

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

31 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

Volume 31

www.landstewardshipproject.org

Number 1, 2013



Bringing chefs and farmers together (see page 23).

-
- ◆
- The Taste of an Ecological Disaster*—
 - Jim Koplín's Quiet Legacy*—
 - Frac Sand, Health Care Legislation*—
 - A Beginning Farmer's Unfair Advantages*—
 - Little Cooking Classes on the Prairie*—
 - Fat, Local Foods & Willie*—



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.

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the *Land Stewardship Letter* should be addressed to the editor, **Brian DeVore**, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407-2102; phone: 612-722-6377; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Bartmann, Tex Hawkins, Alan Hoffman,
Loretta Jaus, Dennis Johnson, Sr. Kathleen
Mary Kiemen, Chad Kingstrom,
Lou Anne Kling, Jody Lenz, Florence Minar,
Heidi Morlock, Dan Specht,
Juliet Tomkins, Rhys Williams

STAFF

Southeastern Minnesota

180 E. Main St., P.O. Box 130, Lewiston, MN
55952; phone: 507-523-3366; fax: 2729;
e-mail: ispse@landstewardshipproject.org
Karen Benson, Parker Forsell, Megan Greeson,
Doug Nopar, David Rosmann, Johanna
Rupprecht, Karen Stettler, Caroline van Schaik

Western Minnesota

301 State Rd., Montevideo, MN
56265; phone: 320-269-2105; fax: 2190;
e-mail: ispwest@landstewardshipproject.org
Amy Bacigalupo, Wade Kasier, Andrew
Marcum, Julia Ahlers Ness, Richard Ness, Nick
Olson, Rebecca Terk, Terry Van Der Pol

Twin Cities/Policy

821 East 35th St., Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55407;
phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 6474;
e-mail: info@landstewardshipproject.org
George Boody—Executive Director
Mark Schultz—Associate Director/Director of
Programs/Policy & Organizing Director
Megan Buckingham, Anna Cioffi,
Brian DeVore, Erik Esse, Steve Ewest,
Bobby King, Abigail Liesch, Mike McMahon,
Joe Riemann, Megan Smith,
Paul Sobocinski, Adam Warthesen



This LSL printed by Roscoe Printers, Wanamingo, Minn.

Contents

Commentary...3

- The Dust Bowl's Gritty Reality

In Memory...5

- Jim Koplin: 1933-2012

Myth Buster...6

- Diverse crop rotations & profits



Policy & Organizing...10

- Frac sand regulation at the Legislature
- Winona County mines doing EIS
- Health care exchange approved
- National BFRDP meeting
- Taking a stewardship message to D.C.
- Wage theft cases & the U of M
- Immigration reform
- Immigrant Farmer Conference

Community Based Food Systems...22

- Big Stone cooking classes
- Getting at the source
- A community supported future
- China supported agriculture

Reviews...28

- *The Town That Food Saved*
- *Salt Sugar Fat*
- *Roll Me Up & Smoke Me When I Die*

Stewardship Calendar...32



LSP News...7

- 2013 Family Farm Breakfast
- 2013 CSA Directory
- *Look Who's Knockin'*
- Kingstrom joins LSP board
- New LSP staff, interns
- LSPers recognized



Farm Beginnings...16



- *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse*
- 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course
- LSP Farmer Network
- LSP Journeyperson Course launched
- Is farming your future?
- *Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming*: Bryan Crigler & Katelyn Foerster

Profits from Perennials...27

- Cover crops in southeast Minnesota
- Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency web page
- Want to see the prairie strips in Iowa?

Membership Update...30

- A virtual LSP
- Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency special report
- In memory & in honor
- Thanks to our volunteers
- Get current with *LIVE-WIRE*
- *Ear to the Ground*
- LSP in the news
- Support LSP in your workplace

The Dust Bowl's Gritty Reality

Do we have to breathe and taste a problem before it strikes home that we have a major ecological disaster on our hands?

By Dana Jackson

I was born in central Kansas towards the end of that terrible decade called the "Dirty Thirties." All during my childhood, sisters and brothers told me about dust storms that left grit on everything in the house, even dishes inside cupboards, and how hard it was during the Depression for my father to earn a living. Drought brought dust storms again in the 1950s during my teen years, and even as my mother hung wet tea towels at the kitchen windows to catch the dust, she assured me that the 1930s were worse.

But Ken Burns' latest documentary, shown on PBS a few months ago, really made me understand the horrible effects of those dust storms I had heard about. Burns' film, *The Dust Bowl*, describes all that airborne soil as "the worst man-made ecological disaster in American history."

Although drought and dust storms of that decade extended north into Nebraska, the Dakotas and west-central Minnesota, *The Dust Bowl* documentary focuses on the southern Great Plains where the most extreme conditions over the longest period of time occurred, specifically western Texas, the Oklahoma Panhandle, southwest Kansas and adjoining counties in Colorado and New Mexico. It draws heavily on material in Donald Worster's book, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930's*. The film project also relies heavily on *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*, by Timothy Egan (see review in Winter 2007 Land Stewardship Letter).

Worster and Egan appear intermittently in the film, explaining that the dust blew because millions of acres of soil-holding short grass prairie were plowed to plant wheat, and describing the hardships people experienced as a consequence. But the history comes alive through poignant, firsthand accounts by men and women who were children during the "worst hard times."

They describe how they could never escape the dirt, how little food they had to eat,

and their emotions when the family's cattle had to be shot. They recall their parents' anxiety about paying the mortgage and their anguish when children in the family sickened and died from dust pneumonia.

During the Depression, the Farm Security Administration hired photographers to record the faces of people struggling to



A boy covers his mouth during a dust storm on a farm in Cimarron County, Okla., in April 1936. It's easier for today's corn/bean farmers to escape the consequences of soil loss and water pollution caused by their farming methods than it was for Dust Bowl-era wheat farmers to escape the blowing erosion they caused. (photo by Arthur Rothstein; The Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

survive, and they gathered over 200,000 images, including iconic Dust Bowl photos from the Southern Plains. (See examples at www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/photos.)

The Dust Bowl employs shocking images from film footage and photos in this collection: towering black dust clouds engulfing farms and towns, dirt dunes piled against buildings, dirt drifted over barbed wire fences with dead cattle nearby, people bent over against the wind as they ran for shelter, and thin children wearing face masks.

Greed, bad public policy and especially ecological ignorance caused the Dust Bowl. Sporadic droughts and wind had always

been part of the climate in the southern Great Plains, which American Indians and cattle ranchers understood. But in the 1920s and 1930s, abundant rain and good wheat prices enticed beneficiaries of the Homestead Act to tear up the sod and plant wheat. American farmers, who had mobilized to feed European allies during World War I, kept planting wheat when the war was over. The deep-rooted, short grass prairie and the animals it supported had adapted over thousands of years to hold soil during drought and wind.

Homesteaders eagerly plowed the prairie when wheat prices were high; then later when prices plunged, they broke even more sod to plant more wheat to make up for low prices. In the first years of the 10-year drought, farmers watched their seeds blow away with the soil, but, hoping for better luck, these "next year" farmers planted wheat again. "Suitcase farmers" claimed land, broke the sod with rows of tractors pulling one-way plows and planted wheat. Then they disappeared until harvest. In the drought years, they just abandoned their fields to the wind.

The stock market collapse in 1929 sent the United States into an economic depression, but Great Plains farmers sold their bumper crops that year at a dollar a bushel and were prosperous. In 1930, markets for another glut of wheat disappeared in the depressed national economy, and in 1931 prices plummeted to 25 cents a bushel. Then in 1932, the dust storms started.

Black Sunday

Some stories in *The Dust Bowl* will be familiar to Land Stewardship Project members who have seen *Planting in the Dust*, the one-act play written by Nancy Paddock and presented over 500 times across Minnesota and other states during the 1980s. The one-woman monologue was performed by professional actresses and followed by audience discussions in which people recalled their own memories of dust storms. LSP used the play to promote its mission to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland. Nancy Paddock tweaked the play to give characters German heritage instead of Scandinavian so I could organize performances of *Planting in the Dust* in Kansas, where I lived at the time. We took the play to Soil Conservation District meetings, some in the heart of the 1930s Dust Bowl in southwest Kansas, and heard heart-wrenching stories from people who had lived through it.

The very worst dust storm was on Black Sunday, April 14, 1935. People thought it

Dust Bowl, see page 4...

was the end of the world. Black Sunday was the last straw for many families, and the Burns film shows “exoduster” families piling tables, mattresses, pots and pans... and kids on their cars for the trip to California. Woody Guthrie survived Black Sunday in Pampas, Texas, and the film features his Dust Bowl song, “So long, it’s been good to know ya...” Although some towns lost 30 percent to 50 percent of their population, most people stayed because they had invested their lives there and had no place else to go.

In the days following Black Sunday, the cloud of dust—200 miles wide moving at 65 miles per hour—carried soil all the way to Washington, D.C., arriving when Hugh Hammond Bennett was testifying before a Congressional committee on a bill to create the Soil Conservation Service.

The bill passed, and Bennett became the Service’s first chief (it is known today as the Natural Resources Conservation Service). Farmers in the southern Plains had chosen to believe that changes in the climate, not their farming practices, caused soil to blow, and many scorned “government handouts.” But after five years without a crop, they were desperate for government aid. In 1937, the Soil Conservation Service began healing the ravished Plains and people’s lives by giving farmers payments to till their fields using a lister that made deep rows—instead of the one-way plow that pulverized soil—or to not plant cash crops at all. The government even bought cropland and returned it to grass.

From Dust to Mud

Can the Dust Bowl happen again? Worster and Egan discuss this towards the end of the film. Actually, dust storms have occurred twice on the southern Plains since the 1930s. Farmers responded to demand and high prices in the 1940s during World War II and planted 300 million more acres of wheat; then drought followed in the 1950s, and topsoil started blowing again. In the 1970s, when Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz urged farmers to plant fence-row-to-fence-row, drought and dust storms followed. However, permanent national grasslands and conservation practices established by conservation districts in the 1940s prevented soil from blowing as much as it had in the 1930s.

Another reason for less soil erosion in the 1970s is that farmers were growing crops with water from the huge Ogallala Aquifer underlying parts of Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Today the aquifer supports wheat, corn and soybeans, and also cattle and hog feedlots. But water

levels in the Ogallala have been drastically lowered, and this boom era will go bust when it costs too much to pump from deeper wells. Dust likely will blow again on the southern Great Plains.

In July 2012, moderate to severe drought covered nearly 64 percent of the lower 48 states, and people started to wonder, even in the Upper Midwest, if we could experience another Dust

The Dust Bowl by Ken Burns

A four-hour film in two episodes:

- Episode I: *The Great Plow Up (1890-1935)*
- Episode II: *Reaping the Whirlwind (1935-1940)*

Available for purchase at www.pbs.com.

Bowl. Indeed, there are some troubling parallels to the “Dirty Thirties.” A *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* study published in February reported that between 2006 and 2011, 1.3 million acres of grassland were converted to crops in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. The researchers said such conversion rates haven’t been seen since the 1920s and 1930s.

That’s troubling, but in the Upper Midwest we should worry less about a potential Dust Bowl and focus on our “troubled waters,” the man-made ecological disaster underway because of the vast number of acres planted to corn and soybeans. High prices for these crops and an insane federal farm policy have motivated farmers to replace other crops and pasture with corn and soybeans.

Soil erodes during spring downpours and nitrogen leaches into groundwater through sparse root remnants from conventional corn and bean fields, so we have rivers polluted with fertilizer-laden sediment and a larger Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Artificial “tile” drainage systems have short-circuited our hydrological cycle, sending more water than

ever into places like the Minnesota River at high speeds. Only 20 percent of the Minnesota farming region’s natural water “budget” now flows into local streams and rivers, according to a study published in the journal *Hydrological Processes* earlier this year. Before massive artificial drainage arrived on the scene, 80 percent of the region’s water was used by plants or evaporated after ponding on the land or collecting in wetlands. Now that water is whisked through pipes to major waterways like the Minnesota River.

This high velocity “fire hose” effect is wearing away the banks of waterways, sending so much sediment (mud) into the Mississippi River that Lake Pepin is threatened with a premature death, say researchers at the Science Museum of Minnesota’s St. Croix Watershed Research Station.

But frankly, it’s easier for corn/bean farmers to escape the consequences of waterborne soil loss and water pollution caused by their farming methods than it was for wheat farmers to escape the blowing soil they caused. Dust Bowl farmers (and their children) breathed the dirt from land they ravished; Upper Midwest corn and bean farmers don’t personally sense the soil and contaminants leaving their land during rainstorms. Because soil erosion caused by tile drainage is less obvious and widespread, we don’t have as many shocking images that show the damage.

For all the promotion of no-till farming as the conservation panacea for continuous corn and soybeans, a 2010 USDA Economic Research Service study revealed that no-till was practiced on 23.5 percent of all U.S. corn acres in 2005; in the Mississippi River Basin states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin that figure was only 15 percent. And even if 90 percent of corn acres are in no-till, the land won’t be resilient enough to withstand the intense weather events that come with climate change.

Today’s ‘Worst Man-Made Ecological Disaster’

Bad as it was, the Dust Bowl is being eclipsed today by global climate change as “the worst man-made ecological disaster in American (and world) history.” Human consumption of fossil fuel has created greenhouse gasses that trap heat in our atmosphere, and the Earth’s temperature is rising. Dust Bowl farmers blamed climate change until they finally accepted the fact that their farming practices made the soil vulnerable to wind erosion in a region with regular droughts. Now, 80 years after the Dust Bowl, we know that global climate is

What’s on Your Mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

Letters and commentaries can be submitted to: Brian DeVore, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; 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 we publish do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

Dust Bowl, see page 5...

causing more extreme weather patterns everywhere, and we expect more droughts and severe rainstorms to make farming riskier. Technological tricks in Corn Belt farming, such as tile drainage, just make the land more susceptible to soil loss and contribute to the ecological disaster that is the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

We need different farming systems in the Midwest that are resilient to weather extremes, systems more like the deep-rooted tall grass prairie plowed up by our forefathers in the northern Great Plains, or systems like those being developed in Burleigh County, N. Dak. (see Land Stewardship Letter, 2012, No. 3 and No. 4). Whether we get drought or heavy rainfall, healthy soil with a high capacity to hold water is what we need to produce food over the long term. Soil is

our most important natural resource in food production. Our best hope is an ethic of land stewardship that will prepare the soil for what's to come. □

Dana Jackson retired from the Land Stewardship Project in 2011 after serving as a board member, associate director and senior staff member. She co-edited the 2002 book, The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems With Ecosystems.

Jim Koplin: 1933-2012

The Land Stewardship Project lost a great friend and mentor on Dec. 15 when Jim Koplin died after a short struggle with pneumonia. He was 79.

"It's hard to convey in words but in every facet of his life and how he lived Jim was just a person who gave more than he took," says Joe Riemann, LSP's administration and finance manager who was a close friend of Koplin's.

Jim was born in 1933 on a farm in Vergas, in northwestern Minnesota. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota, he served in the U.S. Army for two years. He returned to the University of Minnesota to complete a doctorate in psychology in 1962.

While pursuing his doctorate, he met fellow graduate student Sally Katz, and they married in 1959. They divorced but remained close friends until Sally's death in a bicycle accident in 2000.

Koplin was a founding faculty member at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., in 1970. After retiring from teaching, he moved to Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1980, where he helped establish the Center for Nonviolence.

In 1982 Jim moved back to Minneapolis, where he volunteered for a number of community organizations dedicated to social justice and ecological sustainability. No matter what the cause Jim dedicated himself to, he gave it his all. Besides LSP, he worked closely with the Northern Sun Alliance, Organizing Against Pornography and the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, among others.

Jim was not someone who joined a cause just because it was popular; in a way, his mere connection to an organization's work gave it all the more credibility. That's why

LSP's staff particularly appreciated Jim's long-standing membership and support.

He was a frequent volunteer at LSP's Minneapolis office in the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood where he lived, and had a deep commitment to stewardship of farmland. He would often show up at the office to share ideas he had gathered from recent articles or books he had read, or people he had talked to, and had that ability to teach

and pass on knowledge without being preachy or overbearing.

Robert Jensen was mentored by Jim while he was a graduate student. Jensen, now an author and journalism professor at the University of Texas-Austin, wrote in a memorial that Koplin taught him that, "Good teaching is based in recognizing our intellectual limits, our ignorance. By that, he did not just mean that any single teacher can't know everything. Instead, Jim meant that we humans are always more ignorant than knowledgeable, that even in fields in which we

understanding of the world, there is—and always will be—far more that we do not know than we do know."

It was a lucky LSP staffer who occasionally would find a typewritten note from Koplin in their mailbox. The introductions to these pieces were usually surprisingly light in tone, given the content of the actual article or book excerpt he was sharing. "Another unsolicited item!" one 2005 note from Jim began. But it soon got to the point: "I believe this is an excellent brief summary of where we stand on the planet at this moment."

"He didn't do anything without clear intent," says Riemann. "He would introduce people to ideas in such a way that it had great, personal impact."

And he knew the importance of having

that impact on the next generation. Once-a-week during the past four years, Riemann, along with his 5-year-old son Oskar, spent the day with Jim, sharing a breakfast, making crafts, and perhaps most importantly, gardening.

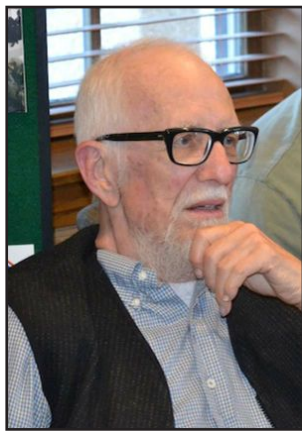
"It wasn't just Jim teaching Oskar things—it was them being friends and sharing," says Riemann. "It was reciprocal."

Jim was also quite adept at introducing people to other people. In a way, he was a master networker, although he would probably hate to hear himself described that way, bringing together people of all ages and all walks of life to discuss and work toward a better world (he carried on a multi-year correspondence with Noam Chomsky, the famed linguist and philosopher). Dana Jackson, a former LSP board member and associate director, remembers meeting Jim in 1993 soon after she had moved to Minnesota.

"Conversations with Jim were enlightening and fun because he read and thought about books, he was an advocate for social and environmental justice, he had informed opinions about the issues LSP worked on, and he saw humor in people's foolishness," she recalls.

But he also served as a good model for how to live a humane, sane life at home, despite all the turmoil in the world. Perhaps most central in Jim's life was his ability to produce food. He was an extremely skilled gardener and retained the skills he had learned growing up on the farm, says LSP member Ila Duntemann, a next door neighbor to Jim who shared his garden. "You name it, he grew it," she says. "He was so good at noting that bigger picture, but also realizing the real impact was those neighborly interactions in the local community like tending a garden." □

A service celebrating Jim Koplin's life will be held Saturday, May 18, beginning at 2:30 p.m., at Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, 1500 E. Lake Street, Minneapolis. More information is at www.jimkoplin.com.



Jim Koplin

Myth Buster Box

An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

→ **Myth:** Diverse crop rotations may be a boon to the land, but are a bust when it comes to farmers' bank accounts.

→ **Fact:**

It's no big surprise that cropping systems more diverse than the typical corn one year, soybeans the next, routine are friendlier to the environment. Breaking up this monotonous cycle by throwing small grains like oats and forages like alfalfa into the mix has proven to not only reduce the need for chemicals that can make their way into our water, but is an effective soil erosion deterrent.

However, it's long been assumed that diversifying a crop rotation came with a major Achilles' heel: it lowered yields of the main cash crops, resulting in lower farm income.

But recent research out of Iowa is questioning the conventional wisdom that more diversity equals lower yields, and thus less profit. From 2003 to 2011 researchers compared three cropping systems on the Marsden Farm, an experimental operation in central Iowa. One system was the typical corn one year, soybeans the next duo-culture. It was then compared to two diversified systems. One involved a rotation where during the third year instead of corn or soybeans a small grain such as triticale or oats was grown in conjunction with red clover. The other was a four-year rotation: corn, soybeans, small grains and alfalfa.

Chemical fertilizers and herbicides were used in the more diverse rotations, but at lower rates than the two-crop systems (composted cattle manure as well as clover and alfalfa residues were used to replace some petroleum-based fertilizers in the more diverse systems).

The study, which was published on the peer-reviewed *PLoS ONE* website last fall, found some significant energy/environmental benefits from the longer rotations. Synthetic nitrogen use in the diverse rotations dropped 80 to 86 percent compared to the conventional system. After several years, good weed control was possible in the more diverse systems even though their herbicide use was on average six to 10 times lower. This meant potential herbicide-related freshwater toxicity was 200 times lower

during the last six years of the study. Diverse rotations also used around half the amount of energy per-acre, per-year.

These results are pretty much common sense: a greater diversity of plants on the land breaks up pest cycles, helps soil build its own fertility and reduces the need for intense tillage year-after-year. In addition, legumes like alfalfa and clover help to provide for "free" the nitrogen so critical for growing corn.

And corn and soybean yields in the diverse rotations were slightly higher when compared to the conventional system. Other studies have shown that once established, a diversified cropping system can provide a yield boost, so this was not a major surprise either.

Diversity = Stable Profits

But what is surprising is that the diverse rotations produced similar, and in some cases slightly higher, profits compared to their conventional counterparts. This was true during both the transition years (2003 to 2005) and the years when the longer rotations were well established (2006 to 2011). That's an important piece of information for any farmers who are considering making the transition to a more diverse system, but are concerned they can't afford even a year or two of lower profits.

This research, which was conducted by scientists from the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the University of Minnesota and Iowa State University, makes another important point about profitability: once the diverse systems were established, they were more financially stable from year-to-year. That's because when a system relies less on inputs like petroleum-based fertilizer, it's not as likely to have its bottom line jerked around by price swings in the oil and natural gas markets.

If this study shows there is more consistent profitability with diversity, why wouldn't more farms adopt such a system? Remember, corn and soybeans, which are quite lucrative these days, are not grown every year when you add small gains and forage to the rotation. That means a farmer needs a way to make something like oats or hay pay during those "off" years when there aren't corn or soybeans available to sell. In most cases, that means having cattle and other livestock present on the farm, or at least on neighboring farms, to

add economic value to those plants by using them as feed and to help provide fertility through manure cycling. In many farming communities, livestock have been removed from the land and put into specialized, large-scale concentrated animal feeding operations while crop farmers concentrate on just raising corn and soybeans.

The other issue is labor. The Marsden Farm researchers concede that the more diverse systems require a more management-intensive approach, with farmers actually walking the fields, observing changes and juggling various plant growth schemes, not to mention dealing with livestock. To a specialized corn and soybean producer used to just planting, applying chemicals and harvesting, this can be a radical paradigm shift, no matter what the profit margin.

However, the Marsden study could help make a diverse farming system more attractive to conventional producers by showing that sustainability doesn't require going cold turkey on inputs. It just may require putting chemicals in their proper place—as tools in a toolbox, not the toolbox itself. As the researchers concluded: "...more diverse cropping systems can use small amounts of synthetic agrichemical inputs as powerful tools with which to tune, rather than drive, agroecosystem performance...."

→ More Information

- To read the full Marsden Farm study, "Increasing Cropping System Diversity Balances Productivity, Profitability and Environmental Health," on the *PLoS ONE* website, see www.plosone.org.

- More on the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture's ongoing research into diverse crop rotations is at www.leopold.iastate.edu/news/10-11-2012/benefits-of-longer-rotations.

→ 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.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

LSP News

2013 LSP Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol Brings People & Lawmakers Together Over Food

Land Stewardship Project members and friends got together with Minnesota legislators during the 8th Annual LSP Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol on Feb. 26 at Christ Lutheran Church in Saint Paul. Over food sourced from LSP member-farmers and other businesses, diners discussed key legislative issues such as regulation of the frac sand mining industry, creating a health insurance exchange and providing funding for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's *Greenbook* sustainable agriculture program. After the breakfast, several LSP members took part in lobbying training and then headed over to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers and participate in hearings. For more on LSP's work at the 2013 Legislature, see pages 10-11. (*LSP photos*)



Josh and Cindy Van Der Pol, shown with their daughter Kirsten, talked about how research they were able to do with MDA *Greenbook* funding helped make their Pastures A' Plenty hog operation profitable.

Volunteers, led by chef Brad Beal, served over 260 diners during the breakfast. Food was provided by several LSP member-farms and other businesses, including:

- Hidden Stream Farm
- Earth-Be-Glad-Farm
- Julia & Richard Ness
- Big Stone Farm
- Kalliroe Farm
- Farm on Wheels
- Pastures A' Plenty
- Velasquez Family Coffee
- Equal Exchange
- Niman Ranch
- Honey and Herbs
- Cedar Summit Farm
- Eartrise Farm
- Dry Weather Creek Farms
- Benson's Bakery
- Organic Valley Midwest
- Common Roots Cafe
- Callister Farm





LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

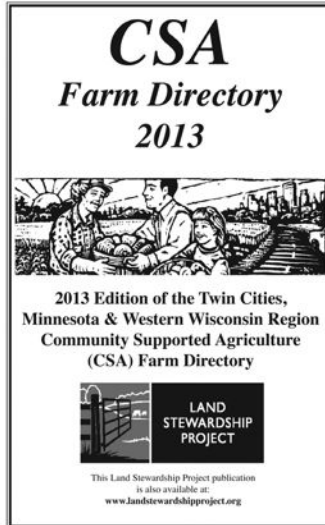
LSP News

2013 CSA LSP Farm Directory Available

Spring is here and eaters in Minnesota and western Wisconsin who want to receive fresh, sustainably-produced food on a weekly basis during the 2013 growing season can reserve a share in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm today. The Land Stewardship Project's 2013 Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region CSA Farm Directory provides detailed information on 78 farms that deliver to locations in the Twin Cities, Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

For a free copy, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/csa or call 612-722-6377. Free paper copies are also available at the Land Stewardship Project's South Minneapolis office, 821 E. 35th St., Suite 200.

Community Supported Agriculture is an arrangement where consumers "put a face on their food" by buying shares in a farming operation on an annual basis. In return, the farmers provide a weekly supply of fresh, natural produce throughout the growing season (approximately June to October). Most of the farms focus exclusively on fresh produce, although a few also offer shares for



other food items such as meat.

Subscriptions are often sold out by early spring and vegetable lovers are encouraged to reserve their shares early. The details of the share arrangements such as how much and what kind of food is offered vary from farm-to-farm. □

Look Who's Knockin' Presented in St. Paul

Look Who's Knockin', a one-act play about the future of farming, was presented by the Land Stewardship Project March 22 and March 23 at St. Catherine University Recital Hall in St. Paul. Both performances were followed by an audience discussion centered on the issues raised by the play.

The one-act play presents an ethical dilemma faced by an older farming couple, Nettie and Gerald: do they follow the trend and sell their land for top dollar, or pursue a path to help the next generation of farmers gain secure, long-term access to land?

"Many landowners and farmers are in the same tough situation as Nettie and Gerald are, particularly at a time of record-high farmland prices," says Karen Stettler, an LSP organizer who is leading a member steering committee that's looking at ways to create more

land access for beginning farmers.

The play was written by LSP organizer Doug Nopar and was created out of numerous interviews and stories of beginning farmers as well as retiring farmers and landowners. It uses humor, storytelling and the common everyday tension in an elderly farm couple's relationship to prompt personal reflection and community discussion about what it is going to take to secure a future for stewardship farmers on the land.



Kingstrom Joins LSP Board

Chad Kingstrom has joined the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors.

He is a 2004 graduate of LSP's Farm Beginnings course and managed a commercial tree farm for four years. Kingstrom has also worked on various farms in the region and he currently raises vegetables and trees near Sacred Heart, Minn., while finishing a degree in philosophy at Southwest Minnesota State University.



Chad Kingstrom

He serves on the Sacred Heart City Council and the Renville County Economic Development board, and in 2012 completed the Blandin Community Leadership Program.

Kingstrom serves on LSP's Health Care Organizing Committee and has presented at several meetings in that role. He has also participated in an LSP fly-in to Washington, D.C., where he discussed farm policy reform and support for beginning farmers with policy makers.

"The tension walks you right up to the point of decision about transferring land that you have cared for. It challenged what I thought I knew about how to make that decision," says Paula Foreman, an LSP member and beginning farmer in the Twin Cities area. "There is room for a decision based on my values—it is more than just an intellectual decision."

Look Who's Knockin' has played to packed houses in southeast and western Minnesota during the past two years. It has also been presented in Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota and Illinois.

An LSP podcast featuring an interview with Nopar is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/184; an audio performance of the play is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/184.

For information on presenting the play in your community, contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105, amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Kaiser, Rosmann Join LSP Staff

Wade Kaiser and David Rosmann have recently joined the staff of the Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food Systems Program.

Kasier has an associate's degree in music recording and live sound from Madison Media Institute. He has interned on two area Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, and has also worked as a captioning assistant and vault teller. Kaiser volunteers at the Granary Food Co-op in Ortonville, Minn.



Wade Kaiser

At LSP, Kaiser is working with farmers, business owners and government officials in western Minnesota's Big Stone County to promote and develop a local food system there (see page 22). He can be contacted at wadek@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-305-9247.

Rosmann has a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University in public service and administration in agriculture and grew up on diversified crop and livestock farm in southwest Iowa. He has worked as an organizer for Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, a farm laborer, a substitute teacher, a chef, a lab technician and a forklift operator. Rosmann has also interned at Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, as well as volunteered for LSP and the Minnesota Organic Agriculture Conference.



David Rosmann

At LSP, Rosmann is working with farmers and other landowners in southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed to develop conservation plans and find profitable ways to increase plant cover and perennials in the area (see page 27).

He can be contacted at davidr@landstewardshipproject.org or in LSP's Lewiston, Minn., office at 507-523-3377. □



Hyde, Torkelson & Breyer Serve LSP Internships

Matthew Hyde is serving an internship with the Land Stewardship Project's Chippewa 10% Project. Hyde is scheduled to graduate from Macalester College in May with a major in geography and a minor in Hispanic Studies. He has worked as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) associate with Envision Minnesota, a teaching assistant in Macalester's Geography Department and a rock climbing instructor/camp counselor. Hyde has also volunteered for Building Dignity in Lima, Peru, and at Anishinabe Academy in Minneapolis.



Matthew Hyde

During his internship, Hyde is helping with mapping and other duties related to the Chippewa 10% Project. For more on the project, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact Julia Ahlers Ness at 320-269-2105.

Jeanette Torkelson recently completed an internship with LSP's Policy and Organizing Program. She has a bachelor's degree in visual media from Rochester Institute of Technology, and has worked as a photographer, gardener, landscaper and vegetable farm intern. Torkelson has volunteered at Minnesotans United for All Families and Metro Blooms.



Jeanette Torkelson

During her internship, she coordinated LSP's 8th Annual Family Farm Breakfast (see page 7).

Alexandra Breyer recently served an internship with LSP's Community Based Foods Systems Program. Breyer has a bachelor's degree in global studies with a minor in horticulture from the University of Minnesota. She has worked as a community organizer for Minnesotans United for All Families, an intern with Grassroots Solutions, an intern at the U of M's Cornerco-



Alexandra Breyer

pia Student Organic Farm and a volunteer coordinator for Minnesota 350. Breyer has also volunteered for LSP, Oxfam America and International Student Volunteers.

During her internship, Breyer produced LSP's 2013 CSA Farm Directory (see page 8). □

LSPers Recognized

Several Land Stewardship Project members have been recognized recently for their work and contributions to a more sustainable food and farm system:

- **Jim Riddle** and **Joyce Ford** were recently named Stewards of Sustainable Agriculture by the Ecological Farming Association for their work to advance organic food and farming systems. Riddle and Ford have promoted and expanded organic agriculture through their work in over 15 countries. They own and operate Blue Fruit Farm near Winona in south-eastern Minnesota.

- **Charlie Johnson** was named the 2013 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). Johnson Farms is an organic crop and beef operation near Madison, S. Dak.

- **Gary Brever** of Alexandria, Minn., has been named the 2012 Outstanding Young Farmer by the Minnesota Jaycees. Brever, along with his wife Jennifer and their four sons, owns and operates Ploughshare Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation.

- **Jan Libbey** and **Tim Landgraf** have been chosen the 2012 recipients of the Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Libbey and Landgraf own and operate One Step at a Time Gardens CSA in northern Iowa's Hancock County. **Mike Natvig**, an LSP member who farms in northeast Iowa, won the Spencer Award in 2011.

- **Kim Bartmann** and **Lucia Watson** were named semifinalists for the prestigious James Beard Foundation Award. Bartmann, the owner of Bryant-Lake Bowl, Barbette, Red Stag Supperclub and Pat's Tap, was named in the "Outstanding Restaurateur" category. She is a member of LSP's board of directions. Watson's Lucia's Restaurant was named a semifinalist for the "Outstanding Restaurant" award.

Minnesota Legislative Update

LSP Pushes for Frac Mining Moratorium, Statewide Regulation

Two busloads of citizens from southeast Minnesota traveled to the Minnesota state Capitol Feb. 19 to call for legislation that helps local communities deal with the onslaught of the frac sand mining industry in the region. That proved to be the first of many trips these citizens would make to St. Paul during the 2013 session of the Minnesota Legislature. During press conferences, hearings and face-to-face meetings with lawmakers, Land Stewardship Project members and others made it clear that legislation is needed that creates a moratorium on new frac sand mining operations while an extensive examination of the environmental, health and economic impacts of the industry is conducted. (Such a study is called a Generic Environmental Impact Statement, or GEIS.) LSP and others have also been calling for state-level regulation of the industry, which would supplement local government regulations.

A Major Threat

Frac sand, also called silica sand, is a fine sand found throughout the Driftless Region of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa, and is used in hydraulic fracturing for gas and oil. The frac sand industry has been devastating to western Wisconsin, where over 100 mines, processing and loading facilities are now operating. Water and air have been polluted, rural communities devastated and thousands of people negatively impacted. This industrial-scale silica sand mining is substantially different from the aggregate mining that has long taken place in this region. The frac sand industry poses a real threat to the area's natural resources, road and bridge infrastructure, farming

and tourism industry, and more.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, at least 80 percent of the operations visited by officials in that state are in non-compliance with pollution rules. Nearly a fifth of Wisconsin's sand mines and processing plants were cited for

Status of Frac Sand Bills

As of late March, Senate File 786, authored by Sen. Matt Schmit (DFL-Redwing), was still moving through the Legislature. The bill calls for a one-year moratorium on frac sand mining and an in-depth environmental study that will be used to establish state-level pollution standards to protect air and water. The state level pollution standards would be in addition to county, city and township local control, which stays strong under this bill.

House File 906, authored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South Saint Paul), was also moving forward as this *Land Stewardship Letter* went to press. It calls for the state Environmental Quality Board to develop standards for frac sand ordinances that can be used by local units of government and to create a technical assistance team to help local government. LSP is working with its allies to strengthen this bill by making sure it contains the key elements of Senate File 786.

The 2013 session of the Minnesota Legislature is scheduled to adjourn on May 31 and this issue will most likely be resolved in the final weeks of the legislative session. For the latest updates on this and other legislation, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

environmental violations in 2012, according to the DNR.

The industry is pushing hard to get into southeast Minnesota in a big way. Vince Ready, an LSP member who raises livestock in Saratoga Township, which is near Saint Charles, says that his community is being targeted for seven proposed sand mines (*see sidebar, page 11*), as well as a processing facility that, if built, would be the largest one in the country. Ready said his community is home to numerous productive farms, including several Amish operations.

"We need to act now or our environment will be changed forever," he says. "What was a safe, scenic farming area will become an industrial mining area."

Southeast Minnesota's karst region is extremely sensitive to groundwater pollution. Large-scale frac sand mining will require processing of the sand, which uses toxic chemicals. Frac sand mining and processing release dangerous crystalline silica particles, known to contribute to silicosis, lung cancer and other diseases. It is not known what level of exposure is safe. Hundreds of trucks hauling frac sand daily would also release carcinogenic diesel exhaust into the air.

And as the *Star Tribune* newspaper has documented, the frac sand industry has a track record of bullying rural communities. In Houston County, a frac sand

Frac Sand, see page 11...



LSP member Vince Ready spoke at a press conference held before a special hearing on the frac sand mining issue at the Minnesota Capitol. (LSP photo)

...Frac Sand, from page 10

mine owner refused to abide by the county's moratorium and the county was forced to take court action to get the mine to comply.

So far in Minnesota, regulating this large and new industry has been primarily left to local governments, but they need assistance from the state. Strong state level pollution standards would be in addition to county, city and township local control.

"Mining supporters argue that local government can resolve all the issues without state government intervention. They argue that state entry into the silica sand mining debate would duplicate what local government is already doing. They're wrong," says David Williams, a township supervisor in Fillmore County. "There are substantial reasons why state involvement is needed."

Pushing for Legislation

Locally elected officials, citizens and grassroots groups, including LSP, Save Our Bluffs, Houston County Protectors

and more, packed hearings in February and March as frac sand bills moved through the Senate and House (*see sidebar, page 10*). Time and time again they made it clear that townships, cities and counties do not have the resources needed to regulate the environmental and health-related problems associated with frac sand mining and processing.

When factory farms invaded Minnesota decades ago, lack of state regulation and information resulted in people suffering from the resulting negative environmental

and health impacts after the fact. A moratorium on frac sand mining would provide the opportunity to study the industry thoroughly. The state Legislature must act this session before it's too late. □

For more on LSP's policy work related to the frac sand issue, contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org, or see www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/localorganizing.

EIS to be Conducted on Proposed Winona County Mines

It was announced in late February that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be performed on the controversial Dabelstein-Yoder frac sand mines proposed for Winona County's Saratoga Township. While an EIS is in process, all permitting decisions are put on hold.

Over the winter, the Land Stewardship Project worked with its members in Winona County to convince local officials that an EIS needed to be done on the facilities, which pose a major risk to the region's water, air and roads. In a highly unusual move, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Health supported LSP and its allies by calling for a full EIS of the proposed frac sand mines.

LSP will be watching the EIS process closely. For more information, contact Johanna Rupprecht at 507-523-3366 or jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org.

Progress Toward a People-Centered Health Care System

Minnesota takes a key step to laying the groundwork for affordable, quality health care for everyone, no exceptions.

By Megan Buckingham & Paul Sobocinski

For the past year the Land Stewardship Project and our allies have been organizing to make sure Minnesota moves forward, not backward, under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). It's clear that our current health care system is failing working people across the state—including urban people, rural people and farmers.

In fact, lack of access to affordable care is one of the major impediments to beginning farmers getting started. And in farm families, it's very common for one spouse to take an off-farm job to get health insurance benefits. This makes it more difficult to build an economically viable family farm—a situation that's particularly challenging for livestock operations.

The other options are hardly better: purchasing expensive insurance on the corporate-dominated private market, which is often inadequate to meet people's needs; or joining the 9.1 percent of Minnesotans who take on the risk of going without health insurance coverage.

That's why LSP has been organizing with allies across the state to win changes in our health care system that start to put the power back in the hands of the people. And we have made progress: on March 20,

a "health insurance exchange" bill authored by Senator Tony Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) and Representative Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) was signed by Gov. Mark Dayton.

Under the Affordable Care Act, each state is required to have an insurance exchange, which can be used to help people and small businesses access the private insurance market in a way that's less complicated and offers more affordable options. But the devil's in the details, and this kind of exchange is only going to work if it reins in the power of the insurance industry and puts more control in the hands of real people.

The final exchange, which is called MNsure, does just that. It bars industry representatives with a conflict of interest from the health care exchange board—making the board representative of people, not corporate "stakeholders." The bill also makes it possible for this people's exchange board to negotiate with the insurance companies in such a way that it prevents these corporations from filling the exchange with messy, complicated policies with hidden costs and false choices. As an "active purchaser," the exchange will be able to require the insurance companies to provide clear options that are both better and easier to compare. The insurance industry fought hard to prevent the exchange from being allowed to negotiate better deals for people. In the end, the exchange has a

strong ability to get better deals for people, but that provision is delayed until 2015. That is not good, it means that insurance companies will be allowed to flood the exchange with shoddy "choices" in 2014, the first year the exchange is up and running. But a good board will be able to hit the ground running in 2015, and make companies remove bad plans and offer people better, more affordable and less confusing choices.

The corporate interests on the other side know how strong this bill is, and they lobbied aggressively to strip the exchange of the provisions that make it good for people. Calls and actions from real people—including LSP members and allies—were instrumental in keeping the exchange a resource that puts people, not corporations, first. As the exchange is implemented later this year, LSP will be working with its allies to make sure it stays true to the law. □

*Megan Buckingham and Paul Sobocinski are LSP organizers working on health care issues. Buckingham can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or meganb@landstewardshipproject.org. Sobocinski can be contacted at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@redred.com. More information is also available on LSP's **Affordable Health Care for All** web page at www.landstewardshipproject.org.*

National Meeting Highlights Dozens of Beginning Farmer Education Initiatives

BFRDP Called ‘A Smart Use of Taxpayer Money’

Eighty beginning farmer education projects from 45 states were represented at a national meeting held in Rochester, Minn., in December. The meeting, which was sponsored by the USDA and hosted by the Land Stewardship Project, featured presentations on dozens of innovative approaches groups are using to help new farmers and ranchers start and succeed in agriculture. All of these groups have received funding through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP).

“It’s exciting to be a beginning farmer right now and it’s exciting to work with beginning farmers,” said LSP organizer Nick Olson, who operates a vegetable operation in Litchfield, Minn. Olson is a staff member with Farm Beginnings, an LSP beginning farmer course that has trained over 600 people since 1997 (*see page 19*).

Farm Beginnings is one of the initiatives that has received funding through BFRDP. This is a competitive grants program authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill with \$75 million in mandatory funding. One LSP initiative the program has funded is the Journeyperson Farm Training Course, which provides assistance to new farmers who are in their first few years of business.

Farm Beginnings graduates Jody and Mike Lenz are in the fifth year of operating Threshing Table Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable operation in western Wisconsin. Threshing Table is doing well, but they are seeking a way to make it viable enough for Mike can quit his

off-farm job.

“We are looking forward to using the Journeyperson Course to help us figure out how to bring Mike back to the farm full-time,” Jody told the participants in the BFRDP meeting.

Through the Journeyperson Course, they were recently paired up with veteran vegetable farmer Atina Diffley, who is mentoring them on everything from management to finances.

Administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture within USDA, BFRDP is the only federal program exclusively dedicated to training beginning farmers and ranchers. Program demand has far outpaced available resources, with 528 applications resulting in the awarding of 145 grants over the past four years.

“I’m hearing from constituents who have gotten on the land because of this program. It’s a smart use of taxpayer money,” Minnesota First District U.S. Rep. Tim Walz told meeting participants via an Internet link from Washington, D.C.

Walz is the lead author of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011. He said that BFRDP has been a boon for people who are inter-

Give it a Listen

Suresh Sureshwaran, the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture Program Leader for BFRDP, talks about the initiative on LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/353.

ested in learning about innovative, low-cost sustainable farming methods that are profitable but are often overlooked by traditional public policy initiatives.

“This program gives opportunities to an area of agriculture that for too long had been locked out,” he said.

The future of BFRDP is at risk as the 2012 Farm Bill remains stalled in Congress (*see story below*). Amy Bacigalupo, director of LSP’s Farm Beginnings Program, said U.S. Senators and Representatives need to hear from the public about what a critical role initiatives like BFRDP play in helping beginning farmers and the rural communities they live in.

“We need to let people know that it should continue.” □



During the BFRDP national meeting, Farm Beginnings graduate Jody Lenz talked about her farm’s involvement with LSP’s Journeyperson Farm Training Course. (LSP photo)

Farm Bill (or Lack Thereof) Update

By Adam Warthesen

The creation of a new five-year Farm Bill is in a major stalling pattern. The fall elections, fractured caucuses (especially in the U.S. House) the fiscal cliff and other manufactured crises on budget matters all have trumped comprehensive Farm Bill reauthorization. Simply put, Congress has dropped the ball, and doesn’t appear to be near picking it up anytime soon.

So what did happen with farm policy

this winter? On Jan. 3, as part of the compromise to avoid the “fiscal cliff,” which included a series of expiring tax breaks and spending cuts, Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed into law a highly flawed nine-month Farm Bill extension, which will expire Sept. 30, 2013.

What ended up being the center point of the Farm Bill extension was continuation of the egregious commodity program known as direct payments — subsidies provided to producers no matter what the current production or market realities are. In other

words, these payments are made even at a time when commodity prices are at record levels. The fiscal cliff deal and all agriculture policy within it was initiated by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Vice President Joe Biden.

Extending direct payments was unexpected since nearly everyone in agriculture has recognized the \$5 billion-a-year in subsidies for this commodity program as outdated and in need of reform. There is no logical explanation for the extension of direct payments,

Farm Bill, see page 13...

other than it panders to southern commodity growers, which McConnell identifies with as a Senator from Kentucky.

And while wasteful commodity spending was extended, frozen out of the late-breaking deal was virtually any support for new farmer, rural development and even disaster aid—*despite* the worst drought gripping our country in decades.

The bottom line is that family farm agriculture loses—reverting to the policies of old and disregarding the growth areas in this sector of our economy.

But not all is lost. With the new 113th Congress everything must start anew — opportunities to leverage for greater change and bigger investments in those initiatives that support sustainable agriculture are available. And with the intense budget demands, there could be openings to reform wasteful

and detrimental programs that abuse the land and cost far too much.

In early March, Land Stewardship Project farmer-members from Minnesota and

A Better Farm Bill

LSP's statement on what a new Farm Bill should look like—"Protecting & Conserving Our Nation's Farmland & Supporting Beginning Farmers"—is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/federalpolicy.

Wisconsin participated in a fly-in to Washington, D.C., holding meetings with Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan, House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), Agriculture Committee members Rep. Tim Walz (D-Minn.) and Rep. Rick Nolan (D-Minn.), as well as Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wis.). The

fly-in focused on growing local and regional foods systems, support for beginning farmers and working land conservation and reform to federally subsidized crop insurance.

Feedback from the Congressional offices we visited leads us to believe that the Farm Bill process will begin with a greater emphasis sometime in early summer.

As Tim Gossman, one of the LSP members who participated in the March fly-in put it recently: "This Congress needs to move forward a Farm Bill that invests in the growing areas of agriculture."

Stay tuned for opportunities in coming months to help us push Congress into making that forward movement. □

LSP organizer Adam Warthesen can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP Meets With Minnesota Senators on Farm Bill Priorities

In January two groups of Land Stewardship Project members held meetings in Minnesota with U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken.

The meetings focused on needed investments for growth in agriculture, and opportunities to advance reforms to the excessive crop subsidy program.

Topics discussed included: new farmer initiatives like the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (*see page 12*), working land conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program and making federally subsidized crop insurance more accountable with stronger conservation requirements and subsidy limits.

LSP members also talked to the Senators about the stalled Farm Bill (*see page 12*) and implementation of the new federal health care legislation and its effect on existing state health care plans (*see page 11*).

LSP members met with Sen. Franken in Rochester. Pictured (*l to r*): Tim Gossman, LSP Associate Director/Policy Program Director Mark Schultz, Arvid Jovaag, Lois Jovaag, Curt Tvedt, Luke Tessum, Sen. Franken, Jon Jovaag, Jon Peterson and Lori Peterson.



Land Stewardship Project members recently met with Sen. Klobuchar at the Darrel and Diane Mosel farm in Sibley County. Pictured (*l to r*): Jim Swanson, Michael Mosel, Diane Mosel, Gloria Sinell, Laura Frerichs, Sen. Klobuchar, Darrel Mosel, Loretta Jaus, Martin Jaus, Tom Nuessmeier and LSP organizer Adam Warthesen.



In Wake of Factory Farm Wage Theft Cases, LSP Calls on U of M to Expand Education & Research

By Doug Nopar

Following the recent disclosure that two of the largest industrial farms in southeast Minnesota had violated Minnesota wage and hourly work laws, a trio of rural organizations is calling on the University of Minnesota and its Extension Service to dramatically increase educational outreach and research activities in the area of farm labor rules. The Land Stewardship Project, Centro Campesino (the Farmworker Center) and the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) have combined forces to raise public awareness about “wage theft” on large-scale farms in Minnesota.

In a January settlement with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, Hader Farms of Zumbrota, Minn., agreed to pay workers \$17,633 in back overtime wages. In 2012, the Minnesota Appeals Court ordered Daley Farms of Lewiston, Minn., to pay \$86,385 in back overtime wages to employees.

Daley Farms is a high-profile dairy operation in Winona County, milking approximately 1,500 cows and employing more than 40 workers. It was the site of the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2012 Family Night On The Farm, which drew 1,500 visitors on June 21. Hader Farms Partnership was the largest recipient of USDA crop subsidy payments in Goodhue County from 1995 to 2011, collecting more than \$4.6 million during that period, according to the Environmental Working Group’s farm subsidy database.

It’s the Law

Under Minnesota law, farms that have more than \$500,000 in gross annual sales need to comply with the Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act. Wage and hour law applies to all workers, regardless of status or documentation. Along with workers not being paid overtime, Centro Campesino, LSP and LEDC have documented other examples of violations on industrial farms in Minnesota, including:

- 1) Failure to provide a final paycheck after an employee’s resignation or dismissal.
- 2) Failure to pay for all hours worked.
- 3) Docking of worker wages for damage

to farm equipment or buildings.

- 4) Failure to inform injured workers of their rights to workers’ compensation.
- 5) Personnel policies that are not in compliance with the law.

“We’ve seen cases like these, particularly on large-scale dairy and hog operations, for a number of years, and we continue to witness them,” says Ernesto Velez Bustos, executive director of Centro Campesino in Owatonna, Minn. “This is wage theft. Whether the farm workers are Minnesota natives or immigrant workers, not being paid your full wages is against the law in Minnesota.”

LSP and the other groups first notified the U of M in February 2012 of the need for focused research and education related to farm worker issues. As of late March 2013, LSP, LEDC and Centro Campesino had received minimal response from the University on the issue.

It is the University’s responsibility to provide leadership on this issue, given its well-documented role during the past 15 years in promoting the kind of expansion that has led to the establishment of large-scale factory farms in Minnesota.

The mega-operations that have been created by this expansion must adhere to the Minnesota Fair Labor Standards Act, and the state’s leading agricultural education and outreach institution must help them do that.

We want the U of M to be involved in improved education of farm employers, conducting research on “wage theft” issues in conjunction with farmworker organizations and to provide farmworkers with information about their rights in the workplace.

Barb Nelson of rural Lewiston is a member of LSP’s state policy committee, which has pushed the U of M to be more responsive to the needs of small and mid-sized

farms, as well as the environment. Nelson is actively involved with U of M Extension as a master gardener and through her volunteer work at the Winona County Fair. However, she says that the University has lagged in its education of employers about worker rights.

“The University is the institution that everyone looks to,” she says. “In this case, it’s their responsibility to make sure that farm employers are educated. I’d bet that 80 percent of employers treat their employees well. The ones that don’t follow the rules put a black mark on those that do right by their workers and enjoy an unfair economic advantage.”

LEDC works with people that want to start their own business, some of whom currently support themselves as farmworkers.

“When we are out working in rural areas of the state, we hear stories of labor rights violations on these big livestock farms,” says Yolanda Cotterall, LEDC’s rural Minnesota outreach coordinator. “We’re actually not out there looking for these stories, but the stories are coming to us. They’re coming



Daley Farms was the site of the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2012 Family Night On The Farm, which drew 1,500 visitors on June 21. (photo by Doug Nopar)

from the people we’re working with and from their friends and family members. Unfortunately, because these workers are often undocumented, they are afraid to report these violations to officials.”

If you’re concerned about the treatment of immigrant workers on factory farms in the Minnesota and would like to become involved in the growing effort to rectify these injustices, contact me at 507-523-3366 or dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Doug Nopar is an organizer based in LSP’s southeast Minnesota office.

Meetings Explore Wage Theft, Licenses for Undocumented Residents & Immigration Reform

By Doug Nopar

If meetings held in December and February at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Rochester are any indication, there is a strong and growing coalition forming in southeast Minnesota to press for immigrant rights and immigration reform. More than 120 people attended these events, including members of LSP, the Unitarian Church, the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi Heights, B'nai Israel Synagogue, Olmsted County Public Health, the Migrant Health Clinic and other organizations.

Attendees heard presentations on “wage theft” on factory farms from Ernesto Velez Bustos of Centro Campesino and Yolanda Cotterall of the Latino Economic Development Center (see page 14). Lisa Sass-Zaragoza gave a presentation on the ongoing need for undocumented workers to be able to have driver’s licenses. Sass-Zaragoza, an LSP member with a long history in both the farmworker movement and the sustainable agriculture community, co-facilitated the event with me.

Following the December meeting, LSP, LEDC and Centro Campesino met with Minnesota Commissioner of Labor and Industry

Ken Peterson and his Deputy Commissioner Jessica Looman. At the meeting, Peterson and Looman expressed their full commitment to addressing the wage theft issue on factory farms, and shared information about two recent southeast Minnesota agricultural wage theft cases (see page 14).

“The resolution of those cases was important,” says Centro Campesino’s Bustos. “We hope that it leads to big livestock farms

LSP & Immigration Reform

In February, the Land Stewardship Project drafted a statement calling for comprehensive federal immigration reform. To read “Land Stewardship Project Statement on Immigration Reform: Abuse of our Agricultural Workforce Must End,” see www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/racialjustice.

across the state paying workers according to the law. Unlawful pay schemes like this not only hurt immigrant workers, but they also serve to depress wages for all workers in the rural community. And that situation needs to be turned around.”

Immediately following the November, 2012 election, both Democrats and Republicans began to show a renewed interest in comprehensive immigration reforms. LSP has long

believed that such reforms were necessary to allow undocumented immigrant workers and their families to fully participate in rural community life, both socially and economically (see “LSP & Immigration Reform” sidebar).

The legalization of undocumented residents would make it easier for immigrant farmworkers to speak out about unjust labor practices. It could also allow those immigrants that are interested in beginning a farming operation of their own to explore those possibilities and to move beyond the fear and insecurity about the future that they now have. Attendees of the Rochester meetings were encouraged to contact federal officials and urge passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

Randy Chapman, publisher of the Rochester *Post-Bulletin* and *Agri News*, attended the December meeting, and later wrote about it in both papers:

“The joining of committed individuals taking action together is more than just a do-gooder act of charity. In fact to push for immigration reform is really in our own self-interest,” wrote Chapman. “What kind of society do we want? What quality of community and town do we want? What kind of world do we want to live in? Taking a stand is more than just charity for others, but selfish unto ourselves. Should we not act when we can, we stand to lose our humanity.” □

Immigrant Farmer Conference

Over 220 farmers and others participated in the Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference in Saint Paul in early February. The conference, which was hosted by the Minnesota Food Association, Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women of Minnesota, Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, was co-sponsored by several groups, including the Land Stewardship Project.

During the two-day conference, farmers from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio and Massachusetts participated in how-to workshops, shared stories and learned about resources available to them. Ethnicities represented at the conference included Hmong, Karen, Latino, Bhutanese, Vietnamese,



Somali, Nepalese, Kenyan, Oromo, African American and Native American.

Several LSP members presented at workshops during the conference, including western Minnesota farmers Jim (pictured) and LeeAnn Van Der Pol, who talked about how to produce and direct-market hogs.

This is the 8th year the Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference has been held. For more information on work in the Minnesota area with immigrant and minority farmers, see the Minnesota Food Association’s website at www.mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676. (LSP photos)



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. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Madeline Neenan is seeking to buy a 20 to 40 acre apple orchard in the *Twin Cities region*. She, her sister and brother-in-law would be interested in a mentorship/transition period with the current owner. Contact: Madeline Neenan, meneenan@gmail.com, 651-319-3813.

◆ Mhonpaj Lee is seeking to purchase 15 acres of tillable farmland in *Washington County, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. She would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years, and would like it to have a pole barn and a house. She would also like it to have access to a well and to have possible livestock production capability. Contact: Mhonpaj Lee, 651-278-1009.

◆ Lucie Passus is seeking to rent 10 acres or less of tillable farmland *within 50 miles of Minnesota's Twin Cities*. No house is required. Contact: 651-400-0285, passusl@gmail.com.

◆ Lucas Johnson is seeking 1-5 acres of farmland *near Forest Lake, Minn., in the Twin Cities area*. He would like pasture to raise hogs and chickens on, as well as a woodlot. Contact: Lucas Johnson, 612-562-5600, wittenburgfarms@gmail.com; www.wittenburgfarms.blogspot.com.

◆ Brennen Bergstrom is seeking to buy or rent tillable farmland in *Kandiyohi or Meeker county in west-central or south-central Minnesota*. He is a beginning farmer looking to get started with his dad. No house is required. Contact: Brennen Bergstrom, bbergstrom13@hotmail.com, 320-857-289.

◆ Kevin Hard is seeking to buy 10-100 acres of farmland *near Duluth, in northeast Minnesota*. He would like it to be pastured land and does not require a house. Contact: Kevin Hard, kevin.walter.hard@gmail.com, 320-296-6388.

◆ Mike Wellens is seeking to buy tillable farmland in the *west and east-central Minnesota counties of Carver, McLeod, Scott or Sibley*. No house is required. Contact: Mike Wellens, 952-448-5167.

◆ Jason Fischer is seeking to rent or buy 40+ acres of farmland in *southern Minnesota (Watonwan, Brown, Blue Earth, Cottonwood, Jackson or Martin County)*. He does not require a house but, if possible, would like the property to include a cattle barn, grain bins and hog facilities. Fischer is willing to be a long-term renter. Contact: Jason Fischer, 507-956-5602, Jason.Fischer2007@yahoo.com.

◆ Ben Aakre is seeking to purchase farmland in northwest *Minnesota's Clay or Becker County*. He is seeking pasture, fencing and water; no house is required. Contact: Ben Aakre, 701-429-7525, ben.aakre@yahoo.com.

◆ Trevor Gustafson is seeking to purchase 15-30 acres of farmland near the *southeast Minnesota community of Zumbrota*. He would like pasture, a barn, fencing for sheep and a house. Contact: Trevor Gustafson, 206-359-0453, gustafson183@gmail.com.

◆ Mike Gilles has available a large number of sugar maple trees on his farm near *Ridgeway, in southeast Minnesota's Winona County*. The trees offer a good opportunity for anyone interested in maple syrup tapping, either as a business or a hobby. Gilles is open to various options, including a lease arrangement or limited partnership. Contact: Mike Gilles, gillesdairy@yahoo.com.

◆ Patrick McNally is seeking to buy 40 acres of pastureland in *Minnesota or Wisconsin*. He is seeking land with water and a barn. No house is required. Contact: Patrick McNally, starfishmcnally@gmail.com.

◆ Daniel Zemke is seeking to buy tillable farmland in *western Wisconsin or eastern Minnesota*. Contact: Daniel Zemke, 715-222-0352.

◆ David Ziegahn is seeking to buy 40 acres in southwest *Wisconsin's Richland or Vernon County*. He would like pasture and for the land to have not been sprayed for several years. Contact: David Ziegahn, 501-993-2098, ziegahn79@yahoo.com.

◆ Kyle Bucholz is seeking to rent or buy tillable farmland in *western Wisconsin's Pierce County*. No house is required. Contact: Kyle Bucholz, 715-307-1454, malkyle@yahoo.com.

◆ Courtney Stevens and Jamie Bertsch are seeking to rent at least 1 acre of land in *eastern Wisconsin's Ozaukee, Washington, Manitowoc or Sheboygan County*. They want to grow cut flowers organically and they would like land that's not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Courtney Stevens, courtneystev@gmail.com, or Jamie Bertsch, jamiBERTSCH@gmail.com.

◆ Kevin McGraw is seeking to rent up to 5 acres of farmland in *southeast Wisconsin's Dodge or Jefferson County, or to the east of there*. He would like land that has not been sprayed in several years and for it to have some type of outbuilding for storing and processing vegetables. Contact: Kevin McGraw, 608-692-8691, kevmcgraw@yahoo.com.

◆ Anthony James is seeking to buy 10-15 acres of farmland in *Ozaukee or Washington County in southeast Wisconsin*. He would like pasture, and if possible outbuildings for overwintering layers and breeding goats. Access to water and perimeter fencing would also be preferred. No house is required. Contact: Anthony James, 414-915-6788, anth.james@sbcglobal.net.

Clearinghouse, see page 17...

Seeking Farmland, continued...

◆ George and Justine Katze are seeking to buy 40-100 acres of farmland in *southern, southwestern or central Wisconsin*. They would like pasture, a tie stall barn (no parlors) and a small silo, as well as a house. The Katzes would also like some woods on the farm. Contact: George or Justine Katze, 920-905-4863, katze920@hotmail.com

◆ Jeremy Menke is seeking to buy 150 to 200 acres of farmland in *Wisconsin*. He would like pasture and a dairy barn that's ready to use. He is open to taking over a dairy farm on a share-milking basis. Contact: Jeremy Menke, 608-339-2949.

◆ Seth Stallings is seeking to buy 10 to 100 acres of farmland in *Wisconsin or Oklahoma*. Stallings is seeking to launch a mixed livestock and vegetable operation and would like land that has not been sprayed for several years. No house is required. Contact: Seth Stallings, stallings.sd@gmail.com.

◆ Daniel and Katie Hackett are seeking to buy 80 to 100 acres of farmland in *Wisconsin or Ohio*. They would like pasture they can set up for rotational grazing and land that has not been sprayed for several years. No house is required, but the Hacketts would like a small barn/shed for storage. Contact: Daniel or Katie Hackett, hackettdk@gmail.com.

◆ Ashton and Kyle Walls are seeking to buy 20+ acres of farmland in *central Ohio's Knox County*. They would like the land to have pasture, a house and fencing, and for it to be on a little-traveled road. Contact: Ashton or Kyle Walls, 740-392-0846, AWK-FARMS@centurylink.net.

◆ Andrea Tholen is seeking to buy 100+ acres of farmland in *Ohio*. Tholen needs pasture; no house is required. Contact: Andrea Tholen, atho16@vt.edu.

◆ Steve Bertram is seeking to rent 5+ acres of farmland in *northeast Illinois*. He wants pasture and a barn/poultry house. A house is required. Contact: Steve Bertram, 224-200-8269, bertramenergy@gmail.com.

◆ Devin Chipman is seeking to rent 100 acres or more of tillable farmland in *central Illinois*. No house is required. Contact: Devin Chipman, 309-221-6201, Devin.Chipman2010@gmail.com.

◆ Jesse Hanson is seeking to buy farmland in *northwest Iowa (Sac County area)*. Outbuildings would be nice, but are not a necessity; no house is required. Contact: Jesse Hanson, 1874 Union Ave., Sac City, IA 50583; 712-260-1797; jhansonfarms@hotmail.com.

◆ Elaine Wilson is seeking to rent 40 to 80 acres of farmland in *western Missouri's Cass or Peculiar County*. She would like the land to have pasture; no house is required. Contact: Elaine Wilson, 816-565-1592, efweyefaye@yahoo.com.

◆ John Anderson is seeking to buy 10 acres of farmland in *Missouri*. No house is required. Contact: John Anderson, 816-716-2111.

◆ Heather Markham is seeking to buy a minimum of 30 acres of farmland in *southeast Missouri's Bollinger or Wayne County*. She would like for the land to have not been sprayed for several years and would prefer a house and barn. Markham would be interested in a situation where the elderly owners of the farm stay on the property. Contact: Heather Markham, livingplanetfarms@gmail.com.

◆ Andrae is seeking to buy 40 to 100 acres of farmland in the *Midwest*. Pasture, a barn, ponds and a house are preferred. Andrae would be ready to move in June 2013. Contact: Andrae, 330-259-5818, maumaucanecorso@yahoo.com.

Farmland Available

◆ Chad and Julia Sandstrom are seeking a renter for 8-18 acres of tillable farmland in *Washington County, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. The land has not been sprayed in 18 years and it's currently planted to hay. They are looking to rotate it, rebuild the soil and convert it back to hay in the future. No house is available. Contact: Julia Sandstrom, 612-250-9125, jgsandstrom@msn.com.

◆ Robert Ossig has for sale 72 acres of land in *Minnesota's Carver County, near the Twin Cities*. The land includes forested acres. The asking price is \$600,000. Contact: Robert Ossig, 201-669-7937.

◆ Linda Stewart has for sale a produce farm *55 miles west of Minnesota's Twin Cities*. The 83-acre chemical-free farm includes 25 acres tillable. No animals have been raised on the property since 2000 (24 chickens that year).

The farm and the facilities could be used for cooperative farming, farm education classes and events. The 1900s vintage restored house has been licensed as a bed and breakfast. The original 50 x 30 dairy barn has a 30 x 30 heated and air conditioned gathering room, new roof, new wood siding, new windows and a 30 x 30 heated workshop/animal space.

Produce farming equipment and bed and breakfast furnishings negotiable in purchase of farm. Contact: www.kingstononthecrow.com or Linda Stewart, kingstononthecrow@gmail.com.

◆ Joanne Svendsen has 14 acres of farmland in *western Minnesota's Big Stone County* for sale. The land has not been sprayed for several years. There is a chicken coop and pole barn, both with electricity, as well as a storage shed, hog barn, garden, grove, well, septic and house. The asking price is \$80,000. Contact: Joanne Svendsen, 507-359-0727, fhsoaps@gmail.com.

◆ Nancy and Yvonne Massey have for sale 40 acres of farmland in *northwest Wisconsin's Polk County*. The land has not been sprayed in several years and includes 30 tillable acres. Property includes house and various facilities/equipment for raising produce. The asking price is \$320,000. See farm's Facebook page for more information: www.facebook.com/pages/Goats-and-Gardens-Farm/61739766838. Contact: Yvonne Massey, massey.yvonne@yahoo.com.

◆ Jessica Jens has for sale an 18-acre farm in southern *Wisconsin's Dane County, near the town of Mazomanie*. The property includes 8 acres of rotationally grazed pasture, a barn, chicken coop and a house. It has not been sprayed for several years. The asking price is \$285,000. More information and pictures are available at <http://windsweptacres.wordpress.com/farm-for-sale>. Contact: Jessica Jens, windsweptacresmazo@gmail.com.

Clearinghouse, see page 18...

Farmland Available, continued...

◆ Tate Sandrock has for sale 40 acres of farmland in *south-central Wisconsin's Sauk County*. It includes 20 acres of tillable land, pasture, an 85 x 35 barn, a silo and cement pad, and a house. The land has woven wire/electric fence. The asking price is \$200,000. Contact: Tate Sandrock, 608-354-5552, tatesandrock@yahoo.com.

◆ Jim Gerhartz has for sale 10-15 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin's Burnett County*. It has not been sprayed in 12 years. There are 4 acres of tillable land, with a quarter-acre of raised beds that are fenced. There is water, a 24 x 24 earth-bermed structure and a 20 x 40 shed-greenhouse. No house is available. The price is negotiable—open to conventional or alternative rental or purchase agreements. Contact: Jim Gerhartz, 651-731-1061, jimgerhartz@yahoo.com.

◆ Erin Altemus and Matt Schmidt have for sale 38 acres of farmland in *western Wisconsin, near Glenwood City*. Eight acres is currently tillable, with an additional 7 acres enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Program contract that will expire in September 2013. Facilities include two houses, a barn with an updated metal roof, packing shed, walk-in cooler, a 12 x 48 greenhouse, two pole sheds, two hoop houses and a refurbished grain bin/yurt.

There is also a maple sugar bush, as well as established hops, rhubarb, apple trees, raspberries and asparagus plantings. The asking price is \$234,000. Contact: www.pineyhillfarm.blogspot.com or Erin Altemus/Matt Schmidt, pineyhillfarm@gmail.com, 715-953-4847.

◆ Debbie Ritke has for sale 25 acres of farmland near the *northern Illinois community of Ottawa*. The farm includes pasture and a house. The land has not been sprayed in nine years. The asking price is \$470,000. Contact: Debbie Ritke, 815-258-4342, debbie@debbieritke.com

Seeking Farm Partner

◆ Suzanne Zipperer is seeking a farmer to join her operation *near Mantiowoc, in eastern Wisconsin*. The farm is 50 acres and some land has been enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program for 20 years. Zipperer

would like a partner to begin organic vegetable production under a permaculture model with poultry and pork. A house is available and living arrangements are negotiable. Possibilities include full partnership or a farmer having their own operation on the land as part of a complementary enterprise. Other ideas are welcome. Contact: Suzanne Zipperer, 414-332-1337.

Seeking Farmer — Seeking Interns

◆ Tim and Naomi Anderson are seeking a farmer to work with them on their livestock and cropping operation in *west-central Minnesota's Douglas County*. Their 700-acre farm has a dairy herd, as well as beef cattle and crops. The Andersons are in the process of transitioning their dairy to organic (they plan to be certified by 2014), and the cows are milked in a New Zealand style parlor. The pay is competitive, depending on experience. Contact: Naomi Anderson, 218-948-2820, tandersonfarm@gmail.com.

◆ The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is seeking a part-time farm laborer for its *Wozupi Organic Farm in Prior Lake, Minn.*, starting this spring. This position will assist in planting and cultivating edible fruits and vegetables for a certified organic farm-to-market operation. This includes greenhouse work, installation of a fruit orchard, working in a high tunnel, managing bee colonies, doing record-keeping, assisting with volunteers and youth groups, assisting with production of maple syrup and operating tractors and other implements. At least one year of crop production experience is required, as well as the ability to operate farm machinery. Contact: Molly Carter, 952-496-7379, www.mysticlake.com.

◆ Earth Dance Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation, is seeking interns for its 2013 growing season. Earth Dance is located near *Spring Valley, in southeast Minnesota*. Contact: www.earthdancefarm.net/internships.

Seeking Farm Work/ Seeking Farm Internship

◆ LSP Farm Beginnings student Denise Zabinski is seeking farm work experience in *western Minnesota*, preferably on a vegetable operation. She is seeking experience in all aspects of wholesale vegetable farming.

Zabinski has experience in various aspects of livestock and vegetable production, and has received Master Gardener certification. She is available to work between April and November. Contact: Denise Zabinski, 320-528-2682 (home), 218-685-6410 (work), dzabinski@hotmail.com.

◆ Joshua Witte is seeking work experience on a vegetable farming operation *within commuting distance of Minnesota's Twin Cities*. He is interested in vermicomposting, bio-intensive gardening, hydro and aquaponics. Witte has gardening experience and worked on a dairy farm. Contact: Joshua Witte, 612-747-9693, joshua.witte@gmail.com.

◆ Robert Stark is seeking work experience on a dairy farm in the *Minnesota region*. He is currently an assistant herdsman and has worked on dairy and beef farms. His goal is to get enough experience to start his own dairy operation. Contact: Robert Stark, 507-429-1004.

◆ Devin Chipman is seeking summer farm work in *Illinois*. Chipman is interested in working with a retiring farmer with the possibility of eventually renting or taking over the farm. Contact: Devin Chipman, 309-221-6201, Devin.Chipman2010@gmail.com.

◆ Joshua Urie is seeking farm work on a small sustainable operation. He has broad experience doing agricultural work. Contact: Joshua Urie, 720-840-7606, jet_urie@gmail.com.

◆ Lekhnath Sigdel is seeking work on a farm. Sigdel has a business degree and has farmed in Nepal. Training in animal husbandry and on-farm milk/cheese processing and marketing is of particular interest. Contact: Lekhnath Sigdel, 984-948-0953, sigdel_np@hotmail.com.

◆ Nathan Austin-Powell is seeking an internship on a farm, preferably working with livestock. He has a degree in construction technologies and has experience working on various types of produce and livestock farms; he is currently interning on an organic farm. Contact: Nathan Austin-Powell, 318-269-2865, powell1942yahoo.com.

Farm Beginnings

2013-2014 FB Accepting Applications

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is now accepting applications until Aug. 1 for the 2013-2014 class session. There will be two separate classes—one in central Minnesota (Saint Cloud area) and one in southeast Minnesota (Winona area).

In 2013, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 16th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is designed for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

This 10-month training course provides opportunities for beginning and transitioning farmers to learn firsthand about values clarification and goal setting, whole farm planning, strategic farm planning, and low-cost, sustainable farming methods. The Farm Beginnings course provides 43 hours of training and hands-on learning opportunities in the form of classroom sessions, farm tours, field days, workshops and accessing an extensive farmer network.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the fall, run until March 2014, followed by an on-farm education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

Over the years, more than 600 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Begin-

nings classes have been held over the years in Illinois, Nebraska and North Dakota. Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, New York and Maine. For application materials or more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org, or contact Karen Benson at 507-523-3366, lpse@landstewardshipproject.org. □

LSP Farmer Network

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program has created the Farmer Network, 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.

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

Farm Beginnings Field Days this Spring & Summer

Grazing, Community Supported Agriculture, high tunnels and orchard production are some of the topics being covered during a series of Land Stewardship Project Farm Beginnings field days this spring and summer.

See the **Stewardship Calendar** on page 32 for details, or check our web calendar at www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/upcomingevents. □

LSP Journeyperson Course Launched

This winter 17 farms participated in the farm planning retreat that kicked off the Journeyperson Farm Training Course. Journeyperson provides new farmers who are in their first few years of launching their operations assistance through mentorship, financial planning assistance, whole Farm planning, peer-to-peer learning and matched savings accounts. The focus of this initiative is to pair up newer farmers with veteran mentor farmers.

At the January retreat, farmer Atina Diffley and LSP Farm Beginnings organizer Richard Ness were presenters. Participants are now working with both a farmer mentor and a financial adviser on their individual farm planning. Each farm in the course will also be a part of a new matched savings account program, where on a monthly basis participants will deposit up to \$100 in a savings account and after two years their money will be matched and they will be able to use it toward a capital improvement on their farm.

LSP will begin taking applications in May for the 2014 Journeyperson Course. If you are interested in applying, contact Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, 507-523-3366, or Richard Ness at rness@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105. More information is also available at www.farmbeginnings.org.

'Is Farming Your Future?' Workshop April 14 in Minneapolis

Are you trying to figure out if a farming career is right for you? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program is offering a "Farm Dreams" workshop April 14, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., at the Good Earth Food Co-op in Saint Cloud, Minn.

The registration fee is \$20 for Land Stewardship Project members and \$40 for non-members, and pre-registration is required. For details or to register, contact Nick Olson at 320-269-2105 or nicko@landstewardshipproject.org. Registration

is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

"The workshop is designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether farming is for them," says Olson, a Farm Beginnings organizer and facilitator for the Farm Dreams workshop. "This is an opportunity to learn what it takes to start and manage a farm-based business, and decide whether this is the path they are ready to take."

In this interactive workshop, participants

will learn about regional training opportunities through LSP's Farmer Network (*see above*), the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Extension and others. This class is the first step to planning an educational path toward farming.

After participating in this class and getting on-farm training over the growing season, prospective farmers may be ready for Farm Beginnings (*see above*).

Farm Beginnings

Bryan Crigler & Katelyn Foerster

Stacking Up the Advantages

The temperature hovers a few degrees above zero and fresh snow swirls around their feet as Bryan Crigler and Katelyn Foerster bend into a fierce wind and head into a stand of walnut trees on a recent January day. In contrast to the wild woods, neat rows of ironwood logs are leaning on wires amidst the trees, stacked tee-pee style like firewood too pretty to burn. In fact, these chunks of wood—there are some 3,000 in all—contain fuel of a different sort: every 40-inch log is riddled with some 50 holes, and each plugged tap contains the spawn for this year's crop of shiitake mushrooms, patiently waiting out the winter snows.

While examining the woody row crop, Crigler reflects on one thing he learned while taking the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course in 2008-2009: when considering starting a farming operation, it's best to consider one's "unfair advantages."

He and Foerster feel they have many: access to land, jobs they can work in the

off-season, good communications skills, connections to established farmers as well as restaurants and other food retailers, a rela-



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

tive who designed a really cool farm logo for them—you get the picture.

"Our list keeps growing," Crigler, 34, says.

And as he and Foerster, 25, consider their next steps in adding some permanence to their mushroom and Community Supported Agriculture operation, Herbal Turtle Farms (www.herbalturtlefarms.com), they will need to take advantage of as many of those advantages as possible.



Crigler and Foerster raise shiitake mushrooms using waste ironwood logs. The outdoor operation can be labor intensive, but pays off in the marketplace. "We charge a higher premium for our mushrooms, and we want to focus on the quality of the mushroom to make sure it's justified," says Crigler. (LSP photo)

Renaissance Farming

Crigler says one of his original unfair advantages was that he was exposed to an alphabet soup of farming enterprises when he was younger. In the 1990s, Crigler's father Jim bought approximately 200 acres of hardwood forest, hay ground and pasture in the back of one of the coulees that lie on the outskirts of Winona, in southeast Minnesota. Saint Mary's University and a smattering of sprawling development are within a mile of the farm, but the land sits on a dead-end, isolated part of a road. Such a location provides a good balance of solitude and access to markets, says Crigler. The other advantage is that the farm has been home to numerous small enterprises over the years.

"I was exposed to a lot of things—chickens, mushrooms, turkeys, vegetable gardening, miniature goats, miniature donkeys, lamb, Scottish Highland cattle. You know—hobby farm," says Crigler with a laugh.

Researching the Market

Crigler has a degree in communications from Winona State University and worked in telecommunication sales and corporate communication after graduation. Six years ago, he quit without a backup plan. "I decided I really wasn't built for cubicle work and suits and ties," recalls Crigler.

But he liked working the various enterprises on his family's farm and started thinking seriously about making a career out of agriculture. Crigler talked to established farmers, co-op managers and chefs in the area, researching enterprises that would work well on the heavily wooded land, but which would not invade an already crowded market.

"Luckily we have a community where there's people who are willing to share information—between co-op managers and chefs, as well as other farmers," says Crigler. "I didn't want to jump into a market that was over-saturated already, because it doesn't help the farmers that are already here and it certainly doesn't help us."

One of the farmers he networked with was Heather Secrist, who owns and operates Suncrest Gardens Farm in nearby Cochrane, Wis. Secrist, a 2003 Farm Beginnings graduate, recommended that Crigler enroll in the class himself. The Farm Beginnings course, which LSP has been offering since 1997, has become a national model for providing wannabe farmers with training in innovative business planning, marketing and goal-setting, among other things. Farm Beginnings is also known for its use of established farmers and other agricultural professionals

Fresh Faces, see page 21...

as class instructors (see page 19).

Soon after he started the class in 2008, Crigler noticed that it emphasized not getting too hung-up on one type of farming enterprise. Rather, students are encouraged to take a broad look at the resources — also known as “advantages” — at their disposal, and to take a big picture view.

That was an important message for Crigler. He was originally very focused on marketing black walnuts from his family’s property. But it turns out selling walnuts for products like ice cream mixes has very low margins.

“Farm Beginnings gave me the ability to break down each enterprise and see if it was making money,” says Crigler. “That was valuable. It made it easier to figure out what to zero in on.”

Crigler’s interaction with Secrist altered the trajectory of Herbal Turtle Farms in another important way. At the time, Foerster was interning at Suncrest, and she and Crigler eventually became a couple.

Foerster has a degree in international relations from Winona State and much of her extended family is involved in corn and soybean farming in southwest Minnesota. But while interning at Suncrest, she got interested in the Community Supported Agriculture model. Also called CSA, it involves selling shares in a farm, usually a produce operation, before the growing season. In return, the farmer delivers produce to “members” on a weekly basis (see page 8). It turned out to be a good fit for Herbal Turtle, although Foerster concedes that she and Crigler got into CSA vegetable farming a bit by accident. In 2009 she planted what she thought was just enough vegetables for their own use.

“It turns out I can’t raise vegetables for one family,” she says with a laugh. “I ended up planting 150 tomato plants. That’s when I knew we were in trouble.”

To deal with the excess, that year they sold shares to seven families in the area. Since then, the CSA enterprise has steadily grown to where this season there will be 60

shares. The couple may have stumbled into it by accident, but it turns out the CSA enterprise is a good way of guaranteeing income without investing huge amounts of resources into marketing during the season, something Foerster calls “small farm insurance.” It’s also a way for the farm to make deep connections with the local food community.

“I really just like the diversity of vegetables you can grow using that model and the connection to all the people you’re growing for,” says Foerster. “People are so excited about what we’re doing out here and interested in what’s happening on a day-to-day basis. And I think the fact that they are willing to share in the risk with us is huge.”

The shiitake mushroom business, on the other hand, is more of a solitary operation. Shiitakes require drilling holes in the logs — in this case they are waste ironwood pieces from a local logger — and planting spawn in the holes, which are plugged with wax. It takes up to a year for the first mushrooms to fruit. In the meantime, the logs — they weigh around 30 pounds each — must be soaked periodically (they use old livestock watering tanks).

“You have to be patient to be a mushroom farmer,” says Crigler. “It’s very labor intensive. We pick up maybe one log 10

times per season, times that by 3,000 logs, and we get pretty buff during the summer.”

Invasive fungi can be a problem, as well as drought conditions such as what the region experienced in 2012. But all the hard work and stress can pay off. Herbal Turtle can count on two to three fruitings per log from April to October, and each fruiting can generate a quarter-pound of mushrooms. High quality shiitakes can go for \$16 a pound on the wholesale market.

The market to restaurants in the region, as well as food co-ops and the farmers’ markets in Winona and Rochester. Mushrooms are also offered as part of the CSA members’ shares.

“We charge a higher premium for our mushrooms, and we want to focus on the quality of the mushroom to make sure it’s justified, that a local chef would want to



Dehydrated mushrooms help Herbal Turtle’s farmers add value to their production. (LSP photo)

Give it a Listen

Bryan Crigler and Katelyn Foerster talk about Herbal Turtle Farms on episode 129 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

look at our mushrooms as compared to mushrooms shipped in from Oregon or China or wherever, and say this is clearly a superior mushroom, this is what I want to give to my clientele,” says Crigler. “We want something we can stand behind.”

The past two growing seasons, Herbal Turtle’s overall income has been pretty much evenly split between the CSA and the mushroom enterprise. Both Crigler and Foerster have off-farm jobs—he telecommutes as a high-tech recruiter and she cooks during the winter at the Blue Heron, a Winona café that showcases locally produced food, including produce and mushrooms produced on Herbal Turtle. Foerster sees her connection to the restaurant as yet one more advantage the farm has.

“It’s been really wonderful to see how chefs like to receive foods, what they want them to look like, what they do with them once they actually get them,” she says.

A Third Enterprise?

The couple is now looking for one more enterprise to add to the mix, one that will allow them to increase income without adding employees and that won’t “bump up against” other farming operations in the area as far as market share goes.

They also need an enterprise that’s somewhat “portable,” since someday they will face the prospect of having to move Herbal Turtle to a more permanent home, preferably to land they own.

For now, Crigler and Foerster are continuing to build their mushroom and CSA business, while generating income with their off-farm jobs to help them when it comes time to get that loan from the bank for farmland.

“If we go to a bank for a loan to buy our own farm, we can’t go with a dream,” says Crigler. “You have to show you have a steady, good income.”

Crigler and Foerster are also interested in enrolling in LSP’s Journeyman Farm Training Course (see page 19).

In other words, that list of “unfair advantages” is set to get even longer. □

Farm Beginnings Profiles

To read more profiles of Farm Beginnings graduates, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/meetourgraduates.

Community Based Foods

Big Stone Seasonal Cooking & Preserving Classes Create a Food-Centered Community

By Rebecca Terk

We need to teach cooking again,” said the former director of the West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Dorothy Rosemeier. “And, we need to figure out a way to do it that truly engages the community in the pleasures of preparing and eating great food.”

The retired University of Minnesota Extension Educator and local foods champion made these comments in the summer of 2011 in Morris, Minn. It was during a gathering of partners from the Morris and Big Stone Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Healthy Eating teams, as well as “advocates” and good food enthusiasts from the surrounding region. Keynote speaker and Twin Cities chef Jenny Breen, author of *Cooking Up the Good Life: Creative Recipes for the Family Table*, echoed Rosemeier’s sentiment.

The test case for this new way of sharing the joy of cooking took shape later that year in a meeting involving Rosemeier, Land Stewardship Project Community Based Food Systems director Terry Van Der Pol and me. The goal was to create an outline for monthly workshops in Big Stone County that focused less on calorie-counting, cup-measuring, and top-down instruction, and more on locally-available seasonal foods, preparation and preservation techniques, as well as engagement of community members as co-developers and instructors for the class.

Published resources such as cookbooks, Extension food preservation guides, and the Whole Plate curriculum would be consulted and incorporated, but so would the resources inherent in a community teeming with creative and skilled cooks. One of 2012’s participants-turned-instructor (a former chef and caterer) said, “These classes bring together people of all skill levels who are interested in good food and how to prepare it. It’s nice to share ideas, get inspired, and even I usually learn something new.”

The 2012 workshops were held in two locations per month from June through October, most often in the Family and Consumer Science classrooms at the high school in Graceville (in the northern part of Big Stone

County), and Ortonville High School (in the south). As the season progressed, classes were occasionally moved to the homes of instructors, where the atmosphere was less formal—and air conditioning was available. Weather also played a part in changes to curriculum—for example, Swiss chard

Big Stone County

For more on LSP’s Community Based Food Systems work in Big Stone County, contact Wade Kaiser at wadek@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-305-9247. More information is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/justfoodforall/bigstonecounty.

was mentioned in July’s lesson outline, but it was left out of the class when the locally available chard bolted to seed in the heat. However, flexibility in the kitchen was a key component of the learning process, and that month’s menu evolved to include a cooling herbed-cucumber soup with yogurt, marinat-

ed and grilled zucchini “planks” topped with chopped egg and parsley, and “dry-fried” snap beans with sesame seeds, a drizzle of dark sesame oil, and a dash of coarse salt—a favorite of participants once they learned to let them cool a bit after they emerged from the wok.

Leaving room in the curriculum for flexibility in the recipes and techniques let local instructors take the lead in developing “their” classes. LSP staff worked with them to create a “menu” for the evening, source local produce from growers, and procure other ingredients through a partnership with the Granary Food Co-op in Ortonville, which provided a discount on class ingredients and helped promote the workshops. Rosemeier’s Extension background and can-do attitude helped inspire newcomers to try home food preservation (or try it again)—especially during those classes where pickling, tomato sauce making, and even meat-canning were on the agenda.

The second season now under way consists of January-through-April classes focused on preparing pastured meats and “using the whole bird,” creative uses of dried beans, whole grains and gluten-free baking, and the “last of the roots—first of the shoots” in early spring. A few changes have been made to the program following instructor and participant feedback from 2012.

Due to the time involved with class

Cooking, see page 23...



Participants in January’s “Getting the Most Out of Your Meat Budget” class sample the dishes they’ve prepared. From left: Heidi Pilot, Stephanie Pelowski, Dorothy Rosemeier, Rebecca Terk and Ardith Eckhardt. (photo by Wade Kaiser)

preparation, it was decided to hold the 2013 workshops in only one location each month, instead of two. However, the location changes each month, with an effort to balance between northern and southern parts of the county so that participants who regularly

2013 Cooking Classes

New cooking classes are being held in 2013, including sessions on ethnic cooking and bread baking. For more information, check www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/upcomingevents or contact Wade Kaiser at 320-305-9247, wadek@landstewardshipproject.org.

attend will not be forced to travel long distances each month to do so. Specifics about location have also changed, with participants and instructors requesting to host and/or teach in private homes, citing the more causal and convivial atmosphere and—for instructors—familiarity with the kitchen and its layout. Still, this is no move to create a private club—instructors and hosts are still

committed to inviting all those who wish to learn about, prepare and celebrate good food—so long as the number of attendees does not overwhelm their available space.

One thing that will not change is the sit-down meal at the conclusion of every course, where participants sample the fruits (and vegetables, dairy, meats, and grains) of their labors and talk about the process of creating the meal, and what they might do differently in their own kitchen. There also tend to be a lot of “oohs,” “ahhs” and “mmms.” While participants fill out a formal evaluation at the end of the evening (after the dishes are washed and floors are swept), the time spent around the dinner table is about conviviality and the core concept behind the class remains: engaging, and even creating, community around the pleasures of preparing and eating great food. □



The core concept behind the class is engaging, and even creating, community around the pleasures of preparing and eating great food. (photo by Wade Kaiser)

preparing and eating great food. □

Rebecca Terk is an LSP Community Based Food Systems Program organizer working in western Minn. She can be contacted at rebeccat@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-305-9685.

Going to the Source

Real chefs inspect their produce on the vine, or as chef Pasquale Presa (left) of the Kahler Grand Hotel in Rochester, Minn., puts it, want that “feeling of the farm.” Either way, the executive chef of the Kahler Grand Hotel in Rochester, Minn., visited Whitewater Gardens Farm near Altura, Minn., this winter before making the first of ongoing orders for hotel events. Presa, who gardens and cans with friends, says his banquet diners like the local angle.

The Land Stewardship Project helped Presa source local food for the national USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program conference, hosted by LSP at the Kahler in December (see page 12). Besides Whitewater Gardens, food for the conference was procured from the Pork N’ Plants Heritage Farm, Kappers’ Big Red Barn Dairy, Larry Schultz Organic Farms and Hidden Stream Farm.

Regardless of the recipe, Presa is putting his money where his mouth is when it comes to supporting local farmers, a fact that sets him apart from many vocal enthusiasts at the institutional level. Standing next



to Presa is LSP member-farmer Matt Dietz of Whitewater Gardens. As a young farmer working into a family operation, Dietz knows that steady local sales are good for the Kahler

and for the well-being of farmers and the region as a whole. Dietz farms with his parents, Lonny (right) and Sandy. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

A Community Supported Future

EDITOR'S NOTE: In early January over 200 farmers and others gathered in Eau Claire, Wis., for the Midwest CSA Conference. This was a chance for operators of CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms to share tips, as well as talk about how far the movement has come in the past two decades and where it's headed in the future. The conference was sponsored by the Wisconsin Farmers Union, in partnership with the Land Stewardship Project and several other groups. One of the keynote speakers was LSP member Tony Schultz, who, along with his partner Kat Becker, owns and operates Stoney Acres Farm (www.stoneyacresfarm.net), a 200-member CSA near Wausau, Wis. In a rousing talk, Schultz made the argument that the CSA model could serve as an example for making the food and farming system in general more sustainable. On these two pages are excerpts of Schultz's talk. To listen to an LSP podcast of his full speech, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/365.

A Powerful Force

...CSA by its very nature is the cure for the ills of industrial agriculture. Where in industrial agriculture the direction is toward monoculture, CSA demands diversity. Where industrial agriculture has limited the land to an increasingly smaller number of people, CSA has preserved family farms like mine and provided opportunity for people outside of agriculture to come back to the land. Where industrial agriculture has sold an increasingly anonymous commodity to an increasingly distant market, we have produced the healthiest and most accountable food for our communities while enhancing those communities with our very presence.

Providing Opportunity

Another virtue of CSA is the opportunity that it's provided. It's been one of the driving forces, I think, in a genuine agrarian renewal. Since 1906, we have lost farms in the United States primarily due to market concentration by fewer and fewer agribusiness firms, and a technological change that serves that market concentration.

I want to make an important distinction. I've discussed the decline of the family farm with many people many times and a lot of people say, "Well the family farm is in decline because of the 24-row corn planter."

Well, a 24-row corn planter is a form of technology created to serve an increasingly concentrated market. It also serves the seed companies that control 90 percent of the GMO seeds that go into those 24-row corn planters. It's not the kind of agriculture that's designed to make the best and most sustainable agricultural system, a technology created to reduce toil, and maximize safety and happiness but also create democratic food security and food sovereignty. And so this is what I see driving down the number of farms for the entire 20th Century.

However, two years ago the USDA in

the Census of Agriculture said that we have actually had an *increase* in the number of farms. And I don't think it's because we've bottomed out. I live in a neighborhood where there's still a lot of small family dairies. There are CAFOs around us but we still have a lot of small family dairies.

The reason for this increase in farm numbers is because of CSA and the local and organic food movement—because of us. CSA has allowed thousands to ease into farming, to have a living on a relatively small base of acreage, to capture all of the value of a higher value crop, to grow their market as they grow their farm and their skills, to escape the trap that so many farmers face of cyclical debt by receiving up-front credit, and to have a community that can provide backing and support, encouragement and maybe some forgiveness at times.

It's allowed the romantic idea of the family farm for many to become a reality. This is why I love CSA so much. By allowing more people to come to the land, to have more people producing food directly for their community, CSA has made the agricultural system more sustainable, more secure, more democratic, more open to more people.

Thinking More Broadly

There are three things that I think our movement can do. First of all, expand CSA for eaters and farmers, which we are doing now. Two, use the CSA model as a starting point for more comprehensive transformation of local food systems and culture. And three, mobilize ourselves and our communities to reform the policies that ultimately

shape what makes it to the table and who puts it there. We need to keep getting our hands dirty, we need to help others get their hands dirty, and grow good food, but not forget the larger social structures that have a powerful influence over what we do.

Expanding Influence

How comprehensive could CSA be within the population? Kat and I were talking—we just threw out this number—what if 20 percent of households had a CSA? We're nowhere near that. I think that would be a great number, a big goal. But that leaves 80 percent of the population, a lot of the food culture to change. So how else now can we extend the influence of local food?

I think we're starting to do it with the other businesses that a lot of other CSAs are inspiring. Local farm-to-table operations, differentiated farmstead cheese, etc. A lot of enterprises are using the CSA model as a sort of micro credit operation to get their micro food operations off the ground, and we are an inspiration to them not only because of the model but because we're doing it locally and they see it.

And we need to speak up about models that go beyond the smokestack chasing and attracting the latest polluting industry that treats our rural areas like a resource suck and a waste dump. Because we have a better model that we can put together, that we can demonstrate.



Tony Schultz

We Need to Farm

We need to farm. We need to farm because industrial agriculture is creating and exacerbating a terminal ecological crisis: soil loss, dead zones, loss of biodiversity, global warming. And we need people not caught up in that system to bring the hope of sustainability to the agricultural landscape and to heal the planet.

We need to farm because democracy is realized when the wealth of this nation and this planet is broadly accessible and broadly shared, starting with the wealth of its land and the wealth of its agriculture. This land is our land, and we need lots of people on it.

We need to farm because while there's been a lot of talk about feeding the world, the increasingly small oligopoly of agribusiness corporations are only saying that to dominate the food system. If the world is going to be fed it's going to take lots of farmers in every part of the world organized to

Schultz, see page 25...

grow culturally appropriate, real food for eaters in their regions and communities. We are those farmers, we are those providers. Our food security is in our food sovereignty.

We need to farm because we need articulate agrarian voices telling policy makers, the public and our neighbors what is at stake with our agricultural choices, what is at stake with our ecology, and what is at stake with our food system, and be able to say we know this because we are stewards of the land.

We need to farm because we need each other. We need the support of our neighbors to share machinery, to check on our herds when we come to the CSA conference, to help each other out, to drink local beer with, to put the culture back into agriculture with.

This is the most important thing we can do. The food system needs our example and our leadership. The future is in our hands. We need each other in this movement for a democratic, just and sustainable food system. □



Participants in the Midwest CSA Conference broke up into small groups and surveyed themselves on the values that help drive the movement. "...we need to think more broadly about what the CSA movement can do for food culture in the U.S.," says Schultz.

(LSP photo)

China Supported Agriculture

Will the nation's first CSA spawn a wider movement?

When Shi Yan was a graduate student studying rural development outside of Beijing, China, a few years ago, she noted a phenomenon that should strike a familiar chord with anyone who has been involved with the local food movement here in the U.S. It seems there were a determined group of farmers who were going against the mainstream and raising food without relying on a chemical-intensive, industrial system of production. In turn, there were a significant number of consumers, many of whom were living in major cities like Beijing, who were very interested in buying that food. In fact, these alternative farmers and eaters would often form a type of relationship called "huchu," which translates loosely as "partnership" or "mutual help." But these two links in the food chain were having a hard time connecting on a regular basis, a problem that only has increased in recent years as the country invests even more resources into a type of industrial farming that feeds 20 percent of the world's population.

"In China the farmers and consumers are very separated," says Yan.

In fact, Yan's husband and fellow graduate student, Cheng Cunwang, organized tours of farms where consumers could see how food was produced and meet the farmers. The tours were a great success—in that feel-good way any weekend outing can be.

"We figured out that consumers will buy

farmers' produce once when you organize a tour, but don't know how to get that produce every week," says Yan. "So the farmers worry about what they should produce and who will guarantee their income."

That experience led Yan on a journey that took her to a farm in western Minnesota and



Shi Yan & Cheng Cunwang (LSP photo)

back to China, where in 2009 she launched that country's first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation. That farm, Little Donkey, has in turn spawned at least 50 similar operations in China and has fired the imaginations of rural residents, urban eaters and even agricultural college students who are questioning the country's massive push into industrial agriculture.

"We hope it will be a big wave," says Yan, 31, obviously a bit flabbergasted at

how intense this mini-wave of alternative agriculture has already been.

A Minnesota Model

She described this situation on a recent winter morning in Minneapolis, where she and Cunwang, 30, had stopped by after speaking at the 5th International conference on Community Supported Agriculture in California. CSA involves a relationship where consumers buy a "share" in a farm before the growing season. In return, the farmer agrees to deliver food, usually produce, on a weekly basis during the summer and early fall. It's believed that the CSA movement first started in Japan during the 1970s, and during the past two decades it's become very popular in the U.S. Over 80 CSA farms have popped up in Minnesota and western Wisconsin since the mid-1990s, for example (see page 8).

Yan became intrigued by the CSA business model because of its ability to allow farmers to plan ahead when it came to production, marketing and cash flow. So in 2008 the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy brought her to Minnesota, where she interned on Earthrise Farm, a CSA operation in the western part of the state that is operated by sisters Annette and Kay Fernholz. Under the tutelage of then-farm managers Nick and Joan Olson, the graduate student and self-described city girl learned the basics of running a CSA operation—from planting and weeding to

Chinese CSA, see page 26...

Community Based Foods

...Chinese CSA, from page 25

planning share sizes and deliveries. (The Olsens now own and operate their own CSA, Prairie Drifter, and Nick is an organizer for the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program.)

"I had no experience actually putting my hand in the soil," Yan recalls. "I actually learned how to grow food. It helped me make more sense of the connection between soil and human beings."

But during the 2008 growing season, Yan learned something else: CSA was not just an alternative business or marketing model. It also wasn't just a consumer education tool. CSA could be a way of creating the kind of community that makes a rural area vibrant and even exciting for people of all ages. Again, like the U.S., China has experienced a tremendous exodus of young and even not-so-young people from its rural areas in recent decades. In many villages, only older residents and children are left.

"In China when you are a farmer it means you work on the farm, but also at the same time it has a meaning which is kind of a class thing," says Yan.

While at Earthrise, Yan noticed that the CSA enterprise not only connected with eaters, but with other farms in the region—some of which were also CSA operations, others of which raised livestock and other products using sustainable methods. These farms shared information on production and marketing, but they also socialized on a regular basis, playing music together, for example. And, Yan noticed, many of these farmers were not elderly. This gave the doctoral candidate a whole different view not only of farming, but of rural life in general.

"Before I came to Earthrise I only wanted to do research about rural issues, but I never thought I could live in a village," says Yan. "But after being on the farm I saw that people could have a good life in rural areas while also making a good living."

It turned out her timing was good. Renmin University of China, where she was getting her degree, was starting an experimental farm. Upon returning home Yan talked her adviser into letting her make the farm into a CSA operation. She didn't waste much time: after conducting consumer surveys to determine if there was a demand for this model of farming, Yan led a team of students that launched Little Donkey Farm in 2009. One thing Yan learned from her consumer research was that, not surprisingly,

there were eaters who were willing to pay to have a regular delivery of organically raised produce—the model most familiar to CSA operations in the U.S. But what did surprise her was the number of people who said they would like their own plot of land to farm.

That first year Little Donkey sold 50 shares—30 were delivered shares and 20 were grow-your-own. With the grow-your-own arrangement, the farm provides all the seeds, tools and organic fertilizer, while the shareholders provide the labor for their own approximately 100-square foot gardens.

In 2010, 120 grow-your-own shares were sold; in 2012, 500. The number of delivered shares was around 450 last year. The growing season runs roughly from May to November, and some 40 varieties of vegetables are grown on approximately 14 acres.

Give it a Listen

Shi Yan describes Community Supported Agriculture in China on episode 130 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

Yan is pleased that Little Donkey has been able to show that farmers and eaters can be brought together on a more consistent basis. And she is particularly happy about one community-building element of the endeavor. In China, elderly people often end up living with their adult children, and several of the grow-your-own shares are managed by older people who live in Beijing. A couple times of week during the growing season, they will get their grandchildren off to school, take a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride to the farm, and work their plot. Many of these people grew up in rural villages and have farming backgrounds, which means they can share knowledge with younger gardeners who are not as seasoned.

"They feel very proud when they say they grow the food for their family," says Yan.

That pride is spreading. Little Donkey has inspired the establishment of over three-dozen CSA farms around China since 2009. One of those new CSA farms is Shared Harvest, an operation started by Yan and Cuwang in 2012 after she received her doctorate (Cuwang is still a doctoral candidate in the School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development at Renmin University). Shared Harvest already has 150 members, and Yan estimates the average membership of other farms in the country ranges from 50 to 100 shareholders.

Sitting in Minneapolis talking about how quickly Community Supported Agriculture has caught on in her home country, Yan contemplates the same question that's often asked in the U.S.: is this merely an exciting niche, or the leading edge of a widespread overhaul in the food and farming system? She sees signs that it's the latter. For one thing, her doctoral thesis, which focused on the role CSA can play in developing alternative food networks, was the first of its kind in China. But she recently found out that at her former university there are now six master's students who are focusing on alternative food markets such as CSA.

In a country where the government's stamp of approval can mean everything to a movement, CSA is far from being embraced by officialdom. However, some local provinces have shown an interest in this type of agriculture as a way of economic development, and China's new president, Xi Jinping, recently gave a speech where he said the country's people need to have good food, clean air and a healthy environment. That caught the attention of the Chinese, who are struggling with issues of widespread food contamination, as well as nonpoint water pollution from factory farms and unprecedented air pollution caused by hyper-industrialization in general.

Having the Chinese government show an interest in alternatives like CSA could help farmers overcome many of the obstacles they face, including lack of access to land, little funding for research into alternatives and a general feeling that only industrial ag can feed all those hungry mouths.

Yan says one thing that may help farmers overcome these barriers is the growing number of CSA members who feel the model helps them tap into a deeply rooted Chinese tradition of taking a holistic view of the body and its relationship to the world.

"There is a saying that in China everything should be a cycle, so from human to nature and from the nature to human," says Yan. "So if you know your food comes from the soil, you come from the soil. The Chinese people still have a sense to go back to the soil."

One final sign that CSA is a serious movement in Yan's country: the 6th International CSA conference will be held in 2015...in China. □

More Information

- Little Donkey Farm: www.littledonkeyfarm.com/plugin.php?id=aiview_dzx:pages
- Shared Harvest: www.tianye.co/en/shared-harvest/

Profits from Perennials

The Big Cover-Up

By *Caroline van Schaik*

Drought made for a poor stand of tillage radishes and oats last fall but did not deter a robust discussion on soil health during a field event on a farm near Lanesboro, in southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed.

Despite the chilly November day, some 25 people, mostly farmers, showed up to inspect host Brian Hazel's cover crops and to learn how they contribute to better soil. Hazel, who raises his own feed for his 500-

head dairy cow herd, told the group that he is combatting soil compaction and moisture loss by planting a root crop into his just-harvested corn fields. In an effort to improve establishment of the cover by planting sooner, he plans to harvest his corn as silage earlier than usual this fall.

Biology professor Bruno Borsari of Winona State University explained the microbial activity of a healthy soil and advocated for prairie species as the best soil cover. Participants were also introduced to the Midwest Cover Crops Council's on-line tool to help landowners decide which species will work

best for their goals. Land Stewardship Project organized the event with the help of the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District and The Nature Conservancy. The field event is part of ongoing work in the Root River watershed to move landowners toward perennial cover.

As a follow-up, Hazel hosted a small gathering of neighboring landowners in late February to discuss the land and what needs doing to help it be healthier.

Funding for this work is provided by grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Wallace Institute. □

Caroline van Schaik is an LSP organizer working in southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed. She can be reached at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. The Midwest Cover Crops Council's cover crop decision tool is at <http://mccdev.anr.msu.edu/VertIndex.php>.



Soil scientist Peter Hartman of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (center) provided a primer on soil health during the cover crop field day. (photo by *Caroline van Schaik*)

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 the soil health improvement initiative in North Dakota's Burleigh County (see page 30).

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. It's at www.landstewardship-project.org/stewardshipfood/foodsystem-landstewardship/chippewa10/soilquality.

Want to See the ISU/Leopold Prairie Strips Research Firsthand?

The Land Stewardship Project is planning to take a bus down to see firsthand the innovative research on row crops, prairie strips and erosion control being conducted at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City, Iowa. If you are interested in taking this field trip (it will probably be sometime in late June), contact LSP's Caroline van Schaik at caroline@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366.

You can read about this research in the No. 2, 2011, *Land Stewardship Letter* at www.landstewardshipproject.org. An LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast recorded at the Refuge is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/175.





The Town That Food Saved

How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food

By Ben Hewitt

2011; 234 pages

Rodale Publishing

www.rodalebooks.com

Salt Sugar Fat

How the Food Giants Hooked Us

By Michael Moss

2013; 446 pages

Random House

www.randomhouse.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

I am not sure I would recommend this, but I recently read two books back-to-back that represent the “how” extremes of today’s food system. I started out with *The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food*, and, literally within minutes of finishing it, picked up *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*.

As the titles imply, the former book is a bit of a feel-good, if complicated, look at what can go right about food (and farming). The latter work is an in-depth, often depressing, look at what has gone so very wrong with the way we process our vittles.

Talk about whiplash. Let’s start with the good news contained in *The Town That Saved Food*. In an engaging book, Ben Hewitt writes about Hardwick, Vermont (pop. 3,200). During the past half-a-dozen years or so, the community has become home to businesses that do everything from provide seed to organic farmers to put locally produced food in front of diners.

As Hewitt points out, a few of these enterprises have been around for well over a decade, and in the case of farmers producing for local markets, many have been around for several decades. But the ones that have caught the imagination of sustainable agriculture and local food promoters have arrived just within the past few years.

“Indeed, the sudden growth in Hardwick’s ag infrastructure has been nothing short of explosive, with numerous food-based businesses and organizations settling in the region, seeking to become part of the town’s answer to the vexing question of what a healthy food system should look like,” writes Hewitt.

Based on various measures, this has been a success. Farmers in the area are increasingly seeing that if they convert to sustainable production methods there will be an infrastructure in place to support them. And by Hewitt’s count, this recent growth in new food-related businesses has brought nearly 100 jobs to a town that is desperately in need of economic development.

But, as the author admits, there is more to the story.

Hewitt writes with an insider’s eye: he grew up in the area and still lives and works on a small farm there. He is friends with many of the players in Hardwick’s local food renaissance, which at first blush would seem to make the writing of this book a relatively easy task. But to Hewitt’s credit, he doesn’t take the easy road and just write an “ain’t it great” story. In 2008, Hardwick’s “success story” was splashed all over the national media, including the *New York Times*. People are hungry for a story that goes against the grain, especially one fueled by compelling personalities like Tom Stearns, the outspoken, entertaining owner of Hardwick’s High Mowing Organic Seeds.

As often happens when a small community becomes a media darling, such publicity brought mixed results for Hardwick, which over its history has experienced boom and bust economies based on quarrying and dairying. Some long-time residents felt the story was being spun as a “new arrivals bring positive change to a backward hick town” kind of narrative. Plus, all of a sudden people from across the county were looking to the community as some sort of magic model for how to counter an “industrial food system run amuck” as Hewitt describes it.

But the local boy does an excellent job of going beyond the headlines and doing what journalists call “a second day story.” In some ways, he feels it’s the least he can do; after all, a feature article he wrote for *Gourmet* magazine was part of that national media blitz.

So Hewitt starts asking some hard questions. Is a local food business no longer a “local food business” when it starts sourcing and selling products out of the region? Is it really sustainable to produce local cheese

that costs \$20 per pound, putting it out of the price range of just about anyone between Hardwick and New York City? When people like Tom Stearns starting brainstorming such ideas as starting a 10,000-member Community Supported Agriculture operation, is this simply one more innovative way to bring healthy food to more people, or is it the death knell for a sustainable local food economy? In other words, what is appropriate scale?

Hewitt travels the roads and streets of the Hardwick area searching for those answers, talking to the owners of these exciting new businesses as well as long-time farmers and even back-to-the-landers living off the grid. In the process of relaying the results of all these interviews to the reader, Hewitt doesn’t so much answer the big questions, as debate them on the page. Perhaps that’s an unsatisfying result for anyone looking to find a quick-fix solution to our dysfunctional food and farming system, but it’s

probably more honest. Hewitt makes it clear Hardwick is in many ways unique, and what works there can’t be easily transferable. It’s also in the very early stages of building an economy based on local foods, and so many of the questions the author asks won’t be fully answered for several years. Local food hasn’t saved Hardwick just yet—maybe Hewitt should have reserved that book title for a sequel written five years from now.

Punch to the Stomach

After reading Michael Moss’s *Salt Sugar Fat*, it became clear to me we are going to need a whole lot of Hardwick success stories to save us all from the industrial food system. Moss is an investigative reporter who won the Pulitzer Prize in 2010 for his coverage of contamination in the food industry.

Salt Sugar Fat goes beyond issues of contamination and provides an in-depth look at a business that sees eaters as just so many guts to be filled—the industry literally refers to “stomach share,” or the amount of digestive space that any one company’s brand can grab. Basically, nothing is off-limits in the rough-and-tumble world where firms like Philip Morris, General Mills, Cargill (the world’s number one supplier of salt) and Coca-Cola battle to get as much salt, sugar and fat down our throats.

As Moss documents, that means everything from formulating food to make it more addictive and to fool our brains into thinking

Food, see page 29...

we're not full, to using cartoon characters to vilify healthy foods like apples while making fake health claims that the added sugar in cereal will raise kids' grades. As Robert I-San Lin, a former chief scientist for Frito-Lay, told Moss: "I feel so sorry for the public."

Moss pulls together documents that show just how insidious our industrialized food system is. Perhaps the most damning are the meeting minutes, memos and other written statements he has dug up proving the food giants have long known their products are not healthy. Some feeble attempts have been made to lower the salt, sugar and fat content over the years, but, according to Moss, almost all have gone down in flames, often because Wall Street is so concerned that less of the bad stuff in food will result in less consumption, which is bad for business.

Reading this book, one gets the sense that the industry is caught up in a kind of arms race—no one wants to be the first to lay down their most potent "market share" weapons for fear competitors will eat their

lunch, so to speak.

We shouldn't be surprised at this, argues Moss. After all, these companies are in business to make money, and food that's bad for you rings a lot of cash registers.

"It's simply not in the nature of these companies to care about the consumer in an empathetic way," he writes.

If ever there was a need for a leash to be placed on an industry, this would be it. But Moss's description of how the USDA and other government agencies have repeatedly failed to take on Big Food—and in some cases have enabled its efforts as a kind of perverse partner—won't be news to most of us.

Salt Sugar Fat would be a complete downer if it wasn't for the fact that Moss supplements

his detailed documentation with interviews of real people. His surprising access to the scientists, executives and marketing geniuses behind the food industry reminds the reader that ultimately real human beings are behind this mess. They have families, live in communities and don't want to die an early death because of a bad diet (most



of them don't eat the food they sell, reports Moss).

These are people like Robert I-San Lin, who has deep regrets about how his scientific expertise was abused by his employers. Another Moss source, Michael Mudd, is a former top executive at Kraft. He tried to not only reform his own company but once stood before the heads of the most powerful food companies in America during a meeting at Pillsbury's headquarters in Minneapolis and compared their industry to the tobacco business. Mudd left the business in 2004, frustrated with its lack of ethics, but his name popped up in the news on the very day I finished reading *Salt Sugar Fat*. In mid-March he penned a commentary in the *New York Times* calling for regulation to make the food industry do what it will never do voluntarily.

"I could no longer accept a business model that put profits over public health—and no one else should either," wrote Mudd.

As Moss acknowledges at the close of his book, such measures are not likely anytime soon. That's why the Hardwicks of the world may be more important than ever. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Roll Me Up & Smoke Me When I Die Musings from the Road

By Willie Nelson

Foreword by Kinky Friedman

2012; 175 pages

Harper Collins

www.harpercollins.com

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die: *Musings from the Road* is the kind of book one would expect from Nashville music outlaw Willie Nelson: profane, down-to-earth, outrageous and earnest. And in the end, it's also a testament to the fact that the country music legend has never forgotten his farm boy roots.

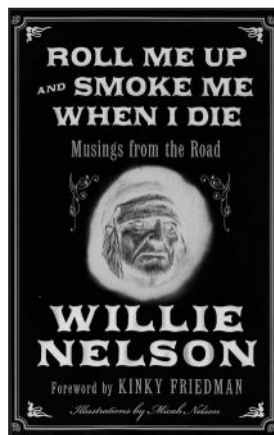
In a breezy writing style, the author addresses a number of topics in this book: his views on God, marijuana, politics, the Occupy Movement, the current economic situation, agriculture and, of course, his musical career. This work ranges from thoughtful and profound descriptions of the influence of his childhood faith on his music on one page

to jokes that could be kindly considered off color on the next. This is vintage Willie Nelson.

A constant theme throughout the book is Nelson's agrarian roots. He discusses his childhood on farms near his home of Abbott, Texas—a childhood that included close relationships with family members, local churches as well as a farm life of cotton picking and pet ponies.

This is the "farm boy life" that has been reflected in his music and many of the causes he has embraced, including Farm Aid and his opposition to the influence of agribusiness on modern agriculture and the damage this influence has done to America's family farmers. This book clearly reflects Nelson's concern about the future of American agriculture and other social justice issues.

Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die makes it clear that Nelson's rural values



of hard work have helped him become a successful entertainer—they may have also kept him from self-destructing. He makes no secret about his checkered past of drugs, alcohol and infidelity, but is equally candid about his struggles to return to the values of being a good father, husband and overall family man, struggles that he addresses with humility and humor.

Nelson also discusses how important agriculture remains in his life, including owning a farm near Nashville while he lived and sang there and his ongoing commitment to agriculture as epitomized through his pioneering work as a founder of Farm Aid and his willingness to allow his name to be connected to an anti-Monsanto campaign.

This is an excellent book that not only outlines Nelson's career and the many influences on his music, but also his commitment to social justice and agricultural issues, making it a good choice for music fans as well as those interested in the many issues that Nelson has championed. □

Frequent Land Stewardship Project volunteer Dale Hadler reviewed *Farm Aid: A Song for America in the Autumn 2007 Land Stewardship Letter*.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update

Amplifying Stories of Stewardship, Justice & Community

By Abby Liesch

Being a membership organization, good communication is foundational to the Land Stewardship Project's work for stewardship and justice. LSP members communicate with each other in many different ways, like in-person meetings, field days, at events, on the phone, through the mail, in publications like the *Land Stewardship Letter* and increasingly, online.

Earlier this year, LSP revamped our website (www.landstewardshipproject.org), giving it a new look and incorporating some of the newer tools to share the voice and power of LSP members.

Social media is one of the platforms LSP's Membership Program uses to share the breadth of the work of the organization. We also see tools like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, our blog and the website as tools to amplify the voices of members.

Too often, the stories of farm and rural communities, their successes and their challenges, are left untold. But through stories, images and videos, we are able to show that there are successful, sustainable farmers getting started. We can show the power of organized people standing up to corporate backed frac sand mines, giant HMOs and factory farms. We can connect people to farmers who are advancing stewardship and providing healthy food. And we can move people to take action in powerful campaigns to win victories for people and the land.

LSP's website is updated daily. *Facebook* is a great way to get a snapshot of LSP's work and find ways to be involved. Through LSP's online tools, you'll find photos from farm field days, letters-to-editors from local newspapers, blogs, commentaries, podcasts,

special reports, policy statements, fact sheets, action alerts, videos and information about activities around the state and region.

LSP is also on *Twitter* and we often use it to report directly from organizing meetings

LSP & social media

LSP is now in more places online. Connect with LSP through *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter*.

Twitter is at www.twitter.com/LSPnow; YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/LSPNOW>.

Direct any questions about LSP's social media initiatives to Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardship-project.org.



and actions—gaining the attention of allies and media. LSP also shares posts and links from our members and allies who are taking exciting steps to make our communities better places to live.

By amplifying LSP's message to a broader and bigger audience, thousands of people are reached on a weekly basis on the issues in our farm and food system.

If you are on social media sites like *Facebook* or *Twitter*, I encourage you to connect with the Land Stewardship Project and share our updates through your networks.

We're excited to connect with you. ☐

Abby Liesch is LSP's membership associate. She can be reached at aliesch@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 or remember loved ones, friends or special events:

In memory of Jim Koplin

- ◆ Robert Jensen
- ◆ Dana Jackson

In memory of Wayne Sauey

- ◆ Maryjude Hoeffel

In memory of Della Rupprecht

- ◆ Holly & Jason Kiese
- ◆ Barb & Martin Nelson

In memory of Jilleen Johnson

- ◆ Loren Kramer-Johnson
- ◆ Melanie Weiss-Turner

In memory of Al Karding

- ◆ Mary Lou Stursa

In memory of Richard Hansen

- ◆ Brian Schneider

In honor of Anne Sawyer-Aitch & Jemiah Aitch

- ◆ Sally Sawyer

In honor of Peter McDonnell & Carolyn McDonnell

- ◆ Amy Bartucci

In honor of Chris Gamm & Dave Hoyt's wedding

- ◆ Krista Pearson

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

LSP 'Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency' Special Report & Podcasts

The Land Stewardship Project has created a special package of *Land Stewardship Letter* stories on what farmers, scientists and conservationists are doing to improve soil health in south-central North Dakota.

It's available at www.landstewardship-project.org/repository/1/676/soil_healthIsl_package_final.pdf. If you'd like a paper copy, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Two podcasts related to this topic are at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/328 (*episode 121*) and at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/386 (*episode 128*).

Thanks Volunteers!

Thanks to all the Land Stewardship Project volunteers that made our 8th Annual Family Farm Breakfast a great success on Feb. 26 (see page 7). Volunteers served food, cleared tables, greeted diners and cleaned up afterwards, among other duties.

And thanks to all of our volunteers that help LSP out in all aspects of our work. LSP literally could not fulfill its mission without the hard work of our volunteers.

Volunteers help us do everything from stuff envelopes and make telephone calls to enter data and set up logistics for meetings.

If you'd like to volunteer in one of our offices, contact:



- **Montevideo, Minn.** — Terry Van Der Pol, 320-269-2105, tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.
- **Lewiston, Minn.** — Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, lpse@landstewardshipproject.org.
- **Minneapolis** — Megan Smith, 612-722-6377, megans@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, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/signup. ☐

Listen in on the Voices of the Land

The Land Stewardship Project's award-winning *Ear to the Ground* podcast showcases the voices of farmers, eaters, scientists and activists who are working to create a more sustainable food and farming system.

We now have more than 130 episodes online and are adding more each month. To listen in, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on the *Ear to the Ground* Podcast link. ☐

LSP in the News

Check out links to the latest print and broadcast coverage of the Land Stewardship Project's work at www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/mediarelations/lspinthenews. ☐

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 workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to:

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



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



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT
821 E 35TH ST STE 200
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55407-2102

NONPROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 ROCHESTER, MN
 PERMIT NO. 289

Address Service Requested

Printed on 50% recycled - 30%
 post consumer waste paper

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

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

→ **APRIL 13**— **Twin Cities CSA Fair**, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Seward Co-op, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.seward.coop/csa, 612-338-2465

→ **APRIL 14**— **LSP Farm Dreams Workshop**, Good Earth Food Co-op, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-1057, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org, www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmdreams

→ **APRIL 20**— **Urban Agriculture Expo**, Sabathani Community Center, Minneapolis; Contact: www.misa.umn.edu, 612-596-1175

→ **APRIL 22**— **Earth Day Benefit Breakfast for LSP**, 7 a.m.-11 a.m., Red Stag Supperclub, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: Anna Cioffi, LSP, annac@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-722-6377

→ **APRIL 22**— **Spring cover crop field day**, Dan Specht farm, 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Monona, Iowa; Contact: Sarah Carlson, PFI, 515-232-5661, sarah@practicalfarmers.org

→ **APRIL 24**— **Holistic Dairy Care**, East Troy, Wis.; Contact: Jodie Janovec, Michael Fields, 262-642-3303, www.michaelfields.org/whole-farm-workshop-schedule/

→ **APRIL 27**— **LSP at Root River Valley Earth Day Festival**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Sylvan Park, Lanesboro, Minn.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, 507-523-3366, caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **APRIL 27**— **Pork on Pasture workshop**, Verndale, Minn.; Contact: SFA, 218-445-7580, sevenpinesfarmandfence@gmail.com

→ **MAY 4**— **Mushroom Cultivation Basics**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: PRI, www.pricoldclimate.org, 612-242-8768

→ **MAY 4-5**— **Minnesota Living Green Expo**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: MEF, www.livinggreenexpo.mn, 651-290-0154

→ **MAY 11**— **Urban Beekeeping**, Twin Cities; Contact: PRI, www.pricoldclimate.org, 612-242-8768

→ **MAY 18**— **Jim Koplin Memorial Celebration**, 2:30 p.m., Heart of the Beast, Minneapolis (see page 5)

→ **MAY 18**— **LSP intro to grazing & field day** (with Howard Moechnig, retired NRCS grazing specialist & author of *Improving and Sustaining Forage Production in Pastures & Managing Grazing in Stream Corridors*), Grant & Dawn Breitreutz farm, Redwood Falls, Minn.; Contact: Richard Ness, LSP, 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MAY 18**— **Urban Chickens**, St. Paul; Contact: PRI, www.pricoldclimate.org, 612-242-8768

→ **MAY 31**— **Official 2013 session of Minn. Legislature adjourns** (see page 10)

→ **JUNE 15**— **Holistic Goat Mgt. Workshop**, Ashby, Minn.; Contact: SFA, 218-747-2202, paradoxhomestead@gmail.com

→ **JUNE 22**— **LSP Farm Beginnings CSA vegetable farming field day**, Threshing Table Farm, Star Prairie, Wis.; Contact: Parker Forsell, LSP, 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **LATE JUNE**— **LSP trip to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, Iowa**, to see research on row crops, prairie strips and erosion control (see page 27)

→ **JULY 6-13**— **American Dairy Goat Association National Show**, Minnesota State Fair Grounds, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: ADGA, www.nationalshow.org, 828-286-3801

→ **JULY 9**— **Organic Crops Field Day**, Southwest Research & Outreach Center, Lamberton, Minn.; Contact: U of M, www.swroc.cfans.umn.edu, 507-752-7372

→ **JULY 19-21**— **Seed Savers Exchange Conference & Camp-out**, Decorah, Iowa;

Contact: 563-382-5990, www.seedsavers.org

→ **JULY 27**— **LSP Farm Beginnings field day on CSA vegetables, machinery & finances**, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Loon Organics, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105

→ **JULY**— **LSP Twin Cities potluck & summer celebration**, Minneapolis (details to be announced); Contact: Mike McMahon, LSP, 612-722-6377, mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **AUGUST**— **LSP Blufflands Region hog roast & summer celebration**, southeast Minnesota (details to be announced); Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366

→ **EARLY to MID-AUGUST**— **LSP field day on high tunnel production**, Minnesota (details to be announced); Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **AUG. 1**— **Deadline for LSP’s 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course** (see page 19)

→ **AUG. 10**— **8th Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival**, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: SFA, www.mngarlicfest.com, 763-260-0209

→ **AUG. 12-14**— **2nd America’s Grasslands Conference**, Manhattan, Kan.; Contact: John Briggs, jbriggs1@ksu.edu

→ **AUG. 23**— **LSP Farm Beginnings fruits/orchard field day**, Mary Dirty Face Farm, Downsview, Wis.; Contact: Parker Forsell, LSP, 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **SEPT. 22**— **Benefit for Minnesota Food Association’s Immigrant Farmer Training Program**, Marine on St. Croix, Minn.; Contact: MFA, www.mnfoodassociation.org, 651-433-3676

→ **NOV. 6-8**— **4th National Conference for Women in Sustainable Agriculture**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: WFAN, www.wfan.org, 515-460-2477

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