



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

25 YEARS OF KEEPING THE LAND & PEOPLE TOGETHER

1982-2007

1982

- Alarmed by reports that in some cases every bushel of corn costs two bushels of topsoil, Ron Kroese and Victor Ray launch LSP with initial grants from the Youth Project and the Joyce Foundation.
- LSP opens an office at Minnesota Farmers Union headquarters in St. Paul.
- “Soil Stewardship Ethics” public meetings begin in Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas.

1983

- LSP is incorporated as a nonprofit.
- The first *Land Stewardship Letter* is published.
- LSP sponsors a legislators’ forum on conservation issues.
- LSP completes initial public meetings and follow-up workshops in 29 counties—14 in Minnesota and 15 in Iowa.
- LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese leads a workshop at the “Creating a Sustainable Food System: Local and Regional Action” conference in Kansas.

1984

- Laura Clark premieres in an LSP-sponsored play, *Planting in the Dust*, written by Nancy Paddock.
- LSP debuts “From Harvest to Harmony” slide/tape presentation at the National Association of Conservation Districts convention.
- LSP’s Stewardship Ethics meetings expand to Nebraska.
- LSP’s Winona County (MN) Project begins.

1985

- LSP opens a field office in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston.
- The Stewardship Farming Program starts in southeast Minnesota.
- First LSP-sponsored tree planting event takes place in Winona County.
- LSP staffer Chuck Thesing takes an aerial photo of a Wabasha County farm that shows how 27 years of conservation measures had been ripped out in a few days following the operation’s takeover by John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company.
- First meeting held in Boston between Hancock and LSP to negotiate conservation policies on company-owned farms.

1986

- LSP-led on-farm research begins in southeastern Minnesota.
- LSP helps organize the Lac qui Parle Lake Association in western Minnesota.
- *Soil and Survival*, by LSP consultants Joe Paddock, Nancy Paddock and Carol Bly, is published. The book describes how stewardship of our farmland is linked to the future of our society.
- Farmer-author Wendell Berry speaks at Hamline University in Saint Paul, MN, with LSP sponsorship.
- More than 150 performances of *Planting in the Dust* (see 1984) are held in Iowa and Minnesota.

1987

- LSP’s Farmland Investor Accountability Program (FIAP) sets up the Farmland Protection Hotline for farmers experiencing problems with insurance companies (see 1985).
- Extensive national press coverage draws attention to conservation abuses on farms foreclosed upon by insurance companies.
- The National Arbor Day Foundation gives its “Project Award” to LSP’s southeast Minnesota office. Members Leo and Mary Rowekamp accept the award in Nebraska City, NE.

- The U.S. Senate holds hearings in Washington, D.C., on absentee ownership of farmland. LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese testifies.
- *Planting in the Dust* (see 1984) expands to Nebraska and South Dakota.

1988

- LSP publishes *Reshaping the Bottom Line: On-farm Strategies for a Sustainable Agriculture*.
- LSP organizes Sustainable Farming Association chapters in southeastern and western Minnesota.
- LSP helps launch the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) to work on federal agriculture policy.

1989

- Shareholder pressure causes Travelers Insurance to agree to lower its \$1 million minimum loan size to \$100,000 for sale of inventory farms (see 1985).
- LSP initiates the Public Policy Project.
- *A Song for the Earth* LSP puppet show debuts as a cultural program.
- *Music of the Land* is launched as an LSP cultural program. It’s a sing-along and slide show created and performed by Bret Hesla.
- The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota is incorporated as a nonprofit organization.

1990

- First LSP urban sprawl meeting is held, featuring the showing of the *Turn Here, Sweet Corn* video essay by Helen DeMichiel; LSP launches Metro Farm Program.
- More than 55 performances of LSP cultural programs presented nationwide in April alone.
- A “Farmer-to-Farmer” video series and “Farming for the Future” education booklets are released by LSP.

1991

- LSP offers fee-based Holistic Management and controlled grazing workshops and consulting services.
- LSP helps create the Minnesota Environmental Fund.
- LSP helps draft and get passed Minnesota’s first city ordinance (Inver Grove Heights) to protect farmland from development pressures.
- LSP launches the Washington County Land Trust, Minnesota’s first land trust dedicated to preserving farmland.

1992

- The late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone helps LSP celebrate its 10th anniversary. For LSP’s vision to become a reality, he says, “We will have to be willing to take on political and economic power in this country.”
- The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is created at the University of Minnesota by LSP and other members of the Sustainers’ Coalition.
- LSP launches Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) to address pollution problems on the Minnesota River.
- The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota holds its first statewide meeting (see 1988).
- A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) fair is sponsored by LSP and the Minnesota Food Association at Hamline University.
- The Minnesota Land Trust is formed. Its roots are in the Washington County Land Trust (see 1991).
- LSP’s Stewardship Farming Program (see 1985) wins the “Renew America National Environmental Award.”

- LSP grass-based farming field days featuring Allan Nation attract more than 400 farmers.
- CURE and local National Guard units remove 15 flatbed trailer loads of scrap metal from illegal dumps along the Minnesota River.

1993

- LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese leaves to become president of the National Center for Appropriate Technology. George Boody succeeds Kroese.
- An award-winning Blue Moon Productions video on urban sprawl, *Houses in the Fields*, is released by LSP.
- The Monitoring Project is launched by LSP, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.
- LSP publishes a directory of CSA farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin (see 1992).
- LSP and other members of the Factory Farm Awareness Campaign defeat efforts to weaken Minnesota’s corporate farming law.
- LSP helps strengthen the Metro Ag Preserves Program.

1994

- LSP co-sponsors the Upper Midwest CSA Conference (see 1992) in River Falls, WI.
- LSP publishes *An Agriculture That Makes Sense: Profitability of Four Sustainable Farms in Minnesota*.
- LSP becomes a membership organization.
- LSP sponsors the National Growth Management Leadership Conference.
- The Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership is formed in western Minnesota with LSP’s help.

1995

- LSP helps launch the Campaign for Family Farms at a rally in Lincoln Township, MO, featuring musician Willie Nelson.
- In a victory for CURE, the Minnesota Court of Appeals upholds a judge’s decision to prevent the construction of a \$400,000 flood control project on the Lac qui Parle River in western Minnesota. The precedent-setting decision helps set the stage for re-evaluating several other environmentally and economically questionable projects.
- *To Till and Keep It: New Models for Congregational Involvement with the Land*, written by LSP member-farmer Dan Guenther, is co-published by LSP and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- LSP and American Farmland Trust publish *Farmland and the Tax Bill: The Cost of Community Services in Three Minnesota Cities*.

1996

- LSP’s Livestock Concentration Committee works to successfully defeat efforts to weaken Minnesota’s corporate farm law.
- LSP co-sponsors the Center for Holistic Management’s International Annual Gathering.
- The 1996 Farm Bill is passed; it contains several key sustainable agriculture provisions that LSP helped develop.
- LSP members hold an anti-factory farm rally at the Minnesota state capitol.
- Members of LSP conduct monitoring of hydrogen sulfide emissions from factory farms in Renville County, MN. Results eventually lead to the nation’s first hydrogen sulfide regulations related to large-scale livestock operations.
- LSP publishes *Monitoring Sustainable Agriculture with Conventional Financial Data*, by ag economist Dick Levins.
- *An Agriculture That Makes Sense: Making Money on Hogs* is published by LSP.

25 YEARS OF KEEPING THE LAND & PEOPLE TOGETHER

1997

- *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development* is published by LSP.
- A journalist reveals that the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) spent \$51,000 in farmer checkoff funds to investigate LSP and five other family farm and sustainable agriculture groups. The federal Office of Inspector General launches an investigation of the checkoff program.
- LSP experiences unprecedented success at the Minnesota Legislature on issues related to factory farming, agricultural research and urban sprawl.
- “Anatomy of a Manure Spill” is published in the *Land Stewardship Letter*.
- The first Farm Beginnings classes begin meeting in southeast Minnesota.

1998

- The Minnesota Legislature establishes an alternative swine research facility and faculty position at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, MN. LSP members, staff and others play key roles in obtaining the funding.
- LSP’s western Minnesota office helps put on “Rediscovering Our Rural Landscape,” a televised town meeting originating from Appleton, MN.
- A mandatory pork checkoff recall referendum is launched by LSP and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms (see 1997).
- 1000 Friends of Minnesota, LSP’s urban sprawl program, is spun off as a separate nonprofit organization.
- *The Monitoring Tool Box*, a product of the Monitoring Team (see 1993), is produced. Eventually, copies are distributed around the world.
- A meeting involving farmers, ecologists, university researchers, writers and journalists is sponsored by LSP at the Aldo Leopold Shack in south-central Wisconsin. The meeting serves as the inspiration for the writing of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems and Ecosystems*.

1999

- LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Committee develops a national proposal for rewarding stewardship farmers and presents it to lawmakers and USDA officials in Washington, D.C. That proposal later serves as the basis for the Conservation Security Program in the 2002 Farm Bill.
- *Killing Competition With Captive Supplies*, a special report on how meatpackers are using exclusive contracts to close the pork market, is published by LSP.
- Nearly 800 farmers from 13 states join LSP and other organizations in South Saint Paul, MN, to call for immediate enforcement of agricultural antitrust laws.
- LSP and the Campaign for Family Farms collect petition signatures from 16,500 farmers, sending the mandatory pork checkoff to a referendum vote (see 1997).
- The first LSP Stewardship Food Network list is published.
- LSP begins holding banquets that feature locally produced foods.
- The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Analysis Project is launched by LSP and numerous other groups and educational institutions.

2000

- The Food Alliance Midwest sustainable seal of approval is launched in Minnesota grocery stores. This joint initiative of LSP and Cooperative Development Services is an affiliate of the national Food Alliance.
- Farm Beginnings expands into western Minnesota (see 1997).
- Using the Minnesota Data Practices Act, LSP obtains a memo showing that state Health Department staffers were pressured by officials and lawmakers into withdrawing their opposition to a factory dairy farm proposal in Fillmore County.

- LSP spins off CURE (see 1992) as a separate nonprofit organization.

2001

- Hog farmers across the country vote to end the mandatory pork checkoff (see 1997). USDA and NPPC later strike a deal to continue the checkoff tax.
- The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project (see 1999) releases a study showing a diversified agricultural system can provide many public “goods” for society.
- A Minnesota District Court Judge rules for a group of LSP members when he says a proposed large-scale factory dairy should have been ordered to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement. This ruling is the first in a series of Minnesota court decisions calling for more oversight of factory farms.
- At various times throughout the year, LSP farmer-members testify before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee on the need for policy that supports family farmers using sustainable methods.
- The Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative is launched with the help of LSP’s western Minnesota office.
- Working at the Minnesota Legislature, LSP members and staff successfully fight to retain state funding for sustainable agriculture.

2002

- *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems* (see 1998), a book edited and written by LSP staff and members, is published by Island Press. Wendell Berry calls it, “...the most necessary book I’ve read in a long time.” The journal *Science* writes that the book, “provides excellent food for thought...”
- A federal judge orders the termination of the mandatory pork checkoff, calling the system “tyrannical” and “rotten” (see 2001).
- The 2002 federal Farm Bill is signed into law; it includes the Conservation Security Program (see 1999).
- LSP helps develop an “intergenerational dialogue” in Milan, MN, to discuss the future of rural communities and agriculture.
- Pride of the Prairie sponsors several local foods meals in the Upper Minnesota River Valley (see 2001).

2003

- The U.S. Supreme Court agrees to decide whether the mandatory beef checkoff program is constitutional. The decision will affect all checkoff programs, including the pork checkoff (see 2001).
- The USDA announces the first signup for the Conservation Security Program (see 1999, 2002).
- LSP puts on a “Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders” workshop in southeast Minnesota.
- LSP and other members of the Farm Transition Network organize the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference in Kearney, NE. People from half-a-dozen states and Canada attend.
- The first payments on interest-free livestock loans are passed on to a new set of Farm Beginnings graduates (see 1997).
- LSP launches a series of articles on Minnesota’s new “Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture.”
- Food Alliance Midwest (see 2000), partnering with Minnesota Farmers Union, holds the first “Minnesota Cooks” event at the Minnesota State Fair.

2004

- Farm Beginnings (see 1997) pilot programs are launched in Illinois, Missouri and Nebraska.
- LSP members in southeast Minnesota’s Ripley Township meet a Minnesota Agri-Growth Council tour with a “Get out of Dodge” protest. The Agri-Growth Council is one of the

- groups supporting the building of a 3,000-cow mega-dairy in the township.
- Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s Livestock Advisory Task Force draws criticism from LSP and several other farm and environmental groups when it recommends the weakening of local government control. A *New York Times* editorial calls it, “a blueprint for the destruction of family farming in Minnesota.”
- The Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities issues a report called, *Creating a Bright Future for Livestock Farmers in Minnesota*. The Citizen Task Force is made up of LSP, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

2005

- LSP helps present *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, a film produced by Cynthia Vagnetti, in which 10 women describe their involvement in sustainable agriculture and why it gives them hope for the future.
- LSP publishes “When Ag Policy Goes Good,” a special report that features several farm families who are utilizing the Conservation Security Program to increase the sustainability of their operations (see 2003).
- In a move that surprises farmers and legal experts, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the mandatory beef checkoff is constitutional (see 2003).
- A paper describing the work of the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture (see 1999) initiative is published in the journal *BioScience*.
- LSP and Oxfam America team up to bring West African farmer Alimata Traoré to Minnesota. She talks to citizens and the media about how U.S. crop subsidies for large-scale operations hurt family farms in her country, as well as in America.

2006

- Over 6,000 people in Minnesota sign an LSP petition calling for reforms in the 2007 Farm Bill.
- LSP meets with three different members of Congress on member-farms to talk about farm policy reforms.
- Due to popular demand, the second edition of the township manual, *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development*, is published (see 1997).
- The USDA releases proposed rules for how grass-fed meat can be labeled. LSP and various other groups play a major part in developing the proposed rules.
- LSP staff members author an essay in the journal *BioScience* calling for agriculture to be made “whole.”
- LSP holds its first annual “Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol” in Saint Paul, MN.
- LSP helps put on a meeting with the Winona County Economic Development Authority on local food systems.

2007

- Farm Beginnings begins its 10th year of classes in Minnesota (see 1997). Versions of the program are now in Nebraska, Illinois and North Dakota.
- LSP members in Minnesota’s Dodge County win a four-year battle against the investors in a mega-dairy when the proposal is dropped (see 2004).
- Food Alliance Midwest (see 2000) holds its sixth annual meeting. There are over 250 Food Alliance certified producers in 17 states managing over 4.1 million acres of range and farmland, making Food Alliance the leading agricultural “eco-label” after organic.
- LSP’s second annual “Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol” is held.
- LSP staff and members get involved in discussions over the future of farm-raised cellulosic-based biofuels.