distance of wells, and that grassy buffers be used along streams. Wotzka argues that endocrine disruption research shows the health standard is not low enough, and that even those short-term spikes should be of concern. He also feels voluntary best management practices have limited effectiveness, given atrazine's residual nature and ability to move about in the atmosphere. He says he was all but ignored by MDA officials.

Finally last October, Wotzka had had enough. When a hydrologist position at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) came open, he applied for it and

### Want more on atrazine?

The website [www.atrazinelovers.com](http://www.atrazinelovers.com) contains links to the latest scientific, environmental and health information related to the pesticide.

was hired.

In March, Wotzka's research caught the attention of Ken Tschumper, a southeast Minnesota dairy farmer and freshman member of the Minnesota House of Representatives. During the 2007 session, Tschumper and Sen. John Marty, with the support of the Land Stewardship Project, spearheaded a group of bills that would tighten regulation on pesticides such as atrazine. Tschumper contacted Wotzka and asked that he testify before the Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division committee on March 23. The hydrologist responded by sending a copy of a presentation to Tschumper. He also sent a request to testify to his supervisors. (That turned out to be a big week for atrazine at the capitol—during a March 21 hearing on another one of Tschumper's pesticide bills, Tyrone Hayes went head-to-head with Timothy Pastoor, head of Human Safety Assessment for Syngenta, the main manufacturer of atrazine.)

A regional MPCA supervisor turned down Wotzka's request to testify at the March 23 hearing, arguing that the research Wotzka was to present to the committee was done while he was an MDA employee.

Wotzka feels that the real reason is his testimony would have run counter to

what the MDA's line is on atrazine contamination. Indeed, when the committee hearing was held, Dan Stoddard, Assistant Director of the MDA's Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division, conceded that although surface water research showed sharp spikes in atrazine, health standards were not exceeded because those increases were temporary.

A week after the hearing, Wotzka was placed on "investigatory leave." He was told it was for allegedly destroying data while at the MDA and forwarding mail from his MDA address to his MPCA office. On May 8, Wotzka was fired. State officials have declined publicly to comment on the situation, only saying that they do "good science" on pesticides and that the hydrologist's firing is a personnel matter.

Wotzka says his whistleblower lawsuit challenges the state's allegations against him. He believes the firing was simply meant to silence him and undermine his public credibility as an expert on pesticide contamination in water. Public criticism of atrazine is not popular in Saint Paul: Hayes himself was dis-invited from giving a keynote at an MPCA conference in 2004 after agribusiness complained about his research.

### Atrazine at the legislature

In some ways, the controversy over Wotzka's firing threatens to overshadow the fact that some important legislation related to pesticides was on the front burner in Saint Paul this year.

One bill authored by Tschumper and Marty became law. Among other things, it lowers the standard for atrazine in private drinking water supplies from 20 parts per billion to three parts per billion, bringing it in line with EPA's limits, which were already in place for Minnesota's public water supplies. And in March 2008, the Minnesota Department of Health has to start examining the possibility of establishing new health limits for 11 of the most common contaminants, including atrazine, found in the state's water. The last time such an assessment was done was the early 1990s.

"A ton of research has been done since then," says Tschumper. "The whole field of endocrine research is relatively new."

(LSP played a critical role in getting this legislation passed by getting 21 farm, religious, conservation and environmental organizations to sign a letter supporting raising the health risk assessment levels for atrazine.)

**Whistleblower** see page 30...



The passage of that legislation provides a good basis for other pesticide legislation becoming law in the near future, says Tschumper. For example, he and Marty plan on reintroducing a proposal to shift registration of pesticides from the MDA to the Health Department.

"The MDA's job is to promote agriculture, and it does an excellent job of that," says Tschumper. "But I believe it lacks the expertise to do health risk assessment. Having MDA regulate pesticides creates an inherent conflict of interest." He cites a recent Legislative Auditor's report that found while in general the MDA does a good job of regulating pesticides, its health risk assessment is lacking.

Paul Sobocinski, an LSP organizer who raises crops and livestock in southwest Minnesota, testified in favor of the Tschumper-Marty bills. Sobocinski, who has used atrazine in the past, says he doesn't think the pesticide should be banned outright at this time. But he thinks

this kind of legislation is a step in the right direction to get more information on the health impacts of pesticides. Farmers want to be careful how they use these chemicals, since they and their families are on the front lines of health issues related to agrichemicals, he says.

More support for alternatives to dangerous chemicals is also needed, such as funding for sustainable agriculture research, says Sobocinski.

"I think it's important we get unbiased research on the health risks of various chemicals, so farmers have options," he says. "That goes for chemicals used by homeowners on their lawns as well."

### A message for public servants

Meanwhile, Wotzka does some consulting, talks about his research and works with his attorneys on building a case for the lawsuit. He says it's been tough to have his credibility as a scientist and a public servant called into question, but he's been heartened by the outpouring of support he's gotten from the public, as well as former co-workers.

Among other things, Wotzka's lawsuit asks for monetary compensation of at least \$75,000. But he says the main goal of the lawsuit is to expose some of the methods used by state officials to silence him. Wotzka also thinks it's important to show other public employees that they should feel free to speak out, even when what they say makes powerful interests uncomfortable.

"There are subtle ways the people in power can rein you in," he says. "But in the end, we work for the public." □

### Atrazine forum Oct. 10

The Land Stewardship Project is helping put on a public forum on atrazine and public health featuring Paul Wotzka and Tyrone Hayes Wednesday, Oct. 10, at the Ritz Theater in Northeast Minneapolis (345 13th Ave. NE). The event, which is also a fundraiser for Wotzka's legal fees, will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a musical performance by Paul Metsa. For details, contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org)

## Opportunities



## Resources

### Grants for ag perennials in Minn.

"Productive Conservation of Working Lands" is a new Minnesota program that provides funds to farmers/landowners for market development, crop establishment and on-farm demonstrations regarding productive conservation crops. Some recent proposals submitted to the program include native grass plantings for seed, native grass plantings for bio-energy production and hazelnut plantings.

For more information on applying for these grants, contact Joe Domeier, Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development, 1160 S. Victory Drive, Suite 4, Mankato, MN 56001; phone: 507-345-7418, ext. 127; e-mail: [Joseph.Domeier@rcdnet.net](mailto:Joseph.Domeier@rcdnet.net). □

### Organic grain reports

Organic grain farmers can get premiums for their crops, but they often are put at a competitive disadvantage because of lack of information. When a buyer offers them a price, organic producers have historically had no idea whether they are receiving more or less than other farmers. Now organic farmers have a new tool to help them com-

pare prices and determine if what buyers are offering is fair. The USDA's Market News Service and the University of Minnesota are tracking prices being paid for organic grains in the Upper Midwest.

To view the reports, see [www.misa.umn.edu/Organic\\_Price\\_Reports.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Organic_Price_Reports.html). In addition, the *New Farm* website tracks organic grain and produce prices at <http://newfarm.org/opx>. □

### I will eat green eggs & ham

*Greener Eggs and Ham: The Benefits of Pasture-Raised Swine, Poultry, and Eggs Production* is a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists that shows how grass-based livestock systems can help avoid the environmental and public health problems associated with conventional farming systems.

The report explains the definitions, standards and label claims for pasture-raised foods that consumers run into at grocery stores. This is meant to be a complementary report to *Greener Pastures*, which describes the benefits of grass-fed beef and dairy cattle.

The reports are available for free online at [www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_)

[environment/sustainable\\_food/greener-eggs-and-ham.html](http://environment/sustainable_food/greener-eggs-and-ham.html), or by calling the Union of Concerned Scientists at 617-864-9405.

Both reports are authored by Kate Clancy, a Land Stewardship Project member who is currently serving as a visiting faculty member in the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair at the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA). This fall, she is teaching a graduate level course at the University of Minnesota called "Special Topics in Food Systems" ([www.misa.umn.edu/Special\\_Topics\\_in\\_Food\\_Systems.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Special_Topics_in_Food_Systems.html)). The course will cover the history of food systems analysis and will focus on issues such as local food, pasture production of livestock and bioenergy.

Clancy can be contacted at 612-625-5495 or [klclancy@umn.edu](mailto:klclancy@umn.edu). □

### Photo contest

"Groundbreaking Innovations, People and Partnerships in Sustainable Agriculture" is the theme of a new national photo competition. The contest is sponsored by the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. The entry deadline is Oct. 31.

For more information on the contest, see [www.sare.org/2008Conference/photo\\_contest.htm](http://www.sare.org/2008Conference/photo_contest.htm), or call Sean McGovern at 614-306-6422. □



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

## Membership Update

### A chance to double your LSP donation

During our 25th Anniversary year, you have a great opportunity to have your Land Stewardship Project donation go further than ever. A longtime LSP member has generously provided a matching fund for major donations.

Through this fund, all \$500 donations from people who have never given \$500 before, and all \$2,500 donations from people who have never given \$2,500 before, will be matched on a dollar-to-dollar basis. If you give a major donation of \$250 or more, and it is the largest one-time gift you have provided LSP, the amount of that contribution above your previous largest gift will also be matched by the donor. Up to \$50,000 is available to be matched through this offer.

In addition, the McKnight Foundation has made available an additional \$5,000 to match dollar-to-dollar all gifts of \$500 or more from donors who give at that level for the first time.

We are very grateful for these generous contributions. If you can, please consider helping LSP begin laying the foundation for our next quarter-century of work with a financial contribution that qualifies for a match in 2007.

For more information, contact LSP Associate Director Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org. □

### Becoming a member or renewing is easy

Whether you are renewing your Land Stewardship Project membership or joining for the first time, there are several easy options:

- **Land Stewardship Letter.** Included in the middle of this newsletter is an envelope you can mail to us with your membership dues or an extra donation.
- **Online.** At [www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus.html) you can use our secure online system to renew or join using a credit card.
- **Give us a call.** You can call our offices in Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105), White Bear Lake (651-653-0618) or Minneapolis

(612-722-6377) to join over the telephone.

If you have any questions about membership, contact Mike McMahon, LSP's Membership Coordinator, at [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) or 612-722-6377. □

### Get connected with

**LIVE  WIRE**

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* for regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Stay current on information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing.

To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail [lsqwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lsqwbl@landstewardshipproject.org), and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." □

### Ear to the Ground audio podcast

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* audio magazine is available on our website. This podcast features interviews and field reports related to LSP's work. These shows can be listened to on a computer, an MP3 player or via compact disc (despite the name, you don't need an iPod to listen to podcasts).

To sample the podcasts, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), and click on the **podcast** link under **Take Action**. For a step-by-step guide on how to subscribe to the free *Ear to the Ground* service, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html). □

### LSP blog

The Land Stewardship Project has entered the "blogosphere." We are writing a weekly food and sustainable agriculture web-based blog for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. To read the blog, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and click on the **Read This Week's LSP Blog** link under **Take Action**. □

## 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.



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).



## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **SEPT. 9—Slow Food Minnesota's Beef, Burgundy, Blues & Brews**, Cedar Summit Farm, New Prague, Minn.; Contact: Barb Horter, 952-953-3342 or blhorter@mmm.com
- **SEPT. 12-15—Risk Management Strategies for Beginning & Small Farmers & Ranchers**, Milwaukee, Wis.; Contact: 414-331-0847 or www.growingpower.org
- **SEPT. 14—Hazelnut Growers Gathering**, Lake City, Minn.; Contact: Jeff Jensen, Rural Advantage, 507-238-5449 or jeff@ruraladvantage.org
- **SEPT. 16—Headwaters Foundation Walk for Justice**; Contact: Cathy Eberhart, 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org (see page 9)
- **SEPT. 16—Third Crop Demonstration**, Fairmont, Minn. (see Sept. 14)
- **SEPT. 22—PFI Field Day on Community Supported Agriculture**, One Step at a Time Gardens, Kanawha, Iowa; Contact: 641-495-6367 or www.ostgardens.com
- **SEPT. 22-23—Introduction to Permaculture Film Festival & Workshop**, Sandstone, Minn.; Contact: 888-404-7743; audubon1@audubon-center.org
- **SEPT. 23—Harvest Feast to Celebrate the Winona Farmers' Market & Promote Local Food, Featuring Chef Lucia Watson**, Blue Heron Coffeehouse, Winona, Minn.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org
- **SEPT. 28—Hands-on LSP Barn Timber-Framing Workshop as Warm-up to Hodgson Barn-Raising** (see Oct. 6), Fountain, Minn.; Contact: Karen Stettler,

LSP, 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

- **SEPT. 29—Rotational Use of High-Quality Land: A Three-Year Rotation of Pastured Pigs, Vegetable Production & Annual Forage**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: 763-694-2002 or www.threeriversparkdistrict.org/parks/galewoods.cfm
- **OCT. 5-7—Upper Minnesota River Arts Crawl**, Ortonville, Minn.,-Granite Falls, Minn.; Contact: www.artsmeander.com or 866-866-5432
- **OCT. 6—Barn-raising event celebrating LSP's 25th Anniversary**, Brad & Leslea Hodgson farm, Fountain, Minn.; Contact: 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org (see page 9)
- **OCT. 10—Forum on Atrazine & Public Health** (see page 28) featuring **Tyrone Hayes & Paul Wotzka**, Ritz Theater, Northeast Minneapolis; Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 612-722-6377; bking@landstewardshipproject.org
- **OCT. 13—Feeding Wrapped Baleage to Beef**, Struxness Farm, Milan, Minn.; Contact: 320-734-4877
- **OCT. 13-14—Celebrate the Harvest & Stock Dog Trials**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: 763-694-2007 or www.threeriversparkdistrict.org/parks/galewoods.cfm
- **OCT. 20—Farm Beginnings course in La Crosse, Wis., begins**; Contact: www.farmbeginnings.org or 507-523-3366
- **OCT. 20—Stateline Farm Beginnings Session 1**, Grayslake, Ill.; Contact: www.CSALearningCenter.org/craft.html or 815-389-8455
- **OCT. 21—LSP's Dana Jackson will participate in a public forum called "The Re-enchantment of Agriculture,"** Sauk City, Wis.; Contact: Curt Meine,

- curt@savingcranes.org or 608-356-9462
- **OCT. 26-27—Rural Youth Summit**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: http://events.iatp.org or 612-870-0453
- **NOV. 3—Farm Beginnings course in Marshall, Minn., begins**; Contact: www.farmbeginnings.org or 320-269-2105
- **NOV. 7-9—National FoodRoutes Network Conference**, Colorado; Contact: www.foodroutes.org or 570-638-3608
- **NOV. 16-17—First Annual Upper Minnesota River Festival & Short Film Festival**, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: 877-269-2873 or www.curemnrivier.org/events.htm
- **NOV. 19—7th Annual Iowa Organic Conference**, Iowa State University, Ames; Contact: http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag or 515-294-7069
- **DEC.—4th Annual Lake Superior Region SFA "Farmers Taking the Stove" Dinner & Silent Auction** (date and place to be determined); Contact: www.lake.superiorfarming.org or 218-393-3276
- **JAN. 18-19—2008 Minnesota Organic Conference**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: Meg Moynihan, MDA, Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us or 651-201-6616
- **FEB. 12—2008 Minn. Legislature convenes**; Contact LSP at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org for details on how to advance legislation that supports family farmers & the environment
- **FEB. 21-23—19th Annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: MOSES, www.mosesorganic.org or 715-772-3153
- **MARCH 25-27—Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education 20th Anniversary Conference**, Kansas City, Mo.; Contact: www.sare.org or 614-306-6422

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



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