



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

STEWARDSHIP • JUSTICE • DEMOCRACY • HEALTH • COMMUNITY



**5 | YEAR  
PLAN**  
2019 – 2024



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT





Hands holding soil  
by Brian DeVore

## The Challenge and Opportunity of this Historic Moment

BY JODY LENZ AND MARK SCHULTZ

### Dear LSP Members, Allies, & Friends,

We have created this five-year plan at a time of much hardship in our communities. Many of us have seen our neighbors lose their farms. Others of us have experienced this tragedy firsthand. For some, their farms — often having been worked for years, even generations — are at risk of disappearing forever. No one has escaped this crisis, whether they are farmers working in dairy, hogs, vegetables, row crops, and more. As the number of farmers declines, production of animals and acres is pushed to the max, consolidating more and more land in the hands of fewer and fewer people. This economic crisis in agriculture, caused in large part by the control of production, markets, and credit by major corporations, is forcing small- and mid-sized farms out of business and off the land. The impact to our land and communities is dire — economically, socially, environmentally. All of us are affected.

While this farm crisis is happening, it is compounded by an expanding climate crisis. We are all seeing increased flooding and other extreme weather events that threaten the stability of our food system and our communities. This state of crisis throughout society continues because of the effects of corporate power abuses on our systems of government, decision making, and human rights. This abuse is often encouraged by elected officials.

These are the times we're in.

But together, we have built an organization from the ground up that is both willing and able to work effectively for what's good and right, and to achieve positive change. **That means we have a responsibility to address these times with vision, determination, and hope.**

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## The Land Stewardship Project's Five-Year Plan: 2019-2024

is a document that will shape the future of LSP. The writing of this plan was a task taken on by many member-leaders of the Land Stewardship Project. We want to take some time to explain what has helped to shape this plan as well as encourage you to read it and then engage with us to carry this important work forward.

Make no mistake, carrying out this plan will stretch us a great deal, because it means we must stand with people in their hardship and pain and assist them to find solutions for themselves, their families, and their communities.

At the same time, we must organize for larger changes in our society — in public policy, in corporate accountability, in food and farming systems, even in what people believe is possible to accomplish — to make a difference for everyone, whether or not they are a Land Stewardship Project member.

We must also organize for the land itself. To accomplish this, we must create networks of people and communities that can support and teach and learn from each other to find and implement the real solutions we need. Our goal is to revamp our agriculture and food systems so diversified small- and medium-sized farms can thrive, healthy food is available and affordable to everyone regardless of race, gender or income, and the health of the land is restored and enhanced.

We believe that the Land Stewardship Project is up to the challenge of this historic moment. It is clear that far-reaching change is needed, and that LSP needs to be a part of making that happen.

The members of LSP called for these changes in February 2019 by sending us 535 completed surveys telling us what they valued about LSP's work, and what they think we should do now. LSP members who serve on our board, steering committees, and campaign committees met in day-long sessions in February to dig into what LSP needs to focus on. Our board/staff Long Range Plan Committee deliberated, drafted, and revised this plan, and our board met over two days to work it through, with a final deliberation and decision at our July 2019 board meeting.

We are writing to say that as an organization, LSP is hopeful about the future. We know that it will take a lot of hard work — our members and staff are used to that. It will take good ideas too, organized into action. We have those ideas, and will develop more from the experience, wisdom, and vision of people directly impacted by the issues we face. And it will take all of you, our members and allies, working together for a better future. What we can't do alone, we can do together.

Please read ahead. You will see a vision for a brighter, healthier future for all, along with actions to get us there. Then, get back to us with how you can be part of this work with grit, determination, good food, and yes, joy. **Join us!**



**Jody Lenz**

Photo by Ilisa Ailts



**Mark Schultz**

Photo by Brian DeVore

**Jody Lenz** is the chair of the Land Stewardship Project board of directors. She farms with her husband and children in western Wisconsin.

**Mark Schultz** is the executive director of the the Land Stewardship Project and a life-long organizer.

They co-chaired the Long Range Plan Committee. Mike McMahon staffed the planning process and served as a member of the committee. Other members of the committee included board members Deborah Allan, Aleta Borrud, Andrew Ehrmann, and Loretta Jaus, as well as staff members Johanna Rupprecht, Karen Stettler, and Terry VanDerPol.

## MISSION & CORE VALUES

**Mission:** The mission of the Land Stewardship Project is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop healthy communities.

### Core Values:

**Stewardship • Justice • Democracy • Health • Community**

These values guide the organization's efforts to achieve its mission.

**Stewardship** is the value of living in right relationship with the land and all that is connected to it: the soil, the water, the air, the plants, microorganisms, animals, and our climate. It means giving to the land and receiving from it, and caring about the entire biotic community. Conservation-minded farmers who live on the land, farm it, and care for it are essential to stewardship of farmland.

**Justice** means there is economic, racial, and gender equity for farmers, workers, and all those who are engaged in the food and agriculture system. It means the achievement of related rights like food sovereignty for all communities, and high-quality healthcare for everyone.

**Democracy** means a society in which the people hold the power to govern, in which those people directly impacted by issues name solutions, set priorities, and win change. It means the health and well-being of people and the land is put before corporate profits.

**Health** is the value of nourishing the beauty, function, and vitality of an ecosystem made up of people, landscapes, plants, animals, soil, and water. The health of the land is a gift that current generations are obligated to provide for future generations.

**Community** is the value of understanding our interdependence and caring for the relationships that sustain each of us. Living in community we are more resilient, creative, resourceful, and powerful — we have greater ability to be the change we seek in the world.

## Introduction to Strategic Initiatives

The Land Stewardship Project seeks, as an organization grounded in its mission and its membership, to do the work in a way that the health of the land is enhanced, small- and mid-sized farms thrive, communities are prosperous and just, and true democracy flourishes. In a true democracy, people have a say in the issues that impact them and their communities.

We believe this is possible, although many obstacles stand in the way. The intent of our current and ongoing work is to increase the numbers of farmers on the land and accomplish real change towards stewardship and justice. This includes building healthy soils, stopping the spread of factory farms and frac sand mines, helping new farmers get a good start, and growing local and regional food systems that operate in a land of clean water

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**Above:** Besty Allister gives a tour of her farm, Northfield, MN  
Photo by Mike McMahon

*"We need to promote communities, to maintain what we build long after we are gone. Individuals and nuclear families only last so long."*

— GREG CHESTER, FARMER,  
CASS LAKE, MN



and ample habitat for wildlife. In addition, it means developing strong relationships with organizations and communities of color and Indigenous communities, winning healthcare for all, advancing racial, gender, and economic justice, and organizing people to create change, including passage of public policies that improve their lives and the care of the land. Our current work stems from our mission and core values, and we are going to stay at it.

We know we can be effective in this work. Our track record as an organization shows that. But more, much more, is needed to address the urgency of this moment.

Five years ago, the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors set goals and launched initiatives to guide our work and accomplish change. Then, as now, LSP sought to create far-reaching change on the cutting edge — from greatly improving the health of the land to ending unjust systems that keep people feeling powerless and separated from the land. On page 15, some of the results of our efforts are described. Much of the work towards the strategic initiatives in that long range plan is still critical and will continue as we transition to this new plan.

Now, five years later, we have again engaged LSP members and leaders to define the initiatives that will allow us to achieve the major changes we seek in the next five to 10 years. These changes will position us for even larger transformation of our food and agriculture system towards stewardship, justice, democracy, health, and community.

**LSP will focus its resources on advancing the seven initiatives that are detailed on the following pages.** They will be implemented through and across LSP's programs, which will be aligned and will work collaboratively to create major quantifiable impacts. We will use narrative practice to tell our stories, leading with LSP values and attracting a growing number of people who share our vision and see themselves in it. These efforts will have ripple effects as our organization grows and we partner with allied organizations, building enough forward motion to change public opinion and institutions. The initiatives will also evolve over time as new emerging issues and opportunities are brought forward.



**Above:** The Tom and Alma Cotter family on their farm Austin, MN

Photo courtesy of Tom Cotter

**Below:** LSP members rally for a better Federal Farm Bill, Ramsey, MN

Photo by Brian DeVore

*"LSP works from the ground up, literally. From farmer-to-farmer networking about soil health, cover crops, livestock integration, grazing, and beginning farmers, to the policy needs at the local, state and federal levels, LSP carefully and wisely lifts up the cross-cutting issues that affect family farmers and rural communities."*

— BETH SLOCUM,  
FARMER, WELCH, MN





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

***Directly address the causes and effects of the economic crisis in agriculture by campaigning for structural changes in public policy, holding corporations and financial institutions accountable, working to assure adequate assistance to farmers in trouble, and advancing real long-term solutions to secure a just and sustainable food and farming system.***

The economic crisis in agriculture impacts small- and mid-sized farms across a wide spectrum — from traditional Midwestern family farms to newer farms raising high-value food for local and regional markets. For dairy farmers, the glut of milk produced by the expanded number of corporate-backed factory farms is a major cause of continuing low prices. For market growers of vegetables and fruits, successfully accessing larger markets is critical for their long-term viability. The control of markets across the board — corn, soybeans, pork, beef, dairy, vegetables, credit, inputs, etc. — by a few major multinational corporations allows them to exercise their plans for maximizing their own profits and economic power to the detriment of farmers, consumers, rural communities, and the land. The situation is urgent, and calls for action now.

### **LSP WILL:**

- *Wage grassroots campaigns to expose what is happening and call for specific solutions — for example, a moratorium on new dairy factory farms, or on farm foreclosures.*
- *Align and ally closely with other people's organizations that are working for real change in our food and farming system towards economic and social justice and environmental stewardship.*
- *Lift up and widely publicize a vision (with real-life examples) of a farming system based on widespread ownership of the land by small- and mid-sized farms that is superior to the corporate-controlled system in place now.*
- *Secure adequate resources for well-conceived public programs that can assist farmers in economic crisis to stay on their farms.*

***Greatly increase access to land and secure land tenure for small- and mid-sized farmers and people who want to start farming in the Upper Midwest.***

More people farming and being stewards of the land is at the root of LSP's mission. Beginning, small- and mid-sized, and regenerative farmers need secure and affordable land tenure to grow and thrive. Land access and secure land tenure are essential components for creating economic justice as well as racial and gender equity, in part because land ownership is a critical vehicle for securing and passing on wealth in our society. The taking of land from indigenous people and the historical denial of land access and tenure for people of color and women is central to the generations of economic, racial, and gender inequity in U.S. society. Over the next five years, LSP will increase access to farmland by:

- *Exposing people to and educating them about the consolidation of land ownership and the policies, agents, and factors that are driving it.*
- *Opposing such consolidation of land ownership and increasing land access for small- and mid-sized farmers. This means we work to ensure access to beginning farmers, indigenous people, people of color, women, existing small- and mid-sized farmers, and low-income people.*

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- Working to keep small- and mid-sized farmers on the land by winning major reforms to farm policy that will support families currently living and working on the land, further preventing land consolidation.
- Creating new, alternative, and creative solutions for secure land tenure for farmers, including farming cooperatives and community land trusts.
- Developing pathways for transitioning farmland to people who want to farm that are aligned with LSP's values of stewardship and justice. This includes increasing fair access to credit, technical assistance, and state and federal farm programs.

**Build the infrastructure needed by small- and mid-sized farms and by rural and urban communities to create functioning local and regional food systems that support regenerative farming and provide all people with the nourishing foods they want and need.**

Building local and regional food systems in which small- and mid-sized farmers gain access to robust, growing markets and all people gain access to affordable, healthy food is a major challenge and a win-win we must achieve.

This is transformational change. A farm and food system built on the values of stewardship, justice, democracy, health, and community will be a powerful engine for shared prosperity, environmental sustainability and the well-being of all people.

Corporate control of our farm and food system disconnects us from our natural world, creates scarcity, and threatens our health and our environment. It exports wealth from the land and our rural and urban communities while denying small- and mid-sized farmers adequate access to markets and fair prices. Structural racism also upholds this tiered and unjust food system, from immigration and labor laws to the price of food and access to land.

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Child walking beside cornfield by Ilisa Ailts



Over the next five years, LSP will build just, democratic, and sustainable farm and food infrastructure by:

- Organizing power to cause public institutions — such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes — to purchase nourishing food from small- and mid-sized farms at prices that support their families, provide a living wage and dignified working conditions for workers, and support stewardship of the land and ethical treatment of livestock.
- Joining forces with rural and urban organizations to create the infrastructure needed by farmers and communities to raise, harvest, store, process, transport, and buy/sell food and farm products.
- Working to dismantle corporate control of our food system (including fighting factory farms) by cutting public subsidies for giant agribusinesses and holding them accountable for the environmental problems they create.
- Advancing our own narrative of food and farming that rejects the dominant narrative that tells us corporate agriculture feeds the world, that only profits matter, and that all of us are on our own. Our narrative will lift up what we know is true — we can accomplish much more together than we can alone, that the land and the people who work with it are what sustain and feed us, and that a better food and farming system is possible.

**Lead in advancing solutions to the climate crisis by innovating and promoting resilient, soil-building farming systems and moving our society away from a reliance on fossil fuels.**

Climate change is a dire threat to our planet and our communities. LSP's commitment to stewardship — stewardship of the planet and stewardship of future generations — requires us to act. Nurturing the health of all living things and the water, soil, and air that life depends on means we must move away from the extractive economic practices that define our current corporate controlled economy. Instead of mining the life of our soil using energy extracted from carbon deposited millennia ago, we will work to shift farming practices so they restore life and carbon to our soil. At the same time, we will work to decrease our communities' reliance on fossil fuels.

**The good news is that agriculture has great potential to help stabilize the climate** by transitioning to regenerative and sustainable farming practices — like cover cropping and managed rotational grazing of livestock — that take carbon out of the atmosphere and protect water quality while using fewer petrochemicals and fossil fuels. Over the next five years, LSP will launch a major effort to impact the climate in a positive way by:

- Greatly expanding the number of acres and farmers engaged in soil health-based farming in the region, thereby pulling excess carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it stably in the soil.
- Increasing our water conservation and protection efforts in all our work based on our understanding of land stewardship and the relationship between water and land.



**Above:** Marilyn Frauenkron Bayer of Houston, Minnesota, speaks at a press conference on frac sand mining at the Minnesota State Capitol, Saint Paul, MN  
Photo by Brian DeVore

*"The most important thing LSP does is to transform agriculture. More life in the soil, more farmers caring for fewer acres each, more life in the towns, and less competition and more cooperation. In five years, I'd like LSP to have helped foster rural renewal across the Upper Midwest."*

— JOHN THOMPSON,  
MADISON, WI

*continued >*

- *Participating in and leading major campaigns to win transformational changes to systems, like factory farms and mega-cropping operations, that are heavily dependent on fossil fuels and thus exacerbate the climate crisis.*
- *Working to decrease extreme energy extraction and the infrastructure (frac sand strip-mines, huge cross-country pipelines) that facilitates it.*
- *Exploring the expansion of regenerative farming practices such as agroforestry that can improve soil health and help stabilize the climate.*

**Greatly expand LSP's base of people — supporters, members, and leaders — to grow our power to advance positive change.**

The source of LSP's power and creativity comes from organizing people who are directly affected by the issues it works on. LSP's ability to engage people in the development, advancement, and implementation of solutions to issues facing farm and rural communities is a strength. Over the next five years, we will build the base of people connected to LSP by:

- *Increasing our base of supporters to 70,000 people and our dues-paying membership to 7,500 households.*
- *Conducting a research and analysis project that engages rural youth in order to inform LSP about work we can do that youth would find meaningful, exciting, and powerful.*
- *Launching and supporting member-led organizing in communities across the region.*
- *Organizing for the long-term in three to four additional geographic areas within the Upper Midwest.*
- *Implementing organization-wide work to build community and connection among LSP members and supporters.*
- *Resourcing ongoing training for member-leaders on the organizing skills they need to become stronger leaders for change on the issues that impact their lives*

**Grow and deepen LSP's understanding, relationships, and work to advance economic, racial, and gender justice.**

Racism, patriarchy, and economic injustice are powerful structural barriers that stand in the way of LSP achieving its mission. Over the next five years, LSP will work to dismantle these forces in our organization and our society in order to achieve our mission by:

- *Incorporating racial, gender, and economic justice in all of LSP's work and operations.\**
- *Investing in relationships with organizations led by indigenous people and people of color; especially those whose members are living in rural areas of our region. People of all races and identities are invited to join and are welcome in LSP.*
- *Developing a board statement on economic justice.*
- *Expanding training for LSP leadership and staff to deepen an understanding of the systemic change that LSP works to achieve. LSP aims to develop an organizational culture, internal processes, and relationships among staff and members that reflect our core values of stewardship, justice, democracy, health, and community, and also addresses racial, gender, and economic injustice so that we may create the world we seek to live in.*
- *Providing training for LSP member-leaders and staff, as well other white-led organizations in the movement, on racial, gender, and economic justice.*

\*Please read "What We Mean By Economic, Racial, and Gender Justice" on page 10 for more information.

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## **Greatly increase the effectiveness of LSP by upgrading the performance of the organization's internal systems of operation.**

LSP's mission is broad and deep and the work of the organization is expansive. To increase our impact, LSP will invest in our internal development over the next five years by:

- Improving administrative, supervisory, and personnel systems, practices, benefits, and tools that meet the needs of LSP and its staff.
- Investing in technological resources that facilitate our communications and collaborative work across the Upper Midwest.
- Growing our fundraising from individuals to support all of LSP's work.
- Institutionalizing narrative practice throughout LSP's program and campaign work.\*
- Incorporating the regular practice of aligning and connecting work across LSP's programs to increase our effectiveness and encourage staff creativity through cross-program pollination and collaboration.

\*Please read "Telling Our Story" on page 12 for more information about narrative practice.

## **What We Mean by Economic, Gender, and Racial Justice**

Systemic economic injustice, structural racism, and gender inequity are major barriers to the advancement of LSP's mission. These forces are interconnected and impact every facet of our work. Understanding how they affect our work and ultimately dismantling these systems of oppression is required for LSP to achieve the change we seek in the world. Addressing systemic injustices also gives us the opportunity to participate in the healing part of the movement. As we care for the soil, we participate in the healing of the land. As we work to understand each other and eliminate oppression, we participate in the healing of community. Moving forward, we will use the following descriptions to understand how our work is impacted by these powerful inequities and how we will work to dismantle them.

### **Economic Justice**

We believe that each person has the right to have a dignified, productive, and creative life. We depend on each other, and we are invested in each other's success. However, the economy we live in today is controlled by major corporations, which prioritize their profits and control above all else. Huge corporations exert influence over every aspect of our farm and food system, consolidating wealth, land, and profits for a few while rural communities and the land suffer.

What we need is an economy that supports the family-sized farms that are on the land now and expands land access and secures land tenure for all people who want to farm, including people of color, indigenous people, and women. We need a people-centered economy and a people-centered government that support opportunities for meaningful work with



**Above:** Farmers Molly Schaus and May Lee of Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN  
Photo by Molly Schaus

*"LSP has very strong advocacy and grassroots effort. Its effective leadership utilizes and values its members and volunteers. LSP works with strong focus. When they decide to take something on, they go all in."*

— NANCY WAGNER,  
LEWISTON, MN

*continued >*

compensation which allows families to flourish. We need quality housing, services, and infrastructure that connect us and allow for innovation. We envision stronger connections among people who live, work, and eat in rural, urban, and suburban communities allowing them to build a shared prosperity together. We believe economic decisions should be shaped by the people directly impacted by them; these decisions about natural resources and the land should serve the people and promote stewardship of the earth.

### **Gender Justice**

To achieve the vibrant, resilient communities we envision, everyone's energies and full creative potential must be unleashed. This can't happen without equity in opportunity for everyone, whatever gender identity they have. Women and gender non-conforming people increasingly make up the ranks of farmers. They have been essential farm partners for generations, and many more are inheriting farms and becoming beginning farmers.

We embrace all as farmers and welcome everyone who aspires to farm and care for the land. Family farms are part of the multitude of farming operations and relationships that make up LSP's membership. There are many different kinds of household and small community relationships and structures that people rely on to farm together, and there are new kinds of farms emerging all the time. All of these farms matter and are part of the fabric of small- and mid-sized farms that LSP believes is essential to stewardship of the land.

Women and gender non-binary people, those who farm and those who do not, are leaders in our communities, and their power and ability to create positive change grows with the advancement of gender justice.

LSP has the opportunity to demonstrate in practice what gender equity looks like and can mean for all of us. Ensuring one's full contribution paves the way for a society based on stewardship, sustainability, economic justice, and racial equity.

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**Below:** The Steering Council and staff of the national HEAL Food Alliance after a September 2017 meeting at the LSP office in Minneapolis | Photo by Brian DeVore

Closely aligned with the mission of LSP, HEAL's mission is to "build our collective power to create food and farm systems that are healthy for our families, accessible and affordable for all communities, and fair to the hard-working people who grow, distribute, prepare, and serve our food — while protecting the air, water, and land we all depend on."

HEAL believes that by coming together, acknowledging the wrongs of racism and corporate control, and working together to end unjust systems and build just solutions, we can create a food and farming system that works for the land and the people — all people. LSP executive director Mark Schultz is a member of the HEAL Steering Council.





## **Racial Justice**

LSP believes every person — of any race, rural or urban, old or young — has value that can't be earned or taken away. We believe healthy rural communities and sustainable agriculture are not possible without addressing racism and racial disparities in our communities and valuing the wisdom and contributions of people from all backgrounds. We all benefit when we are united behind a common goal of a society where everyone can thrive. We believe that achieving racial equity is the work of white people in collaboration with people of color and indigenous communities. Towards this goal, LSP seeks to lead as a mostly white, mostly rural membership organization to act in real and sustained solidarity. This work takes many forms and we are learning as we move forward. In January 2017, LSP's management team adopted five strategies to advance racial justice:

- *Organizing white rural Midwesterners, leading with values, and winning on issues that matter to them, while being explicit that we stand for racial justice, and linking to the larger movement for stewardship and justice that we are helping to build.*
- *Racial justice training, education, action, and analysis with LSP's staff, members, and leaders.*
- *Movement organizing — LSP joining with, sometimes following and sometimes providing leadership to, an emerging multi-racial movement of allies, working to achieve economic, environmental, gender, and racial justice.*
- *Showing up and standing with allied organizations and communities of color and indigenous communities that come under attack.*
- *Responding directly and effectively to racist statements and actions.*

Furthermore, we recognize that the founding of the U.S. was via migrations of peoples from Europe and elsewhere, imposing new borders on land already occupied by indigenous peoples. Today we are seeing increasing migrations of peoples across the world due to violence, stress over resources, and the effects of the climate crisis. We recognize our interconnection with such refugees and migrants as people like ourselves, seeking opportunity and security for their loved ones. Rather than build walls to exclude others, we understand the need to heal the planet and the violence that plagues our nations.

It is only by actively engaging in the dismantling of each of these types of systemic oppression that we can achieve the truly sustainable and regenerative food and farming systems that we want and need.

## **TELLING OUR STORY – WORLDVIEW, NARRATIVE & POWER**

**Worldview** is the rich variety of values, beliefs, and assumptions that we all draw upon and inherit from the world around us. There are many worldviews operating at the same time and they influence our understanding of everything around us.

**Narratives** are certain kinds of stories that have the power to shape our conscious perceptions, understanding, analysis, and sense of what needs to be done and what is possible. Narratives are built upon different worldviews and they are intentional. They are designed to shape possibilities and outcomes.

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**Power opens up space to make greater change possible for people and the land.** By building power in the arena of narrative, we tap into values that are widely held but often buried.

Through our work, we seek to break down the dominant, corporate-driven worldview narrative that controls what people believe is possible and impossible. We will advance a new narrative that is grounded in our members' own core values and beliefs, elevating a vision for the future that is bountiful, just, and regenerative.

The power of narrative is transformational; that's why narrative change is part of every strategic initiative and every LSP program. It is part of our campaigns, our communications, our membership recruitment, and our leadership development.

Narrative work isn't new to LSP, but over the next five years we will increase our efforts to advance a narrative built on the values of stewardship, justice, democracy, health, and community.

*"The ambitions of narrative strategy are profound: to alter the way we think and talk, to change the values we live by, to rewrite the rules."*

— JUDITH BARISH,  
FROM A NARRATIVE OF  
RURAL ABUNDANCE

## Paired Strategies

The pairing of strategies and approaches can be found across the Land Stewardship Project's work. It is an approach that has proven effective, rewarding, balanced, and unique.

As you look through these paired strategies, understand that few organizations actually approach their work this way, and instead often choose one approach over the other. It is also true that there is tension between each tandem pair — they are not the same thing — and the challenge is to do both well, in relationship with each other.

### Paired Strategies

- **Mission Driven & Member Driven:** LSP is both mission driven and member driven. Our mission gives us guidance every day — so do the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of LSP's members.
- **Local or Personal & Structural or Systemic:** LSP works in the sphere of local, specific, and even personal action. Examples include helping a farmer develop a soil health plan, organizing with local residents to stop a factory farm, and helping farmers transition their land to the next generation. But equally important is our work to achieve structural change and build thriving rural communities by passing public policy that rewards farmland conservation, working in multi-racial, multi-issue statewide and national coalitions to dismantle structural oppression, and creating multi-state collaboratives to expand beginning farmer training. For LSP, investing in both of these two "ends" of the work makes us practical, effective, cutting-edge, and grounded.
- **Fighting the Worst & Advancing the Best:** LSP fights some of the worst ideas and developments that would damage the land, our communities, and our democracy — like corporate-backed factory farms,



**Above:** Dayna Burtness of Black Hammer Township speaking out to protect her community from factory farm pollution, Saint Paul, MN  
Photo by Brian DeVore

*"I like that LSP takes on the tough, controversial issues that don't seem to have any other champions."*

— KATHY ZEMAN, FARMER,  
NERSTRAND, MN

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*frac sand mining, and unjust farm subsidies that consolidate land ownership and extract wealth from rural communities. At the same time, we know that we must work to create and build what we want and need — new farms, new leaders, new ways of farming, new local and regional food systems, and new public policies. By fighting the worst and advancing the best, we accomplish more towards our mission and long-term goals.*

- **Taking Action & Telling the Story:** *Through reflection, evaluation, conversation, and writing, LSP strives to improve our work and to share what we learn from others. It is a constant and highly valued part of LSP's work, whether it is through the Land Stewardship Letter, commentaries and articles, podcasts, social media, or the evaluation at the end of a meeting. And we also know that we must act, do, create, and build.*
- **Rural & Urban/Suburban Membership Base:** *LSP unites a strong rural/small town base with urban and suburban members. We emphasize the need for farmers and other rural people to be a central element of LSP's power base, and a source of knowledge and solutions. We know that urban and suburban communities not only bring important ideas and solutions but are truly invested in local foods and healthy land and water. United by values and purpose, LSP members are able to influence decision makers, steward the land, and create communities we want and need — together.*

## Program Areas

The Land Stewardship Project's programs are a major tool for advancing its mission. They are organized to advance LSP's strategic priorities and engage members. Steering committees of LSP member-leaders guide and inform the programs and take responsibility for key program components. LSP's programs are:

**Policy and Organizing:** The purpose of the Policy Program is to organize people to build the power to change governmental and corporate policies that consolidate wealth and power into fewer hands while endangering the health and well-being of people, communities, and the environment. The Policy and Organizing Program also works to win on issues and create policies that help family farms and rural communities thrive, support stewardship of the land, and move us all towards a sustainable food and agriculture system.

**Farm Beginnings:** The purpose of the Farm Beginnings Program is to help people who want to farm get started successfully and sustainably. Farm Beginnings works to create healthy rural communities and economies that are supported by new farmers. The program also works to build strong rural leaders who share LSP's values and are trained to lead in their communities.

**Membership and Individual Giving:** The purpose of the Membership and Individual Giving Program is to maintain and grow LSP's membership. It recruits the majority of new LSP members. The program raises general support funding for LSP through membership dues, major donations, bequests, and events. The program communicates regularly with all of LSP's members.

**Soil Health:** The purpose of the Soil Health Program is to significantly increase the number of farmers in the Upper Midwest implementing soil-building methods that improve farm economic viability, water quality, climate stabilization, and carbon sequestration. The program works with farmers doing this work to encourage them to speak publicly about what they are doing in order to engage more farmers to adopt soil health practices.

**Community Based Food Systems Program:** The purpose of LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program is to advance local and regional food systems in which food is grown with high levels of environmental stewardship, an increasing number of people gain affordable access to good food grown in the region, and in which inequities in the food system are addressed.

## Bearing Fruit: LSP's Accomplishments are Rooted in People, Power & the Land

**Below:** LSP members gather for Our Minnesota Future Assembly, Brooklyn Center, MN  
Photo by Mike McMahon

One popular soil-building method that LSP promotes is cover-cropping, which involves growing non-cash crops in-between the regular corn-soybean growing seasons. Cover cropping armors the soil against the elements. Just as importantly, cover crops can help maintain roots beneath the surface year-round, helping the soil rebuild as it generates long-term resiliency. That's why some have argued that a more accurate term for "cover crops" is "continuous living cover." What the Land Stewardship Project has accomplished in the past five years after launching our 2014-2019 Long Range Plan is a lot like what continuous living cover does: we've armored our land and communities against the damaging impacts of a food and farm system that mines wealth, while establishing the deep roots that anchor and support a sustainable future.

Let's start with the soil itself, literally. Sparked by a strategic initiative included in LSP's Long Range Plan five years ago, we launched a Soil Health Program that is reaching out to farmers who see the future of our agricultural lands and rural communities interwoven with the soil. We have engaged thousands of farmers through workshops, farmer-led field days, and various communication platforms to help them build a bridge to soil health. LSP has also supported a core of farmer-leaders who are providing neighbors guidance on building soil in an economically viable manner.

The role soil health can play in the viability of our communities while having positive impacts downstream became clear while LSP was working with farmers and others in the Chippewa River watershed in western Minnesota. The Chippewa 10% Project, which was conducted in partnership with the Chippewa River Watershed Project, tied farm field stewardship to the health of a larger landscape. Before this initiative wrapped up in 2018, more than 23,600 acres of land was converted to

*continued >*





perennials or diversified farming systems. This work, along with a similar initiative LSP led in southeastern Minnesota's Root River watershed, showed what can be accomplished when farmers and others put such narratives as "care of the land" into action.

In fact, the idea that we must "take care of the land" played a key role in preventing the strip mining of frac sand across southeastern Minnesota. Our region-wide efforts included a LSP-led campaign in Winona County that culminated in a precedent-setting county-wide ban on frac sand production in 2016. That built a base of people who are moving forward with other efforts to protect the land and build community, including stopping proposed factory farms.

Talking about care of the land does little if we don't have farmers who can steward it. That's why LSP has focused on getting people on the land farming successfully. As of 2019, over 800 people have graduated from LSP's Farm Beginnings course, and approximately 60 percent of them are farming. Based on ideas from our farmer-led Farm Viability Steering Committee, we created the Journeyperson Course to help beginning farmers take the next steps toward long-term financial success.

Even with top-notch training, land access remains a major barrier for beginning farmers. LSP has become a national player in making clear the connection between our dysfunctional crop insurance system and the difficulty moderate-sized and beginning farmers have gaining access to land. And we worked with other groups to pass the groundbreaking Beginning Farmer Tax Credit during the 2017 Minnesota legislative session. LSP and member-leaders are also putting on workshops for farmers transitioning to the next generation.

What beginning farmers and their retiring counterparts make clear is that good farming requires intensive management. Unfortunately, too many farmers have to divide their time, working off the farm to gain access to health insurance. That's why LSP is organizing for changes in our healthcare system that guarantee quality, affordable healthcare for everyone, including farmers and other rural residents. Such work has built a base of informed, motivated people who have made their voices heard. If it wasn't for LSP's members stepping up, along with our allies, Minnesota's premier public healthcare program, MinnesotaCare, would likely not exist today.

Finally, LSP's ability to do any of this work is rooted in our membership. Growing the people power and financial support that comes from individuals increases our ability to seize opportunities, weather challenges, and react to strategic issues. During the past five years, LSP grew its dues-paying membership by over 1,300 households to 4,450, and increased our engagement with those members. Some of that engagement has come through LSP leadership development cohorts that focus on building the organizing skills and commitment needed to advance racial justice and build power for positive social change.

In other words, LSP's people power doesn't just send its roots deep, but wide. As we move forward with our 2019-2024 Plan, we do so knowing that with hard work the urgent and essential initiatives we have named can be advanced, and that what we can't do alone, we can do together.



**Above:** Anne and Peter Schwagerl on their farm, Browns Valley, MN  
Photo by Brian DeVore

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*"I love that LSP works for sustainable farming, but ALSO works for sustainable communities. The changes I'd like to see in 5 years are thriving small farms, more local food, reinvigorated small town Main Streets and improvements to federal farm policy."*

— RYAN BATALDEN, FARMER,  
LAMBERTON, MN

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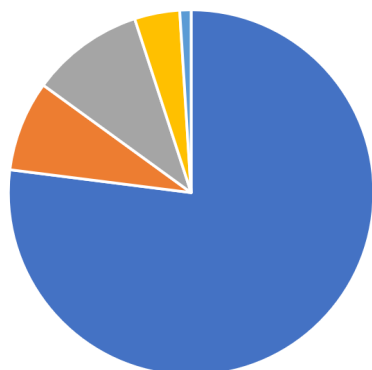
## FINANCIALS

Creating transformative change is hard work. It takes organized people, innovative ideas, good planning, and strong campaigns. It also takes money. We are grateful for the support and generosity of many people who support LSP's work. The Land Stewardship Project funds our work through a variety of sources, including membership dues and contributions from individuals, private foundations, and public funding. We make careful decisions about how we spend money, aiming to be both strategic and frugal with our expenditures.

All kinds of contributions are important and make an impact, but we place special emphasis on raising what's commonly called general support income. General support funds come primarily from membership dues and individual donations, and some foundations choose to make general operating grants. General support funds provide LSP the greatest amount of control over decision-making when it comes to what work to pursue. These funds support all of LSP's work, and they have been critical for starting and sustaining priority work when other funding wasn't available, including launching the soil health initiative, new farmer training and education, and frac sand organizing.

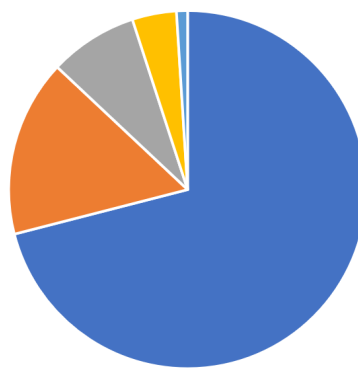
Good financial decision-making and fundraising helps keep the core of the organization strong, which means we are well positioned to grasp opportunities and weather challenges as they arise. As we begin the 2019-2020 fiscal year, LSP's financial position is sound. Over the next five years, LSP will continue to invest in effective financial management and fundraising that upholds the values of the organization and advances the strategic initiatives in this plan.

**EXPENSES BY OPERATIONAL AREA**  
FISCAL YEAR 2018-19



- Programs 77%
- Fundraising 8%
- Management 10%
- Communications 4%
- Other 1%

**OPERATING REVENUE**  
FISCAL YEAR 2018-19



- Foundation Grants 71%
- Membership 16%
- Government Grants 8%
- Contracts/Sales/Fees 4%
- Other 1%



## 2018 – 19 LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### LSP Board of Directors 2018–19:

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*Chair*

Loretta Jaus  
*Vice Chair*

Rachel Henderson  
*Treasurer & Secretary*

Deborah Allan

Aleta Borrud

Andrew Ehrmann

Laura Frerichs

Charlie Kersey

Darrel Mosel

Linda Peck

Kristin Tombers

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Scott DeMuth

Brian DeVore

Maddie Hyde

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Bobby King

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Annelie Livingston-Anderson

Amanda Madison

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Clara Sanders Marcus

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Johanna Rupprecht

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Barb Sogn-Frank

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Terry VanDerPol

*Quotations that are used in this document are taken from surveys completed by LSP members as part of the process of creating this plan, unless otherwise indicated.*

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