

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

30 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

Volume 30

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How refusing to accept soil as a degraded resource can help unearth the potential of farming (see pages 24-27).



- Stewarding the Right to Vote*—
- Local Communities Take on Frac Sand Mining*—
- The Farm Bill Drought*—
- New LSP Initiatives for Beginning Farmers*—
- Marshwatch & its Community*—
- Hope in an Urban Garden*—
- Stand Up!, The Good Food Revolution*—

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

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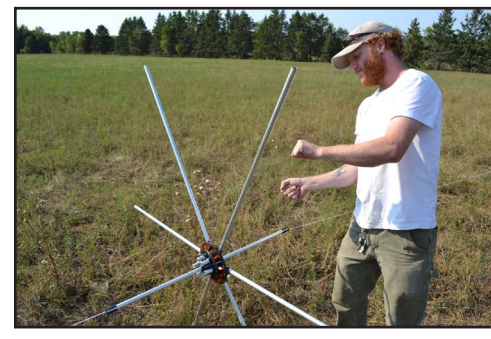
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Stewarding a basic right

Why LSP supports 'Our Vote, Our Future'

By Mark Schultz

Recently, the Land Stewardship Project joined "Our Vote, Our Future," a coalition of over 70 organizations working to oppose the voter restriction amendment to the state constitution that is to be put before Minnesota voters Nov. 6. Why is an organization whose mission is stewardship of the land and our communities speaking out on this issue?

There are several important reasons for taking this stand—as discussed by LSP's State Policy Committee—which relate directly to the values and history of our organization, as well as simple common sense.

Basic issue of democracy — people have to have a say

A good deal of LSP's work as an organization has centered around the basic issue of democracy—that people directly affected need to have a say in the decisions related to their lives. It's a foundation of LSP's approach that people, not major corporations or lobbyist insiders, need to have the most say in how public policy is shaped and executed. It is through democratic action that we will create a food and farming system that is answerable to people, not corporations.

Our work to preserve and utilize the power of local control in Minnesota is a great example of this basic principle being put into action. Local control is critical if people living in rural areas are to retain the democratic right to work through their townships and counties to restrict damaging developments like corporate-backed factory farms and frac sand mines.

Simply said, LSP believes that in order to create a sustainable food and agriculture system, people must have a say. We oppose efforts to exclude people from the process of public decision-making. And that is what this badly-conceived amendment, if voted in, will do—whether intentionally or not.

Consider these facts:

→ The Citizens for Election Integrity and the Minnesotan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance conducted

an in-depth survey of county attorneys in Minnesota in 2010. They found that a photo voter ID system's main role would be to prevent voter impersonation. However, the survey also found that, "The results are clear—there was not one single conviction for voter impersonation. In fact, while there were investigations, there were no felony convictions of double voting, non-citizens voting, under-age voting, or voting outside of the jurisdiction." If there ever was a case of a solution looking for a problem, this is it.

→ If this amendment is adopted, 700,000 Minnesotans who were eligible to vote in 2010 would not be able to vote, as reported by the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*. That includes voters who do not have a photo ID or who use Election Day registration. The amendment would also make it harder for veterans—many of whom use Veterans Administration IDs that don't have a current address—and current military personnel who vote absentee, to vote. Now some rough figuring: if the amendment passes, and there is an amazing response and 80 percent of these Minnesotans take the steps (and pay the costs) to become eligible, that would still disenfranchise 140,000 Minnesotans. The question is: to whose benefit is it to have so many fewer people vote in a democratic election?

→ The voter restriction amendment was designed and orchestrated by the national "American Legislative Exchange Council" (ALEC), a coalition of major corporations and their legislator allies. Voter restriction amendments have been introduced in 34 states since 2010. Again the question: which

sector of society benefits from this kind of large-scale disenfranchisement of American voters?

→ It's important to consider exactly who these 700,000 eligible voters are who do not have a photo ID and who use Election Day registration. The segments of Minnesota's population for whom this situation is most common are elderly Minnesotans, people of color, voters with disabilities, young people and the poorest Minnesotans. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, national studies show that as many as 11 percent of eligible voters do not have government-issued photo identification. That percentage is even higher for seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income voters and students. We have certainly heard from LSP members about people they know who would be affected—an older parent or relative, a student who is moving frequently, a soldier overseas.

LSP's work is based primarily in farming and rural communities. Rural communities include many elderly Minnesotans who often don't have a photo ID since they don't drive or need one, yet they have lived there for their entire lives. It is also the case that in rural communities, your home might be miles and miles from anyplace that offers a "government issued photo ID" that would be mandated by this proposed amendment. This voter ID amendment would make it

Voter ID, see page 4...



Nick and Joan Olson, shown here with their son Abe, farm near Litchfield, Minn. Nick is also a Farm Beginnings organizer for LSP. Rural residents could be particularly hit hard by voter restrictions. (LSP photo)

more expensive and inconvenient for these people to vote where they have always cast their ballot.

But here's the even larger point: all of us are hurt when we exclude people from the vote. We are stronger and better as a state and a nation when people have a say over the decisions that affect their lives. That's why the U.S. Constitution and our state constitution have consistently been used to extend our rights, not to diminish them.

And as a state where communities of color are growing, a voter restriction law that disproportionately disenfranchises people of color is unwise, unjust and anti-democratic. For the strongest and best solutions, we must all be in it together, no exceptions. We can't afford to lose the voices of these growing segments of the population.

Who pays?

Finally, it's clear the voter ID amendment would be a costly measure if adopted, with most of the costs placed on local governments. Various local and state agencies estimate these costs at \$30 million to \$50 million for start-up, with an additional \$8 million to \$10 million in annual operating costs. Rural counties have estimated the costs of mandated photo ID at hundreds of thousands of dollars per county; as high as \$250 per voter in Minnesota's Kittson County alone. This kind of burden on Minnesota's townships and counties, and rural citizens, is unwarranted and unnecessary. Clearly, the backers of the proposed amendment missed this common sense concern in their haste to advance this new policy.

Why put these extra costs on local communities when election officials and county attorneys have demonstrated there is not a problem? Again, what is the goal here?

As for the argument that photo IDs are now required for a lot of things, like boarding a plane, so why not for voting—the fact is this would drastically change our voting system and in the process make it so tens of thousands of people can't exercise a right guaranteed by the Constitution. Boarding an airplane and casting a vote are two different things. Voting is simply the bedrock of American democracy.

Minnesota has one of the strongest records of high voter participation and clean elections in the nation. Close statewide elections and recounts in recent years have reinforced this fact. But this amendment, if passed, would taint our elections by the unjust exclusion of already under-represented people in our community.

The bottom line is this: Minnesota's

elderly, our communities of color, our students, our disabled, our poor, are not represented by the corporate lobbyists that flock to the Capitol or the big money donors that increasingly dominate our elections and are funding this push to restrict voting. To add to this problem by enacting a law that directly and adversely impacts the ability of Minnesotans from under-represented communities to vote is just wrong.

The barriers a mandatory photo ID system create to voting, and the costs to all of us—financial and otherwise—of carrying out such an unfunded mandate, negatively affects everyone. And no one gains from

Letters

Red-headed woodpeckers need farmers' help

Red-headed woodpeckers were once a common sight in much of rural Minnesota. But suburban sprawl, intensive agriculture and oak-savanna habitat destruction has led to a 50 percent decline in this colorful, cheerful bird since the 1960s.

Red-headed woodpeckers are habitat specialists that need a savanna-type landscape with open understory and small clusters of mature and dead trees. The open understory helps the bird to swoop down from a high perch to capture beetles, grasshoppers and other insects in spring and summer. The real key to good red-headed woodpecker habitat is the presence of large dead trees, or "snags," with large limbs and cavities for nesting and rearing young. Whenever possible, we need to leave dead trees standing.

It's interesting that in rural southwestern Minnesota, small abandoned farmstead lots still accommodate nesting pairs of wood-

this drastic change in our voting system but the powerful corporate interests that do not have the average Minnesotan's best interest in mind. We urge LSP members and the rest of the people of the state to note NO on the voter ID amendment Nov. 6. This isn't just about casting a vote; it's about having a say in the future of our land, farms and communities. □

Mark Schultz is LSP's Associate Director, Policy Program Director and Director of Programs. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.

peckers. The key is the presence of dead snags, or what naturalists call "wildlife trees." Sadly, intensive corporate agriculture is destroying these farmsteads to make room for more corn and soybeans. If there are ways to retain abandoned farmsteads, such as conservation easements, we should do so.

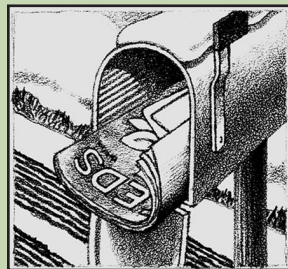
Red-headed woodpeckers are not necessarily shy birds and will nest in close proximity to homes. They will also gladly visit bird feeders with black sunflower seeds in spring and summer, and suet in fall and winter. That means private landowners can make a big difference.

Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery is a volunteer effort, working with public and private landowners to encourage land stewardship practices to reverse the decline of red-headed woodpeckers.

If you are a farmer, landowner or other interested resident who wants to learn more about red-headed woodpeckers, you can visit our website at www.redheadrecovery.org or e-mail us at chetmeyers@visi.com. Once on the website, check out our suggested best land management practices for private landowners.

— **Chet Meyers & Tom Beer**
Red-headed Woodpecker Recovery

What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

The *Land Stewardship Letter* believes an open, fair discussion of issues we cover is one of the keys to creating a just, sustainable society. Letters and commentaries can be submitted to: Brian DeVore, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 612-722-6474; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

We cannot print all submissions, and reserve the right to edit published pieces for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Townships don't have the resources to control development.

→ **Fact:**

Surprise and intimidation can be powerful tools when backers of major development seek to build a large facility in a small, rural township. For a town board used to dealing with mundane issues like how basic road maintenance should be undertaken, to be suddenly confronted with a proposal for a large-scale industrialized livestock operation, garbage burner or frac sand mining/processing facility can be daunting.

The assumption, which is cultivated by proposers of major developments as well as some state policy makers, is often that townships have little or no control over where these developments are placed. Another popular myth is that even if a township does have the legal authority to control the placement of development, the expense and time required to exercise that right is beyond the means of most townships. To top it off, there is often a mistaken belief that townships which try to control development through planning and zoning will have their decisions overturned in court.

The fact is, in Minnesota townships have extensive rights when it comes to developing planning and zoning, and the courts have repeatedly backed those rights. In the mid-1960s, the Minnesota Legislature passed a statute giving municipalities the powers and a uniform procedure for controlling the future development of land. In the mid-1980s, the Minnesota Legislature included townships in the definition of "municipality," thereby giving townships the same zoning authority as cities.

Minnesota townships can put in planning and zoning ordinances that are just as or more restrictive (but not less restrictive) as the county's rules. However, there are limits to what the planning and zoning can address. For example, they can establish parameters on where a large-scale feedlot can be located in relation to other types of land use and prohibit feedlots over a certain size. But a township does not have the authority to establish controls on the amount of waste generated by large-scale feedlots in that township.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

has exclusive control over regulating pollution in the state, but issues around land use such as property values and quality of life can be addressed by the township. That leaves a lot of room for strong local controls.

Moratoriums on development

Minnesota statutes also allow townships to adopt interim ordinances/moratoriums, which are a way of temporarily freezing major development while the town board conducts the research needed to develop a well thought-out comprehensive plan that allows for the kind of development that fits the character of the township. Interim ordinances are a key element for developing good planning and zoning in a township because many townships are not prompted to do such planning until faced with a development project of unprecedented size and scope. In effect, interim ordinances protect the planning process.

The key role of interim ordinances/moratoriums

The key role interim ordinances play in developing a good comprehensive plan have made them a target of major developers, factory farm promoters and other opponents of strong local government. That's not surprising: the more time a local unit of government has to think about the community's future, the less likely it will put in place weak rules that allow development projects that have major negative impacts far down the road.

Anti-local control forces have tried to undermine the power of townships to impose interim ordinances in a number of ways. One strategy is to simply use the legislative process to weaken this power. This strategy was tried yet again during the 2012 session of the Minnesota Legislature, but the Land Stewardship Project and its allies were successful in keeping local control strong.

Another method that can be nearly as effective is to develop a mythology around the difficulty of creating, and eventually defending, a comprehensive plan. The fact is rural townships all over Minnesota and even the country have successfully developed comprehensive plans, often after utilizing interim ordinances to give them the time.

Courts support it

In Minnesota and in other states that allow for township level zoning, courts have repeatedly sided with local governments over disputes surrounding interim ordinances and comprehensive plans. Each case is different, but in general courts support the right of local governments to control the placement of development as long as meetings are open and well-documented and ordinances are not put in place that discriminate against one specific development project.

It's important to note that although a township may be prompted by one particular proposal to put in place an interim ordinance, it cannot use that interim ordinance, or a subsequent comprehensive plan, to target a single project.

A good Internet search will turn up resources and examples for getting started on a comprehensive plan. Of course, it's critical that townships consult the services of an attorney and a planning expert, which do cost money. One Minnesota local government expert (*see page 8*) who has helped numerous townships develop comprehensive plans estimates that such an ordinance can be drafted for less than \$2,500, and it costs \$100 to \$150 annually to administer it. Considering what's at stake—the very future of a township—it seems like a small price to pay.

→ **More Information**

• *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township from Unwanted Development* provides guidance on using the Minnesota Interim Ordinance and other tools in the state's Municipal Planning law. It can be downloaded at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Free paper copies are available by contacting LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **More Myth Busters**

To download copies of previous installments in LSP's *Myth Busters* series, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/libraryresources/mythbusters. For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377.



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LSP News

LSP celebration in the blufflands



The Land Stewardship Project's Blufflands Region summer celebration was held Aug. 19 at Suncrest Gardens near Cochrane, Wis. The event featured a pizza/potluck meal followed by a farm tour and local music. Ice cream from Castle Rock Organic Dairy was served.

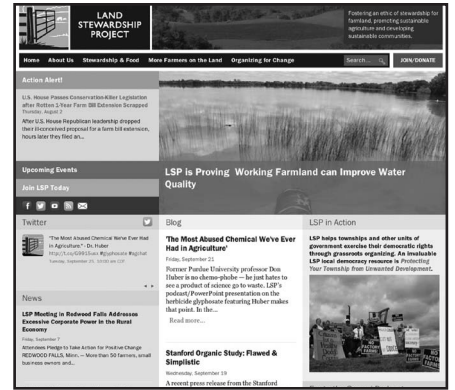
Suncrest Gardens Farm (www.suncrestgardensfarm.com) produces vegetables, berries and livestock for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shareholders and select retail markets. It also hosts weekly pizza nights featuring ingredients from the farm baked in a wood-fired oven and often accompanied by area musicians. Owner-farmer Heather Secrist is an LSP Farm Beginnings training program graduate (see pages 14-20).

To listen to an LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Secrist, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast (it's episode 73).

New LSP website is launched

A dramatically revamped Land Stewardship Project website was unveiled on July 30.

The new site features LSP's events calendar, action alerts, press releases, *Ear to the Ground* podcasts, blogs and videos. In addition, LSP's fact sheets and *Myth Busters* series, along with past copies of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, are archived on the



website in a user-friendly format. The latest resources related to beginning farmers, local democracy, conservation farming and local foods are also available.

Check it out at www.landstewardshipproject.org. □

Get current with

LIVE  WIRE

Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* to get monthly e-mail updates from the Land Stewardship Project. To subscribe, visit LSP's website at www.landstewardshipproject.org. □

Twin Cities LSP potluck-cookout celebration

Over 200 people shared food and fellowship during the Land Stewardship Project's 11th annual Twin Cities potluck cookout July 26 at the organization's office in the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood of South Minneapolis.

Local food, music, games, a silent auction and a discussion about the future of sustainable agriculture and family farming were featured at the event, which was held in the side yard of LSP's office.

LSP is currently remodeling the building, which was formerly a firehouse originally built in 1941. LSP purchased the building in 2011. □



Finley departs LSP

Aimee Finley has departed the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings team to work as a Farm Business Management Instructor at Western Technical College in La Crosse, Wis.

Finley is a Farm Beginnings graduate and holds a bachelor's degree in secondary agricultural education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She has long been involved in dairy farming, and in 2010 joined LSP's staff.



Aimee Finley

During the past two years Finley played a key role as a facilitator for Farm Beginnings classes. She has also worked to develop beginning farmers as leaders and helped shape LSP's new Journeyperson Course and Matched Savings Account initiative (see pages 14-15). Finley recently represented LSP in Washington, D.C., where she testified on beginning farmer issues.

In her position at Western Technical College, Finley will provide one-to-one technical assistance to beginning farmers. □

Rupprecht & Ewest join LSP staff

Johanna Rupprecht and **Steve Ewest** have joined the Land Stewardship Project staff.

Rupprecht is now working as a Policy Program organizer in LSP's southeast Minnesota office. She has been working on the "Corporate Power Has Gone Too Far" petition drive (see page 10) and on LSP's efforts to help rural residents dealing with the frac sand industry (see page 8).



Johanna Rupprecht

Rupprecht recently served an internship with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program in western Minnesota's Big Stone County. She has a master's degree in library and information science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a bachelor's degree in English from Saint Olaf College, where she was a National Merit Scholar. She can be contacted at 507-523-3366 or jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org.



Steve Ewest

Ewest is doing geographic information science (GIS) work for LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program. He recently served an LSP internship and has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Bethel University and a master's degree in GIS from the University of Denver. Ewest has worked as a GIS technician for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or sewest@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Friebur, Hert, Johnson, Sierra serve LSP internships

Robin Friebur, **Carey Hert**, **Samuel Johnson** and **Chrissy Sierra** recently served internships with the Land Stewardship Project.

Friebur has a bachelor's degree in Spanish and Latin American studies from Gettysburg College, and is pursuing a master's degree in public health from the University of Minnesota. She has worked as a case manager for a family wellness/reunification program, a health counselor and a student consultant to the U of M Community Health Initiative.

Hert is pursuing a bachelor's degree in International Studies from Macalester College. She has worked as a camp counselor, a



Robin Friebur

volunteer at Hope Community and in customer service. She also participated in the School for International Training study abroad program on public health, race and human rights.

Johnson has a bachelor's degree in philosophy and music from the University of St. Thomas. He has worked as a Partnership Academy volunteer coordinator, an orientation leader and a philosophy tutor. Johnson has also volunteered for the Basilica of St. Mary Voices for Justice program.



Samuel Johnson

Sierra is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Global Studies in Progress at the University of Minnesota. She is a graduate of the Camp Wellstone Activist Training program and has volunteered with Mujeres en Liderazgo, Farmerworkers Association of Florida, Centro Chicano Cultural and Neighborhood House.

During their internships with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program, Friebur, Hert and Johnson worked in the Hope Community in Minneapolis to help low income families with cooking and nutrition initiatives (see page 21).

During her internship, **Sierra** organized a successful petition drive urging Chipotle Mexican Grill to sign the Fair Food Agreement (see page 10). □



Chrissy Sierra



Carey Hert

DeLaVergne's local food work honored

Former Land Stewardship Project staff member Ann DeLaVergne was recently recognized by the Minnesota Department of Health for her "significant community service and public health accomplishments."

In 2010 and 2011 DeLaVergne worked with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program to increase Washington County, Minn., residents' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. She helped the county's health department implement its State-wide Health Improvement (SHIP) grant.

During an Oct. 3 ceremony, DeLaVergne was recognized for her development of the Fresh Green Bucks program, which is in operation in three area grocery stores and

allows shoppers to purchase coupons that translate to fresh fruits and vegetables for local food shelves.

The Department of Health also honored DeLaVergne for her work organizing Our Community Kitchen, which serves healthy, affordably-priced breakfasts two-days-a-week using locally produced foods, and for her establishment of six community gardens in Ramsey and Washington counties.



Ann DeLaVergne

Rural residents learn how to protect communities from the dangers of frac sand mining

Residents of rural townships have two choices when it comes to determining the future of their communities, according to attorney Jim Peters, an expert on township planning and zoning.

“If you do nothing, you know what’s going to happen,” Peters told a roomful of township officials and residents gathered at the Sportsman’s Club and Community Center in Frontenac, Minn., on Aug. 23. They were gathered for the first of two LSP workshops on using township rights to address frac sand mining and other harmful developments. The second workshop was in Rushford, Minn., on Aug. 30.

As Peters and other experts made clear, what can happen is that unwanted development like frac sand mining can sweep into a community, bringing with it concerns about water quality, excessive road traffic and health impacts. David Williams, a township officer and attorney from southeast Minnesota’s Fillmore County, said frac sand mining’s current scope and potential impact are unprecedented for a region that is not unfamiliar with mining and quarrying.

“Silica sand mining sites are being proposed that are anywhere from 500 to 1,000 acres in size,” said Williams. “This is a whole different scale than the aggregate mines we’ve seen.”

But the other choice for township residents is to do the kind of comprehensive planning that takes into consideration a community’s resources and its citizens’ desires. Such comprehensive planning is an attainable goal for even the smallest communities, said Nancy Barsness, a clerk and zoning administrator in New Prairie Township in western Minnesota.

“The ordinance process is not as complicated as it sounds, and it won’t cost you an arm and a leg,” said Barsness, who has

written over 40 planning ordinances for Minnesota townships.

She said the first step in the planning process is to put in place a moratorium on major developments such as frac sand mines and industrial-sized confinement livestock operations. A moratorium allows the

Moratorium passed in Yucatan Township

After officers from Yucatan Township in southeast Minnesota’s Houston County attended the LSP planning and zoning workshop in Rushford on Aug. 30, they passed a yearlong moratorium on industrial sand mining.

The township has formed a study group to create a comprehensive land use plan and research all aspects of industrial sand mining in order to protect residents from the potential harm this industry poses to water quality, farmland, bluffslands, roads, property values and quality of life.

“When governing entities at the state or county level lack the political will to protect the citizens, people at the most local township level can—and will—stand up,” says LSP organizer Bobby King.

township time to gather information on the township’s resources, its environmentally sensitive areas and what kinds of developments are compatible with the area (*see Myth Buster on page 5*).

Kristen Eide-Tollefson, who is on the township planning commission for Florence Township in southeast Minnesota’s Goodhue County, said her community did just such an assessment of sensitive areas when developing a comprehensive plan in 2003. That process, which has since become a

statewide model, found that water resources in almost the entire township are vulnerable to contamination. That’s why the township is in the midst of updating its ordinances to address frac sand mining.

Eide-Tollefson said such a process is not only important for protecting the community’s resources, but it helps citizens create a shared vision for what they want the township to look like in the future.

“It is a powerful community-building process,” she said.

LSP organizer Bobby King spoke to the importance and challenges of working to protect townships from the outside corporate interests pushing unwanted industrial-scale silica sand mines into rural communities.

“When you stand up for your community and work to stop these proposed frac sand mines you may be accused of causing controversy,” said King. “But it’s the outside corporate interests pushing these operations that are causing the controversy, not you.” □

EAW ordered on mine

On Oct. 2, the Winona County, Minn., Board of Commissioners, in a 3-2 vote, ordered an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) be done on the proposed Nisbit frac sand mine southeast of St. Charles, Minn. This puts the mine on hold until the EAW can be completed.

Had the Board issued a permit without ordering an EAW, this mine would have been the first new frac sand mine established since the county’s moratorium was lifted in May. The county’s decision came after more than 300 residents petitioned for an EAW with concerns about truck traffic, highway safety, air and water quality and public health. □

Give it a listen

Episode 123 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast features experts talking about planning and zoning in rural townships: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

Frac sand mining fractures Leopold’s land ethic

EDITOR’S NOTE: On Aug. 28, Land Stewardship Project board member Tex Hawkins spoke to a busload of LSP members and friends who visited a farm near Dodge, Wis., that was within view of a frac sand mining operation on neighboring land. Here is an excerpt of what Hawkins said.

By *Tex Hawkins*

Since the 1980s, the Land Stewardship Project has helped defend family and beginning farmers, as well as rural communities, against corporate abuse of land and rights. LSP has also led the fight for local control to protect our natural resources.

I spent about 50 years in the conservation business—half of that here in the Bluffslands. I hate to see conservation efforts reversed here or anywhere else. Yet the hired guns and grunts of the energy industries are doing just that.

A recent half-page editorial in the *Saint*

Leopold, see page 9...

Paul Pioneer Press was titled, “An American Energy Bonanza.” This is apparently the new meme being spread by the fossil energy companies and their well-compensated public relations firms, media outlets and politicians.

The hired guns and grunts are spreading the word that a new fossil fuel boom is on the horizon, that fracked supplies are virtually limitless, and that conservation-minded people are standing in the way of progress. It is a familiar message signaling growth and prosperity—at least for the executives of the energy industries and their bankers. Frankly, these are the same kinds of lies that have gotten the U.S. into its current predicament—there *are* limits, largely imposed by escalating costs of extraction, energy waste and externalized costs to society.

We don’t need or want energy dependence, with military bases and operations all over the world gobbling our remaining fuel resources in a desperate effort to restrict rightful access of others to *their* energy resources. But we also don’t really need energy independence either, as companies frantically try to mine, drill, frac, pipe and ship this nation’s remaining fossil fuels all at once. This is a desperate effort to extract, consume and exhaust resources that rightfully should belong—at least in part—to future generations.

What we *do* need—in my view—is energy inter-dependence, with decentralized and diversified energy sources, democratically networked for security and efficiency. We *do not* need monstrous and destructive sources that are geared toward infinite growth and perpetually increasing demand. We *do not* need our energy supply and its profits to be routed through corporate pockets for obscene profits. And we sure *do not* need the corruption that goes with this supposed “boom.”

But we *do* need emergency conservation regulations and policies, as well as fossil energy taxation and financial incentives for businesses and homeowners to reduce demand and consumption. And we *do* need to accelerate development of appropriately-scaled technology for alternative and renewable energy sources. These actions will help slow global warming, buy time and reduce threats to life. These actions provide a pathway to a more resilient society and a more sustainable future.

I said that conservation is a business too, and it has to be—a multi-level effort, local state and national. So is ecotourism—that’s a business too. So are all the service businesses that depend on a clean, healthy

environment. Same with family farming. Frac sand mining is not the only source of income in this area. Should good jobs, livelihoods, health, rights and property values be sacrificed this way?

Today, I’d like to contrast the radically—and some would say irreversibly—altered landscape represented by a single farm’s sand mine across the valley, with the wildly beautiful and naturally resilient land protected and managed on this farm, and on others like it. To what extent, realistically, is that altered landscape recoverable? Can it ever be restored to ecological form and function? And on a broader scale, isn’t this damage driven by outside corporations?

Now, to what extent can *this* farm, and the landscape it represents, be protected from further fragmentation, degradation and obliteration without organized resistance and institutional intervention? We have witnessed what happened in coal mining country with mountaintop removal, poisoned water and a destroyed culture. We are seeing it happening again in places like Williston, North Dakota, and Fort McMurray, Alberta, and we don’t like it.

What we see across this valley is just the tip of a tsunami. On a recent flight over the Blufflands, from Red Wing down to Dubuque, I saw many white scars—pits evolving into strip mines—connected by freshly constructed roads leading to storage and processing facilities. And beyond that, I could picture thousands of drilling pads, pipelines and refineries stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the tar sands of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, blighting shorelands and coastal wetlands from east to west, on Great Lakes and major rivers.

Consider what science is telling us about climate projections and risks, fossil fuel demand and consumption, global warming effects on polar ice melt, sea level rise and acidification, desertification, starvation and the spreading epidemic of extinction. Knowing all of this and more, as most of us do in spite of the propaganda assault, we have to ask ourselves: “How lucky do we *really* feel today? Lucky enough to ignore the Precautionary Principle?”

And I have to ask *you* to consider which of the landscapes before you is the more ethical and sustainable? Beyond that, does our society really understand the connection

between ethics and sustainability? In land use decision-making, is one even possible without the other? Shouldn’t we be having this discussion right now?

Without an ethical framework, how do we know that Bill McKibben is telling the truth, when he says that energy companies intend to use this silica sand to extract and burn several times the amount of fossil fuel it would take to render this planet uninhabitable? How do we know whether James Hansen, the nation’s top climate scientist, is not lying when he tells us essentially the same thing? How do we know when “a thing is right?”

Luckily, you and I—and millions of others—already know the answer to that



An industrialized silica sand processing facility near the Mississippi River in Winona, Minn. To what extent, realistically, is that altered landscape recoverable? (LSP photo)

question. We have read the writings of Aldo Leopold, who said that a thing is right when it tends to preserve (or sustain) the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. And it is wrong when it tends otherwise. This responsibility to *all* life has always been a Native American tradition. We need to incorporate it into our post-industrial culture as well.

I submit to you today that what you see on the far horizon here and across this continent is the creation of energy *waste*, not supply, when we consider hidden costs, as well as creation of profits for a few at the expense of many. Are these realities ethical or sustainable? Shouldn’t frac sand mining be studied with a full generic environmental impact statement initiative? Wouldn’t it be prudent to consider reallocating vital resources to renewables for a sustainable energy future?

Before he died in 1948, Aldo Leopold left us his land ethic as a guideline—a measuring stick—to use in the decision-making process as individuals and as an inclusive community of people and living landscapes. Right now is our golden opportunity to apply it and change the course of history. □

Policy & Organizing

LSP members address excessive corporate power in the rural economy

By Megan Buckingham

This summer and fall, Land Stewardship Project members and volunteers have set up at farmers' markets, county fairs and community events across Minnesota to talk about the problem of excessive corporate power in our economy and our democracy—resulting in thousands of conversations and over 2,000 people signing on to LSP's "Corporate Power Has Gone Too Far" petition.

As people talk to each other, using the petition to start the conversation, we are finding a lot of agreement that corporate power certainly has gone too far. Whether its beginning farmers talking about how hard it is to get affordable health care while HMOs are making huge profits, or township residents fighting big oil and gas-backed frac sand mines, it's clear that excessive corporate power has a direct impact on rural communities and people's lives.

Along with the petition drive, LSP held three larger organizing meetings in the Minnesota communities of Lonsdale, Rushford and Redwood Falls, and a handful of smaller

"kitchen table" meetings across the state. At each meeting members told their stories of running up against corporate power when trying to make positive changes in their own lives, in their communities and on the land. Members also talked about organizing to take back our economy and democracy for the good of the people and the land.

"People have the power to make change when we organize and take action together," said LSP Community Based Food Systems Program director Terry Van Der Pol at the meeting in Redwood Falls. "Corporate power has gone too far, and the only way to diminish their power is to organize together and build our power as people." □

Megan Buckingham is an LSP Policy organizer. She can be reached at 612-722-6377 or meganb@landstewardshipproject.org.



LSP member Barb Nelson (left) and LSP organizer Johanna Rupprecht collected "Corporate Power Has Gone Too Far" petitions in rural Minnesota this summer. Altogether LSP volunteers and staff members collected over 2,000 signatures at fairs and community events and talked with neighbors and strangers about the ways in which excessive corporate power stands in the way of positive change for people and the land. To sign the online petition, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. (photo by Megan Buckingham)

Food with integrity

In October, the Chipotle Mexican Grill company agreed to sign on to the Immokalee Workers Fair Food Program as the result of a nationwide campaign involving the Land Stewardship Project and other groups.

In September, LSP was part of a delegation that delivered more than 2,500 petition signatures to a Chipotle's restaurant in Minneapolis urging it to take action to improve working conditions and increase wages for farm workers in the tomato fields of Florida. The petition made the point that if Chipotle's "Food With Integrity" advertising tag line is more than a slogan, then the company needed to sign on to the Fair Food Program.

Besides LSP, the Minnesota petition campaign involved the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha and the Department of Chicano Studies at the University of Minnesota. For more information, see www.ciw-online.org. (LSP photo)



Forecast for having a new Farm Bill in 2012: mostly cloudy

By Adam Warthesen

After a long, hot summer, prospects for a new Farm Bill in 2012 are wilting fast. The current Farm Bill expired Sept. 30 without a law to replace it, and Congress will not reconvene again until the lame duck session after the November elections, where chances of it being passed aren't much better. That means the earliest we will have a new Farm Bill is sometime in 2013.

The response from the typical non-farmer might be: "So what?" True, grocery store shelves were still stocked with food come Oct. 1, and the rural landscape will look much the same in coming months.

But there's the potential for our food and farming system to suffer some real long-term damage as a result of this inexcusable action (or rather, inaction) on the part of Congress. As we've reported before, both the Senate and House's versions of the Farm Bill are far from perfect, but Congress still has a chance to develop a proposal that benefits family farmers and conservation, instead of just corporate special interests.

Up until recently, the Farm Bill process was moving on schedule. The Senate as a whole passed its version of the legislation this summer, and the House Agriculture Committee passed a Farm Bill soon after.

But farm policy recently hit a major pot-hole in the House. That's because leadership there is reluctant to debate the Farm Bill on the floor, since it did not do the groundwork necessary to get enough votes for passage. Making things even more difficult is that election year politics is getting in the way of either party agreeing on any policy issue, let alone agriculture. This is a catastrophic failure of the kind of leadership that is required to develop sound public policy.

Veteran Congressional journalist David Rogers recently reported that an analysis of 50 years worth of Farm Bills found no precedent for the situation we are currently in.

"Never before in modern times has a farm bill reported from the House Agriculture Committee been so blocked," wrote Rogers. "There have been long debates, often torturous negotiations with the Senate and a famous meltdown in 1995 when the House Agriculture Committee couldn't produce a bill. But no House farm bill, once out of committee, has been kept off the floor while its deadline passes."

As a result, if a new Farm Bill isn't

passed this year programs related to sustainable agriculture, economic development and beginning farmer support all come to a dead stop. Many of these are programs that were won through hard work by LSP and other sustainable agriculture groups during the last Farm Bill, but require action on the part of Congress to be funded in the future.

In addition, key reforms that were passed by the Senate will wither on the vine without a 2012 Farm Bill. That means, for example, huge direct payments to large-scale crop farmers will continue, and crop insurance payments will be made without any restrictions on how the land is farmed.

Our nation needs a comprehensive Farm Bill re-authorization that provides continuity and confidence for farmers and ranchers, conservation for our natural resources and sustainable development for our rural and urban communities.

However, the Land Stewardship Project will not support just any Farm Bill that passes. This is more than about meeting an arbitrary deadline. In order to gain our endorsement, a bill must take the long view and invest in effective conservation, beginning farmers and rural development, while at the same time bringing reforms and greater accountability to abusive and wasteful elements of crop insurance and commodity programs.

As if this Farm Bill debacle wasn't enough, Congress also passed a six-month Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2013,

which will result in across-the-board slashing of key conservation initiatives like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

As a result of the Continuing Resolution, CSP enrollments for 2013 would be halted completely, with resources only available to maintain and administer existing contracts.

The loss of CSP would hit the Upper Midwest particularly hard, since, as the chart below indicates, states in this region have led in the use of the program. In Minnesota alone over 3,200 CSP contracts—more than any other state—are in place, allowing farmers to protect soil, water and habitat, while providing them incentives to be even more innovative. Thousands more farmers in the region have shown interest in

the program, making it a potential boon to working lands conservation.

Failing to pass a solid Farm Bill or allowing the Continuing Resolution process to blindly gut effective programs like CSP seems to fit with Washington's attitude that conservation, family farmers and rural communities should always take a back seat (or maybe even be shoved in the trunk) when it comes to public policy.

With mounting pressure on America's farming regions—be it from land-inflating commodity prices, corporate concentration, high erosion levels or drought—an investment in the land and the people who live and work on it is more important than ever. □

Adam Warthesen is an LSP organizer who works on federal farm policy. He can be reached at adamw@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. For updates on the Farm Bill, see the **Federal Farm Policy** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

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Why should conservation, family farmers and rural communities take a back seat (or maybe even be shoved in the trunk) when it comes to public policy?
 • • •

CSP demand remains high	(# of acres enrolled per year)			
	2012*	2011	2010	2009
Minnesota	663,586	550,267	448,101	467,660
Iowa	302,190	366,683	428,342	369,263
Wisconsin	162,082	253,947	188,009	171,981
North Dakota	874,552	634,775	663,817	616,913
South Dakota	834,927	868,844	606,024	688,366

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

*Estimate

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Upper Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the Upper Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling him at 507-523-3366. Here are recent listings:

Organic Dairy Farmer Needed: NW WI

• Community Homestead (www.community-homestead.org) is seeking a farmer to manage its organic dairy operation in northwest Wisconsin. Community Homestead is a six household, 40 strong, nonprofit life-sharing community. The dairy is a Grade A certified organic operation (pipeline milking 36 Holsteins and selling directly to Organic Valley). As a member of a supportive three-part ag team, including the farm manager and head gardener, the dairy manager has room to lead, organize and create. Contact: Christine Elmquist, christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org, 715-294-3038.

Seeking Farmland: Iowa

• Steve Saunders is seeking to rent row-cropped ground to convert to organic production in Iowa. He is seeking 25 to 200 acres of tillable land. He will consider certified organic acres, land that has not been sprayed for several years or conventional acres. He does not need a house. Contact: Steve Saunders, 319-480-3032, mdpuller@msn.com.

Seeking Farmland: NE Illinois

• Zack Toepper is seeking to rent farmland in Will or Kankakee County in northeast Illinois. He does not require a house. Contact: Zack Toepper, zstoepfer@sbcglobal.net.

Seeking Farmland: Minnesota

• Dan Hanson is seeking to purchase 5 to 10 acres of farmland in Minnesota within two hours of the Twin Cities. He is looking for tillable and forested acres, and would like it to have not been sprayed for several years. He does not require a house. Contact: Dan Hanson, danandmarta@comcast.net.

• Josh Witte is seeking to rent or purchase 30 acres of farmland in Minnesota. He would prefer land that is tillable and forested, and that has not been sprayed for a number of years. He requires a house. Contact: Josh Witte, 612-840-3378, joshua.witte@gmail.com.

Seeking Farmland: SE MN

• Farm Beginnings graduate Tom Reay is seeking to rent or buy 25-100 acres of land in southeast Minnesota, near the communities of Chatfield, St. Charles or Eyota. He would like land he could set up a rotational grazing system on, and requires water but no house. Contact:

Tom Reay, 507-261-3775, tomreay@hbc.com.

• Josh Berge is seeking to buy or rent 40 to 100 acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota's Dodge or Olmsted County. He would like the site to have a cattle shed but does not need a house. Contact: Josh Berge, 507-923-5840, josh.berge@gmail.com.

• Michael Dripps is seeking to buy 10 to 30 acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota, within a 60-minute drive of the Twin Cities. He would like tillable and forested acres, and does not require a house. Contact: Michael Dripps, 612-670-3776, mdripps@earthlink.net.

Seeking Farmland: Twin Cities

• Brian Personius is seeking to purchase or rent 1 to 5 acres of tillable farmland in Minnesota's Anoka County, near the Twin Cities. He does not require a house, but would prefer access to a water supply. Contact: Brian Personius, 763-227-9231, brian@personiusfamilyfarm.com.

• Growing Lots Urban Farm is looking to complement its urban operation with a small acreage within a 30 to 45 minute drive of Minnesota's Twin Cities. Growing lots is seeking 3 to 5 acres of tillable, forested and pastured land. A house, water and electricity is necessary and outbuildings would be preferable. Contact: Stefan Meyer, 651-707-6383, stefanm777@gmail.com.

• Stone's Throw Urban Farm is seeking 3 to 5 tillable acres within a 45-minute drive of Minneapolis. Land with access to running water and that has not been sprayed in the past three years is preferred. Contact: Alex Liebman, 413-320-7018, stonethrowurbanfarm@gmail.com.

• Vong is seeking to rent approximately 2 acres of tillable land in the Twin Cities' Dakota or Washington County. Contact: Vong, 425-830-1570.

Land Available: SE MN

• James Hegland has for sale 56 acres of land in southeast Minnesota's Winona County. Approximately 11 acres is tillable. There are no buildings on it. He is willing to accept less for this property than what the frac sand companies are offering if the buyer will agree not to mine it. Contact: James Hegland, 952-270-3743.

• Scott Miller has for sale or rent 25.5 acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota's Goodhue County. It has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Scott Miller, 507-491-3308.

Organic Farm for Rent: S WI

• Renae Mitchell has for rent 3 to 10 acres of

certified organic farmland near the southern Wisconsin community of Whitewater. It consists of tillable, pastured and forested land, as well as a greenhouse, 100-foot hoop house, shed and house. The price is \$350 to \$650 per month. Contact: Renae Mitchell, 262-225-9296, ourfarm@netwurx.net.

Seeking Land to Rent: N ILL

• Sean Johnson is seeking to rent 20 to 500 acres in northern Illinois' LaSalle, Grundy, Livingston or Kendall County. Contact: Sean Johnson, 815-671-6642, jfarms22@hotmail.com.

Seeking Land: SC MN

• Brennen is seeking to rent or buy land in south-central Minnesota's Meeker County. Contact: Brennen, 320-857-2894, bbergstrom13@hotmail.com.

Farm for Rent: NC ILL

• David Nusbaumer has for rent 12 acres of farmland in north-central Illinois' LaSalle County. This is an opportunity to join a team of farmers at Pioneer Valley Farm that produce for consumers who come to the farm's store. Lease includes use of equipment and additional marketing. The rental fee is \$200 per acre. Contact: Dave Nusbaumer, dave@pioneervalleyfarm.net.

Seeking Farmland: S Iowa

• Aaron Steenhoek is seeking to rent or buy land in southern Iowa's Marion or Mahaska County. No house is required. Contact: Aaron Steenhoek, 641-780-8595, acsteenhoek@gmail.com.

Farm for Sale: SC MO

• Sarah Dvorsak has for sale 17 acres of farmland in south-central Missouri's Douglas County. There is tillable, forested and pastured land, and it has not been sprayed since at least 1985. Outbuildings are available. It is perimeter fenced with some cross fencing. The price is \$135,000. Contact: Sarah or Evan, 417-683-9979.

Farm for Sale: SE WI

• Jane Sadusky has for sale 20 acres of farmland in southeastern Wisconsin's Waukesha County. The farm is in a good location to access the Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago markets. There are 11 acres tillable/pastured and 6 wood-

Clearinghouse, see page 13...

...Clearinghouse, from page 12

ed. There is a two-bedroom house. The price is \$250,000. Contact: Jane Sadusky, 608-215-6594, saduskyj@charter.net.

Urban Farm for Sale: Minneapolis

• Beth Wallace has for sale a .2 acre urban farmstead in the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood of Minneapolis. It's a double lot and the house sits in the middle of three lots. There are 10+ developed beds. Cherry trees, heirloom rubarb and a variety of woodland plants are on the lot. The asking price is \$136,000. Contact: Beth Wallace, 612-822-1262, bethwallace@visi.com.

Farm for Sale: WC MN

• Marcia Neely has for sale an 8-acre farm in west-central Minnesota. It includes an orchard and gardens. It also has an on-farm produce store that's been in operation for 15 years (Honey and Herbs), a house, 50 x 56 steel shed built in 2006, 24 x 36 workshop and 12 x 16 utility shed. The asking price is \$195,000. Contact: Marcia Neely, marciagarden@yahoo.com, 320-843-3363.

Farm for Rent: Twin Cities Area

• Chris O'Shaughnessy has for rent 35 tillable acres in Inver Grove Heights, Minn. The land is available in 2013 and has not been sprayed in over two years. Ideally, the entire parcel would be rented by one renter, but smaller splits are possible. Contact: Chris O'Shaughnessy, cots@comcast.net, 651-681-0030.

Organic Farm Available: Madison, WI Area

• There is a 79-acre organic farm for sale within 30 minutes of Madison, Wis. There is approximately 50 acres of crop/garden land, and the rest is woodlands. The property includes outbuildings and two separate residences; two splits are permissible. Seller prefers to retain life estate in one of the residences. There is also a small licensed commercial bakery on the property. Seller desires that buyer have demonstrated commitment to maintain the property in organic food production. Contact: Attorney Peter McKeever, One Odana Court, Madison, WI 53719.

Farm Available: C MN

• Linda Stewart has for sale an 83-acre farming operation in central Minnesota's Meeker County. Besides the 83-acre farm and farmstead, also for sale are the operation's equipment, business and client list. The farm has been operated for 30 years seasonally, growing produce for restaurants. The asking price is \$699,000, although other options are available, such as purchasing a 40-acre parcel. Contact: Linda Stewart, 952-261-7495, kingstononthecrow@gmail.com.

Farm Available: SE MN

• Curtis and Donna Reiser have for sale

or rent an 11-acre farm in southeast Minnesota's Winona County. There are 4.5 acres of pasture and 4.5 acres of woods, as well as apple trees. The land hasn't been sprayed in seven years. There is new fencing, along with an automatic livestock watering system. The sale price is \$308,000. Contact: Curtis Reiser, 507-696-3710.

Seeking Land: C MN

• Shawn Mohr is seeking to buy 15+ acres of tillable and pastured land in central Minnesota. He is looking for a situation where the owner would be willing to finance. Mohr would like outbuildings such as a barn or shed, as well as a house. He prefers land that has not been sprayed in at least three years. Contact: Shawn Mohr, 320-291-0520, jmead2003@hotmail.com.

Seeking Land: WI

• Harold and Ed Hilton are seeking to buy 10 to 40 acres of farmland in Wisconsin's Grant, Iowa, Green, Buffalo, Pierce, Dunn, Crawford, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Monroe or La Crosse County. They would like at least 5 to 15 tillable acres. Contact: Harold Hilton, 773-213-4652, hdhilton@aol.com.

Land Available: SW WI

• David Hoyt has for sale 40 acres of farmland near the southwest Wisconsin community of Viroqua. Fourteen acres is wooded. There is no water. It is currently growing plums, apples, ramps, berries and morels. Contact: David Hoyt, 612-876-6288, david@davewhoyst.com.

Seeking Land: Central, WC MN

• Ryan Heinen and Bryan Simon are looking to purchase 80 to 250 acres in central or west-central Minnesota's Douglas, Grant, Ottertail, Pope, Stevens, Stearns or Kandiyohi County. They want to raise livestock, vegetables and native prairie seed. Contact: Ryan Heinen, 605-380-2697, ryanheinen@hotmail.com.

Seeking Land: E MN or W WI

• Joshua Bryceson and Rama Hoffpauir are seeking to purchase 80 to 120 acres of farmland in eastern Minnesota or western Wisconsin. They are licensed cheese makers and are seeking to expand their dairy herd and make cheese. Contact: Joshua Bryceson or Rama Hoffpauir, turniprock@gmail.com, 715-237-2998.

• Farm Beginnings grads Caleb and Lauren Langworthy are seeking to rent 2+ acres for their market garden business in western Wisconsin. They are seeking a three-year lease and would like to work with someone to eventually purchase 40-60 acres. Contact: Caleb and Lauren Langworthy, 715-352-0717, BlueOxFarm@gmail.com.

Seeking Land: Minn. or Wis.

• Karl and Whitney Nesse are seeking to rent or purchase 100 to 500 acres of tillable farmland in Minnesota or Wisconsin. They do not require a

house; livestock buildings would be preferred. Contact: Karl or Whitney Nesse, 320-455-2400, knesse41@gmail.com.

Seeking Land: W MN

• Kristin Lindstrom and John Larson are seeking to rent or purchase 10+ acres of farmland in western Minnesota's Chippewa and Swift counties. They do not require a house but would like running water. Contact: John Larson, 612-590-5812, lonnyj Larson@yahoo.com.

Land for Rent or Sale: EC MN

• Wally Anderson has for rent or sale 117 acres of farmland in east-central Minnesota's Sherburne County. This was formerly a working farm, but has been vacant for the past 40 years or so, and has not been sprayed in 50 years. It includes 20+ tillable acres, 20 pastured and 30 forested. There is no house and there are no outbuildings. Contact: Wally Anderson, 651-248-9512, wally@prhealth.com.

Homestead Available: N MN

• Farm Beginnings graduate Steve Larson has for sale a 60 x 180 foot homestead in northern Minnesota's St. Louis County, on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The fenced yard has 200 feet of raised beds, irrigation, a 10 x 22 greenhouse, a chicken coop with 12-bird capacity and a woodshed. The asking price is \$65,000. Contact: Steve Larson, 320-734-4597 or 360-918-8397, soloflarson@gmail.com.

Organic Farm Available: Twin Cities Area

• Jeanne Larson has for sale in total or in parcels 286 acres of farmland in east-central Minnesota's Chisago County. The property includes 125 acres tillable, 100 forested and 50 pastured. It includes a vineyard, which was certified organic in 2011; the remaining acreage will be certified in 2012. The price range is \$1,000,000 to \$2,865,000. Contact: Jeanne Larson, 612-419-1978, jeannelarsonglobal@gmail.com; or Kent Larson, 612-670-7687, larson@visi.com.

Seeking Farmland: W SD

• Nicole Schumacher and Michael Deay are seeking to rent or purchase 220 acres of tillable and pastured land in western South Dakota, near Rapid City. They would prefer that the property have fencing and water, but they do not require a house. Contact: Nicole Schumacher or Michael Deay, 605-791-2180, munchkin24love@hotmail.com.

Seeking Farmland: Illinois

• Ryan Mclean is seeking to rent or purchase 25+ acres in Illinois. He would like pasture and fencing and does not require a house. Contact: Ryan Mclean, Mcleanr1@comcast.net.

Raising farmers to the trade

LSP launches its 'Journeyman' initiative

"Contrary to popular assumption, good farmers are not in any simple way part of the 'labor force.' Good farmers, like good musicians, must be raised to the trade."

—Wendell Berry, *Another Turn of the Crank*

By Parker Forsell & Richard Ness

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program is farmer-led, community based and focused on sustainable agriculture. Since its start in 1998 in Minnesota, Farm Beginnings has graduated 622 beginning and transitioning farmers. During the 10-month course, farmers learn firsthand about whole farm planning, as well as low-cost, sustainable farming methods. They also develop a strategic farm plan. For many of these individuals, the course represents the beginning of a five- to 10-year journey toward establishing a viable enterprise.

This summer, Farm Beginnings graduates completed a survey that identified their needs as they begin to farm. The survey showed that beginning farmers in the first three to five years of their start-up need one-on-one mentoring, farm-based production skills and financial management skills (*see graph*).

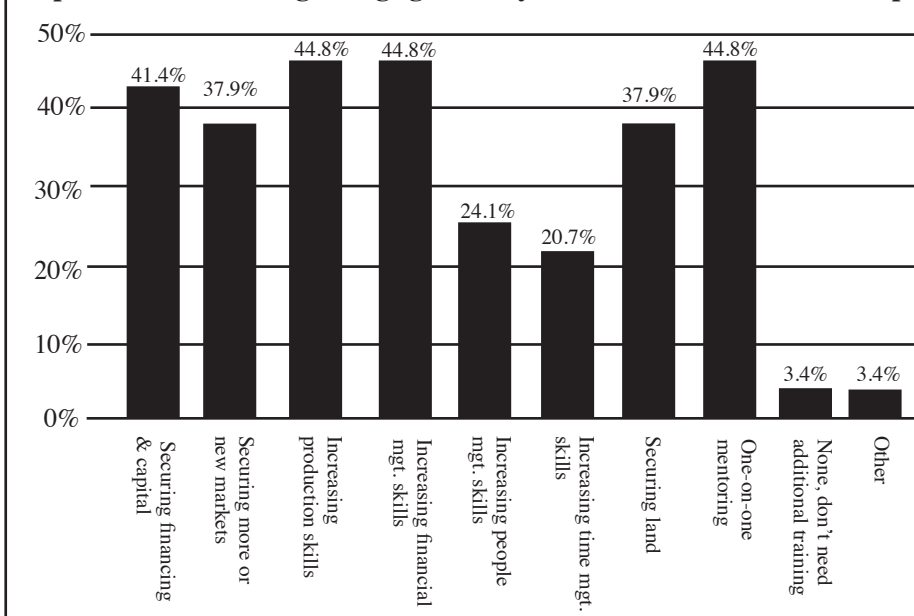
In the past few years, we have established an active farmer network where graduates of the Farm Beginnings course can receive informal mentoring through field days, workshops, farm tours and working visits to farms. For many graduates, this has been a critical component of their ongoing education and support. Looking ahead, LSP has sought to address additional needs of beginning farmers by bringing mentors and resource people to the table (literally the kitchen table, in many cases) to troubleshoot farm start-ups. One way we've done this is through the successful Livestock Loan Program (*see page 20*).

LSP also gathered ideas and inspiration from our farmer steering committee, as well as organizations like Midwest Organic and

Sustainable Education Services (MOSES) and Minnesota Farm Business Management. We've also gained valuable insights through our work with the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, a national alliance of independent regional groups of farmers and farmer-training support organizations working together to promote Farm Beginnings

Through our newly formed partnership with Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association (MOFGA), a new member of the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, we learned about its approach to supporting beginning farmers in years three to five via

Top needs of Farm Beginnings grads in years 3-5 of their farm start-up



their "Journeyman Program." Since it was started in Maine by MOFGA in 1999, the Journeyman Program has been a core component in that group's success with getting more farmers on the land.

The Journeyman Course

As a result, LSP is launching its own version of the Journeyman Course as a way to fill the continuing education gap between farm start-up and farm establishment. The goal is to provide the resources and opportunities for beginning farmers who have completed an initial farm-planning course and have gained some experience on their own, but want to further develop

the skills they need to farm independently and successfully. The program is largely shaped by the farming interests and goals of individual participants and is intended to enable aspiring new farmers to gain advanced farming experience, skill and perspective in a relatively safe and supportive environment of a peer-to-peer learning network. Journeyman people also benefit from participating in the LSP Farmer Network, which includes over 130 farms with anywhere from one year to decades of experience under their belts. On page 16 is an example of how the Network has helped one beginning farmer.

It takes a community

One of the key outcomes of Farm Beginnings is an intentional approach to connect participants as peers, through one-on-one and group work throughout the course.

Along with the majority of presenters being farmers, the peer networking that happens during Farm Beginnings differentiates the

course from other farm planning or business planning courses.

When students graduate from the course, an informal community is maintained through field days, workshops and farm visits available through the Farmer Network. The new Journeyman Course aims to create a more formal community through peer-to-peer networking and one-on-one mentoring provided by an experienced farmer and a financial adviser.

Each participant will network with another participant through monthly phone calls and periodic visits. LSP staff will organize two retreats—one around winter planning and one around seasonal wrap-up.

For many of our beginning farmers that have moved beyond the classroom, planning has become intricate and individualized. The Journeyman Course is meant to provide a supportive environment where they can get individualized attention from mentors, while also building connections with another farmer at a similar stage.

The course would not be possible without

Journeyman, see page 15...

What to expect from LSP's Journeyperson Course

→ **Mentorship-farmer:** As an LSP Journeyperson you will choose or be aided in choosing a farmer mentor through our partnership with the MOSES Mentoring Program. Mentor-Journeyperson arrangements are diverse and vary from one relationship to another, and are up to the participants to negotiate and maintain on a case-by-case basis. In addition to a mentorship arrangement, MOSES provides participants two years entry into the Organic Farming Conference and one year of Organic University—both valuable resources.

→ **Financial adviser:** As an LSP Journeyperson you will choose or be aided in choosing a financial adviser, through our partnership with Farm Business Management of the Minnesota and Wisconsin community college systems. Financial advisers will help with setting up a basic record-keeping system and initial financial plan, do a check-in visit mid-season and an end-of-season visit to assess your financial situation.

→ **Farmer peer:** Each Journeyperson will be connected with a peer from the course and follow a monthly check-in schedule.

→ **Individualized planning retreats:** As an LSP Journeyperson you will be enrolled in two planning retreats: a two-day winter retreat and a one-day seasonal wrap-up. During these planning retreats participants will improve their planning skills and re-focus and revise their current plans within an interactive and supportive environment.

→ **Free access to LSP resources:** This includes technical advice from our LSP Farmer Network members, and free admission to LSP-sponsored events and workshops.

...Journeyperson, from page 14

the added community of other organizations that LSP has looked to for support and training in the past. MOSES is a longtime partner of LSP and has offered the annual Organic Conference, Organic University, the Mentorship Program and field days for years. Farm Business Management has also been a key asset for many Farm Beginnings graduates in setting up and monitoring record-keeping and financial systems. By partnering a financial adviser with an experienced farmer, the Journeyperson Course aims to provide a solid foundation for beginning farmers ready to plan their next stage of growth.

Capitalizing the farm

Journeypeople will also be able to enroll in a Matched Savings Account through LSP (see sidebar below). During the two-year development pilot of the Journeyperson Course, Farm Beginnings staff have been figuring out the most strategic way to help beginning farmers build skills in financial management while building assets that can assist them in scaling up. The Matched Savings Account will help beginning farmers develop good record keeping practices while

saving money for an important asset. In the end, they will have a record of the actual performance of their business.

The bottom line is beginning farmers need good financial management practices to be successful in the long term. The best way for them to learn these practices is with support from mentors and resource people who will sit down at the kitchen table to look over the numbers.

A Matched Savings Account for Journeypeople is a combination of money and education. The participant saves a given amount during the life of the program, while completing a financial plan as part of the educational component.

The Farm Beginnings Matched Savings Account will provide a 100 percent match of up to \$2,400. The participant is expected to save on a monthly basis, up to \$100 per month over a 24-month period. During that period they are required to participate in and complete the educational requirements within the Journeyperson Course.

LSP expects all people who go through the Journeyperson Course to enter into an agreement with us describing their goals and objectives for the program. They must also complete full farm plans and participate in a

loose curriculum that includes regular mentor, financial adviser and peer meetings, as well as workshop attendance.

The first application cycle began this fall and the deadline is Nov. 12. The first planning retreat will be Jan. 4-5. Up to 20 farms will be accepted into the program each calendar year. □

The Journeyperson Course is funded in part by a grant from the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP).

Want to apply?

The deadline for the first LSP Journeyperson Course is Nov. 12. Participants pay \$600 tuition and assume additional expenses for food and lodging (approximately \$75 per person) connected to the two planning retreats.

For more information on the Journeyperson Course, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact Richard Ness (320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org) or Parker Forsell (507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org).

Why matched savings accounts?

The concept of matched savings accounts dates back to programs developed in the 1980s. The evaluations of the initial programs proved they were very successful in helping people start small businesses, buy first homes or save for going back to school. The success of those initial programs led to the federal government allocating money to be used as matching funds for savings programs all across the country.

That federal program has continued to be funded based on the ongoing evaluations of

these programs.

The matched savings accounts are a combination of education and the actual saving of money. The educational component is always related to the purpose of the savings. People using a matched saving program for buying their first home are required to participate in a financial literacy class, home ownership classes and financial classes related to mortgages and other home ownership requirements.

There are a number of examples from around the nation of matched savings ac-

counts being used to help beginning farmers build equity. The Farm Beginnings Matched Savings Account is designed to assist people in acquiring an asset critical to their farming operation. The educational component will build on their knowledge gained through the Farm Beginning class, especially in the areas of financial planning, record keeping and agricultural production.

For more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact LSP's Richard Ness at 320-269-2105 or rness@landstewardshipproject.org.

Farm Beginnings

Tyler Carlson

A voice at the other end of the line

The call came in the night. On the end of the line was the panicked voice of Tyler Carlson, a 26-year-old beginning farmer who was starting a grazing operation in west-central Minnesota. It seems that while making a long-distance move of the cowherd he had just purchased a few days before, a baby calf had gotten separated from its mother. It was dark, coyotes were on the prowl and Carlson had just spent a few fruitless hours trying to chase the confused calf down. What to do?

The advice offered by the receivers of the call, beef producers Don and Helen Berheim, was to leave the animals alone—the cow and calf would find each other during the night.

“Sure enough, come morning they were together,” says Carlson. “It’s great to be able to make that call, and sometimes what you learn is there are certain things you have to let go. There are so many things they don’t teach in the books.”

Farmer Network

Indeed, there are many things they don’t teach in books. And that’s a primary reason why the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Program has created the Farmer Network. The Network is a group of over 130 producers who represent a broad spectrum of farming enterprises. Members of the Farmer Network share their experiences and provide informal mentoring to those in the beginning to intermediate stages of production agriculture. Many of these farmers are also presenters at field days, tours and winter workshops through LSP and other farmer training organizations.

Carlson’s relationship with the Berheims is an example of how a connection forged as a result of the Farmer Network can evolve from a simple exchange of goods and information to a mutually rewarding relationship.

“That’s been probably the most phenomenal connection I’ve made,” says Carlson of the relationship he’s developed with the Berheims during the past several months.

Don Berheim says the feeling is mutual. “It has become immensely satisfying and enjoyable to be around all that energy and passion,” he says.

Connecting ag & the ecosystem

A major reason Carlson and the Berheims have developed such a deep mentor-mentee bond is they have a similar philosophy when it comes to farming, land stewardship and livestock’s role in making it possible.

For Carlson, it started when he was



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

studying sustainable agriculture and restoration ecology at the University of Minnesota. While in college, he took a plant physiology course with the late Bud Markhart, a horticulture professor who focused on organic farming systems.

“Bud Markhart blew my mind every day,” Carlson says. Specifically, he became fascinated by the role perennial systems like grasslands and forests could play in restoring the ecological balance on a farm. “I was interested in where landscape ecology meets agriculture.”

After graduating in 2010, Carlson interned at Moonstone Farm, a western

Minnesota operation that over the years has transitioned from raising row crops to a system based on perennial plants. There Carlson learned how rotationally grazing livestock such as cattle can be used to not only add value to perennial plants such as grass, but actually improve the environmental health of the

land. Moonstone’s owners, Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen, encouraged Carlson to take LSP’s Farm Dreams course, a one-day workshop that helps participants determine if farming is for them and if so, the best way to step onto that career path.

Farm Dreams helped Carlson figure out that LSP’s Farm Beginnings was the natural next step if he was to set up a farming operation. Carlson enrolled in the 2011-2012 class and last fall and winter traveled twice-a-month to Hutchinson, Minn., for workshops led by established farmers and other ag professionals in the area. Through the class, he learned about business planning, marketing and goal setting. Carlson says the class showed him how it was possible to combine agroecological restoration with profitable farming.

“I got really excited about grass-fed beef and carbon sequestration and all of that,” he says.

And he has access to some land to try out his ideas—Carlson’s family owns 200 acres near Sauk Centre. About 80 acres is farmable, and it has been growing row crops and alfalfa for the past several years. Carlson’s goal is to convert some of that 80 acres to a “silvo-pasture” system where cattle are able to graze in-between double rows of trees. The system, which has been used with success in states like Missouri and Georgia, provides shelter for the cattle, protects the soil, preserves water, provides wildlife habitat, shades cool season grasses and sequesters large amounts of carbon. The elongated grazing “paddocks” are 300 to 400 feet long, with 20-foot alleys between the double rows of trees spaced seven feet apart.

Fresh Faces, see page 17...



Tyler Carlson: “It’s been quite a year of learning on the farm here, and it’s been a fairly successful year of learning, largely because I have people in my network now like Don and Helen.” (LSP photo)

“Each alley provided about a day’s worth of grazing for the seven steers we had this year,” says Carlson.

This spring he planted around 6,500 red oak, red pine, Norway pine and white pine with the help of cost share funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The farm is now a U of M demonstration site for silvo-pasturing, which is a relatively new concept in Minnesota.

Such a system relies on cattle, of course, to make use of that forage and make the system economically viable. That’s where the Berheims enter the picture.

Networking

While enrolled in Farm Beginnings, Carlson had learned of the Farmer Network and how important continued connections with established farmers can be to the success of a new operation. That’s why, while looking for cattle last winter that would do well in a pasture system, he contacted Parker Forsell, who coordinates the Farmer Network. He told Forsell he was looking for a few head of brood cows to start a grass-based beef herd. Parker put the word out through the Network’s e-mail list. As it happened, the Berheims had already provided brood cattle to around half-a-dozen beginning farmers in recent years.

Since they started raising grass-based beef on their 200-acre farm near Benson, Minn., in 2004, the Berheims’ herd has been steadily growing. About the time Carlson put the word out about his need for cattle, they were looking to trim their herd.

“It really is satisfying when you have a good product and you can help someone out,” says Don.

Carlson contacted the Berheims and eventually made the hour drive to visit their farm. What he found was an operation that’s doing exactly what he’d like to do eventually on his land: using cattle to improve the ecosystem in a financially viable manner.

The Berheims feel their land’s health and productivity is better than it’s ever been. The pastures were previously overgrazed, and where it was tilled, there is “basically no topsoil,” says Don.

“It’s really satisfying to me to see the land being restored,” says Don. “The cattle are in the best flesh they’ve ever been in, and I think it’s because the land is getting healthier.”

The Berheims grew up in the western Minnesota-eastern South Dakota region, and returned to the Benson area in 2002 after doing various things, including farming and, in the case of Don, working as a Lutheran pas-

tor. They had been introduced to rotational grazing in South Dakota and began raising cattle on grass soon after moving to their farm near Benson. The cattle are Lowline Angus, which are shorter than other breeds and do well on pasture, meaning they can make good use of the grass growing on the rolling hills of the Berheim farm.

Carlson initially came to see the cattle that were for sale, but it soon became clear that this was no simple seller-buyer arrangement. The Berheims take good care of their cattle and won’t just sell them to anyone—they want them to go to grass-based operations where good husbandry is used.

“We have had a lot of conversations sitting around the table,” says Helen of those first meetings with Carlson. “We had similar dispositions in working with cattle and everything seemed to mesh. But we also end up talking about many things, not just about farming.”

Carlson also helped out on the farm to learn the ropes of handling cattle and grazing systems. The Berheims got to observe how he was with the animals, and they liked what they saw.

The relationship has re-energized the Berheims at a time when many farmers are looking to retire—Don is 73 and Helen will be 70 in December. They have two sons, but both have careers off the farm.

A season of learning

In April Carlson ended up buying 15 pregnant cows and heifers, seven yearling steers and two bulls. As part of the deal, the Berheims provided an extra heifer for free with the condition that Carlson would eventually pass on any calf it produces to another beginning farmer—akin to the Heifer International “revolving livestock loan” model.

“Tyler was really pumped about that,” says Don. “Not just getting the heifer but being able to pass it on.”

But the real deal sweetener was Don’s parting message to Tyler as he took the cattle home.

“I told him, ‘If you have any questions, just give me a call,’” says Don. Carlson has taken him up on his offer numerous times.

On a recent summer day Carlson points out the crisscross of trenches Don recently dug with his backhoe on the farm for water and electrical lines. He also dug a large hole that

Give it a listen

Tyler Carlson and Don and Helen Berheim talk about their relationship on episode 122 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

will eventually be a root cellar. The young farmer then walks out to his pastures to check on the cow-calf herd, which is grazing old alfalfa ground. He shows how he uses a device called a “tumble wheel” to move the portable fencing quickly and efficiently. He then checks on the part of the farm where trees have been planted as part of the silvo-pasture system. Carlson is blunt: it’s been a tough year, what with the extremely dry



“It really is satisfying when you have a good product and you can help someone out,” says Don Berheim, shown here with Helen on the couple’s beef farm. (LSP photo)

conditions—as of September he hadn’t had a significant rain since July 4. But even when it came to weather, the Berheims had good advice: don’t worry about what you can’t control, but take steps to prepare for it.

“That seems so long ago,” Carlson says of that night last spring when he made the desperate call to the Berheims. While saying this he’s rubbing his eyes and sitting in front of the yurt he erected on the farm for living quarters. “So much has happened in the last few months. It’s been quite a year of learning on the farm here, and it’s been a fairly successful year of learning, largely because I have people in my network now like Don and Helen.” □

Farmer Network

For more on LSP’s Farmer Network, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork, or contact Parker Forsell at 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

A team approach to transitioning LSP launches a transition coach initiative

By Karen Stettler

As a Land Stewardship Project staff member, I have been involved in some aspect of beginning farmer training for the past 15 years. Over these many years there has been significant growth in the number and quality of trainings for beginning farmers in our region. Today, many organizations in addition to LSP are training and supporting beginning farmers. This is an important development and is already resulting in more farmers on the land. We are seeing that more diversified farms are critical to protecting the land and our individual and collective security and wealth.

Strides have been made, certainly, to provide a more comprehensive training program for those who want to pursue farming as a career. If one wants to start farming, these learning and networking opportunities can really help make the dream a reality. Yet, barriers still exist that are preventing beginning farmers from getting started. One significant barrier is accessing land to farm. All the training and preparation for farming in the world does little good if the beginning

farmer has no place to farm.

Tom Reay, a recent Farm Beginnings graduate, is an example of someone who left the family farm operation he grew up on in Iowa and has yet to find the 40 to 80 acres of land he needs to fully launch his own livestock grazing enterprise. He has the experience and the passion for farming and is biding his time with an in-town job until he can find the right farming opportunity. He realizes that he will probably have to rent to start out. Even though he would love to own land eventually, he doesn't know if that is a realistic goal.

The price of land is a significant barrier. But it has values that go beyond the going market price, and these values must be taken into account when considering the future of farmland.

Affordable access to land

"We have such an intimate relationship with our farm—the land, the animals—it is like having another child," says farmer Maren Holst, whose family has completed a transition of their operation to the next generation. During that process, they thought about what they value and how they could make sure the legacy they leave is well

rooted in those values. "We want to know that the farm and land will continue to be well cared for in the future."

Unfortunately, Holst's example of completing a transition plan before it's too late is all too rare in farm country. Although there are resources, trainings and coffee shop experts that lay out farm transition options, it is often difficult to line up those options with one's values and put a plan together. Bill McMillin, who farms near the southeast Minnesota community of Plainview, says, "I go to these transition workshops and come away with lots of information. It's good information and gets me thinking, and yet I still find when I return home I am not sure how to begin to put all the pieces together and get started."

LSP's farmer-members are leading the way, as many are trying to figure out next steps for their farms and land. LSP is working to help these farmers continue their stewardship-farming legacy through grassroots action.

For example, LSP worked with the Plainview Area Land Access Organizing Committee last winter to prioritize what was needed to get more new farmers established in the community (see the No. 1, 2012, Land Stewardship Letter, page 9). Among the top ideas developed was the creation of an objective third party that could help families work together and navigate the farm transfer planning process. The farmers on the committee realized that what they had in mind was a type of "coach" that could help identify what individual farm families need to get started in the farm succession planning process.

Transition coaches: the bridge

Led by this community committee, LSP is training two "transition coaches" who will eventually work directly with families. The farm transition coaches aim to help families get started in the process and move toward the peace of mind that comes with a well thought through transition plan.

These coaches can help families in different ways, depending on each particular situation. In some cases, a family's biggest hurdle might be making the time to start the transition process. For other families, helping to facilitate a collective goal could be the starting point, while others might focus on figuring out what the transition planning process looks like, as well as what kind of information and timeline is needed.

Just as there is no one way to put together a farm business, it follows that there is no one way to put together a farm transition. A good farm transition coach can offer guid-



A recent LSP Farm Beginnings field day at Prairie Drifter Farm in Litchfield, Minn., featured crop specialist Thaddeus McCamant talking about managing diseases, weeds and pests in diversified vegetable operations. Such in-depth on-farm educational events provide beginning farmers invaluable training, but do little good if those wannabe farmers can't get access to land. (photo by Nick Olson)

Coach, see page 19...



Farm Beginnings graduates Kristine and Ryan Jepsen recently hosted a workshop on producing grass-finished beef. Farm successions involving livestock enterprises can be particularly challenging. (photo by Aimee Finley)

...Coach, from page 18

ance at whatever place the family is starting. When the family is ready to move on, or there is a need larger than the coach can handle, that coach will be able to connect the family to resources that already exist. (For further details about what a farm transition coach is and is not, see the sidebar below.)

LSP is pioneering this new farm transition resource with the help of LouAnne Kling and Paul Wotzka. A long time LSP

member and farmer herself, Kling brings a wealth of knowledge and experience as the former coordinator of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Farm Advocates Program. She trained and worked with volunteers who in turn helped farmers with financial planning and advocacy. She continues to work as a volunteer farm and small business advocate. Kling realizes that the successful navigation of farm transitions will be necessary to ensure a new generation of farmers on the land.

In addition to currently working as a

Interested in having a transition coach?
 If you are interested in more information about working with a farm transition coach, contact LSP's Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

consulting hydrologist on water quality issues in southeast Minnesota, Wotzka runs his family's organic farm near the community of Weaver. His interest in being a farm transition coach stems from work he has done over the years to keep innovative, diversified farmers on the land.

Starting the process

As we proceed in this first year of the transition coach initiative, we will be working with a limited number of families to help them take the first steps toward a completed farm transition plan. In the process we will also be doing a thorough evaluation of the benefits of working with a farm transition coach. If we see an increased demand for this service, LSP and the Plainview Land Access Organizing Committee will consider how to grow this resource. □

Karen Stettler, a former director of the Farm Beginnings Program, now coordinates LSP's Community Engagement and Impact initiative. She can be reached at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

Overview of farm transition coach

A farm transition coach is:

- ◆ Someone who meets with family members to listen to their story and help them get started and continue down the road to a farm transition.
- ◆ Someone who asks hard questions to make sure people are really thinking all the way around the issues.
- ◆ Someone who can be an objective third party if two generations are working together (either related or not related).
- ◆ Someone who has an understanding of resources available to families and a sense of who to engage when.
- ◆ Someone who can help the families think through their next steps. This could

mean helping to develop a framework for moving forward, developing timelines and holding the families accountable.

- ◆ Someone who can be a support person along the journey of the farm transition—which could possibly stretch to beyond a year or more.
- ◆ Someone who assesses when their own skills are not enough to handle the situation and knows when to call in other resource people.
- ◆ Someone who is able to work confidentially with families—the information shared is not public and will not be shared.

A farm transition coach is not:

- ◆ Someone intended to be an expert on

such things as tax law, legal implications of decisions and the ability to assess the financial validity of a farm operation.

- ◆ Someone who does the work for the family.
- ◆ Someone who is a "matchmaker"—rather it is someone who is considered a conduit for making connections with beginning farmers.

A family requesting a farm transition coach MUST:

- ◆ Be willing to meet with the coach.
- ◆ Be willing to do the work needed to move the farm transition forward.
- ◆ Help honestly evaluate the value of the service the coach provides.

Farm Beginnings

LSP & 39 other groups receive grants to help new farmers succeed

But the future of beginning farmer investments in limbo

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced this summer the awarding of more than \$18 million in grants to 40 groups supporting beginning farmers and ranchers around the country. Grants provided through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) are aimed at supporting organizations and institutions that are training and assisting beginning farmers and ranchers. In a teleconference call from the Farm Progress show in Boone, Iowa, on Aug. 30, Vilsack spoke to the need to invest in beginning farmers.

“These grants will help beginning farmers and ranchers overcome the unique challenges they face and gain knowledge and skills that will help them become profitable and sustainable,” said Vilsack. “The reality is we’re seeing a lot of young people interested and wanting to get started in agriculture.”

Through this round of BFRDP grants, the Land Stewardship Project received support

for the “Farm Beginnings Collaborative: Expanding and Strengthening Farmer-to-Farmer Training in a Multi-State Project,” which will enhance new farmer training approaches and best practices for a growing network of 22 organizations in seven states working with beginning farmers.

The project will expand the use of farmer-to-farmer training models and focus on three major objectives: strengthening and expanding farmer networks; enhancing the skills and knowledge of beginning farmer trainers; and increasing the capacity of beginning farmer training to document short, medium and long term change.

“This investment in farmer-to-farmer networks will allow our groups to deepen the impact we have and increase our long-term ability to assist beginning farmers,” says LSP Farm Beginnings director Amy Bacigalupo. “Organizations offering Farm Beginnings and other farmer-led networks will now have a space to learn from one another’s experiences. This will make us

each more effective in our ultimate goal: getting more farmers started and succeeding in agriculture.”

Over the past four years, BFRDP has offered nearly \$75 million in 145 grants to organizations and institutions. Yet, as deliberations on the 2012 Farm Bill stall, the program’s future is uncertain.

“Here is the reality: after this round of grants this successful and high-demand beginning farmer program has no additional funding,” says Adam Warthesen, LSP federal farm policy organizer. “Farm Bill drafts in both the Senate and House have support for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, but if the inaction we’re seeing in Congress persists, we will have no Farm Bill and no continuation of the program.”

The current Farm Bill expired Sept. 30 and Congress has yet to pass a new version. See page 11 for details. □

More on BFRDP

For a list of 2012 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant recipients, go to www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2012news/bfrdp_award_descriptions.html.

For more on the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, see www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmer-andrancher.cfm.

Transitioning the Livestock Loan Program

With a grant from Heifer International, in 1999 the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Program launched the Livestock Loan Program for graduates.

These were no-interest loans for breeding stock, and the first payment was delayed, the length of the delay based on the species of livestock purchased. Charging no interest and delaying payment helped beginning farmers build equity. The first loan was approved in December 1999 for a group of dairy heifers, and eventually 22 loans in total were made.

Education was key

The Livestock Loan Program was more than just another source of money—it also had an educational component. A team of farmer-mentors and a financial adviser met with the loan recipients on a regular basis, especially during the first year of the loan, to help them in starting their livestock and overall farming enterprise.

The program was a success. Numerous successful farm enterprises have been started with the help of a Livestock Loan and the mentoring that accompanied the loan.

From Livestock Loan to Journeyman Course

However, there were signs in recent years that the Livestock Loan Program was not serving most of our Farm Beginning audience. It was critical to several graduates, especially beginning dairy farmers. However, vegetable farmers and beginning farmers looking for financial assistance beyond breeding stock could not access the program. In fact, not a single loan has been made since the fall of 2009.

The reality is there is a USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan program that “outperforms” the Livestock Loan initiative in terms of flexibility and the amount of money that can be borrowed. The FSA program has an interest rate that is very low. In addition,

the agency is in the process of launching a micro-loan program that looks to fill the same niche as the Livestock Loan.

LSP as an organization is at its best when it does organizing, education and research with our membership base. Our strength does not lie in administering loans.

Farm Beginnings staff learned from closeout interviews with Livestock Loan recipients that in many cases the support of the mentor, staff and financial adviser was equal or greater than the value of the breeding stock.

In response to this analysis, Farm Beginnings, with approval from LSP’s board of directors, is ending the Livestock Loan program and will be starting the Journeyman Course and Matched Savings Accounts initiatives (see pages 14-15).

No new Livestock Loans will be considered, although all existing loans will continue as they have in the past until they are completely paid off.

Community Based Food Systems

Growing hope in the garden

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

Hope Community is a community development organization that is entrenched in the Phillips Neighborhood, one of the most economically challenged and diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Hope provides 173 units of affordable housing that is home to some 400 people.

For the past few summers, a few dozen residents of Hope Community have been raising vegetables in a communal plot that had been an all but abandoned lot before it was reclaimed. With the help of LSP organizer Anna Cioffi and under the tutelage of LSP board member and master gardener Rhys Williams, residents have learned how to affordably raise healthy food right where they live.

Cioffi recently snapped these photos in the community garden as well as in a cooking class that helps residents make use of the food they produce.

For more on LSP’s urban food and farming work, see www.landstewardshipproject.org and browse under the **Stewardship and Food** section. □

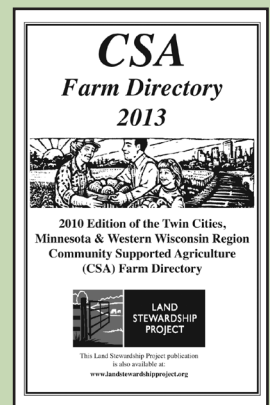


Are you a CSA farmer?

If you are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer operating in Minnesota or western Wisconsin, the Land Stewardship Project would like to invite you to be listed in the 2013 edition of LSP’s *Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region CSA Farm Directory*.

The directory will be published in February and is distributed throughout the region, as well as posted at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/findingjustfood/csa.

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



Community Based Food Systems

A part of the community

Marshwatch is striving to prove that farming belongs in a metro area

Sometimes a piece of land has to prove itself, and other times someone comes along who sees the potential right off the bat. When Joe and Terrie Adams bought 20 acres of land in Scott County south of Minnesota's Twin Cities in 1996, the couple brought both points of view to the table.

"This was nearly worn-out soil," says Joe

enough to earn a living on.

"I think Joe's more pie-in-the-sky than I am," Terrie says. "I can't say I did have a vision for this place in 1996."

Well, the pie-in-the-sky has landed, perhaps surprisingly with much of Joe's vision intact. The Adamses originally bought the farm for their children, since Terrie and Joe both had careers that took them literally



Joe and Terrie Adams are working to show that local food production not only fits in with the human community, but the environmental one as well. (LSP photo)

as he relaxes, momentarily, in a shady spot next to the farm's refurbished Brown Swiss dairy barn, gesturing at the nearby garden plots and native prairie plantings dispersed throughout the farm. "But the first time we stepped on this farm I saw the potential. I've always been able to see a finished whole before I start in on a project."

Terrie is a little more circumspect about how the farm revealed itself at first. After all, it had started out some hundred years ago as a quarter-section dairy and crop operation. Over the years it had been gradually sold off a piece at a time until this last 20 acres was left. There was a reason it wasn't being farmed at the time the Adamses discovered it—20 acres just didn't seem like

around the world. In 2009, they returned to the land; that first year they raised vegetables on 10,000 square feet. That helped convince Terrie there was more to this land than meets the eye: food could be raised there *and* people were willing to buy it. "It was such a bounty," she recalls. "We really were able to sell a lot at the farmers' market."

They have since developed a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation called Marshwatch Farms (www.marshwatchfarms.com). The "marsh" in this case is a shallow, 120-acre glacial pond called Geis (German for goose) Lake, which the farm overlooks.

CSA farming, which provides shareholders a weekly supply of fresh produce during

the growing season, seemed like a way to combine Terrie's practicality with Joe's ideals. Marshwatch recently wrapped up its third year as a CSA, and it's not only a source of food for some 60 households, but it is home to dozens of species of wildlife. A visit to Marshwatch or a glance at their weekly newsletter, *The Mews*, provides a sense of an operation that's trying hard to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time: produce fresh food, be a training ground for new and aspiring farmers, provide a natural respite from suburban sprawl and serve as a place where visitors from the community as well as other countries can see sustainable farming in action. The Adamses concede they are in a bit of a hurry—Terrie is in her late 60s and Joe his early 70s.

"At our age, we don't have time to do anything but dive in," says Joe.

And in the meantime, they've made it a point to share, at every opportunity, as much of the farm as possible with the community. They have put on bluebird-building workshops for kids and hosted high school and university environmental ethics classes. They also regularly host special needs adults—on a recent fall morning they helped pull up plastic mulch in the gardens.

"It gets them out of the classroom, provides physical activity and shows them there's a beginning, middle and end to work," says Joe. "They see work does not have to be boring."

Their outreach stretches outside of the country's borders. The barn's rafters feature small flags from France, Italy, Peru and Nigeria. "We have enough rafters we'll just keep putting up flags because international contacts are important to us too," says Joe.

But the couple also invites visitors who could have a major role in determining the future of farms like Marshwatch, which the Adamses feel can serve as a counter-

argument to the claim that you can't make a living farming a few acres. Getting that message out is important in this fast-developing part of the state within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, where land's value is often viewed only in terms of its potential to serve as the home for the next subdivision.

"This ridgeline all the way to Belle Plaine is the richest soil in the seven-county metro area," says Joe. "When city people take a ride in the country, all they see are empty lots."

That's why Marshwatch has hosted the Scott County Board of Supervisors and the local Soil and Water Board for tours and a meal of local food.

"We hope the message is there's more to farming than row crops," says Joe.

Marshwatch, see page 23...

Not just another career

Joe jokes that this is the third time he's emerged from retirement. He grew up in the Chicago area and studied genetics in college in the mid-1960s, but chose work that took him hither and yon. "I couldn't see myself living in a basement with phone chords and punch cards," says Joe, who has worked as a photojournalist and consulted to foreign companies and governments on marketing and trade shows, among other things.

Terrie spent 17 years as an executive consultant and before that was a teacher. Despite their cosmopolitan—some would call glamorous—career paths, the Adamses have long felt a connection to food, farming and the land. Joe has fond childhood memories of visiting his grandparents' farm in Iowa, and Terrie grew up on a farm in Ohio. Joe trained as a chef while working in France, and while volunteering in Peru for three years they both saw the variety of food that can be raised in a region.

But just as importantly, the Adamses' background has made it clear to them the importance of creating a community centered around people, food and the land. After all, they've experienced quite the opposite.

"We know what it's like to come home and have the garage door go down and be shut off from the natural world," says Joe.

But the Adamses knew they had a lot to learn about actually raising food. When they came back to the farm, they sought out advice on food production through the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota and read a lot. They also hooked up with other local farmers in the region—Scott County is home to several farms using innovative production methods and selling directly to eaters.

In 2010 they used USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost share funds to put up a hoop house as a way to extend their growing season. They are farming around three and a half acres—the rest is set aside in the Conservation Reserve Program or planted in native habitat and fallow land for future rotations.

Having natural habitat on the farm is more than pleasant to look at: the Adamses see it as providing valuable services in the community. For example, the outside perimeter of the farm is planted to prairie, which acts as a natural snow fence, keeping a road that borders one side of the farm from drifting over. This saves the county money and reduces the number of trips snowplows have to make up and down the road, polluting the air and dumping snow-melting chemicals that can find their way into the water.

And, of course, such habitat provides a more "wild" service: they regularly see bald eagles, turkeys, pheasants, deer, coyotes, trumpeter swans, pelicans, red tail hawks, peregrine falcons and dozens of varieties of waterfowl. The farm gained five species of butterflies in each of the past three years. In 2010 they were recognized by Pheasants Forever as "Conservationists of the Year" for their establishment of wildlife habitat.

"To have a farm is like having a great big canvas and we can paint it any color we want," says Terrie. "And we can eat food off it to boot."

The future

In three years, Marshwatch has grown from 40 CSA shares to 60 summer shares; it also offers fall shares and sells chickens, eggs and honey raised on the farm. To make the farm financially viable, the number of shares sold will need to be at least doubled, the couple estimates. They will also need to figure out who will farm Marshwatch in the future.

"Finding someone to take this over is a real concern," says Joe. "We know 10 years from now we won't be able to do this. We're practical—we know our bodies can't put up with this."

The good news is: whenever they put the word out they need help, they get 20 applicants. One intern, Mike Wedell, recently worked on the farm and has returned to his Yankton Sioux community in South Dakota to teach organic agriculture.

The Adamses have considered different scenarios, including selling the farm outright to someone interested in this kind of agricultural/educational enterprise, mentoring someone and working them into the operation, or finding an organization that could use it as an educational-training facility.

No matter what the future holds, their overall goal is to communicate to any aspiring farmers that producing food is creative, healthy, social and economically viable work, particularly if you are supplying a market that appreciates taking good care of the land.

"Spending 17 years in corporate America, I know the importance of marketing," says



Terrie Adams: "Every person who chooses to buy local, to buy fresh, to buy chemical-free foods is truly voting with their feet and is supporting this kind of environment and this kind of opportunity to be in the neighborhood for their kids and for future generations."
(LSP photo)

Terrie. "And for this the market is there. So every person who chooses to buy local, to buy fresh, to buy chemical-free foods is truly voting with their feet and is supporting this kind of environment and this kind of opportunity to be in the neighborhood for their kids and for future generations."

That's why Joe was disappointed recently when officials from the Metropolitan Council came to the area for a meeting, and he asked them about the role farms play in the future of the region. Their answer: "That's not part of our mission statement."

It should be, as far as Joe and Terrie are concerned, and they are determined to show why. That's why they are focused on getting that message across to people who haven't quite bought into the "land not developed is land wasted" mindset, who see a working farm and realize its potential as a member of the community.

"I see in our own members they no longer look at a farm as a place to be developed. They look at a farm as a place to walk, to hunt, to fish, to bring their family," says Joe as he heads out to work on cleaning up vegetable plots at the end of another growing season. "We love when children come to the farm and go running, screaming like they were in a school hallway. And that's the generation that's going to make a difference. Not mine, not ours, but the people who are coming behind us." □

Give it a listen

Joe and Terrie Adams talk about making their farm a valued part of the community on episode 120 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

Feeding the subterranean herd

How putting soil at the center could help revitalize farmland...& farming

By Brian DeVore

On a crisp morning in September, North Dakota farmer Gabe Brown held two handfuls of soil and searched for signs of life—theoretically not a difficult task considering one teaspoon of humus contains more organisms than there are humans in the world. But many of the bacteria and invertebrates that lurk in the dark basement of our farm fields exist visually only in the world of high-powered microscopes. So Brown, a compact ball of energy who can somehow combine references to soil biology, farm policy and animal husbandry in the same sentence, uses a less scientific assessment method to compare and contrast the two handfuls—one from his field, the other from a neighbor's.

“When you grab this soil there is no structure,” says Brown, referring to his neighbor's soil. Indeed, it has a slabbed, compacted look to it, indicating there isn't much room for worms and roots to facilitate transfer of water and nutrients. It's also a lighter color than Brown's darker soil, which is the consistency of cottage cheese. “If you have this dark color, you know you have organic matter. I look at it as an investment.”

It's an investment in a good crop—just a few feet away stands a field of corn that's emerged from Brown's rich soil, and it's thriving, a rarity this year in a part of North Dakota that has been hit especially hard by drought. But to Brown, that healthy soil represents more than more bushels in the bin. It's also an investment in his farm's long-term viability and the future of his entire community—human and natural.

The idea that healthy soil is an investment, not just one of many tools, has led Brown and his neighbors to develop a farming system that combines some of the most exciting advances in sustainable production systems—conservation tillage, multi-species cover cropping, mob grazing and frequent rotations. This system, which is evolving, combines cutting-edge soil science with the desire on the part of natural resource

professionals to no longer accept a Band Aid approach to conservation. It also shows how teamwork fueled by a holistic, big picture view of agriculture can produce a farming system that benefits land, farmers and communities.

1st of 2 parts

“What Brown and the others he is working with are doing is one of the most exciting and revolutionary in-the-field developments in agriculture today,” says

Richard Ness, a Land Stewardship Project staff member who has worked with sustainable farmers throughout the Midwest and who has spent time in south-central North Dakota, where Brown farms. “They're pushing scientists, conservationists and sustain-



Farmers in Burleigh County studied the soil profile in a corn field during a recent field tour. Farmers, conservationists and scientists working in that region believe soil's potential to develop its own fertility has yet to be fully tapped. (LSP photo)

able agriculture in general to a new level.”

Getting at the root of the matter

At the core of this story is a change in attitude toward soil—perhaps one of the most taken-for-granted resources around. Consider, for example, how Jay Fuhrer used to do his job. Fuhrer is the Burleigh County district conservationist for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Burleigh County lies near the section of the Missouri River where it passes through the south-central part of North Dakota. Here the flatness of the state gives way to a more rolling landscape—a landscape known for wheat, “wild” pastures that contain native

species such as big bluestem, hay ground and, in the past decade or so, corn. This part of the state receives on-average 16 inches of rain a year, making water a dear resource. So for many years Fuhrer and other resource professionals focused on short-term efforts to get more water into the soil profile and keep it where plants could use it.

“We had accepted a degraded resource,” Fuhrer recalls as he sits in his office in Bismarck, just a few miles from Brown's farm. “And when you accept a degraded resource you generally work from the viewpoint of minimizing the loss. And so we would apply a lot of practices.”

Fuhrer's specialty during the 1980s and early 1990s was putting in grassed waterways in an attempt to keep water from running off so quickly. It helped, but didn't get at the core of the issue: why was that water not infiltrating the soil in the first place?

“In retrospect very few of those waterways were actually needed,” he concedes.

What farmers like Brown and soil scientists in the area were starting to figure out was that the production system that had come to predominate—extensive tillage, low crop diversity, no cover crops, livestock kept out all-season long on overgrazed pastures—was compacting the soil to the point where little water could make its way beneath the surface. It was also sharply reducing the amount of soil organic matter, which drives the entire soil food web. Unbroken prairie soils can have as much as 10 percent to 15 percent organic matter. But because of intensive tillage, Midwestern soil organic matter levels have plummeted to below 1 percent of total soil volume in some cases. This means the soil has little opportunity to cook up its own fertility via the exchange of nutrients, making it increasingly dependent on applications of petroleum-based fertilizers.

Learning from failure

There is a photo that has acquired almost legendary status in Burleigh County. It shows one of Gabe Brown's fields after 13 inches of rain fell in 24 hours. The picture shows no standing water on this low-lying field, even though plots on neighboring land are inundated. Brown has created a soil profile that allows water to infiltrate quite efficiently. And unlike a field that's been drained through artificial tiling—sending water at rocket speed through the profile and eventually downstream—Brown's fields retain that moisture in the system, mean-

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ing plants can access it during drier periods. Such a healthy water cycle requires a healthy biological food web.

Kristine Nichols, a soil microbiologist at the USDA's Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan, N. Dak., says this photo is a prime indicator that farmers like Brown are able to increase their organic matter to the point where it is able to, for example, make better use of water. As soil organic matter increases from 1 percent to 3 percent, soil's water holding capacity doubles. During the past decade or so, Brown has more than doubled the organic matter in some of his fields, raising it from less than 2 percent to nearly 5 percent.

Nichols says that as a soil scientist she was taught that a farmer couldn't have a positive impact on soil organic matter in a typical lifetime.

"We were told this was something we couldn't change, except in a negative way. Now we realize we can change organic matter," she says while sitting in her office across the Missouri River from Bismarck. That's important, Nichols adds, because in the case of organic matter, "You have something that's less than 5 percent of the soil, but it controls 90 percent of the functions."

Brown came to his own realization that he could have a positive impact on organic matter somewhat by accident. He and his wife Shelly bought their farm from her parents in 1991, and in 1994 they went 100 percent no-till as a way to save moisture in their cropping system, which produced mostly small grains like wheat. Brown liked the no-till system, but bad weather produced a string of crop failures during the late 1990s.

It made things extremely difficult financially, to the point where the Browns were having a hard time borrowing enough money to purchase fertilizer. This forced them to start planting more legumes such as field peas, triticale and hairy vetch that could fix nitrogen and provide more homegrown fertility while feeding their cattle herd.

"I was using cover crops but I didn't really grasp soil health," recalls Brown. What he did grasp was that his wheat often did better when planted into ground that had just produced a cover crop. His soil color and texture was improving, organic matter levels were rising and water seemed to infiltrate the soil profile, rather than simply running off.

"So we had four crop failures in a row, and I tell people today that was absolutely the best thing that could have happened to me and my family, although we didn't think

that at the time," Brown says with a laugh as he guides his pickup past beef cattle grazing a cocktail mix of warm season cover crops.

Fuhrer and other soil conservation experts in the region were impressed with Brown's results and began talking about ways of combining cover cropping, live-stock impact and no-till agriculture in a way that soil quality could actually be improved, not just maintained at a high enough level to grow a stand of wheat. For Fuhrer, taking such proactive steps couldn't have come at a better time—he had grown frustrated with applying practices that simply maintained the status quo, if that.

Diversity is strength

Frankly, cover crops are nothing new. The NRCS has long promoted planting a soil-friendly crop like rye in the fall after corn or soybeans are harvested as a way to reduce erosion. Such cover crops are often



Soil conservationist Jay Fuhrer: "We had accepted a degraded resource." (LSP photo)

seen as having no immediate economic value, making them a tough sale in row crop country.

But in Burleigh County, the cover cropping concept has been taken to whole new level, and farmers have begun to see them as an integral part of their long-term financial viability, as well as the land's ecological health. Again, this breakthrough on cover crops came at failure's doorstep.

In 2006 Fuhrer was examining eight different species of cover crops planted on test plots. In one plot each species had been planted as a monoculture, and the other plots contained various combinations: two-way mix, three-way, etc., all the way up to where all eight species were planted together.

"And then we had one of the driest years on record," recalls Fuhrer. "And then I just thought, oh, everything's failed and we're just not going to learn anything this year. And I was so wrong."

What Fuhrer and his colleagues learned

was that the monocultures failed, and the mixes involving just a few species didn't fare much better. But the eight-way mixture didn't seem drought stressed at all, and in fact yielded quite well.

"It really taught us a lot from the viewpoint of how plants won't necessarily compete with each other—they can actually help each other," says Fuhrer.

Long-term studies done in Minnesota, among other places, show that increasing diversity in prairie systems produces a similar positive synergy, making them much more resilient. Fuhrer and his colleagues started thinking that maybe it was a lack of carbon below the soil that was the problem. The difference between soil and dirt is soil produces life, and it can do that because it contains carbon. And socking away that carbon for a rainy day (or a very dry one) pays big dividends.

Those eight species of plants growing above ground may appear to be in competition, but all the while they are creating an incredibly diverse subterranean ecosystem. Soil scientists say a diverse root system can create a soil that is resilient, less erosion prone and able to develop its own fertility.

"We figured out we wanted to stimulate soil biology through nutrient cycling and through roots," says Brown. "Well, let's have something really diverse and try it."

These days most of Brown's cover crop mixes contain as many as 20 species. The goal is to keep the soil covered and spider-webbed with roots year-round, and to extend the sub-soil's active biological season as long as possible—the greater variety of species above ground, the greater diversity of species below ground. In a typical year, Brown will do this by planting four crop types: warm season broadleaves such as alfalfa, buckwheat, chick pea, cowpea and sunflower; warm season grasses such as corn, millet, sorghum and Sudan; cool season grasses such as barley, oats and triticale; and cool season broadleaves such as canola, flax, vetch and sweet clover.

A growing season may consist of Brown planting winter wheat, harvesting it in June or July and planting a cocktail mix of warm season crops. Once they've grown up by late summer, these crops can be grazed well into the fall and even into early winter, producing good cash flow through the animals. The manure and urine deposited by the cattle, plus the trampling they execute while browsing, builds nutrients and carbon in the soil while supercharging biological activity,

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providing the basis for planting another cash crop like corn the following spring.

What must be kept in mind is that this isn't strictly a no-till system, or strictly a grazing system. No-till—planting crops in ground that's been disturbed as little as possible—is better for the soil than heavy tillage, but it doesn't take full advantage of the nutrients and biological activity present deep in the soil profile, says Brown. He points out that the neighbor's soil that's lower in organic matter than his has actually been under a no-till regime since the late 1990s.

And grazing perennial grasses, again a more soil-friendly system when compared to tillage, isn't the final word. Hal Weiser, a soil health specialist with the Burleigh County Soil and Water Conservation District, estimates that some of the season-long grazed land in the area has water infiltration rates of only a quarter inch. "Which is simply unacceptable," he says.

Several years ago farmers in the region began switching from simply turning cattle out into large pastures for the entire season, to breaking them up into rotated paddocks. This provided extended rest periods for grass, and pastures responded with healthier stands that provided forage longer.

But more recently livestock producers have taken that rotational grazing concept one step further by utilizing mob grazing—a system where a lot of animals are placed in a paddock for sometimes only a few hours. The animals browse the most palatable part of the plants and generate a lot of biological activity, but don't compact the soil. This system comes with the assumption that the cattle won't make the most efficient use of all the forage—in fact they may trample a good amount of it, which is not only acceptable, but may be preferable in some cases. All that trampling just puts carbon under-

ground and generates biological activity, in effect feeding the soil.

Making soil the focus

Nichols says the key to this system is accepting that soil is at the center of one's farming system—not just another input that can be plugged in. That "dirt" is much more complex than we once thought is becoming increasingly evident as new advances in electron microscopes (thanks to medical technology) and DNA testing offer unprecedented glimpses into this fascinating world. But Nichols points out that in a way soil is a "big black box" that's just becoming "blacker" as science churns up new information about what goes on beneath our feet.

"The chemistry happens the way the chemistry happens. But when you throw biology into the mix, it gets complicated," she says while flashing microscopic images of soil organisms on her computer. "In some ways it's a step backwards—we thought we knew 10 percent of the organisms in soil, now we realize it's less than 1 percent."

But that may not necessarily be a bad thing. It's when farmers begin seeing soil as the heart of an extremely complex, often-times mysterious, system that they can start taking steps to get at the problem, rather than just treating the symptoms.

Nichols, who grew up on a southwest Minnesota crop farm, says a prime example of treating symptoms without getting at the core of the problem is what's happening in the Minnesota River Valley with erosion. There are indications that field-level erosion in the Valley has gone down, thanks to the adoption of conservation farming techniques, among other things. However, studies show that sedimentation of the river continues at an alarming rate.

"What is going on with the soil now where we can't get the infiltration of water?" Nichols asks. "We addressed some of the

symptoms, which was great, but did we address the bottom line?"

An example of the bottom line being addressed is when microorganisms do something called "habitat engineering," which has huge implications for not only cutting erosion, but also making sure soil can cook up its own fertility while staying in place. When soil does not have good aeration and plenty of pore space, it loses its ability to stick together and form strong aggregates.

"The water coming in can actually cause these aggregates to explode with air pressure," says Nichols of a typical soil erosion situation in compacted soils.

But soils with more carbon feed themselves, and extra "food" goes into developing a waxy glue that holds aggregates together, creating a habitat where water can't build up explosive pressure.

"They've actually engineered an environment that's safe, that has food and has the ability to produce carbon to self-perpetuate," she says. "The more of these aggregates there are, and the larger they are, the less susceptible to erosion the soil is. We've found management can impact this."

Investing in the soil bank

Being able to improve soil's ability to engineer its own healthy environment has huge implications on and off the farm.

Soil provides at least \$1.5 trillion in services worldwide annually, according to the journal *Nature*. For example, soil stockpiles 1,500 gigatonnes of carbon, more than the Earth's atmosphere and all the plants on the planet. And it's the organic matter that does the heavy lifting: it can hold 10 to 1,000 times more water and nutrients than the same amount of soil minerals.

In recent decades, great strides have been

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LSP Holistic Management classes this winter in west-central Minn.

LSP is sponsoring two Holistic Management classes this winter in Glenwood, Minn. The instructor will be Joshua Dukart (pictured), a Holistic Management certified educator who also works for the Burleigh County Soil and Water Conservation District in North Dakota.

- **Part I** (Jan. 15-17)—Introduction to Holistic Management: Principles for Success.
- **Part II** (Feb. 5-6)—Holistic Management: Financial Planning.

The cost for these classes is yet to be determined. For details and to register, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact LSP's Julia Ahlers Ness at 320-269-2105, janness@landstewardshipproject.org.



made in reducing soil erosion to “T”, or “tolerable” loss rates—that’s the rate at which soil can be lost and still replaced. This is thanks to conservation tillage and structures such as grassed waterways and terraces.

But it’s become clear even bigger strides in conservation could be made by increasing soil carbon content, or managing for “C.” One NRCS estimate is that if all of our country’s cropland was managed for T, soil erosion would decline by 0.85 billion tons annually. If cropland was managed in such a way that C was increased, erosion levels would drop by 1.29 billion tons

per year. In financial terms, managing for T is worth \$16.5 billion annually; managing for C almost \$25 billion per year.

But the health of soil on an international or even national level means little unless those dollars can come home to roost on the farm.

Brown says in his case, they already have. He farms around 5,400 acres—1,300 of that is cropland and most of the rest is pasture. The Browns own about 1,400 acres and rent the rest, so maintaining a regular cash flow is important. The main cash crops are corn, spring wheat, triticale and vetch. They run 400 cow-calf pairs and anywhere from 300 to 800 yearlings, depending on the year

Increasing organic matter on his farm has allowed Brown to reduce the use of commercial fertilizer by over 90 percent, and herbicides by 75 percent, and that’s paying off big time. Sitting on a four-wheeler near one of his corn fields, Brown shows a printout that outlines the financials for his 2011 crop. At today’s fertilizer prices, each 1 percent of organic matter contains \$751 worth of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, sulfur and carbon, he estimates. That means Brown’s 5 percent organic matter content is worth \$3,775 per acre. When he figures in his expenses for the 2011 corn crop—seed, herbicide, planting, storage, etc.—his 2011 return to labor, management and land was \$5.38 per bushel of corn.

Still, cover crops and grazing aren’t attractive to producers farming high-priced land and gunning for bin-busting yields.

“There’s such an emphasis on yield and unfortunately with a lot of these systems, there is not an increase in yield,” says Nichols of soil building farming techniques. “But if you can afford to buy an input, then you

can afford the cover crop seed or the yield drag. You have to look at your goals: yield or long-term viability?”

Brown says he sees planting cover crops and letting cattle graze/trample them as no different than forward-pricing his fertilizer. But he concedes that in these days of record corn prices, planting a cocktail mix of forages, many of which will end up as worm food, may appear financially foolish.

“And now we’re going to mob graze this with cow-calf pairs probably starting next week,” he says while standing in a former Conservation Reserve Program field he is renting. It was planted to some 20 species of warm season plants on July 20; on this



Gabe Brown standing in a field containing a 20-species cocktail mix of cover crops. Much of it will serve as fodder for his cattle, but a significant amount will also feed organisms in the soil. (LSP photo)

day in early September, the crop is up to his chest. “I’ve got to pay cropland rate on it but I’m going to seed it back to native grasses next year. Everybody thinks I’m crazy seeding good cropland back to native grass but that’s what we want to do. To us, the resource comes first. The cattle can still gain on this and we’re still making money.”

Given the great strides he and other farmers have made in building soil health while improving profitability, Brown is a little perplexed that more producers aren’t focusing on treating the problem, rather than

Give it a listen

Farmers, conservationists and a scientist talk about improving soil health on episode 121 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

the symptoms. Some of the hesitation may be the result of the “inputs in-results out” model of agriculture that predominates.

Invariably, when Nichols talks to farmers about how fungi can improve soil quality, someone will ask, “Where can I buy them?”

“We are in the mindset that we can always go out and buy something to fix a problem, which may not be a problem, but a symptom,” says Nichols.

Brown says government programs like federal crop insurance don’t help matters any, since in many ways they reward farmers for raising crops in a way that is risky, but not sustainable. Remember: he credits failure for pulling his operation out of its monocultural rut.

“Adversity drives change,” he says.

Without that adversity, farmers aren’t forced to take a closer look at whether their system is just a series of reactions to symptoms, or whether it’s getting at the root of the problem. And without such a reexamination of systems, the true potential of soil, land and farms may never be reached.

“Gabe did something I thought was impossible and instead of telling him, ‘Good job,’ I said, ‘What more can you do?’” Nichols says. “I don’t know how far we can take it, but I like the idea of not putting limitations or constraints on a system. Can we take it a little further?” □

The next issue of the Land Stewardship Letter will describe how Burleigh County’s team approach and use of Holistic Management has helped farmers build soil health, increase profitability and create more opportunities for young farmers.

New LSP ‘Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency’ web page

On Sept. 21, the Land Stewardship Project helped bring the “Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency” video conference to over 270 farmers, crop consultants and resource conservationists from across Minnesota. Participants heard about new cover crop and livestock management practices, as well as ways of connecting soil health with profitability. Featured presenters were people involved in Burleigh County’s soil health improvement initiative.

LSP’s new **Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency** web page features video and presentations from that conference, as well as other resources related to soil quality on the farm. Check it out at www.landstewardshipproject.org.



The Good Food Revolution Growing Healthy Food, People, and Communities

By Will Allen (with Charles Wilson)

Foreword by Eric Schlosser

2012; 256 pages

Gotham Books

www.growingpower.org

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

Near the end of Will Allen's inspiring book, *The Good Food Revolution*, DeShell Parker talks about what Growing Power means to her: "It means integrity. It means strong thinking. It means willpower. It means confidence. It means assertiveness. It's so far beyond dirt and worms."

Allen's book, which he wrote with Charles Wilson, is extremely important, and not just because it provides insights into how to start and run something like Growing Power, one of the most innovative and influential urban farming operations in the nation. It's important because, as Parker's quote shows, it proves that Growing Power is more than about making good compost or feel-good fodder for feature articles. It's about people.

Will Allen has a way with people, partly because he is such significant presence—physically and emotionally. The six-foot-seven former pro basketball player's tireless passion for food, farming and community is infectious. That's why he's been so successful at getting people from all walks of life to join him on his mission of developing an urban agricultural system that reaches across racial, economic, even agronomic, lines. Allen's Growing Power has become an epicenter for not only producing food in a major city (in this case Milwaukee), but also for training people from across the country and even abroad on the basics of urban ag.

I first met Allen in the mid-1990s at the MOSES Organic Conference. He had brought with him a group of African-American youth who wanted to learn about sustainable agriculture. They were literally the only people of color at the conference, but Allen didn't let that dampen his enthusiasm.

As he argues in his highly personal, yet wide-ranging, book, farming and food are a critical part of the African-American

experience. Allen himself raised food with his family as a child, and later re-caught the farming bug while playing basketball in Europe. Unfortunately, when most African-Americans think of farming, they associate it with slavery and an abusive sharecropping system that arose after the Civil War.

Since he attended that MOSES conference in the 1990s, Allen has become a bit of a rock star in the local food movement. The same engaging personality and passion that helped him become a top salesman for Procter & Gamble has made it possible for Allen to sell everyone from inner city youths to U.S. Presidents on the idea that an urban agriculture movement based on the ideals of self-sufficiency, justice and ecological balance is quite viable.

He's been featured in the national media and in movies, and is the recipient of a prestigious MacArthur Genius Grant. All of this attention to Growing Power's work has done immeasurable good in advancing the cause, including here in Minnesota where the Women's Environmental Institute is working closely with Growing Power to develop intensive production trainings (LSP organizer Anna Cioffi and residents of Hope Community have participated in these trainings at the Institute's North Branch, Minn., farm).

But it also brings up the question: is Will Allen's dream sustainable, or is it something that will die when he moves on? Is this man's powerful presence so overwhelming that no one will be up to carrying the baton the next leg of the race?

Creating a "cult of personality" is easier than ever in the age of social media and 24-7 electronic communications. That's why movements must be on-guard against being so reliant on charismatic authority figures that they fail to build the grassroots foundation needed to continue long into the future.

That's why *The Good Food Revolution* isn't just important because it's a handy history of Growing Power, a way of documenting what in itself is a truly remarkable story: a sharecropper's son takes a collection of abandoned greenhouses in a rough part of Milwaukee and remakes them into an urban

farm/composting facility/retail store/training center that is known worldwide.

Rather, Allen's ruminations on farming, food, race, economics and urban development is more of a "how-to" in the sense of how to make the kind of human connections so key to developing a brilliant idea into a sustainable movement. Almost every chapter introduces the reader to someone that has had a major influence on Growing Power. Predictably, Allen starts with his mother, Willie Mae, who instilled in him a love of good food. But then there are all the farmers, community organizers, local officials, scientists, educators and foodies that helped along the way.

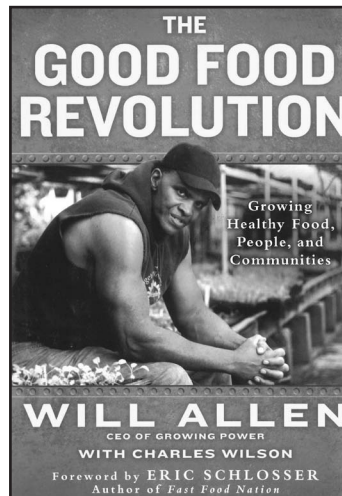
But most importantly, *The Good Food Revolution* features people who live in the neighborhood where Allen launched his urban farm: the troubled youth, single mothers and others who feel powerless in the face of age-old stereotypes: African Americans aren't interested in farming, food can never be too cheap, farming doesn't belong in the city. Allen knows if these kinds of people aren't in on the "Good Food Revolution," it will never be sustainable. And he acknowledges that his time is limited. Now in his early 60s, the hulking Allen is still as energetic as ever, but he's not immortal.

That's why it's so key that the book begins and ends with Karen Parker, who Allen first met when she was managing a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant Allen was in charge of. Parker was a hard-luck case and has had more than her share of run-ins with drugs and bad relationships over the years. But Allen saw something in her, just as she saw potential in those broken down greenhouses and that worn out city soil.

Parker was the first person he hired when he began his grand experiment in the 1990s. Parker's daughter DeShell, the source of the "dirt and worms" quote, now has two master's degrees and is a social worker. Her brother DeShawn, who was disfigured by fire as a boy, is now an accomplished chef who works with locally produced foods.

The future is in their hands, and that future is bigger than dirt and worms—or even one very large local food icon. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.



Give it a listen

Hear Will Allen talk about racism, farming and developing sustainable urban communities on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast (it's episode 64).

Stand Up!

The Story of Minnesota's Protest Tradition

By Rhoda R. Gilman

2012; 168 pages

Minnesota Historical Society Press

www.mnhs.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

S*Stand Up!: The Story of Minnesota's Protest Tradition* is Rhoda Gilman's chronicle of Minnesota's unique activist history—from its territorial days to the 2008 Republican National Convention in Saint Paul.

Gilman, a highly respected historian and activist in her own right, provides a comprehensive examination of just how big a role this protest tradition has played in making Minnesota what it is today. She also shows just how diverse this protest community is.

She discusses the woman's suffrage movement, the abolition movement, the prohibition movements and anti-abortion movements like Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life and anti-war groups like Women Against Military Madness. She also describes the role of groups such as the American Indian Movement in advocating for the rights and safety of indigenous people, not only in Minnesota but nationwide.

Movements are about groups of people, but Gilman knows that charismatic individuals can help provide a spark that inspires others. Nowhere is this truer than in politics. Through the stories of often entertaining historical personalities like Independence Party Governor Jesse Ventura, Communist Party Presidential candidate Gus Hall, anti-war activist Eugene McCarthy, Congressman John Bernard (he was the lone Congressional voice opposing the arms embargo on Spain during the Spanish Civil War) and Republican Governor Harold Stassen, we see the role third-party political movements, as well as contrary voices within mainstream parties, have played in the state's development.

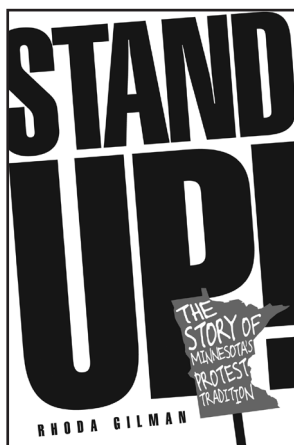
Farm activists

One area the author discusses is the key role of protest movements in the agricultural life of Minnesota. Oliver Hudson Kelley's

Grange Movement began in Minnesota and became a national farm advocacy movement. The Grange and cooperative marketing organizations, like the Grain Terminal Association started by the Farmers Union, served to empower farmers to have greater control over prices and shipping costs. This enabled them to push back against the railroads and entities like the Minneapolis Grain Exchange, whose low commodity prices and shipping penalties put many farmers under unnecessary economic stress.

Gilman also explains how this drive for farmers, especially wheat producers, to control their own economic destiny spread into the political arena. This gave rise to the North Dakota-based Nonpartisan League and ultimately the Farmer-Labor movement (later the Farmer-Labor Party). Groups like this called for political reform outside the existing two parties. In fact, the Farmer-Labor Party ultimately dwarfed the Democrat Party with its influence and power until the two entities eventually merged to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party toward the end of the Depression and during the period surrounding World War II.

In more recent times, protest and activist movements like The Organic Consumers Association, Minnesota Food Association and the Land Stewardship Project continue to play a role in Minnesota's rural life, combating the damage done to farmland,



family farmers, small communities and the environment by industrialized, corporate-controlled agribusiness.

The book describes the important role farm advocacy groups serve in helping empower farmers and all rural people as they attempt to make a liv-

ing from the land in a vocation where much of their prosperity is controlled by outside forces like market demand and the weather.

Even though the author's own political background would be considered "liberal" or "progressive," as indicated by her Green Party affiliation, the book is very balanced.

Gilman not only describes the role of labor, radical and farm cooperative groups in Minnesota history and politics—she also discusses the role of groups opposing women's voting rights, advocating prohibition of alcohol and opposing legal abortion. She points out how groups like Women Against Military Madness and Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life both claim to advocate for life but frequently have entirely different political views—a contradiction that shows the complexity of both protest politics and politics in general.

This book shows how one movement can spawn a counter-movement. For example, Gilman describes the involvement of union groups like the International Workers of the World (known as the "Wobblies") in early attempts to organize the iron ore mines of northern Minnesota, and how the business community organized to challenge such movements.

Gilman also explains how immigration history has influenced Minnesota politics. Finnish and Swedish socialists and communists fled their European homelands, bringing their "radical" political ideas to Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin—ideas that ultimately found their place in politics and the labor movement.

This ultimately made the Iron Range and cities like Minneapolis union bastions and gave Minnesota a tradition that continues to this day. Gilman points out that despite this "radical" foundation, most Minnesota unions have become more conservative as a reaction to the anti-communist era of the 1950s and a realization among many industrial unions that the fate of their members is contingent on the health of the industry they work in.

Overall this is an excellent, concise read. It outlines the influence of protest politics on Minnesota's overall history and explains how the combination of immigration patterns, economics and natural resources have played a role in the creation of Minnesota's somewhat unique protest tradition. This book is a good resource for anyone interested in the labor, agricultural, immigration or protest history of the state.

The only shortcoming of *Stand Up!* is that it was completed before the rise of the current Occupy Movement. It would be fascinating to know the author's take on this latest incarnation of a long history of protest movements. □

Land Stewardship Project member and frequent volunteer Dale Hadler has participated in numerous actions related to environmental, agricultural and social justice issues over the years.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update

Why I belong to the Land Stewardship Project:

LSP gets to the roots of what's happening in ag

By Bill Gorman

I live outside of Goodhue, in southeast Minnesota. I raise organic, pasture-based, Jersey/Swiss dairy cows and a few small grains and a little bit of corn on 160 acres. I've been farming on this land my whole life. My dad bought the farm in

Policy Committee.

Since serving on the Federal Farm Policy Committee, I've worked a lot on the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP is a program that pays farmers for implementing conservation practices on working farmland (see page 11). LSP played a pivotal role in getting CSP into the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills. And as part of that effort, I traveled



Bill Gorman: "There are changes coming, and it's important to belong to a group that can help us all participate positively in those changes." (LSP photo)

the late 1940s, and I've since taken control. I now live on the farm with my wife as well as my son and his family.

I've been a Land Stewardship Project member since 2003. I first got involved with LSP by attending their workshops and events. When Mark Schultz, LSP's Associate Director, visited the farm nearly 10 years ago, our conversation led to the commodity programs and how they weren't working for what needed to be done on the land. We talked about the concept of using conservation practices on working lands. It was then that I decided to join LSP's Federal Farm

with LSP organizers to Washington, D.C., to meet with policy makers—making sure programs like CSP were getting the support they deserved. I've always been interested in the political aspect of agriculture. Through my involvement and leadership as a member of LSP I've been able to focus on the agricultural issues that matter to me and make a difference in my community. By the way, our farm is in the third year of a CSP contract.

LSP is a very grassroots, down-to-earth, organization. It has always gotten to the bottom line of what's really right and what's

really wrong with federal farm policy—not only how it impacts people and the land, but how it affects the greater community and the nation as well.

What's unique about LSP is it brings together different people and organizations to give a better picture of what agriculture is and the direction that it should be going in order for us to sustain a viable, as well as a safe, food system. What we hear on the radio and television, and read in farm publications, is just a vague glossing over of the situation—it's not really what's happening on the ground.

If you're thinking about becoming a member, know that being a part of LSP is a way to get at the real roots of what's going on in agriculture. You'll gain an understanding of the political arena that affects agriculture and learn something about where the money goes and doesn't go.

There are changes coming, and it's important to belong to a group that can help us all participate positively in those changes. One such group is the Land Stewardship Project. □

LSP & social media

LSP is now in more places online.



Connect with LSP through
Facebook,
YouTube and
Twitter.



Direct any
questions
about LSP's

social media initiatives to Abby Liesch at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@landstewardship-project.org. □

LSP shopping night at Ten Thousand Villages Dec. 11

You can support stewardship and Fair Trade this holiday season by buying handmade gifts at the Ten Thousand Villages store in Saint Paul, Minn., on Tuesday, Dec. 11.

Ten Thousand Villages (www.stpaul.tenthousandvillages.com) is donating 20 percent of all sales from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. that day to support the Land Stewardship Project's work. The store is located at 867 Grand Avenue (Victoria Crossing West). LSP is grateful to Ten Thousand Villages for its support and work to advance Fair Trade.

Please come out to show your support for its work and ours on Dec. 11. For more information, contact Mike McMahon at mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. □

In memory & in honor...

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received the following gifts made to honor loved ones, friends or special events:

In memory of Erwin Schultz

- ◆ Mary Pat Harvey
- ◆ Wayne & Lou Anne Kling
- ◆ Paul & Candy Sobocinski

In memory of Lois Swenson

- ◆ Dana Jackson

In memory of Tom Taylor

- ◆ Sally Waterman
- ◆ Mary Taylor

In memory of Armas Tamminen

- ◆ Beth Tamminen

For details on donating to LSP in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP gear, books, videos & more

Check out the Land Stewardship Project's Stewardship Store for t-shirts, caps, bumper stickers and other resources. For more information on obtaining these resources, see the **LSP Store** link at www.landstewardshipproject.org, or call 612-722-6377.

LSP t-shirt

LSP's black t-shirts have our logo on the front and the words "Land Stewardship Project" on the back. They are USA Union Made, 100 percent preshrunk cotton, and are available in adult sizes: small, medium, large and extra large. Price: \$15.



LSP cap

LSP's baseball-style cap is union-made in the U.S. of high quality 100-percent cotton. It comes in black with LSP's green and white embroidered logo featured on the front. A fabric strap and brass clasp on the back make this a one-size-fits-all cap. Price: \$15.

Local democracy bumper sticker

Display your support for local democracy with LSP's 3 x 9 red, white and

blue bumper sticker. It features the words: "Grassroots Democracy & Local Control: Stand Up For MN Townships." For a free bumper sticker, call LSP's Policy and Organizing Program at 612-722-6377 or e-mail Bobby King at bking@landstewardshipproject.org. Bumper stickers are also available at LSP's offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366) and Montevideo (320-269-2105).

Glyphosate/roundup presentation

On March 24, 2011, Purdue University emeritus professor Don Huber gave a presentation in Creighton, Neb., on some of the environmental, health and agronomic

problems posed by long-term use of glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide. The price of the three-hour DVD: \$18.

Monitoring Tool Box

The *Monitoring Tool Box* is a resource developed by the Monitoring Team, a collaboration of farmers, scientists and natural resource professionals. The Monitoring Tool Box provides practical, how-to information on monitoring quality of life issues, farm sustainability and financial data, as well as birds, frogs and toads, streams and pasture vegetation. Price: \$45.00 + \$8.00 S & H. To order a copy and for more information, see our website or call LSP's Karen Benson or Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366. □



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. Op-

tions include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377, or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.



MINNESOTA
Environmental Fund



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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 visit www.landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **NOV. 3**—LSP program on “How Can Cooperatives Strengthen Local Food Systems & Democracy in Western Minn.?” (potluck, book signing & discussion with Atina Diffley), 6 p.m.-11 p.m., Watson, Minn., Town Hall; Contact: Rebecca Terk, LSP, 320-305-9685, rebeccat@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 3**—7th Annual Earth Conference, Center for Earth Spirituality & Rural Ministry, Mankato, Minn.; Contact: Lisa Coons, 507-389-4272, lcoons@ssndmankato.org

→ **NOV. 4**—LSP Farm-Art-Bowl Farm Beginnings fundraiser, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Bryant-Lake Bowl, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 9-11**—13th Annual Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Ag, Cedar Valley Resort, Whalan, Minn.; Contact: staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com

→ **NOV. 10-JULY 28**—“Dig It! The Secrets of the Soil” Smithsonian exhibit at the Bell Museum of Natural History, U of M, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.bellmuseum.umn.edu, 612-624-7083

→ **NOV. 12**—Application deadline for LSP Farm Journeyperson Course (see pages 14-15)

→ **NOV. 13**—LSP Local Food Happy Hour, Twin Cities; Contact: Anna Cioffi, LSP, 612-722-6377, annac@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 14**—LSP Seasonal Cooking & Preserving Workshop, CGB High School, Graceville, Minn.; Contact: John Hain, 507-269-6295, johnh@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 14-18**—National Biodynamic Conference, Madison, Wis.; Contact: www.biodynamics.com, 262-649-9212

→ **NOV. 15**—LSP Seasonal Cooking & Preserving Workshop, Ortonville (Minn.) High School; Contact: John Hain, 507-269-6295, johnh@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 17**—Cover Crops in Action Farm Walk, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Fillmore County, Minn. Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366, caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **NOV. 18-19**—12th Annual Iowa Organic Conf., Iowa City; Contact: www.leopold.ia-state.edu/news/calendar/2012-11-18/12th-annual-iowa-organic-conference, 515-294-7069

→ **NOV. 29**—Deadline for USDA SARE Sustainable Ag Proposals; Joan Benjamin, 800-529-1342, www.northcentralsare.org

→ **DEC. 4**—Wintering strategies on a grass-based dairy, 1 p.m., Bonnie & Vance Haugen farm, Canton, Minn.; Contact: 507-743-8326

→ **DEC. 6**—Workshop on post-harvest handling & wholesale marketing of fresh produce, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: www.misa.umn.edu, 612-625-8235

→ **DEC. 11**—LSP Benefit Shopping Night at Ten Thousand Villages, Saint Paul, Minn. (see page 30)

→ **DEC. 12-13**—Midwest Value Added Ag Conf., featuring Laura Jackson, John Ikerd & Francis Thicke, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-579-5098, www.rivercountryred.org/valad.html

→ **WINTER**—LSP workshops on farm transitions (details to be announced); Contact: Karen Stettler, 507-523-3366, stettler@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 5-6**—Kickoff retreat for LSP’s Journeyperson Farm Training Course (details to be determined; see pages 14-15)

→ **JAN. 8**—2013 session of Minnesota Legislature convenes; Contact: Bobby King, 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 10**—Minnesota Organic Conf. pre-conference workshops, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic.aspx, Meg Moynihan, 651-201-6616

→ **JAN. 10-11**—Midwest CSA Farming Conference, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; Contact: www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com, Sarah Lloyd, 920-210-7335

→ **JAN. 10-12**—Practical Farmers of Iowa Conf., Ames Iowa; Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org, 515-255-0882

→ **JAN. 11-12**—Minnesota Organic Conf., St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic.aspx, Meg Moynihan, 651-201-6616

→ **JAN. 15**—LSP Local Food Happy Hour, Twin Cities; Contact: Anna Cioffi, LSP, 612-722-6377, annac@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 15-17**—LSP course on Introduction to Holistic Mgt.: Principles for Success, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Glenwood, Minn. (see page 26)

→ **JAN. 19**—Application deadline for Minnesota Livestock Grants Program; Contact: 651-201-6456, www.mda.state.mn.us/livestockinvestmentgrant

→ **JAN. 24-26**—Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Winter Conf., Aberdeen, S. Dak.; Contact: <http://npsas.org/news-events/winter-conference.html>, 701-883-4304

→ **EARLY FEB.**—8th Annual LSP Family Farm Breakfast & Day at the Capitol (details to be announced), St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: Bobby King, 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **FEB. 5-6**—LSP course on Holistic Mgt.: Financial Planning, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Glenwood, Minn. (see page 26)

→ **FEB. 15-16**—Sustainable Farming Association of Minn Conf., Chaska, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org, 763-260-0209

→ **FEB. 20**—2013 Organic University, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html, 715-778-5775

→ **FEB. 21-23**—MOSES Organic Farming Conf., La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org, 715-778-5775

→ **AUG. 1**—Deadline for LSP’s 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course; Contact: Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, www.farmbeginnings.org

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