

The Land Stewardship

Keeping the Land and People Together



Letter

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When Ag Policy Goes Good

CSP has the potential to correct many of the wrongs of current commodity programs.

By Brian DeVore

For evidence that a new green farming initiative called the Conservation Security Program can produce real environmental benefits, look no further than the Vic and Cindy Madsen farm, five miles from the East Nishnabotna River in southwest Iowa. The 300 acres of land they produce crops and livestock on has a serious roll to it,

and 90 percent of it is considered “highly erodible”—meaning an intense rain can send soil rushing into local creeks and ditches with surprising speed. As the Madsens explain on a recent summer afternoon while taking a break from haying and cultivating, they have long taken pains to protect soil and water. Sometimes such efforts pay immediate economic dividends. For example, they utilize no-till farming on some of their acres, a method which reduces soil

disturbance, thus reducing erosion and cutting equipment fuel costs. And about a third of the Madsens’ crop and livestock farm is certified organic. On the organic fields they use a five-year crop rotation that includes oats and alfalfa to reduce erosion. “I think 60 feet of hay on a sidehill is just as good as a terrace,” says Vic. That takes extra work and planning, but it also means the crops raised on those

CSP, see page 16...



Vic, Cindy and Eric Madsen enrolled their farm in the Conservation Security Program when it was first launched in 2004. “There’s a lot more to this program than what the farmer gets,” says Vic. “It would change the scenery and the economics of a community.” (LSP photo)

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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 newsletter as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the Land Stewardship Letter should be addressed to the editor, Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone/fax: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charlotte Brooker, Jim Erkel,
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STAFF

Southeastern Minnesota

180 E. Main St., P.O. Box 130, Lewiston, MN
55952; phone: 507-523-3366; fax: 2729;
e-mail: lspse@landstewardshipproject.org
Karen Benson, Bobby King,
Karen Stettler, Caroline van Schaik

Twin Cities Area

2200 4th St., White Bear Lake, MN 55110;
phone: 651-653-0618; fax: 0589;
e-mail: lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org
Louise Arbuckle, George Boody,
Brian DeVore, Cathy Eberhart,
Lori Golightly, Dana Jackson,
Ray Kirsch, William Peterson,
Ron Rengel, Joe Riemann, Cathy Twohig

Western Minnesota

103 W. Nichols, Montevideo, MN
56265; phone: 320-269-2105; fax: 2190;
e-mail: lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org
Amy Bacigalupo, Laura Borgendale,
Michele Skogrand, Terry VanDerPol

Policy Program

2919 E. 42nd St., Minneapolis, MN 55406;
phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 6474;
e-mail: marks@landstewardshipproject.org
Paul Anderson, Mike McMahon, Mark Schultz,
Paul Sobocinski, Adam Warthesen

From Dust to Voices

By Dana Jackson

The voice of one woman, a fictional woman named Annie, took the mission of the Land Stewardship Project to thousands of people and over 500 audiences across the United States between 1984 and 1991, through presentations of the half-hour, dramatic monologue *Planting in the Dust*. Today, the voices of 10 real, contemporary farm women are taking LSP's vision of a sustainable food and farming system to audiences far and wide, through showings and discussions of *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, a 27-minute film documentary produced by Cynthia Vagnetti.

Both presentations express deep appreciation for the gifts of the soil and the responsibility of all people to care for the land that sustains us. Annie

is a 35-year-old woman who has returned to the farm her great-grandparents homesteaded. During the course of the play, she talks about her relationship with the land and her frustrations with Jordan, a corn-soybean farmer of her father's generation who represents industrial agriculture. Annie complains about the way Jordan, who owns all the land surrounding her farm, abuses the soil:

"He's no outlaw. He's not mean. He's good to his kids, loves his wife, helps his neighbors when they need it. But he just doesn't include the land in that.

...Monitors the markets by computer while his land slips out from under him.

Just doesn't feel it...Not many around here do feel it. The land is something you own...and use."

Annie "feels it," but she also has a sound scientific understanding of soil.

"Maybe I'm crazy, but when I look out there and see that cloud of blowing topsoil, it's like it's my own flesh, skinned alive.

And it is alive—this soil is made up of the bodies of all the beings that have ever lived in this place—over millions of years. And it's the whole life of all the

years to come."

Speaking two decades after Nancy Paddock wrote Annie's speech about soil, several women in *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* also describe the connection they feel to the soil. These are unrehearsed comments captured during filmed oral history interviews, so their words aren't edited to be poetic or dramatic as Annie's speeches were, but they are thoughtful and memorable.

"Industrial agriculture removes the farmer from the land, detaching him or her from the work of what's going on biologically on the land," says Mary Doerr in *Voices*. "A connection, literally, to the soil is critical to farming. We need

to be mindful that we don't lose that balance, that we don't lose touch with the spirit of the soil."

"I've noticed in my seven years out here that I find myself speaking to the soil," Kay

Fernholz admits in the film. "I don't think that's strange because what we now know is that the earth is a living organism and therefore it has responses. It also softens my own personal soil within my own being to listen more carefully so I don't wring this soil for production only, so that it really becomes that which I am derived from and it's an extension of who I am as well."

Planting in the Dust was written to be used in public meetings about land stewardship in counties where soil erosion rates were high. When LSP was founded in 1982, its first work was to organize public programs and workshops, using a special anthology/action book written by Joe and Nancy Paddock and a slide show called "From Harvest to Harmony." The programs were held in church meeting halls, not only in Minnesota, but also Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota. In 1983, Nancy Paddock, Joe Paddock and Carol Bly, who had all collected oral histories for National Farmers Union's American Farm Project,

• • •
Unlike Planting's Annie, who felt utterly alone, the women of Voices are part of the sustainable agriculture movement and the local foods movement.
• • •

were leading these meetings in Minnesota. Carol and Nancy were frustrated that there were almost no women attending them. They struggled over how they could reach women and came up with the idea of a play.

This play was one of the first attempts to address the land stewardship issue from a woman's point of view. It drew women to the meetings and they embraced its message that soil conservation was their responsibility too. Someone representing LSP or a sponsoring organization would introduce the play and lead a discussion following the performance. It was performed across the U.S. and in Canada in churches, museums, libraries, schools and even outdoors; it had a long run into the 1990s.

From time to time, someone at LSP has suggested a revival of the play. That would require some significant updating—a farmer like Jordan likely would have built a large-scale hog confinement operation by now, and dust from spring planting could be laced with the stench of liquid hog manure.

The trend towards fewer and larger farms continues, and agribusiness interests want the public to believe it's inevitable that farms "get big or get out," that family farms are no longer viable economic units that provide a good way of life. LSP knows, and *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* shows, that family farming with good land stewardship isn't dead. Starting in the early 1980s, about the time *Planting in the Dust* was written and first performed, a strong sustainable farming movement began to evolve that fostered environmentally friendly practices and helped people develop economically viable farming systems.

In Annie's time, she and her husband were using stewardship practices her neighbors didn't bother with, such as growing crops on the contour and planting trees. Annie dreams of creating a farming system "that can sustain itself and us indefinitely." But Annie felt no support for this goal and out of step with her community. The roots of the sustainable farming movement were sparse.

The 10 farm women we meet in *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* speak about supportive communities and networks of farmers that have helped them make changes and develop more sustainable farming systems. They are living examples of the benefits of the sustainable farming movement in this country that has resulted in organizations like the

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, the Nebraska Sustainable Farming Society and other kinds of groups such as grazing circles and marketing cooperatives.

Cynthia Vagnetti, a photographer and filmmaker, approached LSP a few years ago for support in her project to collect oral histories of contemporary Minnesota farm women with a digital video camera. The product is *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, a new outreach tool that can be used similarly to the way we used *Planting in the Dust*. But there are important differences between these two cultural works.

Voices promotion package available

The Land Stewardship Project will be promoting *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* as a focus for food and agriculture programs. Through the Farm and City Food Connections Program, we will develop a study/action packet to accompany the film, (available in both VHS and DVD) and offer it for rental or purchase from our Twin Cities office. The packet will contain an introduction to read before showing *Voices*, a set of discussion questions for use following a showing, several reprints of articles related to themes in the film, a bibliography, and a guide for follow-up action.

Volunteers needed

Would you like to volunteer to show *Voices* and lead a discussion about it for a church group, food co-op, citizens' group, or community meeting? The one-hour program will be suitable for both urban and rural settings in any state. Training and support will be available to make this experience comfortable and rewarding. If you are interested, contact Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org.

Voices for sale

DVD and VHS versions of this 30-minute film are available to purchase for \$15 each (LSP members can take a 10 percent discount; Minnesota residents add 98 cents to cover state sales tax). Send a check payable to LSP to: Louise Arbuckle, LSP, 2200 4th Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110. For more information, or to order via credit card, call Arbuckle at 651-653-0618.

Vagnetti has captured the spirit of sustainable farming in scenes of 10 women farmers talking about their lives as they move livestock fences, attach an implement to a tractor, gather eggs, process grapes into wine, and unload boxes at the farmers' market. The women in this documentary express satisfaction with their way of life and speak about their goals to be good stewards of families, their communities and the land. They think of themselves as farmers, as partners in farming enterprises, not as the wives of farmers.

In June, the *New York Times* reported that the number of farms operated by women has more than doubled since 1978, from just over 100,000 to 250,000, and that 15 percent of American farms are now run primarily by women, up from 5 percent in 1978. The Organic Farming Research Foundation says that women run 22 percent of organic farms. The sustainable farming movement has introduced women to practices more compatible with their propensities for nurturing and offered the kind of community support that bolsters confidence they can be farmers.

Women in the *Voices* documentary do not seem threatened by the "get big or get out" message repeated everywhere by industrial agricultural promoters, mainly because they did get out already—out of conventional markets where small scale farms have to compete with the efficiency of industrial operations. Unlike *Planting's* Annie, who felt utterly alone, the women of *Voices* are part of the sustainable agriculture movement and the local foods movement. A major partner, the film makes clear, is the consumer. *Voices* illustrates the importance of supportive relationships between stewardship farmers and the people who buy food.

Voices of Minnesota Farm Women isn't just a documentary about women farmers; it's a positive, hopeful story about family farming. It debunks the myth that all farms must be large and industrial to survive and instead shows a good future for new farmers. Strong images of children in the film reinforce that hopeful message. Children are always present—helping with the work, listening to adults, playing at the feet of adults. You get the feeling that they will grow up satisfied with their lives on the farm, ready to become the farmers of the future. □

Dana Jackson is an LSP Senior Program Associate. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org.

More (open) eyes to the acre What do farmland travelers really see?

Dan Guenthner

Our farm is located on a winding, rustic road that meanders along the bluff top of the scenic St. Croix River, which forms a portion of the western border of Wisconsin. On weekdays the traffic on our narrow blacktop road is limited to a handful of neighbors who work in town, six miles to the north of our farm.

By contrast, on weekends during the growing season, our solitude is interrupted by the steady flow of sightseers out enjoying a drive in the beautiful Wisconsin countryside. It is not uncommon to see large groups of touring motorcycles or antique car clubs rumble by. Our quiet country lane is transformed into a busy thoroughfare for a good portion of each weekend.

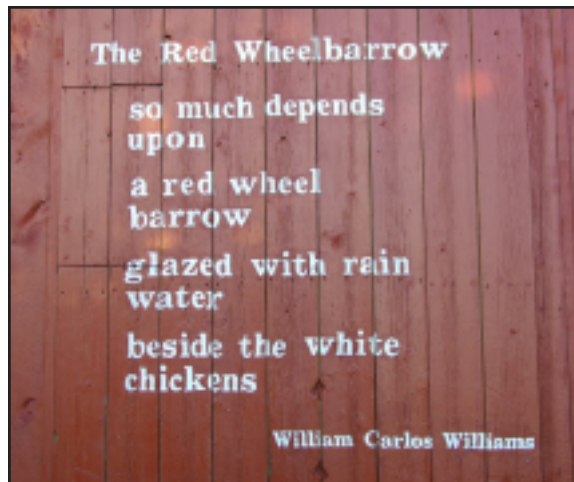
We are thankful for Monday morning and with it a chance to hear the birds more clearly and know that the salamanders and red-bellied snakes have a better chance of reaching the other side of the road safely.

We make our living farming 10 acres of organic vegetables that we rotate throughout our 40-acre Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. Due to the nature of our work with the soil, we spend the majority of our time working out in the fields, at all times of the day, and in all types of weather. Oftentimes on weekends, sightseers will slow down as they pass our farm. I often see heads turn with an occasional outstretched arm pointing in our direction.

When I see this I frequently wonder what these people saw that piqued their curiosity. Was it the diversity of crops we grow that stand in contrast to the monotony of the surrounding fields of corn and soybeans? Did they slow down out of a sense of pity after seeing us laboring on a hot summer afternoon while they anticipate the next stop at the ice cream shop in town? What did they see? Was it animals out on grass, or our Halflinger horses hitched to a cultivator, or kids picking rocks or someone eating a carrot

with soil still on it? What did they see?

A college professor of mine once asked us to consider the difference between *looking* and *seeing*. As with the distinction between hearing and listening, one is primarily involuntary and accidental, the other is purposeful and intentional. My fear is that our weekend sightseers are looking at a countryside that they do not recognize or fully comprehend. It may be wrong of me to speculate as to their thoughts and



This William Carlos Williams poem, painted on the side of a barn at Common Harvest Farm, sometimes catches the eye of motorists speeding by on the nearby blacktop road. (Photo by Joe Riemann)

intentions, but I'm struck by how few people wave or slow down enough to take in the quilt-like beauty of a working small farm. What can they possibly see and understand at that speed?

A half of a mile north of our farm the road rises to one of the highest points in our county. This vista offers a view that extends for five to six miles to the east over a landscape dotted with wooded slopes interspersed with farmland. From one vantage-point you can see 14 silos on nine different farms. To the casual observer, it must look much like it did 40 years ago when our township had 48 working dairy farms. Today we have nine remaining, and on those that have survived, off-farm income is needed to keep them alive. So much has changed

that I question whether our weekend visitors can truly see those changes and how they impact their lives.

As visitors drive through our township I wonder if they ask themselves: where are the cows that not so long ago could be seen grazing on lush pastures? Where are the farmers who used to be out repairing fence or visiting with a neighbor over a fencerow? Where are the people in this bucolic landscape?

The nearby village administrator has been actively trying to promote tourism in our area. But rather than bringing more people to the river valley for recreation, he hopes to draw people to travel down our rustic road and look at our farms and rolling fields. What does he think people will see? My fear is that many people in our county are trying desperately to pretend that our small farms are still

vibrant and alive. Most people want to believe that their food still comes from small diverse farms like ours. The reality is that far too many people have no idea that their food is increasingly controlled by fewer and fewer corporate players.

My hope is that people are willing to look with new eyes and see this changing landscape as it truly is. My hope is that our well-intentioned onlookers will find new ways to support small farms so that our agriculture will once again be diverse and healthy. Amidst all the changes in our township, we now have six organic farms that include two dairies and four vegetable farms, including ours. Each year these operations train a new generation of farmers through on-farm internships, hold farm tours and grow and sell food at local farmers' markets and through Community Supported Agriculture.

The sustainable farmers in our township are demonstrating that small farms made sense 50 years ago and that they still make sense within our "global economy." Maybe if our weekend visitors could see more clearly, they might see the agriculture of the future rather than the one they so desperately want to remember from the past. □

LSP Board Member Dan Guenthner, along with his wife Margaret Pennings and their children, own and operate Common Harvest Farm near Osceola, Wis. For the past 16 years, Guenthner and Pennings have been leaders in the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Upper Midwest.

Gego aanjitooken manoomin (Don't change the wild rice)

Jennifer Tlumak

The Anishinaabeg have harvested manoomin, or wild rice, from the waters of this region for thousands of years. In Manoominike Giizis, the Wild Rice Moon, ricers set out early, with one pushing the canoe forward through the tall grass with a long pole and the other gently knocking wild rice seeds from plants into the canoe bottom. Hours and hundreds of pounds of rice later, they return to shore to rest during the heat of the day, and bring the rice to a local mill where it is wood parched. The wild rice harvest and finishing (parching, jigging and fanning) is a time of hard work, celebration, and spiritual and cultural renewal for the Ojibwe, or Anishinaabeg. It is also an important economic activity, which provides revenue for families through an environmentally sustainable practice. But the rice itself and the ricing way of life are threatened for all Minnesotans who treasure wild rice as their State Grain and as a critical part of lake and watershed ecology.

The prospect of genetically engineered (GE) wild rice poses a cultural, economic, and environmental threat for those who enjoy this traditional food. The University of Minnesota has completed mapping of the genetic structure of wild rice, opening the door to genetic engineering. Genetic engineering occurs when scientists cross genes from one plant, animal or bacterium with another to achieve desired characteristics. Examples include tomatoes engineered with fish genes for frost resistance and corn injected with genetic material from the bacterium Bt for pest resistance. The consequences of genetically engineered crops include widespread genetic contamination of traditional crops and wild plants and loss of traditional varieties. The Mexican government has placed a moratorium on the planting of GE corn in order to halt genetic contamination of traditional varieties and preserve germplasm unique to that country. GE wild rice released into the environment could contaminate natural rice beds, wreaking unknown havoc. Although

University of Minnesota scientists are not currently genetically engineering wild rice, the school has refused to refrain from such research and development, should the opportunity arise.

A related, though equally troublesome, issue is that of the patenting of life. Currently, two patents are held on wild rice breeding processes and researchers are applying for two additional patents on crosses between wild rice and white rice. Ownership of life presents a problem for many of us for purely visceral reasons. In



“Nokoomis and Nanabozhoo Ricing,” by Red Lake Ojibwe Rabbett Strickland. (Art courtesy of White Earth Land Recovery Project)

the Ojibwe cultural tradition, there is little concept of ownership with regards to natural resources—our relatives with roots, wings, fins or paws. The idea that a single corporation or institution might have exclusive rights to certain varieties of wild rice, all of which originated from wild varieties, is frightening to many. Such patents diminish access to seeds for Native people and paddy rice farmers, decrease harvester and farmer autonomy, further consolidate money and power in large agribusiness corporations, and

decrease biodiversity by developing reliance on fewer seed varieties.

Challenging these dual threats—genetic engineering and patenting of wild rice—the White Earth Land Recovery Project is working to pass legislation at the state level. In March 2005, Sen. Becky Lourey and Rep. Karen Clark introduced S.F. 1566/ H.F. 1382 at the Minnesota Legislature to prohibit GE wild rice from being introduced into the state. It is vital that such a bill be passed in the 2006-2007 session. There is momentum behind the effort; now is the time to actively advocate for state action. Several nations, statewide organizations, religious groups, food co-ops, and many individuals have approved ordinances and resolutions or signed statements confirming their opposition to GE wild rice.

The Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League has passed a resolution stating that the release of GE wild rice could cause “loss of unique genetic resources, . . . decline in abundance of the species, . . . and decline in resilience of the biological community (in this case Minnesota lakes and rivers).” The Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa ordinance states, “mahnomen [wild rice] as a natural species is intimately related to continuity and vitality of Anishinabe culture . . . [and] genetic modification of mahnomen would irreversibly damage the maintenance of mahnomen.”

Genetically engineered wild rice does not yet exist. Let's make sure that it never does. The best way to ensure that wild rice is protected is to spread the word, write your Minnesota lawmakers, and support the work of the White Earth Land Recovery Project.

To find out how you can help, please call 218-573-3448 or visit www.savewildrice.com. □

Jennifer Tlumak is the Wild Rice Outreach Coordinator for the White Earth Land Recovery Project. She can be reached at jtlumak@welrp.org.



What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Corrections? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Contact: Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.



2005-2006 Farm Beginnings™ classes begin in October

Classes for the 2005-2006 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ Minnesota program begin Oct. 22 and run until March, followed by an on-farm education component, including farm tours and one-on-one mentoring. Classes will be held in New Prague, just south of the Twin Cities.

This is the ninth year of the program, which provides participants an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. Farm Beginnings students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars and provide a strong foundation of resources and networks for those interested in farming. There are also opportunities to connect with established farmers through farm visits and one-on-one mentorships.

Since 1998, over 220 people have completed the course, and 60 percent of those graduates are farming today. □

Farm Beginnings in Ill., Mo. & Neb.

Starting this fall, Farm Beginnings will be available in four states. If you are a beginning farmer who is interested in learning more about Farm Beginnings™, there are several ways to get started:

→ Southeast Minnesota—

Contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ Western Minnesota—

Contact Amy Bacigalupo at amyb@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105.

→ Twin Cities—Contact Cathy

Twohig at cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-623-7110.

shipproject.org or 612-623-7110.

→ **Northern Illinois**—Contact Parker Forsell at 608-637-8361 or parkerforsell@hotmail.com.

→ **Central Illinois**—Contact Deborah Cavanagh-Grant at 217-968-5512 or cynghgrn@uiuc.edu.

→ **Missouri**—Contact Randy Saner at 417-256-2391 (sanerr@missouri.edu) or Debi Kelly at 573-882-1905 (kellyd@umsystem.edu).

→ **Nebraska**—Contact Martin Kleinschmit at 402-254-6893 (martink@cfra.org) or Jim Peterson at 402-426-9455 (jpeterson2@unl.edu) or Kim Mathews at 402-438-6056 (cropsinnebraska@earthlink.net).

→ On the Internet—

www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html. □

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

See page 14 for the latest installment in our series on Farm Beginnings graduates. □

Credit workshops in November

An "insider tips" workshop on successful farm credit has been rescheduled for Friday and Saturday, Nov. 4-5, in Lewiston, Minn., and for Nov. 11-12 in Montevideo, Minn.

Better record keeping is a critical tool for farmers seeking credit, according to surveys conducted by the Land Stewardship Project. The workshops will address aspects of both record keeping and loan applications, with a goal of better preparing farmers to manage their farming as a business and feeling confident when they enter a bank.

The primary instructor will be Lou Anne Kling, an LSP Board member and recently named project coordinator of FSA's American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative. She has administered farm loan programs at the state and federal levels.

The eight-hour training costs \$20 per family for LSP members, or \$25 per family for non-members. The fee includes materials, snacks and lunch Saturday. Pre-registration is required, with priority given to Farm Beginnings™ graduates.

For details, contact Caroline van Schaik in LSP's Lewiston office at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Margaret Pennings and Dan Guenther, shown here with their daughter Grace, hosted a Farm Beginnings™ field day this summer. On-farm visits are a key part of the course. See page 4 for more on Pennings and Guenther's farm. (Photo by Joe Riemann)

Frances Moore Lappe' to speak in Minneapolis Nov. 18

Author/activist Frances Moore Lappe' will be returning to Minnesota for a special Land Stewardship Project even on Friday, Nov. 18.

If you missed her when she spoke in Winona in February, here's your chance to hear Lappe's thoughtful insights on how strong local democracies can help alleviate hunger and encourage land stewardship around the world.

Lappe' is the author or co-author of 15 books, including the groundbreaking *Diet for a Small Planet*. She is the co-founder of two national organizations that focus on food and the roots of democracy. Lappe' is the fourth American to receive the Right Livelihood Award—sometimes called the “Alternative Nobel Prize.”

Her latest book, *Democracy's Edge*, is coming out in November, so her visit will be timely. Lappe's presentation will be at 7 p.m. at St. Joan of Arc Church, 4537 Third Ave. South, in Minneapolis.

For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. Watch our e-mail

newsletter, LIVE-WIRE, for details of the event as they develop. In the meantime, you can learn more about Lappe's work by checking out the Jan./Feb./March 2005

issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (page 19), or visiting www.smallplanetinstitute.org. □

From Frances Moore Lappe's latest book:

Democracy's Edge is about hope—not sappy, wishful thinking but hope grounded in a grasp of the root causes of spreading misery. I propose that we are in the midst of an extraordinary historical moment—one in which anti-democratic forces appear to be in ascendance while at the same time, invisible to most of us, a powerful current is stirring that may well take us to democracy's next historical stage. I cast aside the gloomy view that Americans are hopelessly divided left vs. right and secular vs. religious, and uncover widespread shared sentiment and common democratic innovation across those supposed barriers.



Frances Moore Lappe'

A more sustainable farm policy



Land Stewardship Project members discussed what federal farm policy changes they would like to see during a meeting Aug. 31 in Minneapolis. This was the fourth in a series of meetings on this issue. The others were held in the Minnesota communities of St. Charles, Granite Falls and New Ulm. Discussion is already taking place in Washington, D.C., on what the 2007 Farm Bill will look like. At the LSP meetings, participants said they would like to see federal policy that stops rewarding mega-farms for over-production, rewards good conservation that produces real results, and preserves hunger prevention and nutrition programs. For more information on LSP's federal farm policy work, contact 612-722-66377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. (LSP photo)

“That disparity points out an awkward truth about the USDA: what it urges people to eat to remain healthy does not match what it pays farmers to grow.”

—Andrew Martin, writing in a May 2, 2005, *Chicago Tribune* article on the disconnect between USDA's food pyramid and crop subsidies (www.farmpolicy.com/2005/05/nutritional-angle-to-farm-bill-debate.html)



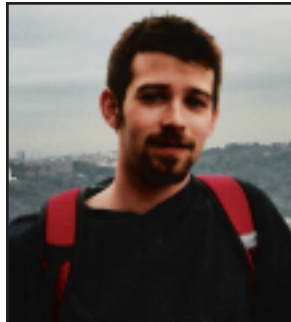
Anderson, Peterson & Riemann serve internships

Paul Anderson served an internship with the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program this summer. He has a bachelor's degree in conservation from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and has worked as a naturalist for the Maine Audubon Society. During



Paul Anderson

his internship, Anderson conducted research on government farm subsidy programs and the soil quality index as it is applied to the Conservation Security Program.



William Peterson

William Peterson is serving a communications internship with LSP. Peterson has a bachelor's degree in anthropology from Hamline University and attended the archaeological field school in Iklaina, Greece. He has worked as an emergency wildland firefighter with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and strings instructor at Ramsey International Arts School. During his internship, Peterson is helping



Joe Riemann

develop publicity for the Dine Fresh Dine Local event on Oct. 11 (see page 24).

Joe Riemann has also been serving an LSP communications internship. He holds bachelor's degrees in political science and sociology from the University of Minnesota. Riemann has worked as a research assistant at the Center for Homicide Research and is Organic Retail Certification Coordinator at the Wedge

Community Co-op in Minneapolis. He also does research and development for the co-op. During his internship, Riemann has been helping develop a series of Myth Buster fact sheets and writing about the new grass-fed meat label (see page 28). He also organized a music show in August that raised funds for LSP. □

Call for Stewardship Art Gallery entries

The theme of the next Stewardship Art Gallery is "The Wild Wonderland of Waterfowl." The deadline for entries is January 1. Please submit them to Louise Arbuckle at lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. If your entry is chosen to appear on our website you will receive a free LSP membership for you or as a gift for someone.

Subjects & media

The entries should show waterfowl in their natural setting. We will accept any kind of artwork, sculptures, paintings, photos etc. For photos, candid shots work well, black and white or color are fine and tell us when, and where you took it. Please title your entry.

Entry guidelines

Please **do not** send originals. Send entries as digitals or scanned files. If you are using pictures from your digital camera, they will work just fine if they are JPEG files. If you are scanning the images yourself from photographs or artwork, it is better to save them in either TIFF or EPS format. When scanning, use a 150 PPI ("pixels per inch") setting.

Check out Land Stewardship Project's Gallery at www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-gallery.html.

If you have any questions please contact Louise at 651-653-0618 or lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.



Pasture Pals

April 2005

By Susie Walker

7-Mile, Iowa

LSP event spotlights democracy, food & farms

AG Hatch, Signatures chefs & Pangrac family discuss different aspects of 'local'

Local democracy, local food and local farming were the centers of attention during the Land Stewardship Project's annual southeast Minnesota hog roast on June 25. The "Food, Family and Farming" event was held on the Dale and Carmene Pangrac dairy farm near Lewiston.

Local government

During the keynote, Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch talked about the importance of strong local governments and thanked LSP staff and members for working so hard to protect the rights of townships during the 2005 session of the Minnesota Legislature (see page 10).

"You cannot rely on the state government to balance the needs of the local government with the economic needs of the state," Hatch told the more than 100 people who attended the event.

Recent attempts to build a controversial tire burning plant and a large dairy near a state park drive home the importance of local control, said the Attorney General. In both cases, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency wasn't doing its job when it gave the go ahead for these projects, said Hatch, adding that it took local citizen action to stop these bad projects. In Renville County, large-scale hog factories inundated the area during

the 1990s, causing health problems and massive fish kills. Citizens responded by voting government officials out of office, said Hatch.

"In the end, you had a total change in local government, because local people said enough is enough."

Hatch encouraged citizens to stay involved in protecting local democracy, which is seen by factory farm boosters as a major barrier to putting in large-scale facilities with massive liquid manure systems.

"I can guarantee once [local control] goes, it won't come back," he said.

The local table

Chad Reilander provided a succinct definition of "slow food," the movement that is gaining international recognition these days: "Slow food is about bringing food back to the center of the table. It's about connecting people with the land again."

Reilander and Matt Schoeller are chefs at Signatures, a new Winona restaurant that has the stated mission of buying as locally and directly from farmers as possible.

Reilander and Schoeller, who roasted the pig for the LSP event, said there are a lot of things that need to be done to smooth the way for local farmers wanting to sell food directly to local restaurants.

For example, chefs like small greens. But without talking to chefs before the growing season farmers may not necessarily plan on growing for such a demand because it requires more seed. In turn, Reilander said chefs may get half-a-hog and ask in exasperation, "What do I do with this?" That's why it's important for farmers to explain that an animal can be butchered to a chef's specifications, he added.

Despite the logistical difficulties of getting local food to local restaurants, some major strides forward have been made in recent years. During a recent one-month period, Signatures bought \$25,000 worth of food and, "I can trace about \$8,000 to the local community," Schoeller said. "We are really turning a corner. People really appreciate good food and they realize they can't get it without taking care of the land."

Locally grown farmers

Carmene Pangrac talked about their farm's recent transition to organic certification. She and Dale produce milk from 110 cows using managed rotational grazing and sell it to Horizon Organic. Carmene also serves on LSP's Farm Beginnings™ steering committee and has been a mentor to new dairy farmers. She introduced Kevin and Reagan Hulbert, recent Farm Beginnings graduates who started dairy farming in the Lewiston area last spring (see page 14).

"We wouldn't be dairy farming without LSP," said Kevin. □



Carmene Pangrac describes her farm's milk storage system during a Land Stewardship Project event on June 25. Pangrac, along with her husband Dale, rotationally graze a 110-cow milking herd. They sell the organically certified milk to Horizon Organic. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

Milo Hanson: 1920-2005

Milo Hanson, a longtime farmer and supporter of soil conservation, died on July 25. He was 85.

Hanson, of Dawson, Minn., was a member of the Land Stewardship Project and supervisor for western Minnesota's Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District for 21 years. Over the years, Hanson received many awards for his work in soil and water conservation, including the Minnesota President's Award for dedicated service to state and national conservation.

In April, he and his wife Helen had participated in an LSP meeting in Granite Falls, Minn., on how massive crop subsidies were hurting farmers here and abroad (see April/May/June Land Stewardship Letter, page 12).

Local control remains strong

LSP members defend right to protect communities

By Bobby King

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty and corporate special interests were unsuccessful in their attempts to weaken local control during this session of the Minnesota Legislature. Land Stewardship Project members, along with key allies, stopped any meaningful erosion of local control. This was a hard won victory. Starting last summer, the Pawlenty administration and corporate ag interests began their campaign to weaken local democracy and made it a legislative priority. The Minnesota Pork Producers, the Agri-Growth Council and the Minnesota Milk Producers were among the special interests working to weaken township rights.

Hundreds of LSP members participated in a postcard campaign, made calls to legislators, attended grassroots meetings in key legislative districts and traveled to the Capitol. The issue for LSP was fundamentally about democracy. The defeated legislation was part of an ongoing movement by corporate interests to remove decisions from local communities and put them in the hands of distant, un-elected government officials. In that respect, this success represents an important victory for local democracy over corporate special interests.

Also at the last minute, Sen. Steve Dille attempted to introduce language targeted at Ripley Township in southeast

Minnesota's Dodge County. In April, Ripley Township enacted a temporary moratorium on large-scale developments, including factory farms. This moratorium had the effect of stopping a New Jersey investor from proceeding with a proposed 2,100-cow dairy. During the special session, Dille unsuccessfully attempted to pass language that would have exempted the proposed factory dairy farm from the moratorium.

Sen. Gary Kubly and Attorney General Mike Hatch played leadership roles in protecting local control. The issue of local control was resolved in the Senate's Agriculture and Environment Finance Conference Committee. Sen. Kubly, who was on the committee, worked with LSP to develop alternative language (see sidebar) to that proposed by the Governor and House, which he was successful in getting passed. Throughout the legislative session, Attorney General Hatch worked closely with LSP, including attending two LSP meetings to speak about the importance of local control and weighing in with key legislators on the issue. Without their leadership this victory would not have been possible. Please, make time to thank them for their work:

- Sen. Kubly can be reached at sen.gary.kubly@senate.mn or 651-296-5094. His mailing address is 306 Capitol/ St. Paul, MN 55155.

- Attorney General Hatch can be reached at 1-800-657-3787 or attorney.general@state.mn.us. His

mailing address is 1400 Bremer Tower, 445 Minnesota Street, St. Paul, MN 55101.

Other legislators who played significant roles in standing up for local control include Sen. John Hottinger, Sen. Jim Vickerman, Sen. John Marty, Rep. Aaron Peterson, Rep. Ruth Johnson, Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba, Rep. Kent Eken, Rep. Frank Moe, Rep. Carlos Mariani, Rep. Frank Hornstein, Rep. Patti Fritz, Rep. Bev Scalze and Rep. Debra Hilstrom. □

Bobby King is an LSP Policy organizer. He can be reached at 507-523-3366 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

What was passed

The basics of Sen. Gary Kubly's amendment, which was passed into law:

- Requires 20 working days notification to the township before a feedlot permit can be issued.

- Requires a public hearing and 10 days notice before an ordinance affecting a feedlot can be passed. This was Governor Tim Pawlenty's language and was left in as part of the compromise. LSP worked for the better township notice to counter this.

- Requires a majority vote to order an economic analysis of a proposed feedlot ordinance. The Governor's language allowed only one township officer or county commissioner to require this.

- Restores the words "environmental" and "social" to the optional state review of local feedlot ordinances. The Governor's proposed language removed these words.

Walking, working, learning as one

By Charlie Bunk

In June, the 20th annual Chippewa County CROP Walk was held in western Minnesota. As in the past, this event was sponsored by churches in the Montevideo area as well as the Land Stewardship Project. For two decades

people have walked to raise money to fight hunger and to raise the awareness of local people. Over the years we have raised \$156,852 and have enrolled 3,117 walkers. We honor Vicki Poier, along with many church recruiters and other volunteers who have participated in every one of these twenty events. The Church World Service CROP Walk formula

allows Friends of CROP, the local committee that organizes the walk, to devote 25 cents of every dollar donated to local food shelves and anti-hunger initiatives. In the early years the local food pantries assured Poier that the Twin Cities food pantries had greater need and were more deserving of this local money. That is no longer the case. Over the past few years, we have been dividing this portion amongst three local projects: the

CROP, see page 11...

Chippewa County Food Shelf, the St. Martin's Ecumenical Relief Fund and LSP. What have we learned through this experience?

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"If birds travel without coordination, they beat each other's wings" —Swahili

• • •

A yearly one-day event to raise awareness and contribute to world food security issues takes planning. We have added an educational component to our recruitment rally. We have built a base of over 30 local churches, civic organizations and LSP members.

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"Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable." —Bande

• • •

We need to tell and retell our stories about local and global food security in order to mobilize this community base. Each year we renew our commitment to creating sustainable food systems. This effort includes helping all people access healthy foods and preparing the next generation of farmers.

LSP has used its portion of the yearly funds in several ways. It has launched a grassroots organization to protect and improve the Upper Minnesota River Basin, called CURE (Clean Up the River Environment). LSP has also sponsored new farmers and taught them about the marketing of local food products through Farm Beginnings™, Pride of the Prairie, and Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaigns and many other efforts to sustain the land and its people out here in western Minnesota.

Church World Service has always provided emergency relief through "blankets of love," school kits and direct food aid. They have also supported small development projects in Third World countries. Church World Service has educated people on the destructive effects of land mines and undertaken many projects to provide clean drinking water .

• • •

"Leaning on the granary does not help a hungry person." —Fulani

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This past year Church World Service has been a part of the great Tsunami relief effort. So far, the organization has distributed \$3.5 million in supplies and has teamed up with other relief agencies



Participants in the 2005 Chippewa County CROP Walk gathered for a group photo.

(Photo by Laura Borgendale)

to provide medical, water supply and sanitation aid to victims.

Our local CROP Walk chose not to focus on this huge wave of recovery aid. Instead, we chose the theme "A Garden is Life" for this year's walk. We feel it is important that we honor how our food is produced and the knowledge held by farmers and gardeners. Through our Historic Garden project, young people have the opportunity to learn from our gardeners and farmers. We highlighted small agricultural projects which Church World Service has completed. Each Sunday school has "adopted" one of the projects and made posters about it. Our recruitment rally, which 60 people attended on April 14, featured preserved local foods by Garden Club members and local farmers. We invited Madame Alimata Traore of Mali to discuss fair trade (see April/May/June 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 12).

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"Peace, Rain, Prosperity."

—Basotho

• • •

The longer we work together, the more we realize that food issues are by nature social justice issues. Our efforts to lift up food security and sustainability through the CROP Walk have brought us into the social change arena. LSP has led us in this way as well. This year we encouraged walkers, sponsors and donors to join the "ONE" campaign. This is an effort to work within the United States to encourage our government to promote fair trade, debt relief and anti-corruption activities, as well as to bring increased development aid to the poorest of the world's countries. This year, only 0.39 percent of the U. S. government budget is dedicated to these causes. The ONE campaign challenges us to work to increase this by 1 percent.

Remember, "If you want to travel fast, travel alone. If you want to travel far, travel together." □

Charlie Bunk is a pastor at the Saron and Baxter Lutheran Churches in Montevideo. He can be reached at cbbunk@maxminn.com or 320- 269-4782.

Help farmers left in Katrina's wake

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in September, it wasn't only New Orleans that suffered. Family farmers throughout the region lost homes, crops, livestock and facilities. Losses like that are enough to finish off a farming career.

Almost immediately after the storm, Patchwork Family Farms teamed up with Farm Aid and the Campaign for Family Farms to donate 3,500 pounds of sustainably-raised pork products to the relief effort. The food aid was distributed by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Selma, Ala. Patchwork is a cooperative effort of mid-Missouri hog farmers and an economic development project of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center. Both the Missouri Rural Crisis Center and the Land Stewardship Project are founding members of the Campaign for Family Farms.

Help is still needed in the devastated region. Farm Aid has started the Family Farm Disaster Fund to help rural residents in the area. To make a contribution, visit www.farmaid.org, or call 1-800-FARMAID.

The landscape of our dinner plate

Do you know how to value a really 'good' meal?

NOTE: Land Stewardship Project organizer Caroline van Schaik was the keynote speaker at the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center's "Dinner on the Bluff" event on Aug. 13. The presentation followed a dinner at which all but two items were sourced from southeast Minnesota farmers. Here is an excerpt of her keynote.

By Caroline van Schaik

At its best, what we choose to eat can be rural development by the forkful. Who we choose to buy our food from is a vote for or against how crops and animals are raised. It says how much erosion we are willing to pay for with our taxes and our dedicated food dollars. In support of such goals as carbon sequestration, native bird habitat, and a food system that supports us *here* can be research, innovative policy, and first and foremost, eating.

Let's go back to some recent research and the question of whether all food is created equally. In a study the Land Stewardship Project was involved with a few years ago soil scientist Christopher Iremonger considered how much soil might be lost in a heavy storm if his host farmer's mixed grass-crops field was instead planted entirely to permanent grass or entirely to corn. He found a huge range of predicted differences, from practically no soil loss when the land was planted to grass to several tons per acre when in corn (see the chart on this page; more information is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/lsl/lspv19n2.html#coverstory).

Now think about cattle or sheep raised on a grass farm with virtually no soil loss versus a farm where corn or other annual row crops dominate. You can see that your choice of steak, or chop, or chunk of cheese is undeniably connected to the loss of soil. If you really want to do something for the environment, which

farm should you buy from? As one campaign went a few years ago: "You don't support factory hog farms when it comes to legislation. Why are you supporting them at the grocery store?" So what really matters, and how can we get those things to the table?

What really matters

When you buy a car, you want it to run. You might also want all-wheel drive, red paint rather than factory blue, and you might insist that it be made in the U.S. These are features you value above and beyond the price of four wheels and an engine.

Like your car that must first of all run, our food must give us energy. After that, taste matters. A car "Made in the U.S." for some means food "Locally Grown." The all-wheel guarantee might be Food Alliance or MOSES certified according to "sustainable" or "organic" criteria.

As do the particulars of your preferred automobile, these food features go beyond the meat and potatoes of dinner. We have to grapple with what we value on our landscape to move us to what we should be paying for on our dinner plates.

If you are among those compelled to leave a smaller footprint upon this earth, "good" as in "a good meal" will have to mean close to home, to minimize fuel and maximize flavor, seed integrity and the financial viability of local farmers so that they can keep growing good food for you.

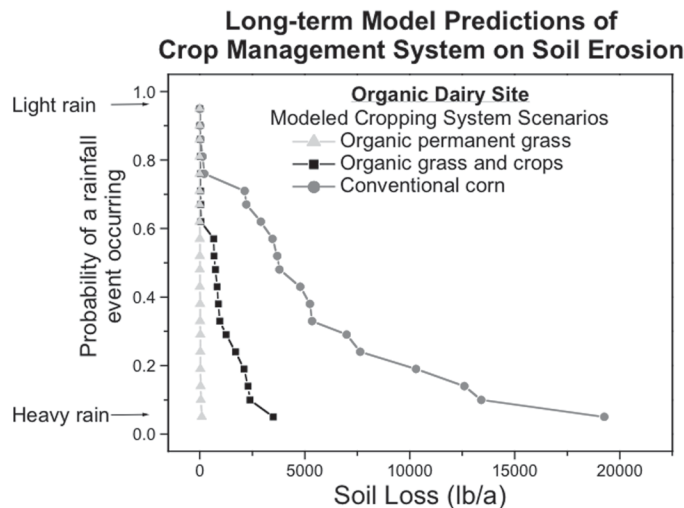
"Good" will embrace farming that produces undeformed frogs, clean streams for those frogs and green fields of soil-protecting grass on a bright April day. "Good" will mean knowing as many farmers as you can so that you will know exactly who and what you are paying for.

"Good" might mean coming to verbal blows with your elected officials who still feel that 1,000 cows in one place is good for Minnesota. So "good" might lead you to a comment about the Farm Bill, even though you are not a farmer.

Some of the "good" in a good meal is already marketed, with important premiums vested on organic, local, fresh and hormone-free, for example. Some are not yet but must become so—the value we say we give to water, habitat and soil must translate financially so that we pay our due to those who provide us these public (and publicly enjoyed) gifts.

Then we can sit down to a truly "good" meal. □

Caroline van Schaik can be reached at 651-653-0618 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. For more on LSP's "Multiple Benefits of Agriculture" work, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html.



SOURCE: *Sustainable Farming Systems: Demonstrating Environmental and Economic Performance*, June 2001, www.misa.umn.edu/publications/SFSReport.pdf



Getting the word out

By Brian DeVore

On July 11, National Public Radio began broadcasting “Going Green in Agriculture,” a three-part series on efforts to make federal farm policy more ecologically friendly. The report, which was put together by respected science journalist Dan Charles, discussed how some farmers are striking a balance between making a living and protecting the environment on working farmland. The report also described how current farm policy penalizes farmers who are working to produce food in a more sustainable manner, and how initiatives like the Conservation Security Program (see page 1) can help correct that unfair situation. Charles’ report quoted Land Stewardship Project members and the Public Radio web page dedicated to the “Going Green in Agriculture” stories provided links to farm policy information and research LSP has on its own website.

A lot of people complain about the media not doing its job these days. Why don’t more journalists look beyond the latest political “gotcha” scandal or celebrity gossip patrol and dig deep into the issues that really matter? “Going Green” shows what happens when a well-informed journalist does the homework, takes on a complicated issue that is vitally important to us all, and presents it to a national audience in an understandable way. LSP played a major part in helping Charles report this story. “Going Green in Agriculture” is an example of how the many ways LSP promotes a more sustainable, just approach to federal farm policy can come together and begin influencing the public dialogue. But it is also an example of how getting a quick “hit” in the national media via splashy press conferences doesn’t always do the trick. A report like “Going Green” is the culmination of years of outreach to a journalist. Even more important, it’s the result of countless hours of unheralded work with farmers, researchers and policy makers.

LSP’s relationship with Charles started in 2002, when he produced an in-depth Public Radio report on how technology was changing agriculture. It was a particularly well-researched story and it showed that Charles had more than a passing knowledge of food and farming issues, so we made a special effort to put him on our media list. In April of that year, when *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosys-*

• • •
“Going Green” is an example of what happens when a journalist does the homework and takes on an issue that is vitally important to us all...
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tems was published, Charles was sent an LSP press release announcing the new book. *The Farm as Natural Habitat* was edited by LSP’s Dana Jackson and her daughter Laura, who is a University of Northern Iowa biology professor. Many of the chapters were written by LSP staff and members. The book describes how farmland is viewed by many as an “ecological sacrifice zone,” but that diverse farming systems can help balance food production and environmental protection on working farmlands. Charles, who has also written on agriculture for the *New Scientist* magazine, interviewed Laura Jackson and talked with her about the book.

Fast forward to January of this year, when the journal *Bioscience* published a paper written by LSP Executive Director George Boody and LSP Board member Bruce Vondracek, among others. The paper described how the multi-year

“Multiple Benefits of Agriculture” research project has shown that planting fewer row crops and more perennial plants such as grass and hay in two Minnesota watersheds could significantly improve water quality. The paper also outlined how such changes in the landscape were unlikely to occur without significant changes in farm policy. Charles received a press release on the study and he later contacted LSP’s Policy Program here in Minnesota.

While Boody was in Washington, D.C., this spring, Charles conducted an extensive interview with him about the research and LSP’s work. At the time, Boody invited Charles out to Minnesota to see some real working farms that were taking steps to protect and improve the ecosystem. A few months later, Charles contacted LSP’s Policy Program and said he wanted to come to Minnesota and interview farmers who could talk about ways of making farm policy more green. LSP organizer Adam Warthesen set him up with Dave Serfling, a southeast Minnesota farmer and member of LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Committee. While in Minnesota, Charles also interviewed Tex Hawkins, an LSP member and biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as Art Thicke, a grass-based dairy farmer. Both Hawkins and Thicke were key players in the Monitoring Project, an initiative LSP coordinated in the 1990s that showed how farmers using sustainable methods could gauge the ecological impact their practices were having.

Perhaps one of the most succinct descriptions of what groups like LSP are trying to accomplish came from Serfling, when he told Charles, “Right now you have to have it in your heart to make changes on your farm. We’re hoping to get enough economic incentives that you can use your head.”

“Going Green in Agriculture” covers a lot of ground, and includes reports from Kansas to Europe. But many of its basic concepts—there are farmers who can do right by the environment given the correct incentives—are rooted in work LSP is associated with, on the land, in the laboratory and in the halls of political power. The media doesn’t always have the patience, resources or inclination to recognize such connections. But when it does, the result is a more informed public that can eventually act on that information. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

NPR report on the Internet

To listen to “Going Green in Agriculture” and view the report’s associated links, see www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4735566.

Oh, the places you'll go

NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of profiles featuring graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings™ program. See page 6 for more on Farm Beginnings.

June in southeast Minnesota. It's that time when a grass-based dairy operation provides a peek at its potential for the year, what with newly green pastures blanketing the hills and cows hitting their milk-producing stride. On just such a day south of the town of Lewiston, Kevin and Reagan Hulbert are showing their potential as well. The morning milking is done, fresh grass seed has been spread and the cowherd has been turned out to pasture for the day. The young couple points proudly to the ruler-straight fences they have erected on pastureland that just a year before was planted to corn and alfalfa. In spite of a wet, sometimes miserable, spring, the milk cows and newborn calves now look vibrantly healthy. The Hulberts have only been milking a couple of weeks, but production is better than they had expected.

The relative calm on this Saturday morning belies a hectic couple of years, during which the couple quit city jobs, worked on a couple of dairy farms, took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ course and searched far and wide for a farm to rent. It hasn't been easy, but the Hulberts now have enough experience under their belt to know they can make a go of it in farming, even when January's dark cold makes bright June mornings like this seem a remote memory.

"I've had a lot of jobs in the animal science field," says Reagan confidently. "This is the best job I've ever had."

The couple, neither of whom grew up on farms, credits Farm Beginnings with providing them the tools to begin realizing their potential on the land.

The call of the land

For Kevin, the call of farming came in the late 1980s via the public address system at his high school in Lewiston: "If you want a job, come to the counselor's office." Kevin bit and soon the town boy was biking to work on a farrow-to-finish hog farm. That was all it took.

"I liked it," says Kevin. 34. "I like working outside. I like soil. I like

animals. You just kind of get a passion for it."

Reagan, 29, grew up in the heart of northern Minnesota's iron ore mining region but has always liked working with large animals and considered becoming a veterinarian for a time.

Both of the Hulberts have animal science degrees from the University of Minnesota and worked at the school's dairy barn. After he graduated in 1996, Kevin worked in computers, and the couple bought a townhouse in the Twin Cities. But they also kept researching what it would take to get into farming. Kevin has an extensive agricultural library, including every copy of *The New Farm* he's ever been able to get his hands on. The now defunct magazine—an Internet version exists at www.newfarm.org—carried numerous articles

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



To read other profiles of graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of the *LSL*, or log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html#profiles.

on low-cost sustainable ways to farm. Kevin was particularly intrigued by a 1990 article about farmers who were using managed rotational grazing to produce milk on grass. At that time, this system was proving itself in North America as a viable alternative to expensive confinement dairying.

"To get in when you're young, grazing is the only way to go, as far as I'm concerned," he says.

He introduced Reagan to grazing and she was impressed by its financial competitiveness when she ran the numbers. She also liked how healthy the cows were under such a management system.

Through Kevin's Lewiston connections, they found out about Farm Beginnings, and in the fall of 2003 started commuting from the Twin Cities to

Plainview, Minn., to take the twice-monthly classes. Farm Beginnings provides participants an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. Students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars and provide a strong foundation of resources and networks for those interested in farming.

There are also opportunities to connect with established farmers through farm visits and one-on-one mentorships. The couple says the course helped them see that farming was doable, and pushed them to do some realistic planning.

"Let your goals steer you instead of your wants and needs," says Kevin.

"You also learn what's your passion," says Reagan. "You learn who you are."

They soon found out about area farmers who needed cows milked during Christmas holidays and gained hands-on experience that way. Two Lewiston dairy farmers, Dale and Carmene Pangrac, served as their mentors and helped them hook up with Lewiston area farmer Warren Hoppe, who produces milk using managed grazing. In early 2004 they sold their townhouse and moved into a mobile home on the Hoppe farm where they worked for about a year.

"People thought we were nuts," recalls Reagan.

Reagan also worked on a 1,500-cow full confinement dairy for a time. The last six months of 2004, the Hulberts intensified their search for a farm to rent, looking close to home as well as in Wisconsin and even Nebraska. They visited farms armed with a digital camera. Later, they used a TV to display the photos, showing them to experienced dairy farmers like the Pangracs so they could get a second opinion of the operation's siting, buildings and milking equipment.

"We don't want to fail," says Reagan. "I want all the skeletons out of the closet."

After farm visits they would also sketch out an operation's layout on a dry erasable white board to help them in the decision making process. The Hulberts put ads in newspapers and on the Internet, e-mailed people, and asked lots and lots of questions.

They also used more basic methods of

Fresh Faces, see page 15...

seeking a farm as well.

"At one point I actually opened the Lewiston phone book and started calling," Kevin recalls with a laugh.

The Hulberts were surprised at the responses they got during their search—some wouldn't take them seriously and

Hulberts have made up for that with some hard work. They converted 30 acres of former crop ground into grazing paddocks. They then invested about \$5,500 in portable fencing and started milking.

That was when the reality set in.

"It would take two, two and a half hours just to milk 20 cows that first week," recalls Reagan. To the couple's chagrin, that was about how long it used

livestock loan. As Farm Beginnings graduates, the Hulberts qualified for the loan, which they have five years to pay off (during the first two years, no payments have to be made). The Heifer International loan primed the pump for more cow-buying credit.

"That was the only way we would have gotten the bank loan," says Reagan. "Once we told the bank about the [LSP/Heifer International] loan, they opened their eyes and said, 'Aha.'"

For now, Kevin is commuting to La Crosse, Wis., to work as a computer specialist for a security firm. Reagan does the farming during the week, and they both work on the dairy during weekends. And the Hulberts aren't done preparing for their future in farming. As a result of their involvement in Farm Beginnings, they are taking farm analysis/record-keeping classes through the Minnesota Farm Business Management Association.

Their goal is to grow the milking herd to around 60 or 70 cows, a size that may allow Kevin to quit his job, and then start looking for a farm to buy. Their fencing is portable, and they've kept their equipment to a minimum (they own one 70-horsepower tractor and a four-wheeler, plus some calf hutches) to keep costs down and facilitate mobility. Even the mobile home they own in Lewiston is part of their plan: once they find a farm to buy, they can move the house to the land.

For now, the Hulberts' farming dream is still more potential than reality. But as Reagan points out, they didn't come by that potential naturally—they prepared for it.

"We're very ready for this." □



Kevin and Reagan Hulbert with their new milking herd. "This is the best job I've ever had," says Reagan. (LSP photo)

had a laugh at their expense.

But the couple was undeterred.

Pay dirt

In April, all that preparation and determination paid off when the Hulberts began milking their own cows on the farm of Ray Radatz just outside of Lewiston. The farmer, who still raises crops and replacement heifers, had gotten out of the milking business the summer before and was willing to rent some land and facilities. This turned out to be a nice turn of events for the Hulberts: unlike some of the defunct dairies they had looked at, the milking parlor and other facilities on the Radatz farm are still in excellent shape. It even has a farm office attached to the milk room. The one downside was the farm had been a full confinement dairy, which meant there was no pasture for grazing. But the

to take Radatz to milk 100 cows. And all that hard work produced a disappointing first milk check: \$450.

In the groove

But these days the milking goes much smoother, and the milk checks are growing. The Hulberts have built up a herd of 54 cows, and milk 38. The herd is made up of calves they got through their work arrangement with Hoppe, as well as from another grazing operation. The cows' recent history has proven to be an immense advantage: sometimes cows that have been confined have a difficult time adapting to a pasture-based system. Not these bovines. "When we let them out they champed the grass right down," recalls Reagan. "They know how to graze. There was no adjustment there."

Fifteen of their heifers were procured through a Heifer International no-interest

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chemical-free acres can garner price premiums in the organic market.

But one conservation method the Madsens utilize does not pay off financially—it's just the right thing to do. Over the years, they have planted grassy "headlands" on particularly hilly portions of their crop fields. These are established at the end of rows where corn or soybean plantings would cause erosion on a hillside. These are quite effective at holding soil in place, but are unproductive. Sometimes headlands can gobble up a significant amount of revenue-producing acres: the Madsens have one 80-acre field that is seven acres of headlands.

"You just planted those headlands because you didn't want the soil to wash," Cindy says to Vic as their college-aged son Eric works on the baler nearby.

But how long can a farm do the right thing in an era of razor thin profit margins?

That's where the Conservation Security Program, called CSP for short, can help fill key conservation gaps on a farm—rewarding and encouraging practices that don't show up on a balance sheet but are a public good just the same.

Interviews with farmers, conservation professionals and agricultural/environmental policy experts indicate a fully

functional CSP could be the key to a significant greening of the landscape. The program's emphasis on farm diversity could also have a positive impact on the human element of that landscape.

"There's a lot more to this program than what the farmer gets," says Vic, who enrolled in CSP when it was first offered in 2004. "It would change the scenery and the economics of a community."

The sting of commodities

For many farmers, the USDA's decades-old commodity subsidy system has made the penalty for making conservation a major part of a farming enterprise too steep. Farmers receive subsidies for raising corn, soybeans, rice, wheat and cotton. Planting hay or grass (or wildlife shrubs) on corn ground means a loss of farm payments, something many farmers can ill afford.

The result has been a major degradation of our soil and water quality. Soil scientists such as the University of Minnesota's Gyles Randall point the finger of blame at lack of diversity in farm country. Row crops such as corn and soybeans cover the land for only a few months of the year, leaving the soil vulnerable to erosion. Such plantings also rely on large amounts of agrochemicals to keep them productive, and some of those inputs often find their way into our water. Grass, hay and other perennial plants not

only protect hillsides from erosion; they slow water down significantly, allowing it to seep in through the soil profile and recharge the underground aquifers many Americans rely on for drinking water.

There are other impacts as well: mountains of surplus commodities are depressing prices here and abroad, while the majority of subsidy payments go to some of the largest farming operations in the country. Studies show that rural counties that take in the most crop subsidies also export people at the highest rate. A recent analysis by the USDA's Economic Research Service found that population changes in U.S. counties receiving high amounts of farm program payments have been consistently 12 to 15 percentage points lower than in other rural counties. On average these "high-payment" counties lost between nine percent and 10 percent of their people between 1998 and 2003. A color-coded USDA map shows in dark blue the high-farm-payment counties that lost more than 10 percent of their population between 1998 and 2003. An azure cluster of counties spills down the middle of the country, tracking the western Corn Belt closely.

"Farm programs, as they are currently structured, do not address the causes of

CSP, see page 17...

A CSP primer

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is being made available across the United States on a watershed-by-watershed basis. It is available for all cropland, including hayland, vegetable acres, vineyards, orchards, pastureland and rangeland. Also eligible are farmsteads or livestock feeding and handling areas. CSP is available to all farmers who sign-up and qualify. To qualify for CSP, farmers need to meet minimum criteria for addressing soil and water quality, which are considered "resources of concern."

The tiers

At the core of CSP is a three-tiered system, with farmers in Tier III attaining the highest stewardship level and thus receiving the biggest payments:

- **Tier I:** Contracts are for five years, and a farmer must have addressed water quality and soil quality issues to

the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) standards on all or part of the farm.

- **Tier II:** Contracts range from five to 10 years, and farmers must have addressed water quality and soil quality standards as outlined in the FOTG for their entire farm. They must also be willing to address one additional resource—such as soil erosion or water quality—by the end of the contract period to a level that sustains the resource according to FOTG standards.

- **Tier III:** Contracts again range from five to 10 years, but farmers must have addressed all resource concerns to a "resource management system level" that meets FOTG standards on the entire farm. Meeting the resource management system level means all resources of concern are managed with sound and effective conservation.

These tiers leave open the option of improving stewardship on the farm, thus increasing payments over time. Once farmers qualify for a certain tier, they can move up into a higher tier in subsequent years by

improving stewardship on the farm.

CSP has four kinds of payments, including: automatic, per-acre annual payments called **stewardship payments**, or **base payments**; **existing/maintenance payments**, which are made annually to farmers for maintenance of existing practices that already deliver conservation benefits; **new practices payments**, which provide one-time cost-share funds for establishing a new farming practice; and **enhancement payments** which are made for additional conservation practices, activities or results that go above and beyond those needed for basic eligibility.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service will use spot checks to determine if farmers enrolled in CSP are complying with its criteria.

For more on the basics of CSP, see LSP's series of fact sheets at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html.

long-term population decline experienced by many farming communities,” concluded the analysis, which was published in the February 2005 issue of *Amber Waves* magazine (www.ers.usda.gov/amberwaves). A University of Minnesota study of cropping statistics and census figures for the 12-state Corn Belt region shows an inverse relationship between the acres planted to corn and soybeans in a given county, and population growth. In short, more corn and beans equals fewer people.

Our commodity subsidy system, with its all-out emphasis on producing a handful of crops, is failing the land and the people.

Getting paid to do the right thing

In 2002, Congress tried to balance the scales with the creation of CSP. This initiative attempts to make conservation and farming not so much of an either-or choice by rewarding farmers financially for having measures in place that protect and enhance the environment. This is a dramatic departure from traditional commodity programs.

“CSP is a huge deal in terms of having a green program that’s on a more level playing field with the commodity program,” says Ferd Hoefner, Policy Director for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

The program, which is administered by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), was mired in bureaucratic muck for almost two years, mostly because of foot-dragging on the part of the government. But finally in 2004, and again earlier this year, farmers were able to sign up for CSP. On Aug. 25, the USDA announced that 110 watersheds, with at least one in all 50 states, Guam and Puerto Rico, will be eligible for the 2006 CSP sign-up. These watersheds represent more than 120,000 of the nation’s potentially eligible farms and ranches, covering more than 46 million acres that are evenly split between cropland and grazing land. That announcement brings the number of watersheds enrolled to 330 across the nation, representing 250 million acres that have been eligible for the program.

Those statistics are all good fodder for a USDA press release, but how is CSP

working where it matters: on the land?

Grazing gets its due

One of CSP’s most positive components thus far is that for the most part it reflects the NRCS’s relatively new-found respect for managed rotational grazing as a stewardship farming technique.

It’s about time grazing got credit as a financially viable livestock production system, according to Bonnie Haugen, who operates a grass-based dairy farm in southeast Minnesota’s Fillmore County with her husband Vance. Two years ago during a drought her farm got only \$331 in disaster payments because grass and hay are not considered as valuable as

wildlife on the farm. On a recent summer morning, Bonnie walks toward her pastures and points to one seven-acre hillside covered in grass as proof that a healthier environment can also result in a healthier bottom line. When they first started grazing it, there was about one day’s worth of feed. Now that hillside provides about seven days of good grazing.

“It’s thicker, it has better color,” Bonnie says proudly.

In addition, organizations such as the Land Stewardship Project were able to get a grazing-related rule change in place that is a major boost for grass-based farming. Under the original CSP rules, no



Northeast Iowa farmer Jason Klinge will use CSP payments to complete the transition to organic beef production. (LSP photo)

corn. Bonnie estimates they lost \$20,000 because of the dry weather.

Managed rotational grazing deserves some environmental respect as well, she says.

“There’s a place for corn. There’s a place for corn-soybeans. But there are too many hillsides planted to just row crops.”

When the Haugens bought their farm in 1993, they were told by the local zoning administrator that it was the “worst farm in Fillmore County.” Years of intense row-cropping had taken its toll. But after more than a decade of rotational grazing, the Haugens say their soil quality is increasing and they are seeing more

matter how a pasture was managed it qualified for lower payments than if the land was planted to corn or other crops. But now cropland that was converted to pasture and is under a well-managed grazing system is considered “pastured cropland,” and will qualify for payments as high as if it was still cropland. Farmers also get the option of getting the same level of “enhancement payments” that come with crops.

“Just because you are using four hooves instead of four wheels to manage

that land you shouldn't be penalized," says Adam Warthesen, an LSP Policy Program organizer who has been working with farmers interested in CSP.

School of hard knocks

An unattended result of CSP's implementation is the lesson it's teaching farmers who *do not* qualify for the program. A major reason for not making the CSP cut is not having the proper soil tests. But farmers are also being disquali-

and then they found out their fertilizer dealer's recommendations were keeping them out."

The Madsens, for their part, found the fertilizer information they got through their own on-farm research was a major boon when they applied to CSP. As members of Practical Farmers of Iowa, one of the research projects the Madsens have been involved in is the late season nitrogen test—a method for reducing applications of fertilizer. Being involved with that kind of research—they own their own soil test kit—means that the family has years of soil tests results, as

small grains like oats to feed that livestock (as well as to recycle the nutrients in the form of manure-based fertilizer). This concerns Ranum, who is a NRCS grassland conservationist in northeast Iowa. He says in northeast Iowa watersheds like the Turkey and Wapsipinicon, advances in erosion control are being threatened as pasture and hay ground gets plowed up for row crops. If CSP lives up to what its Congressional creators intended, it would reward farmers for having more hay, grass and small grains such as oats on the land. And those types of plants, in turn, can help make livestock production profitable again.

"I think [CSP] could put more livestock on the land," says Ranum. "I don't think you're going to see a lot of 50-year-old farmers going back to livestock. But hopefully some younger farmers will see livestock as an entry into farming like it used to be."

That's why Ranum is excited to see farmers like Jason Klinge sign up for the program. For Klinge, who farms in the Turkey River watershed near Farmersburg, Iowa, CSP could help him complete the transition to an organic, grass-based grazing operation. During a recent pasture walk hosted by Klinge and attended by farmers and Ranum, the topic was supposed to focus on how to keep grazing paddocks nutritious during deep summer. But another major topic of conversation that day was recent flash floods in the area and how the builders of a large-scale manure lagoon found out almost too late that there was a cave beneath the building site. Klinge talks about a particularly large sinkhole on his farm that serves as a kind of mega-

storm drain for water running off several thousand acres of farmland in the area. "And it goes somewhere," he says quizzically of that runoff.

Klinge bought the 315-acre farm in 1985, and raised hogs on it for a decade. For about 10 years, much of the farm was planted in a rotation involving corn, hay and oats. Raising more corn meant he qualified for higher government subsidies, but Klinge always felt the land, which is highly erodible, needed a good crop rotation. He also was concerned about the Swiss cheese-like limestone karst geology that underlies his soil. "I didn't like putting on all those chemicals



Vance and Bonnie Haugen like that CSP allows them to use rotational grazing to protect the soil on their southeast Minnesota farm. "There's a place for corn. There's a place for corn-soybeans. But there are too many hillsides planted to just row crops," says Bonnie. (LSP photo)

fied for applying too much fertilizer, which can become a water quality hazard when it runs off fields. Some CSP applicants have found they are applying more fertilizer than CSP allows because that's what chemical dealers had recommended over the years.

Crop farmers have reduced fertilizer inputs in recent years, but many still tend to over-apply this relatively cheap input, not wanting to take a chance that the crop will be starved of nutrients. All of a sudden, CSP showed there could be a significant penalty for over-applying fertilizer: being bumped from participating in a government program.

"There's been some education through CSP," says southeast Minnesota farmer Dave Serfling. "Farmers wanted to get in,

well as records of how much nitrogen fertilizer they've used. More importantly, they have documentation that shows they are reducing their fertilizer usage.

"After five or six years of those tests we got a pretty good feel for what we could get by with and not see a major drop in yields," says Cindy.

More livestock on the land

From Jim Ranum's perspective, one of CSP's key roles could be to make livestock a major part of the landscape again. As farming operations have specialized and converted more acres to corn and soybeans in the Midwest, livestock have been concentrated on larger confinement operations. The result is less of a need for local pasture, hay and

when you were that close to the rock,” he says. “You just wondered when it rained real hard where it was all going.”

So in the 1990s Klinge began converting his acres to certified organic—about 200 of his 270 tillable acres are now organic and he hopes eventually to be totally chemical-free. Three years ago he began getting into managed rotational grazing seriously. Now, with the exception of one field of corn and some hay, the farm is mostly made up of grass. That conversion has cost Klinge government money as the amount of land devoted to corn has shrunk. And although he is taking extra trouble to raise his cattle in a natural way, they are not certified organic, meaning he hasn’t been able to take advantage of price premiums in the marketplace.

Klinge feels CSP will help him complete the switch to a totally organic beef operation, which means he can receive premiums and be rewarded for the extra care he takes raising cattle.

He qualified for Tier II, which means \$48,000 in payments over a 10 year period. His 2005 CSP payment will be \$13,000. “That money will really help me,” he says. From the taxpayer’s standpoint, such an investment in Klinge’s operation is a good deal when compared to the \$360,000 per year in subsidies large row-cropping operations can qualify for through the conventional commodity program. Agribusiness lobbyists are fighting efforts to lower that cap to \$250,000 (see sidebar on page 21).

A hobbled program

Now the bad news. After a year of operation, CSP’s shortcomings, many of which were predicted before it was even launched, have become more evident than ever. Without some changes, CSP will remain at best a small, boutique program that services a select few farmers. At worst, it will disappear altogether.

First the funding problem: CSP’s 2005 budget was capped at \$202 million, and even less will be available for new watersheds in 2006, according to the proposed federal agriculture budget.

To put things in perspective, the price tag of commodity programs in general has been averaging around \$15 billion a year. The Conservation Reserve Program land retirement initiative costs around \$2 billion a year—slightly more than half the total conservation budget.

The Sustainable Agriculture

Coalition’s Hoefner says without at least a billion dollars a year, CSP can never be the working farmland conservation program it has the potential to be. It is particularly troubling as the program is implemented in an increasing number of watersheds, spreading the funds even thinner over the landscape.

The lack of a “continuous sign-up” option is also a major issue. During the first two sign-ups, farmers in a particular watershed were only able to apply for CSP once every eight years. That lag time is set to be extended to a dozen years or more as funding becomes tighter. That means that a correctable conservation problem that makes farmers ineligible for CSP—although it could be addressed in a matter of months or a year—will keep them out of the program for a decade or so. What financial incentive is there to deal with that correctable problem in the intervening years between sign-ups?

And despite the respect shown for managed rotational grazing under CSP, other conservation farming methods such as careful use of resource conserving crop rotations—cover crops, green manure crops, small grains, etc.—is all but being ignored by NRCS. Hoefner says although CSP is being billed as open to all types of farming, small-scale fruit and vegetable producers are getting a raw deal under the program. That’s because it penalizes them for tillage and doesn’t recognize the benefits of the resource conserving crop rotations or cover crops these operations often use.

“They don’t want to talk about farming systems. They want to talk about practices,” Hoefner says of NRCS. “They just want to work everything around the corn and soybean cropping system.”

This brings up a bugaboo that may have long-term, negative implications: CSP’s bias towards no-till farming.

“I think the flatter ground was very easy to qualify,” says the NRCS’s Ranum of how the program was implemented in his area. Larger cropping operations tend to be found on flatter ground. That means in some cases they found it easier to qualify for CSP than their diverse neighbors who are raising a mix of livestock and crops on hillier, less fertile farmland. Those flatland cropping operations may be using no-till or other conservation farming methods to protect the soil, and that’s good, but is it enough? No, say a growing group of soil scientists. And that’s why it’s more important than ever to have a CSP that rewards and encourages a variety of sustainable farming practices.

Hard water

Protecting and enhancing the environment in an adequate way is a moving target. That became clear recently when a study was published in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* that described how changes in the climate threaten to increase soil erosion significantly. The authors of the paper, Jerry Hatfield and John Prueger of the USDA’s National Soil Tilth Laboratory, estimate that recent documented changes in precipitation patterns—more intense rains lasting shorter periods of time—could be increasing soil erosion by as much as 95 percent in some areas.

“Scary, isn’t it?” Hatfield quips.

Hatfield and Prueger express concern that even “state-of-the-art” soil management won’t be good enough to deal with these increased erosion rates, and that significant changes in farming practices will be needed to keep soils productive.

“There’s been an underestimate of the impact of this,” Hatfield, who heads up the Tilth Lab, says. “What’s happening in the real world is the real world is exceeding model expectations.”

In other words, the soil scientists’ “worst case scenario” predictions of erosion increases was not enough to cover what’s actually happening on the ground (see the Myth Buster Box on page 30 for more on this study).

That’s a major step backward for scientists like Hatfield, who saw soil erosion rates in this country drop between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, thanks in part to the adoption of conservation tillage methods. But mothballing the moldboard plow and leaving more plant residue on the soil surface isn’t going to be enough in the future.

“We have conservation measures that were built for a climate scenario we no longer have,” he says.

Scientists aren’t the only ones demoralized over losing ground in the soil conservation battle. Hatfield says producers who have adopted good conservation measures are starting to ask, if this or that technique worked before, why isn’t it working now? They are seeing more rill erosion on land that’s under a minimum tillage system, for example. Leaving unplowed crop residue on the surface isn’t enough in this bad new world of intense rainfalls.

Hatfield feels farmers and conservation professionals need to start looking at

making changes on a landscape-wide basis, not just through “component” conservation methods like installing a terrace here or a grassy buffer there to take care of a localized erosion problem.

That means getting more diverse plant systems on the land other than corn and soybeans that cover the soil for only a few months of the year. That will require more grass, hay, trees and small grains.

CSP can play a big role in developing such a landscape approach, Hatfield says.

What it really needs to do

At its most basic, CSP is doing what its creators wanted it to do: pay farmers for doing the right thing on the land. But for it to fully realize its potential to transform the rural landscape using well-managed working farms, CSP must evolve from a program that rewards farmers for doing the right thing to one

that encourages others to change their farming systems.

Many of the farmers who have benefited from CSP so far have the same philosophy as Vance Haugen recently voiced: “I’ll say it: government payments or not, we would still do it this way.”

But CSP is providing key incentives to keep farmers like the Haugens on the land. And many enrollees in the program are using the payments to invest in their farms and help ensure their long-term viability. Some are also using the payments to complete transitions into more sustainable ways of farming, such as organic or grass-based production.

Still others are using the CSP program to make up for damage inflicted by the commodity programs. For example, the subsidization of intensive row-cropping has been devastating for all types of wildlife habitat, from brushy fencerows to wetlands. Hunters, anglers, birdwatchers and the general public are increasingly alarmed by what’s become

an ecological disaster.

This spring, Vic and Cindy Madsen planted a “quail habitat” shrub package—American plumb, gray dogwood and nanking cherry—on four different areas of their southwest Iowa farm. It was a lot of work to get the shrubs established: they hired a young couple with strong backs to help with the planting and Cindy hauled water to the plants.

Wildlife of all types will benefit from this new habitat, and the Madsens are excited by this new addition to their farm. But like grassy headlands, wildlife habitat doesn’t have the financial payback of, say, a field full of soybeans; without CSP, the farmers may not have gotten around to doing the plantings. But now they have a financial incentive: the farm qualified for CSP’s Tier II in 2004 and the wildlife shrubs will help it be eligible for extra payments in the future.

CSP, see page 21...

Plowing through the paper

Talk to farmers who have signed up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP), and they will tell you that applying to the program involves providing a fair amount of documentation to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on what was done to what field when.

“This isn’t just going to the NRCS office to pick up a check,” says Adam Warthesen, a Land Stewardship Project Policy Program organizer. “It’s a lot of paperwork.”

Farmers applying to CSP need to provide nutrient, manure, and pest management plans from the past two years to verify farming practices. Without formal plans, these farmers must provide field specific records on crops, yields, planting and harvesting dates, manure and soils test results, commercial fertilizer and manure applications, and pest control methods.

Providing that documentation is easier for some farming operations than others. Farms that have not been enrolled in USDA commodity programs in the past may have less official documentation available. On the other hand, operations that undergo third-party certification—“organic” or “Food Alliance Midwest,” for example—are used to providing a detailed paper trail of practices and inputs. In addition, operations

involved in on-farm research often have an advantage when it comes to CSP applications.

For example, southwest Iowa farmers Vic and Cindy Madsen have long done research with Practical Farmers of Iowa gauging how to reduce nitrogen fertilizer applications on crop fields. When it came time to apply to CSP, this served two purposes: it provided a paper trail of how much fertilizer they were applying; and it showed that they had reduced their fertilizer applications significantly.

But even for farms that are not third-party certified or involved with research, the paperwork load involved with CSP application was a little bit overblown, say farmers and NRCS staffers.

“There was a lot of coffee shop talk that it was too much paperwork to make it worthwhile, and then people who didn’t sign up were mad when they found out how easy it was,” says Jim Ranum, an NRCS grassland conservationist in northeast Iowa.

Southeast Minnesota dairy farmer Bonnie Haugen estimates it took 60 to 70 hours of work to apply to CSP. That sounds like a lot of paper-pushing, but when figuring the payback on an hourly basis, it is well worth it, she says. As Tier I enrollees, the Haugens estimate they will get \$7,000 annually in CSP payments for the next five years. That’s compared to getting basically nothing under the conventional commod-

ity subsidy program.

But Bonnie learned a hard lesson while applying to CSP: do soil tests on *all* your land. She and her husband Vance were knocked out of Tier II eligibility their first year because they didn’t have soil test results for land they own elsewhere, even though it was not in their home watershed. They qualified for Tier I and hope to move up to II by doing more soil tests.

Ranum thinks once CSP gets up and running, farmers will be required to provide even more documentation on the land and methods used. CSP watersheds have been announced by the government with little notice. That’s why farmers should begin doing their homework now, he says.

“That’s the word we need to get out: keep your records so when your watershed hits, you’re ready to go.”

The first step to determining CSP eligibility is completing a CSP Self-Assessment Workbook, a preliminary evaluation tool developed by NRCS. Farmers who have signed-up for CSP so far say this workbook actually helped greatly in determining their eligibility. It is available online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp, or by calling LSP at 612-722-6377. For other tips on applying to CSP, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html.



NRCS staffer Jim Ranum: "I think [CSP] could put more livestock on the land." (LSP photo)

...CSP, from page 20

Positive pats

In the end, one of the biggest benefits to this program may simply be the morale boost it provides farmers. Dave Serfling, who along with his wife Diane farms 350 diverse acres in southeast Minnesota, says giving a pat on the back to farmers who are utilizing innovative—sometimes untested—methods to farm in an environmentally sound way is no small matter. As a member of LSP's Federal Farm

Policy Committee, Serfling helped develop some of the key ideas that form the basis of CSP. He and others have argued that the most effective programs are ones that give farmers a conservation goal, and then allow them the freedom to achieve that level of stewardship through their own creative means. This is in contrast to some conservation programs that have prescribed a set of cookie-cutter practices which don't work for every farm.

The Serfling farm qualified for CSP when it was offered in the Root River watershed this year. The family uses diverse

crop rotations, managed rotational grazing and deep-straw hog production to protect water and soil on the land, and they are in the program's Tier II designation. A 2,000-acre crop farm in the same watershed is also enrolled in CSP. But the larger operation, which is in Tier I, won't receive as much money through CSP as the Serflings.

"This never happened in the commodity program, where I actually was paid more than the big cropping operations," says Dave.

When Serfling talks about the fact that through CSP he is getting more money

than his large-scale crop-farming neighbor, he's not bragging about a financial windfall at the expense of a fellow farmer. He's just expressing amazement that for once his diverse farming techniques are not being penalized by the government.

Such a change in attitude could do more than transform the landscape, it could change entire rural communities.

That's what Vic and Cindy Madsen hope. Near their farm is the town of Audubon, home of Albert the Bull, a 30-foot concrete Hereford erected in the early 1960s to honor the area's beef production heritage. But Prince Albert is lording over a different community than it did even a few decades ago. Audubon County's landscape has given over to large corn and soybean operations, interspersed with confinement hog facilities. The traditional "farmer-feeder"—a beef producer that raised the corn, hay and grass needed to get the animals to market—is increasingly rare. Young people are seeing fewer farming options in the area.

As he heads to the field to cultivate soybeans, Vic considers for a moment the chain reaction a fully-realized CSP could set off.

"If this program was widely accepted in a watershed, at the end of 10 years the view of that watershed would look a lot different. You'd have a lot of more secondary effects, like stronger small town economies." □

Take action: Future of CSP may be decided in October

Congress is expected to take up debate in October over how to cut \$3 billion from the 2006 federal agriculture budget. Unfortunately, conservation programs—including the Conservation Security Program (CSP)—are on the chopping block. In addition, there are attempts to severely cut nutrition programs for low income Americans. These nutrition programs are delivering needed benefits to 25 million Americans, the majority of whom are children, the elderly and working families.

Ironically, these cuts to stewardship and nutrition programs may be executed at a time when agribusiness interests and commodity groups are fighting to preserve massive crop subsidies for a handful of mega-farms that receive over \$250,000 annually in payments.

It is critical that you call your repre-

sentatives in Congress today and tell them:

→ **Make no cuts to CSP.** This program needs to be funded at \$331 million in the 2006 budget.

→ **Limit cuts to food support and nutrition programs.** LSP has joined with anti-hunger groups in an attempt to protect these important programs.

→ **Put in place real payment limits on commodity crop programs.** Legislation has been proposed in both the House and the Senate to reduce the amount of subsidies any one producer can receive to \$250,000 annually, while closing loopholes.

In mid-September, Minnesota Senator Mark Dayton signed onto the Rural America Preservation Act of 2005. The proposed bill would bring the yearly payment cap down from \$360,000 to \$250,000. It

was authored by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND). Lowering the payment cap would save billions of dollars annually while helping nutrition programs and conservation initiatives such as CSP. It's critical that more members of Congress throw their support behind fair budget balancing initiatives such as the Grassley-Dorgan bill.

To get the telephone number for your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives, call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

For more information, contact LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org. More information is also available on LSP's Action Alerts web page at www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-alerts.html.

Minnesota Cooks brings farmers, chefs & consumers together at Minnesota State Fair

More than 5,000 Minnesota State Fair visitors learned about the connections between leading chefs and farmers who grow foods in environmentally and socially responsible ways during the third annual Minnesota Cooks event on Aug. 30. The event brought together 14 of the region's best chefs to demonstrate how they use locally-grown fruit, vegetables, herbs, meat and dairy products to create award winning fare. Joining them were Food Alliance certified



farmers from the area who talked about their production methods during a tasting panel that included Olympian and Minnesota native Carrie Tollefson.

This event was sponsored by Food Alliance Midwest and the Minnesota Farmers Union. The Food Alliance was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services. All Food Alliance farms and ranches are certified for producing foods using environmentally friendly and socially responsible agricultural production practices. During the past five years, Food Alliance has certified more than 60 farmers across Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Dakotas. Fifty-four retail stores and 11 college campuses in the Upper Midwest carry Food Alliance products.

For more information, including where to find Food Alliance products, call 651-265-3682 or www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm. □



Alex Roberts of Restaurant Alma in Minneapolis was one of the chefs who utilized Food Alliance-approved foods during Minnesota Cooks. (LSP photo)



A panel tried out the creations of chefs and talked about fresh, local foods. Pictured (left to right) are: David Massey, a Food Alliance certified farmer; Mary Lahammer, political reporter for Twin Cities Public Television; and Carrie Tollefson, an Olympic runner and Dawson, Minn., native. Massey, a Land Stewardship Project member, operates Northwoods Organic Produce in White Bear Lake, Minn., with his wife Pam. (LSP photo)

If you grow food...

This is a good time for farmers to sit down and complete a Food Alliance Midwest application.

An application takes about an hour to complete, and Food Alliance certification is good for three years. Thus, your investment of an hour pays dividends for years.

To receive an application, contact Food Alliance Midwest Certification Coordinator Ray Kirsch at 651-653-0618 or ray@foodalliance.org. Application forms can also be downloaded from

www.foodalliance.org/certification/howapply.html.

Kirsch can provide a list of the Food Alliance's "guiding principles," or they can be downloaded from www.foodalliance.org/certification/index.html.

If you eat food...

Look for the Food Alliance certification seal everywhere you shop and eat. If your local store or restaurant doesn't carry Food Alliance certified foods, ask them to become "market partners." Food Alliance Midwest market partners are

committed to carrying Food Alliance certified, locally grown foods. For a listing of retailers and food services that carry Food Alliance certified products, visit www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm. A list of certified farmers is at www.foodalliance.org/certification/producers/producers_MW.htm.

For information on how food retailers can become Food Alliance market partners, contact Bob Olson at 651-265-3682 or bob@foodalliance.org. □



LSP Board of Directors member Sandy Olson-Loy was one of the volunteers who worked in the State Fair Minnesota Cooks Tent on Aug. 30. Volunteers talked to fairgoers about how to obtain locally produced foods from family farms. (LSP photo)

Thousand Hills partners with Food Alliance Midwest

A company dedicated to getting grassfed beef to consumers is working with the Food Alliance Midwest to get its producers certified.

Thousand Hills Cattle Company is owned by Todd Churchill of Cannon Falls, Minn. The firm is currently buying cattle from 18 producers in the Upper Midwest. Its protocols require the cattle to be 100 percent raised and finished on well-managed pastures, with no hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified feeds used in the feeding program. Thousand Hills products are available at various retail locations in the Twin Cities region.

The cattle company shared the Minnesota Cooks Tent at the 2005 Minnesota State Fair this summer (see page 22). For more information on Thousand Hills, call 507-263-4001 or 612-756-3328. The website is at www.thousandhills-cattleco.com. □



Todd and Dee Churchill, along with their daughter Kate and son Will. (Photo courtesy of Churchill family)

Food Alliance focus of TV program

Food Alliance Midwest will be featured on a special Twin Cities Public Television documentary either later this fall or early

in 2006. Watch future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter* and LIVE-WIRE for broadcast details as they develop. □

Food Alliance certified butter #1...again

A group of southeast Minnesota dairy farmers who are certified by Food Alliance Midwest are producing the top salted butter in the nation, according to the American Cheese Society. PastureLand's Summer Gold salted butter took first place during the 22nd Annual Cheese Competition July 20-21 in Louisville, Ky. This is the second year in a row that PastureLand's butter has taken top honors at the competition.

PastureLand, a cooperative of three organically certified farms in southeastern Minnesota, has been marketing artisan butter and cheese since 2000. All three of the farms produce milk using managed rotational grazing.

"We think this award underscores the work that we do on our farms each day," says PastureLand producer and Land Stewardship Project

member Dan French. "The attention that we give our cows and the way we work with nature comes through in the flavor of our butter and cheese. We are also lucky to have

such a skilled butter maker."

PastureLand's butter is made by Gene Kruckeberg at the Hope Creamery in Hope, Minn.

Considered one of the world's most influential and prestigious competitions in recognizing the art of artisanal and specialty cheese-making, the American Cheese Society's annual judging competition takes place in conjunction with the American Cheese Society's annual conference. For more information, see www.cheesesociety.org.

PastureLand products are available at Twin Cities natural food co-ops, as well as various grocery stores and restaurants.

For more information, visit www.pastureland.coop or call 612-331-9115.



PastureLand butter took first place during the 2005 American Cheese Society conference. (LSP photo)

Dine Fresh Dine Local Birchwood & Riverbend forge a local connection

NOTE: The second annual Dine Fresh Dine Local event will be held in the Twin Cities on Tuesday, Oct. 11. Sixteen restaurants will be featuring locally produced food during the day-long culinary affair. Profiled here are Birchwood Café, which is participating in Dine Fresh Dine Local, and Riverbend Farm, one of the local suppliers of the restaurant.

See page 25 for details on the Oct. 11 event.

By William Peterson

So what do you do with 50 pounds of organic rhubarb? Well, if you ask Tracy Singleton she'll tell you: pies, tarts, jams, even chutney. Yes, rhubarb chutney.

That kind of creative menu manipulation has served Tracy Singleton well as she balances running a profitable restaurant with supporting local farmers. She is the proprietor of the Birchwood Café, which is nestled in-between the bungalows of South Minneapolis' Longfellow Neighborhood.

One of the farmers who helps Singleton put her support for local foods where her customers' mouths are is Greg Reynolds, a certified organic farmer from Delano, just west of the Twin Cities. Reynolds' Riverbend Farm has been certified organic since 1994. He and his wife Mary cultivate 30 acres in a four-year crop rotation and they provide produce to around 20 other area restaurants and co-ops. Reynolds is one of a handful of local food producers that Tracy works with on a weekly basis.

The Birchwood Café has been in the Longfellow area in one form or another since 1926. The cafeteria-style customer service system is a nod to the café's original incarnation as a dairy. Tracy entered the café's history about 10 years ago; four years later she and Reynolds teamed up to bring local cuisine to a whole new level.

They both concede there are some issues with local "slow food," or food

that runs counter to the importing of industrialized, commodified grub lacking in taste and freshness. Tracy says that Minnesota's weather can "keep them on their toes" and make it difficult to procure locally produced food at certain times of the year. Reynolds agrees that Minnesota's short growing season poses some problems, as does the day-to-day moodiness of Mother Nature. A freak hailstorm, for instance, can devastate a crop of greens, leaving salad lovers out of luck for weeks. Fortunately, the ever rotating menu setup at the Birchwood is ideal for dealing with such catastrophes.

Singleton tries not to be too preachy about organic and local produce. She says there's a fine line between marketing and informing. She feels her neighbors and customers would rather *eat* good food than hear about it.

But the restaurateur knows consumer education is part of the process of creating a local food community, and so Singleton publishes a newsletter to inform her curious Birchwood community. The popular newsletter covers everything from kohlrabi to the "Coffee Club."

Both Greg and Tracy cite their individuality as a core value of their operations. But the value of networking is not lost

Take a local foods listen

To hear an audio file featuring William Peterson's full interview with the Birchwood Café's Tracy Singleton, visit www.dinefreshdinelocal.com/profiles/birch_river.htm.

on them.

"A distribution system would save me about two entire days per week," says Reynolds, who makes his own vegetable deliveries. "The trouble is that it would also cost me some of my individuality and my products would edge towards becoming commodities. At that point, the race to the bottom begins."

Tracy works with Greg and her other producers over the winter to determine what crops her restaurant will need for the next growing season.

"It's mutually beneficial because then they know they have a market for their product," she says.

And when the shipments arrive, she often consults the same growers for recipe ideas. That gives these local farmers an edge multinational food suppliers such as Sysco lack. It's this communication and personal interaction that Singleton feels makes local producers so special. It gives

Dine see page 25...



Tracy Singleton and Greg Reynolds in front of the Birchwood. "I have a relationship with these [farmers]," says Singleton. "I wouldn't want to do it if I couldn't do it that way." (Photo by William Peterson)

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 contact them personally to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

For a complete listing, contact our Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618, or go to 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. Here are the latest additions:

Twin Cities Metro

☐ Nitty Gritty Dirt Farm

Robin Raudabaugh & Gigi Nauer
10386 Sunrise Road, PO Box 235
Harris, MN 55032

Phone: 651-216-9012; 651-674-6065

E-mail: nittygrittyfarm@aol.com

→ Products: **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation that offers vegetables, fruit, lamb, eggs, artisan breads**

✕ Also services: East central Minnesota

☐ Webster Farm Organics

Nett Hart & Tamarack

PO Box 53

Foreston, MN 56330-0053

Phone: 320-983-2289

→ Products: **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable operation, Salad Days**

✕ Also services: Central Minnesota

◆ Certified by: **O-FVO; IFOAM**

Southwest Iowa

☐ Madsen Stock Farm

Vic & Cindy Madsen

2186 Goldfinch Ave.

Audubon, IA 50025

Phone: 712-563-3044

E-mail: vcmadson@metc.net

→ Products: **Pork, chicken, eggs**

✕ Also services: Iowa communities of Des Moines & Ames

...Dine, from page 24

her a piece of mind that she can pass on whole-heartedly to her customers.

"I have a relationship with these [farmers]," says Singleton. "I wouldn't

want to do it if I couldn't do it that way." ☐

William Peterson is a Land Stewardship Project communications intern. You can sign up for Tracy Singleton's newsletter and

check out the weekly updated menu for the Birchwood Café at www.birchwoodcafe.com. Riverbend's produce can be found in the Twin Cities at various natural food stores and co-ops.

2nd Annual Dine Fresh Dine Local Oct. 11 in Twin Cities

16 Restaurants to help celebrate local food & local farming

Restaurants, farmers and diners in the Twin Cities area will have a chance to celebrate local, sustainably-produced food during the second annual "Dine Fresh Dine Local" event on Tuesday, Oct. 11. This special one-day culinary event will take place at 16 restaurants across the metropolitan area.

During the inaugural Dine Fresh Dine Local event last fall, over 200 dining parties turned out to show their love of good food and their support for hardworking local farmers.

During the Oct. 11 event, a limited number of gift bags containing a 2006 *Blue Sky Guide—the Coupon Book for Healthy Living*, and a *Minnesota Grown Directory*, will be given to dining parties that mention "Dine Fresh Dine Local." Great River Energy is sponsoring the *Blue Sky Guide* give-away. The gift bags will also include the fall issue of *Edible Twin Cities* magazine. In addition, Land Stewardship Project memberships and a



Brenda Langton of Cafe Brenda in Minneapolis is one of the chefs participating in this year's Dine Fresh Dine Local event. (LSP photo)

\$50 restaurant gift certificate will be awarded during a special drawing. Participating restaurants will be making a financial contribution in support of promoting partnerships with local farmers.

The 2005 Dine Fresh Dine Local event is sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project, *Blue Sky Guide*, Food Alliance Midwest, Minnesota Grown, Sysco and the Minnesota Project. ☐

Join us Oct. 11!

For a complete list of the restaurants participating in Dine Fresh Dine Local, visit the *Blue Sky Guide* website at www.findbluesky.com and click on "Blue Sky Guide Dining Guide." For more details about Dine Fresh Dine Local, visit www.dinefreshdinelocal.com, or call 651-698-5586.

Main Street's local food lion

Alyce Fust's passion for feeding her neighbors good food

Hip urban areas have their Chefs Collaborative. The international community has the Slow Food movement. Small town America has people like Alyce Fust: preaching the local foods gospel one piece of apple crisp at a time.

"I feed people, that's what I do," she says in her direct way.

Fust, along with her husband Dave, owns and operates the Meat Center of Appleton in the heart of western Minnesota's wild goose and domestic corn country. The Meat Center, true to its name, was for years a basic "meat locker," a place where farmers took a single bovine or hog to have it butchered for their own consumption. Occasionally these farmers would sell a quarter or half of these animals to neighbors, friends and relatives. Such locker plants are also where deer hunters go to get their venison processed. The Meat Center still does all of that, much as it did when Alyce and Dave bought it in 1986. Before that, Dave had put in two decades at meat giant John Morrell, and Alyce had

worked as a nurse. It wasn't long before they began noticing some changes in their customer base: families were getting smaller and more women were taking town jobs. There was less time to handle large cuts of meat in meal preparation.

"That was a real turnaround for our business—having more prepared as well as ready-to-eat products," recalls Alyce.

In 1992 they put in retail cases and started offering more ready-to-eat meats, cheeses and other items. Alyce also put her love of cooking to work and started catering events in the region. That business has grown to some 200 venues a year. Whenever possible, Alyce uses locally produced foods in her catering. She feels it's better for the farm economy, ensures fresher ingredients, and supports a more diverse, environmentally sound

agriculture in the area. Besides, it tastes better than what Alyce calls, "cookie cutter food—it looks beautiful on the plate but the flavor just isn't there."

Fust is so committed to these local flavors that she's willing to do quite a bit of extra work at times.

Once it took her and an employee two



Dave and Alyce Fust with some of the locally produced foods the Meat Center of Appleton handles. "The local people aren't going to pass off trash," says Alyce. (LSP photo)

hours to peel five gallons of apples for a batch of "Alyce's Awesome Apple Crisp." That was four hours of labor—or more than 45 minutes a gallon.

"Well, I could have walked over to the shelf and opened cans of apples off the Reinhart truck and it would have taken about 20 minutes," she says. "But the flavor and texture doesn't compare."

Like an alchemist in a local foods laboratory, one recent fall day Alyce flits from project-to-project as a handful of workers cut up sides of beef and stuffed sausages. One of the projects is an impromptu display she's set up on an old butcher-block table. It contains a selection of locally produced foods Fust has handled lately: flour produced and milled on a local farm, fat carrots from a farm just outside of town, kale from a local

Community Supported Agriculture operation, brown eggs, meat, apples, cabbage, even honey. She has a story for each item: the honey is from local hives and "contains nothing but honey"; the flour was ground in a stone mill set up in a farm's remodeled garage; those carrots come from a farm that lies on the border of the local wildlife refuge—"There's something about that soil that produces the best carrots."

There has been an explosion of interest in local foods in recent years. Fust feels a lot of it has to do with health issues.

People are more aware of the benefits of a diet made up of fresh, local foods that are not heavily processed. Fust's own

passion for food goes back to when she worked as a nurse.

"Part of my interest in healthy foods starts with healthy families," she says. When she taught breast-feeding classes, food preparation was stressed.

"Healthy eating and healthy living went hand-in-hand," says Fust. "Now due to the rapid life-style we seem to be in, most families reach for the *quick*. People don't know how to cook anymore. People don't know how to cut up a whole chicken. That kale looks good sitting on the table but what do you do with it? We need to teach them how to use these foods and we need to teach them shortcuts."

Fust is passionate about food, but she's also a realist. She owns cookbooks written before microwaves, long

commutes and 2.5 children families. She also is experimenting with processed products that feed fewer people quicker.

As others have found, in a small farm town local residents can be the toughest to win over on the concept of local food—mostly because of the increased expense. Some of her best customers are Twin Cities waterfowl hunters who come out, get a taste of local meat, and call later from their home in Minneapolis or Minnetonka wanting to buy grass-fed beef or some naturally raised pork.

But Alyce is convinced local foods can catch on locally. That's why she is involved in Pride of the Prairie, a Land Stewardship Project initiative that is connecting consumers and farmers in the

Main Street, see page 27...

Upper Minnesota River Valley.

Fust believes farmers, processors, retailers and institutions can work together to educate consumers—and each other. Farmers need to learn that although direct marketing food instead of sending it straight to the elevator or packing plant can be a hassle, it is doable. Grocery stores, restaurants and institutional food services must realize that it is not illegal to buy food from local farmers and processors. And consumers need to be taught such basics as how to cut up a whole chicken, while being provided recipes and kitchen tricks that allow them to save time in their busy schedules.

But Fust is also convinced there are times when cutting corners is too much of a compromise. If people could just taste the difference, they would realize that it's worth the extra trouble. A consumer who dislikes factory farming will buy a free-range local chicken once. Someone who likes the taste of that chicken will be a repeat customer.

Great flavor allows the food to do a lot of its own communication. When she caters an event, Alyce allows people to enjoy what they're eating. Then, she often gets in front of the crowd and relays a succinct story about the food. She gives the folks a kind of, "This is no accident that this food is so good" talk. If you like it, you have to find ways to support it in your everyday living: buy from local farmers, support businesses who handle local foods, stand up for policies that encourage local consumption.

She doesn't do this just because she likes to talk about food (she does). Alyce's practical side is being acted upon as well. She sees it as a way to give local farmers credit, but also as a way to create constituencies of people who will support local food. Maybe a few of those hunters she's feeding will go back to the Twin Cities and tell their representatives at the state house to support laws that help the development of local food systems. Even better, maybe the local church group that's enjoying her apple crisp will demand more local food prepared according to proper health guidelines and take steps to ensure it's available on a regular basis. The more demand for local food there is, the more need for businesses like the Meat Center of Appleton. After all, the Wal-Mart less than 30 minutes down the road in Montevideo can sell meat—but the Meat Center can sell local meat, and tell you how to season and prepare it.

Fust says big barriers to sourcing and providing local food are regulations written for the "IBPs of the world." Federal inspection guidelines are over-regulating very small independent food businesses, she says. At any one time, the Meat Center employs about half a dozen people. This makes it relatively easy for Alyce and Dave to keep a close eye on where they get the raw products and how they are processed. It also makes it easy for their customers to provide feedback on how they are doing. But they are often operating under the same restrictions of large meat packing plants employing hundreds of people and slaughtering thousands of animals daily. This adds to the expense of doing business and puts restrictions on what kinds of ingredients Alyce can use in her foods.

For example, she's convinced locally produced eggs coming from chickens that are pasture-raised are superior. In fact, she breaks a local brown egg and a factory farm-produced white egg side-by-side and shows anyone who will take a minute how the brown egg's deep yellow yolk perks up, while its commodified counterpart looks a watery, anemic mess. "I love this demonstration," she says excitedly as she picks up the eggs. "What do you see? The brown egg is just"—she pauses for a moment, searching for the appropriate word—"healthier."

Ironically, regulations written for large processors but applied to smaller operations like the Meat Center make it difficult for Fust to use the local eggs in her catered meals. All hamburger used in a catered meal—whether it be five pounds or 5,000 pounds—must be from a federally-inspected source.

Another major barrier for Fust is sourcing local food. There's a reason food businesses, both large and small, are getting their ingredients straight off the Reinhart truck: it's easy and efficient.

She says what businesses like hers need is a local foods clearinghouse of sorts, a place where she can learn what and how much is available. It doesn't necessarily need to be a large warehouse somewhere—it could be as simple as an e-mail connection.

"I type in, 'I need carrots.' You type back, 'I have carrots,'" she says.

That's why Fust is excited about the potential of Pride of the Prairie. Creating demand for local food would do little good if there wasn't the supply to meet those needs. Alyce says these days there are more farmers in her area producing top quality food for local consumption. Some are certified organic, but most are

not—they adhere to a tougher Main Street kind of standard, one that could never match the stringency of a pile of paperwork or a keen-eyed inspector. "The local people aren't going to pass off trash," says Alyce between answering the phone, helping walk-in customers and eyeing the difference between a factory egg and its country cousin. "They know I'll see them in church."

That kind of accountability is the essence of a local food system. □

Food handling fact sheets

Through the Pride of the Prairie initiative, the Land Stewardship Project is working to break down the barriers that sometimes prevent local food from being purchased by local food service operations. In 2002, nutritionist and consultant Lynn Mader surveyed 25 food service operations and found that purchasers sometimes did not buy locally produced foods because they believed local farmers did not qualify as an "approved source."

LSP joined forces with the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, farmers and restaurateurs to develop a set of local food handling fact sheets. These fact sheets were made possible by the USDA's North Central Sustainable Agriculture Professional Development Program.

Food Handling Fact Sheets:

- ✓ *Sale of Shell Eggs to Grocery Stores and Restaurants*
- ✓ *Sale of Meat and Poultry to Grocery Stores and Restaurants*
- ✓ *Providing Safe Locally-Grown Produce to Commercial Food Establishments and the General Public*

To download these fact sheets in pdf format, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html. For information on getting paper copies of the fact sheets, call LSP's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105. That's also the number to call to learn more about Pride of the Prairie.

On the Internet, see www.prideoftheprairie.org.

Food labeling

USDA chewing the grass-fed cud

By Joe Riemann

The USDA's ruminations over the labeling of grass-raised beef are nearing an end. The agency is expected in October to release for public comment a proposal for what will constitute a "grass-fed" beef product. The public will be allowed to comment on the proposed rules for 90 days. Those comments will be considered before the final regulations are issued.

Currently, the market for grass-fed beef is a "buyer-beware" industry. There are no standards for grass-fed and it is not regulated by the USDA.

"The [grass-fed] label is not that important to me in my marketing operation because I do direct market," says Terry VanDerPol, a Land Stewardship Project organizer who raises beef on grass in western Minnesota. "My customers know what they know about the beef because they have heard it from me and they trust me. It becomes more important when you begin retail marketing."

Until recently, most grass-fed products have been obtained by consumers via direct-marketing farmers like VanDerPol. That's changing. Increasingly, grass-fed products are making inroads into natural food co-ops, health food stores and even conventional supermarkets. According to the *Organic Trade Association*, the U.S. organic market is projected to reach a value of \$30.7 billion by 2007, with an annual growth rate of about 20 percent. Grass-fed animal production is a major component of the organic livestock sector. There is also growing demand for grass-fed products that are not necessarily certified organic. As the human health benefits and environmental positives associated with grass production continue to be documented, consumer demand for grass-fed products is expected to grow.

"Sustainable farmers have created niche markets like organics and grass-fed and they need to pay attention to industry's interests in those markets," says Ann Wright, senior policy associate with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.

One of the grass-fed standards that farmers, consumers and groups such as the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and

LSP have been pushing for is that beef be raised on "100 percent" pasture. With no official standards, beef can theoretically be sold at a premium grass-fed price, without living up to the 100 percent standard.

"Labeling as grass-fed any product that is less than 100 percent grass-fed is disingenuous and confusing to consumers," says Tilak Dhiman, a nutritional researcher at Utah State University.

It's taken the USDA awhile to get that message. In 2002, the agency presented the first grass-fed label proposal along with labels for "antibiotic free," "free-range," and "hormone-free" red meat. The first proposition suggested an 80 percent grass-fed ruling, which would have allowed almost all red meat a grass-fed label, since most cattle are pasture raised for a significant portion of their life. The USDA received thousands of negative comments from farmers and consumers.

The agency eventually withdrew the original grass-fed proposal and did something that grass-fed advocates argue it should have done from the beginning: consulted with farmers, consumers and organizations about the regulations. It was the persistence and dedication of grass-fed advocates that led to a much better set of proposals, says Wright, who organized the advisory groups. The advisory groups were diverse, representing farm, health care and consumer interests, which made their input all-encompassing and added valuable insight, says Wright. Each group appointed representatives, who then discussed their concerns with William Sessions, the USDA Livestock and Seed Program's Associate Deputy Administrator.

"The Livestock and Seed division of the USDA should really be applauded since they've made significant changes to their original proposal, and probably done so under great opposing pressure from the beef industry," says Urvashi Rangan, the Project Director for the Consumers Union's Eco-labels.org website, which rates various food labels.

The new proposal will more closely adhere to the "100 percent" pasture-fed standard recognized by farmers, consumers and organizations that support grass-based agriculture, says Wright.

The proposed rules aren't perfect by any means. The revised USDA proposal will include a 99 percent standard for all grass-fed red meat. (There is no discussion yet about incorporating poultry into the standard.) The sticking point is that verification will be optional. Because there were no certifying agents or verification processes in place, as there was with the National Organic Program, labeling will be approved by reviewing the stated practices of the farmer. The standards are still solid, but it may take some extra initiative on the part of ranchers and consumers to see that these standards are met.

"We will tell consumers to always look for the grass-fed label, but also look for the additional USDA verification," says Rangan.

When the new proposal is introduced for public discussion, it will be up to interested consumers and farmers everywhere to get involved and keep informed about the changes taking place in retail standards, says VanDerPol, who participated in the grass-fed advisory group organized by Wright.

"One of the effects of participating on a broad-based panel will be tested real soon," she says. "I think because of the approach we took to developing our recommendations we have a fairly diverse mix of groups and individuals that can help watchdog whatever the USDA comes up with as the grass-fed standard. We should be able to generate a lot of strong comments supporting a sensible standard." □

Joe Riemann is an LSP communications intern. See the Opportunities/Resources section on page 29 for information on grass-fed livestock fact sheets.

Comment on grass-fed in October

The 90-day comment period on the grass-fed label regulations will begin as soon as USDA releases the latest proposals, which is expected sometime in October. Comments can be sent to:

William Sessions
Associate Deputy Administrator
Livestock and Seed Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
STOP 0249
Washington, DC 20250-0249
Phone: 202-720-5707
e-mail: william.sessions@usda.gov



Grant deadline Dec. 1

Farmers and ranchers have until Dec. 1 to get research proposals into the North Central Region of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE). Over the years, SARE has funded numerous on-farm research projects. Summaries of some of those initiatives can be viewed at www.sare.org/nrcsare.

For more information on applying for a grant, contact: Joan Benjamin, Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, NCR-SARE, 13A Activities Bldg., 1734 N. 34th St., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0840; phone: 402-472-0809; e-mail: jbenjamin2@unl.edu. On the web, see www.sare.org/nrcsare/cfp.htm for the full call for proposals. □

Sustainable ag grant deadline Dec. 16

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for grants from Minnesota farmers, researchers, educators and nonprofit organizations that have innovative ideas for sustainable farming systems. The deadline for application is Dec. 16.

Individual grants are available for three-year projects that benefit the environment, increase farm net profits through cost reduction or enhanced marketing, and improve farm family quality of life. Eligible projects may include but are not limited to enterprise diversification; organic production; cover crops and crop rotations to increase nitrogen uptake, reduce erosion or control pests. Other projects might include conservation tillage and weed management, integrated pest management systems, livestock production and manure management systems, nutrient and pesticide management, and alternative energy production opportunities.

Applications and more information are available on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap, or by contacting the Agricultural Resources Management and Development Division at 651-296-7673. □

2005 Greenbook

The 2005 edition of the *Greenbook* is now available. This popular publication features articles on research projects being carried out on farms and test plots

throughout Minnesota. These are projects funded by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Program, organic agriculture grants from the USDA's Risk Management Agency and grants from the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program. The theme of this year's Greenbook is "the next generation of sustainable farmers."

You can order a copy by calling Linda Bougie at 651-296-7673 or e-mailing linda.bougie@state.mn.us. □

The poop on pasture-raised

As we report on page 28, a new USDA grass-fed meat label is likely to hit your local meat case in the near future. This might be a good time to bone up on why grass-fed livestock production is good for ecological and human health. Check out the Land Stewardship Project's "Multiple Benefits of Agriculture & Pasture Raised Livestock" web page (www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html) for the latest on the benefits of grass and other perennial plant systems. In particular check out the following fact sheets in pdf format:

→ **Pasture-raised Dairy and Meat Products are Good for You and the Environment.**

→ **Pasture-Raised Livestock: An Innovative Strategy for Farmers to Comply with the Clean Water Act.**

→ **Grass-Based Beef and Dairy Production.**

For more information on LSP's "Multiple Benefits of Agriculture" work, see page 12.

The monarchy of maize

Corn has evolved from a component to a kingpin in agriculture. Wouldn't it be nice to know a little more about the history of a plant that in some ways has come to control us more than we control it? The USDA has a web-based chronology of maize from its ancient roots in Mexico to its spread across the globe at [\[search/maize/introduction.shtml\]\(http://search/maize/introduction.shtml\).](http://www.nal.usda.gov/re-</p>
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And now for an update on what corn has been up to lately: At the 25th anniversary Ecological Farming Conference earlier this year, writer Michael Pollan gave a keynote talk on how "King Corn" has wormed its way into almost all aspects of our lives and become a despotic ruler.

"Corn is really getting the better of us at this point. We hand over land to it, we pamper it, we push out all other species from our farms, crushing biodiversity to help the corn, we overfeed it with fertilizer, we nuke its enemies, we stuff ourselves with it, all to advance the reign of corn over us," says Pollan, who is the author of *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*.

The New Farm website has reprinted an edited version of Pollan's talk in two parts at www.newfarm.org/features/2005/0805/pollen/index.shtml. □

Husbandry & farms

"Renewing Husbandry" is a new essay by writer/farmer Wendell Berry on how agricultural mechanization is affecting us all. In the September/October 2005 issue of *Orion* magazine, Berry lays out an argument for making husbandry of animals and soil a focus of farming again—to do otherwise robs agriculture of the resiliency that comes with balancing complex relationships.

He writes: "Husbandry always has understood that what is husbanded is ultimately a mystery. It is not fully replicable by science. And so the husbanding mind is both careful and humble. Husbandry originates precautionary sayings like 'Don't put all your eggs into one basket.' It does not boast of technological feats that will 'feed the world.'"

But Berry does have hope that husbandry can be reclaimed. You can read his essay at www.oriononline.org/pages/om/05-5om/Berry.html. □

Safe direct marketing

Are you thinking of selling fruits and vegetables directly to consumers, restaurants and food services? A new series on food safety tips for direct marketing is now available from Iowa State University. The series, "On-Farm Food Safety," includes three fact sheets: Guide to Good Agricultural Practices (GAPS), PM 1974a; Guide to Food Handling, PM 1974b; and Guide to Cleaning and Sanitizing, PM 1974c.

For information on purchasing paper copies, call 515-294-5247. The fact sheets can also be downloaded from www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/. □

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ Myth:

Global climate change will benefit agriculture.

→ Fact:

There is evidence that as greenhouse gases build up in the atmosphere, yields of crops such as wheat, rice and soybeans will increase. That's because plants use greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide as a type of "gaseous fertilizer."

But in the long term, global climate change poses a significant threat to our soil's ability to produce food at all, no matter what the yield. For example, the U.S. is becoming wetter, and in recent decades the majority of that increased precipitation has come in the form of intensive rainstorms. Since 1970, there has been a marked increase in heavy rainstorm events in the U.S., especially in the Midwest, Great Lakes regions and the Southwest, says the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society. A nice slow all-day drizzle provides ample opportunity for moisture to soak deep into the earth. Heavy downpours that overwhelm the landscape in a matter of hours, sending water running over the top of the ground instead of into it, are increasingly the norm. Modeling studies show "extreme precipitation events" will continue

to become more common in the future.

The result? An agro-ecological disaster in the making, say scientists Jerry Hatfield and John Prueger of the USDA's National Soil Tilth Laboratory. These more intense rains are much more erosive, say the scientists, who examined the impacts of changing precipitation patterns on water quality in a paper published in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*. In a report published by the Soil and Water Conservation Society, it's estimated that changes in precipitation patterns could be increasing soil erosion by as much as **95 percent** in some areas. That's a disheartening statistic after all of the recent progress made in reducing erosion rates using no-till, high residue farming and other conservation tillage methods. Soil isn't the only thing affected by changing weather patterns; the more water that runs off the surface of a field rather than soaking in, the more pollutants it will carry to rivers and lakes. Liquid manure runoff in particular could be a problem, since it is already saturated with water when applied to the land as fertilizer.

Hatfield and Prueger express concern that even "state-of-the-art" soil management won't be good enough to deal with these increased erosion rates, and that significant changes in farming practices will be needed to keep soils productive. These concerns aren't all of the future tense vari-

ety. Farmers and soil scientists are already seeing good soil management practices being overwhelmed by intense rainstorms. A study in Minnesota's Sand Creek watershed showed that chisel plowing, a sound conservation tillage method that leaves more soil-protecting plant residue on top of the ground, still resulted in about five tons per acre of erosion on a corn field during a particularly heavy rainstorm.

But some farms are finding ways to protect the soil even under extreme conditions. During that same storm, a dairy farm that was planted to alfalfa hay and rotationally grazed pastures lost 53 pounds of soil per acre—or just enough to fill a five-gallon bucket.

→ More information:

Hatfield and Prueger's study was published in the January/February 2004 issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* (<http://swcs.org/en/publications/jswc>). A special report, *Conservation Implications of Climate Change: Soil Erosion and Runoff from Cropland*, is at www.swcs.org/en/publications/advocacy_publications/2001. To read about soil erosion studies in Sand Creek, see the April/May/June 2001 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html).



Membership Update



How LSP measures up

By Cathy Eberhart

The Conservation Security Program, which is featured in this issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, is all about measuring and rewarding farmland conservation. It is about quantifying the many different benefits of stewardship farming and valuing those benefits in the form of public dollars.

In a similar vein, we regularly attempt

to quantify the power of our membership and measure and monitor the effectiveness of our fundraising efforts. As we end a fiscal year, and begin a new one here at the Land Stewardship Project, we have some exciting numbers to report.

Measuring the power of members

Certainly, it is difficult to measure something as amorphous as "power." But one clear indicator is the number of people standing with us—our members.

During fiscal year 2004-2005 (July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005), LSP received 1,750 memberships, an all-time record since we began our membership program 10 years ago. These memberships represent nearly 2,500 individuals, as well as some 200 organizational allies and partners.

At a time when LSP's initiatives to preserve local democracy have been under attack in some circles, it is a strong affirmation of our work to see our membership continue to grow steadily.

Membership, see page 31...

What is harder to measure is the high level of involvement of our members. But we know that we have an extraordinarily active membership. We know because you tell us you are making telephone calls, sending e-mails and writing letters. We know because we see you at field days, local foods meals, steering committee meetings and lobbying days. Thank you for standing with us.

Measuring financial stability

Our members also provide us with much needed financial support. In fiscal year 2004-2005, we received \$181,148 from our members—also an all-time high. While this represents just a portion of our overall budget, it gives us the flexibility to fill funding gaps and cover program work that is not as easily funded through foundation grants.

Thank you for your financial gifts. Your loyal generosity amazes and humbles us, making us all the more committed to work hard for our shared mission of stewardship for the land.

Measuring effectiveness & efficiency

You should know that we also use numbers to make sure our fundraising efforts are as effective and efficient as possible. Just as our *Monitoring Tool Box* provides tools for farmers to measure the sustainability of their farming practices, we continually track the costs and effectiveness of fundraising efforts like mailings, events and phoning. We monitor and learn and do our best to adjust based on what we learn.

In their nonprofit accountability standards, the Charities Review Council recommends that “at least 70 percent of an organization’s annual expenses are for program activity and not more than 30 percent for management/general and fundraising combined.” We are proud that 83 percent of our funds go directly to program work, with only 6 percent going for fundraising and 11 percent for management and administrative costs.

Measuring our dreams for the future

We spent our summer staff/board meeting further developing a long-range plan for the coming five years. As we discuss ambitious program plans to foster successful farmers on the land, promote stewardship values, expand regional food systems and empower citizens, we

recognize the need to create equally ambitious goals to increase our membership base and diversify our funding.

While our program and fundraising goals are ambitious, they are based on the strong foundation we have built together over the past 23 years. We know we will also need your help to continue to recruit new members and to give generously

when you are able.

Thank you for standing with us. We are excited to move into the future with you by our side. □

LSP Membership Coordinator Cathy Eberhart can be reached at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org.

Thank you

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful and honored to have received a number of memorial gifts over the past few months from the following people:

- ◆ Jay C. Dregni and Meredith Sommers in memory of Chuck Andrews.
- ◆ Susan and Gary Sexton in memory

of Curtis Henderson’s stepfather Bill.

◆ Larry and Carolyn Olson in memory of Don Maronde’s mother.

◆ \$560 for Farm Beginnings™ scholarships in memory of Farm Beginnings graduate Jerry Unger from Judy and Alan Hoffman, Dan and Muriel French, Featherstone Farm and vendors at the Rochester Farmers’ Market.

Give the gift of stewardship this holiday season

As the holiday season approaches, consider giving family and friends a gift membership in the Land Stewardship Project. We will send recipients a card informing them of your gift and provide them information on what their membership helps accomplish for the land, farmers and food. You can use the envelope included with this *Land Stewardship Letter* to order memberships. Memberships can also be purchased online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus.html.

For more information, contact Cathy Eberhart, LSP’s Membership Coordinator, at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer 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, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **OCT. 16-19—USDA National Small Conference, featuring LSP's Farm Beginnings™ program**, Greensboro, N.C.; Contact: www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/in_focus/smallfarms_if_conferences.html; or 336-334-7734
- **OCT. 19—LSP member Laura Jack-**

Dine Fresh Dine Local Oct. 11

The second annual Dine Fresh Dine Local culinary event will be held Oct. 11. See page 25 for details.

son will present the **2005 Shivers Memorial Lecture**, Iowa State University, Ames; Contact: 515-294-3711; www.leopold.iastate.edu

- **OCT. 21-23—2005 Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference**, Burlington, Vt.; Contact: 802-223-2389 (ext. 15); www.uvm.edu/wagn/womeninag.html
- **NOV. 3-5—National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference**, Columbia, Mo.; Contact: 1-800-633-2535; www.smallfarmtoday.com
- **NOV. 4-5—“Insider Tips” workshop on farm credit, southeast Minnesota** (see page 6)
- **NOV. 8-10—Artisanal cheesemaking conference**, River Falls, Wis.; Contact: 715-425-3704; www.dbicusa.org

Call Congress today

Congress is set to debate budget cuts in October that could have severe effects on conservation and nutrition programs. See page 21 for details on how you can make your voice heard.

Vote for LSP at the Wedge

Members of the Wedge Community Co-op in Minneapolis, Minn., have a chance to support the Land Stewardship Project in October through the WedgeShare program. This initiative gives Wedge members an opportunity to cast votes to determine which organizations get grants and gifts from the co-op. LSP's "Sustainable Farmers, Prosperous Communities Project" is on the ballot. Ballots need to be mailed in by Oct. 23, or can be dropped off at the Wedge by 5 p.m. on Oct. 27. Ballots will also be accepted at the co-op's annual meeting until 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 27. For more information, see www.wedge.coop/membership/membership-wedgeshare.html.

- **NOV. 11-12—“Insider Tips” workshop on farm credit, western Minnesota** (see page 6)
- **NOV. 14—5th Annual Iowa Organic Conference**, Iowa State University, Ames; Contact: 515-294-7069; www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic05/about.html
- **DEC. 1—Deadline for NCR-SARE grant proposals**; Contact: 402-472-0809; www.sare.org/ncrsare/cfp.htm
- **DEC. 8—Marketing & Food Systems Workshop**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 515-294-1854; rspirog@iastate.edu
- **DEC. 8-10—Acres U.S.A. Conference**, Indianapolis, Ind.; Contact: www.acresusa.com; 1-800-355-5313
- **JAN. 9-FEB. 10—“Family Farms: A Tribute” traveling art show**, Northfield, Minn.; Contact: Stephanie Henriksen, 507-645-7086; dkamis@rconnect.com
- **JAN. 25-28—Ecological Farming Conference with the theme, “Savoring Connections from Seed to Table”**; Pacific

Grove, Cal.; Contact: www.eco-farm.org; 831-763-2111

- **JAN. 27-28—8th Annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: 715-834-9672; www.rivercountryrfd.org
- **FEB. 2-3—Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 763-434-0400; www.mfvga.org
- **FEB. 18—Statewide meeting of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota**, central Minnesota; Contact: 866-760-8732; www.sfa-mn.org
- **FEB. 23-25—Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, LaCrosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-3153; www.mosesorganic.org
- **MARCH 1—Biennial session of Minnesota Legislature begins**; Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 507-523-3366; bking@landstewardshipproject.org
- **MARCH 5-6—LSP's Dana Jackson will speak at the Annual Conference of**

Lappe' in Minn. Nov. 18

Frances Moore Lappe' will speak on her new book, *Democracy's Edge*, at a special Land Stewardship Project event in Minneapolis on Nov. 18. See page 7 for details.

the **Wildflower Association of Michigan**, Michigan State University, East Lansing; Contact: www.wildflowersmich.org

→ **MARCH 14—Minnesota Environmental Partnership's 5th Annual Citizens' Day at the Capitol**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 651-290-0154; www.mepartnership.org

Check www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on upcoming events.



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The date above your name on the address label is your membership anniversary. Your timely renewal saves paper and reduces the expense of sending out renewal notices. To renew, use the envelope inside or go to the LSP website.