

The Land Stewardship

Keeping the Land and People Together



Letter

Vol. 24, No. 3

www.landstewardshipproject.org

Autumn 2006



Farm Beginnings graduates Peter and Katy Hemberger have gained the confidence needed to think long-term about their operation (see page 17).

—*The Path to a More Sustainable Farm Bill*—

—*Green-Light Ethics*—

—*When a Factory Farm Comes to Town*—

—*Farms Without Borders*—

—*Putting the Bite on Fast Food*—

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

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charlotte Brooker,
Dan Guenther, Bonnie Haugen,
Dennis Johnson, Sr. Kathleen
Mary Kiemen, Lou Anne Kling,
Sandy Olson-Loy, JoAnne Rohricht,
Jim VanDerPol, Bruce Vondracek

STAFF

Southeastern Minnesota

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

Twin Cities Area

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

Western Minnesota

301 State Rd., Montevideo, MN
56265; phone: 320-269-2105; fax: 2190;
e-mail: lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org
Amy Bacigalupo, Michele Skogrand,
Terry VanDerPol

Policy Program

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

The *Land Stewardship Letter*'s Editorial Advisory Team:
Jason Abraham, Patrick Deninger & Susan Maas

This newsletter printed by Roscoe Printers, Wanamingo, Minn.

Contents

Commentary...3

- A winning strategy for sustainable ag policy
- A new initiative for a new Farm Bill
- Letters

Myth Buster Box...6

- Organic vegetables & E. coli

Newsbriefs...7

- Profitable prairie grasses
- Ethanol & local economies

LSP News...8

- Sustainable ag gets the green light
- LSP at the State Fair
- Serfling Scholarship awarded
- Internships, apprenticeships
- Horticulture night
- Erkel, Tacheney honored for service

Western Minnesota Update...16

- The New Farm Initiative

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming...17

- Peter & Katy Hemberger

Food & Farm Connection...18

- Pride of the Prairie
- Stewardship Food Network
- Food Alliance Midwest



Multiple Benefits of Ag...20

- 3 farms without boundaries

Opportunities/Resources...24

Reviews...25

- *Chew On This*
- *The Omnivore's Dilemma*
- *A Prayer for the Prairie*

Membership Update...26

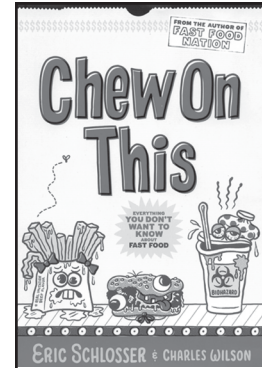
- A fundraising brainstorm

Stewardship Calendar...28



Policy Update...12

- Bringing Congress to the farm
- Farm Bill petition
- New township manual
- Ripley Township wins in court
- TV ads shown to be misleading
- Is MDA abandoning sustainable ag?



A note to our readers

With this issue, we have launched a few minor changes to the *Land Stewardship Letter*.

We no longer have a single “cover story,” and are instead focusing on a variety of shorter features, profiles and news pieces. In addition, *LSL* issues will be identified by the seasons—Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer—rather than by months.

We hope these changes will help make the *LSL* even more timely and relevant as we continue to work towards covering the work of the Land Stewardship Project, as well as sustainable agriculture, local foods, family farming and local democracy in general.

As always, we'd love to have your feedback on the *Land Stewardship Letter* and the issues we cover. Feel free to contact the editor, Brian DeVore, at 612-729-6294 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Getting a sustainable Farm Bill one person at a time

EDITOR'S NOTE: This commentary is excerpted from a keynote given by Mark Schultz at the launch of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's Farm Bill campaign in August. Schultz is the Land Stewardship Project's Policy and Organizing Director.

By Mark Schultz

What I'd like to share with you today is how I think the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC) can and should build a winning campaign for the 2007 Farm Bill, and beyond.

Together we've built a vehicle, this coalition, for societal change on the issues revolving around food, farming and the environment. But we would not be here if everything was okay. And it's not — not by a long shot.

For instance, federal farm policy right now is massively subsidizing the continued industrialization and consolidation of farming, while it sets up obstacles for innovation, opportunity and real solutions. An example: researchers at the Global Development and Environment program at Tufts University are showing that taxpayers fork over a 13 percent subsidy of factory farm expenses, or \$1.25 billion per year, to corporate-backed factory farms through the cheap-grain initiatives of current farm policy. Smithfield Foods alone is estimated to have benefited to the tune of \$511 million in 2005. This is a major reason why factory livestock operations of unprecedented size and impact drive out family hog and dairy farms.

At the same time, Conservation Security Program (CSP) funding has been strangled, sustainable agriculture research is woefully underfunded, and much-needed solutions like the Farm to Cafeteria program are barely funded at all — yet literally millions of parents are calling for local, healthful and culturally appropriate foods in their schools and communities.

SAC's Policy Platform aims to address these issues, and more. We have solid proposals and have built strong

initial support behind many of them.

But now we have to shift gears and go into campaign mode, into building the concerted action of tens of thousands and then literally millions of people demanding change.

Look around you. We can do it. Take a minute and think of the people who are members of your organization, who are your neighbors, who support your work, who would support your work if they knew of it, who have a desire for change and are looking for positive action to take.

Together, we can do it.

In the words of Cesar Chavez, one of our country's great organizers, when asked how he got several hundred thousand people to a huge demonstration for farmworker justice in California: "First I talked to one person, then I talked to the next person, then the next person, and we built until it got here."

There are lots of ways to talk to the next person. But here's the key: focus on people who are directly affected by the problem you seek to address, and engage them in the solution. That's how you get "fire in the belly" for real action, and for real change.

Make no mistake about it—for us to win on these issues will require organizing a lot more people than we ever have before who join us and then take us further down the road as they find their voice, their courage, their genius, and apply their leadership. We may not win everything we want in this Farm Bill, but we will force change in the direction we need to go.

Here's something to think about—it's kind of a challenge. One of our land grant universities, Ohio State, graduated a young man in the 1970s named Archie Griffin. He was a running back for the Buckeyes who was awarded back-to-back Heisman Trophies as the best college football player in the nation—an unprecedented accomplishment. I remember hearing him say something that has stuck with me my whole life. He was once asked what his secret was, what made him great.

He said: "Drive, Determination and Desire, the 3 D's."

→ **Drive**, to go forward, make

progress, and to get up every play after he had been tackled — which was nearly every play he handled the ball if you think about it — and to go after it again, to move forward.

→ **Determination** — I'm going to do this; we're going to do this; we have the power to affect things and we're going to.

→ **Desire** — This is my passion, this is what I believe and want.

I'm serious now—are we passionate enough about the changes we seek to drive a campaign to victory? Will we do what it takes—every day, following mini-defeats and mini-victories—to win real change? Are WE determined?

Let me give another example from a traditional spiritual:

*Paul and Silas bound in jail,
Got no money for to go the bail,
Keep your eyes on the prize,
Hold on, hold on.*

*Paul and Silas thought they was lost,
Dungeon shook and the chains fell off,
Keep your eyes on the prize,
Hold on, hold on.*

*The only thing we did wrong,
Was stayin' in the wilderness too long,*

*Keep your eyes on the prize,
Hold on, hold on.*

*The one thing we did right
Was the day we started to fight,
Keep your eyes on the prize,
Hold on, hold on.*

This applies to us, as it did to hundreds of thousands of African Americans who sang this spiritual and organized and won freedom.

Lack of resources? Got no money? Then figure out how to win with less. Keep your eyes on the prize, and hold on. Do what you can do—and keep doing it.

Think all is lost some days? Remember—things are shaking, like the dungeon in the song, and the chains are coming off. Live and act in freedom, building with others towards a better day.

Farm Bill, see page 4...

The one thing we did right was the day we started to fight. AMEN.

In closing, I want a commitment from each of you — made to yourself and to our movement. You don't have to say it out loud, but I'm asking you to make one.

I want you to think now of the prize you will work for in this Farm Bill campaign. The prize that will help your community, help the land, make a difference in the lives of people. I want you to commit to keeping your eyes on that prize, and working to build the power to make that change. I want you to commit to bringing more and more

people into this movement and into your organization, and to simply do what you can. And I want you to celebrate that commitment itself as a victory, a victory for democracy and hope. And then I want you to join in the celebration at the end of this campaign when we see what we have won, as we surely will. And then plan the next campaign forward. □

A 'New Farm Initiative' for the 2007 Farm Bill

EDITOR'S NOTE: This commentary is excerpted from testimony Land Stewardship Project organizer Paul Sobocinski gave to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture in July. Sobocinski is a crop and livestock farmer in southwest Minnesota. The full text of the testimony can be found at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/06/newsr_060722.htm.

By Paul Sobocinski

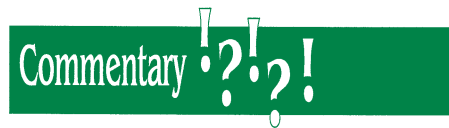
The New Farm Initiative is a package of policies to support new types of farms and farmers, including farmers growing food for local communities and regional markets and beginning farmers and ranchers starting on the land. It is a major, cross-cutting initiative that addresses in a comprehensive fashion the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as farmers re-beginning their operations to meet the increased demand for safe, healthful, locally-grown food.

For new farmers, barriers to entry include difficulty finding viable farming opportunities, ineffective entry strategies, over-reliance on debt financing, inability to acquire initial capital investment and difficulty obtaining credit and insurance for nontraditional farming enterprises. Other stumbling blocks are shortage of farm mentoring opportunities and lack of access to the kind of training in management, marketing and communication skills necessary for success in new and value-added marketing opportunities.

The next farm bill needs to include a "Beginning Farmer Act," which has a special emphasis on support for beginning and new farmers. The face of American agriculture is changing, and its future depends on the ability of new family farmers and ranchers to enter agriculture. Providing opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers, includ-

ing minority or new immigrant farmers, is also important for rural communities as well as the viability of our nation's rural businesses, schools and other community institutions. Components of the Beginning Farmer Act include:

1. Reauthorization of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). Funded at \$20 million a year, the BFRDP is targeted especially for collaborative local, state, and regionally based networks and partnerships to support financial and entrepreneurial training, mentoring and apprenticeship programs, "land link" programs, innovative farm transfer and transition practices, and education and



outreach activities to assist beginning farmers and ranchers. Not less than 25 percent of funds appropriated for this program are targeted to limited resource and socially disadvantaged beginning farmers and ranchers and to farm workers seeking to become farmers or ranchers.

The program also establishes education teams, made up of representatives of colleges and universities, cooperative extension, nongovernmental organizations and agencies.

2. Increasing access to credit and land. One of the greatest struggles beginning farmers and ranchers with limited resources face is difficulty obtaining credit and land for new or innovative farming approaches. The Beginning Farmer Act also includes ideas to strengthen the ability of beginning farmers and ranchers to access credit and land by including reforms such as:

- a. Expansion of the Down Payment Loan Program and Loan Contract Guarantee Program.

- b. Establishment of an Individual Development Accounts pilot program to encourage savings.
- c. Incentives and prioritization within Conservation and Stewardship Programs to encourage beginning farmer participations.

As part of the 2007 Farm Bill's New Farm Initiative, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program should be reauthorized and granted at least \$20 million a year in annual mandatory farm bill funding.

3. Prioritizing Conservation Incentives. The conservation title of the 2002 Farm Bill authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to provide incentives to beginning farmers and ranchers and limited resource producers to participate in federal agricultural conservation programs. Such incentives should be prioritized in the 2007 Farm Bill.

4. Enact policy options to optimize the growth and development of local and regional food systems. Policies to support local and regional markets for community based food systems include strengthening the Farmers Market Promotion Program, breaking down the barriers to interstate meat sales, building on the Farm to Cafeteria initiatives, and farmer-friendly reforms to the Value Added Producer Grants program.



In conclusion, I would like to thank the United States House Agriculture Committee for the opportunity to testify. These issues are critically important to family farmers, rural America, the environment and our food system. □

For more on the New Farm Initiative, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377. See page 16 for more on the New Farm Initiative's connection to rural development.

Don't read this on an empty stomach

I enjoyed your review of *Simply in Season* (Jan./Feb./March 2006 *LSL*, page 29). I have always cooked from scratch, as did my mother, who spent all summer gardening and driving to farms for the freshest of produce, meats and eggs. You are absolutely correct, however, that "home cooking with whole foods is no longer a part of everyday life" for the vast majority of American families.

It's not that it couldn't be done today. Even in Champaign, Ill., when my seven children were young, I was able to forage and glean fruits and wild foods to supplement grocery store fare. I aimed to be able to use any amount of whatever ingredients came my way, cheap, in preparing tasty and nutritious meals. My first cookbook was a salvaged copy of *The Compendium of Household Arts* (1915), with hundreds of old-timey recipes for preparing vegetables (candied turnips, anyone?). Later, when I had to go to work half-time at the University of Illinois, my baby-sitter was a country woman from Mississippi, who was a fantastic cook. After I moved back to Arkansas in 1972, my mother and I collaborated to serve all home-cooked fresh foods three times a day to up to 11 people each meal.

I have read in food industry trade publications that the conscious aim of the U.S. food industry is to "replace 100 percent of home-cooked meals." This is simply a ploy to gain "market share," and lots of people fall for it. It's also a way to slip in lots of cheap, corn-derived fillers and sweeteners like "high-fructose corn syrup." (Some have also suggested that there is a darker agenda: American productivity has kept up only by forcing women into the wage labor market because of falling real wages.) When I make something from scratch, I know what's in it and can leave out poor quality fillers and extraneous preservatives.

When tomatillos came up in my compost (to which the local natural foods co-op had contributed out-of-date organic vegetables), I made a good supply of green salsa. My fare this week included Asian natural beef, Indian curried lamb, shredded beets with beet greens, organic carrots and broccoli, vegetable soup with corn muffins, squash rolls, and pirogi (Russian lamb pie) with diced new potatoes. I'm not a very big fan of desserts or baking, but the squash rolls (my mother's recipe) turned out well. The Red Kuri squash had been a volunteer in

Letters

my garden. Last year I put up wild cherry jelly and blackberry conserve from my land and several pints of wild persimmon puree from foraged persimmons.

My weekend schedule nowadays includes shopping at the farmers' market (which also has meats, eggs, cheese and honey), tending my five gardens, and trying new recipes from a collection of ethnic cookbooks. Several of my children live in the family compound, and I'm trying to get them back on healthy diets. In my family, it's that boomer generation that has gotten out of touch with healthy eating.

— Katherine Adam
National Center for
Appropriate Technology
Fayetteville, Ark.

Recalling land

The commentary in the April/May/June *Land Stewardship Letter* ("Renewable Rural Development," page 2) was right on target. Fundamentally we need an educated citizenry—a society with

• • •
*Many people have
forgotten there
is such a thing
as land.*
• • •

awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the natural world. I cannot imagine blotting up the soil nutrients of the country to burn in our huge, inefficient

vehicles.

My father, Aldo Leopold, once wrote, "The problem of conservation education is how to bring about a striving for harmony with land among a people many of whom have forgotten there is such a thing as land."

I am sending your commentary to our Aldo Leopold office—it should go in every newsletter in the country!

— Nina Bradley
Baraboo, Wis.

CSP too books-based

While I agree with your philosophy that many farms are much better for this country than just a few big farms, I do take issue with the Land Stewardship Project's endorsement of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) as it stands.

I attended one of the first meetings two years ago to learn about CSP. Many of my neighbors also attended. We all have dairy herds from 40 to 100 cows and are all a one-family operation per farm.

None of us could see that CSP would work for us. Why? The bookkeeping bureaucratic nightmare.

CSP is geared to an operation where an office support staff is already in place to take care of all the record-keeping that CSP requires. This farm has been in the Primus name for 60 years. And during that time we have learned what it takes to produce good crops while protecting the soil. But this farm is not run "by the books."

That said, I will conclude by suggesting LSP work with Uncle Sam in developing less bureaucracy in the farm program.

— Harvey Primus
Bluffton, Minn.

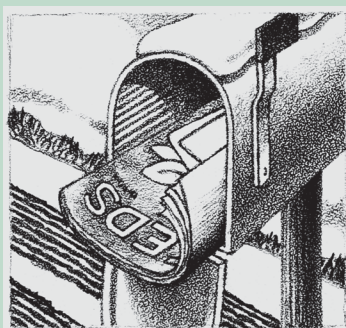
What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

Contact: Brian DeVore, *Land Stewardship Letter*, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.



28%...

...That's the percentage of the nation's pork processing business Smithfield Foods is expected to control if its attempt to buy Premium Standard Farms is successful. Smithfield, which is the world's largest hog producer and packer, announced in September that it wants to acquire Premium Standard, the number two pork producer in the U.S. Such a mega-merger means Smithfield could soon own over one million sows and produce over 20 million pigs a year.

Several farm groups, including the Land Stewardship Project and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, have expressed grave concerns about the merger. It promises to further concentrate an already heavily monopolistic industry, reducing the need for packers to pay competitive prices for hogs produced by independent farmers. The Campaign, as well as several members of Congress, have asked that the Department of Justice take a serious look at the deal to determine if it violates antitrust laws. (See www.landstewardshipproject.org/itn/06/061107.htm to read a commentary authored by several members of the Campaign on this issue.)

Unfortunately, the Justice Department has stood by passively as agribusiness has gone through an unprecedented run of mega-mergers. In fact, a few years ago the former head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, Joel Klein, was hired by Smithfield to help determine if buying IBP would pose anti-trust problems. Klein said it wouldn't, despite the fact that if Smithfield had been successful in its buy-out of IBP it would have controlled 40 percent of the hog market. According to conventional economic wisdom, when *four* firms control more than 40 percent of a market, it's no longer a competitive one.

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Organic vegetable production spawns outbreaks of deadly bacteria.

→ **Fact:** When news broke this summer that E. coli infections had been linked to raw spinach, some of it coming from certified organic farms, apologists for the conventional food system pounced. Organic vegetable operations can use cattle manure as a natural source of fertility, and E. coli is often present in raw bovine waste. For some commentators, that was enough evidence to indict all organic farms.

What was lost in the hysteria was an important point: certified organic farmers are prohibited from using raw manure for at least 90 days before harvesting crops grown for human consumption.

One other mostly overlooked factor is the role factory livestock farming plays in the spread of dangerous E. coli bacteria. E. coli exists in the guts of humans and cattle without managing to make us sick, as food writer Nina Planck recently pointed out. In general our stomachs are acidic enough to kill this bacterium. But

one strain of this critter, E. coli O157:H7, loves acid, and it's the one that can make us ill, even kill us. The intestinal tracts of cattle that feed on grass and hay don't contain this deadly bacterium. But during the past few decades, cattle have increasingly been raised using intensive grain diets on large-scale factory farms. It turns out grain-based diets create unnaturally acidic stomachs in bovines, providing a perfect environment for O157.

This means that O157 is now an uninvited guest at your supper table, even if only vegetables are on the menu. Liquid manure from factory farms can find its way into waterways, making it possible to contaminate produce operations via irrigation or flooding.

Stack on top of that the fact that our meatpacking industry has managed to loosen regulations and speed up production lines to the point where it's difficult to keep the manure-laced E. coli that's inside the cattle from getting onto the meat being processed, and you have a recipe for disaster.

Agribusiness and its friends within the

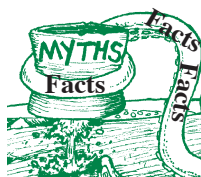
government have known how to nip the O157 problem in the bud for some time. Replacing even some of the intensive feeding of grain with more grass and hay would take care of the problem. And many other human health, as well as environmental, benefits are starting to emerge from grass-based livestock production.

For now, industrialized agriculture's strategy is to feed grain to livestock in large-scale confinement facilities and to manage the problems associated with such a system through Band-Aid solutions such as irradiation.

→ **More information:**

- Nina Planck's commentary on E. coli and spinach is at www.nina.planck.com/index.php?article=e_coli.

- The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture (www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html) initiative has fact sheets and research reports on the benefits of grass-based livestock production.



Myth Busters series now on the Internet

The *Land Stewardship Letter's* popular Myth Buster series is now available on our website. You can download pdf versions at www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html. For information on obtaining paper copies of the series, contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Profits on the prairie

One of the complaints about U.S. agricultural plant research is that it often focuses almost exclusively on promoting the production of more of the same: namely commodity crops like corn and soybeans. But recent news out of eastern Nebraska indicates that scientists are sometimes able to sneak in some innovative research that doesn't have the seal of approval of Pioneer Hi-Bred or Monsanto.

In this case, two new varieties of big bluestem prairie grass have been developed by scientists at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The varieties, called Bonanza and Goldmine, combine wide-ranging adaptability with better forage quality, according to *Agricultural Research*, a USDA publication. When cattle grazed on the new bluestem varieties during pasture trials, they gained 18 to 50 pounds more per acre per year than those that grazed traditional bluestem grasses (those old varieties have dominated in the region for more than 40 years). That could translate into a mean net profit of more than \$35 per acre annually for beef producers—a \$15 increase. In fact, on poor quality soils, yearling steers that grazed pastures sprouting Bonanza and Goldmine generated net profits of up to \$119 per acre, 2.4 times more profit than that land would have produced growing corn, according to the researchers' estimates.

This is good news for farmers and ranchers looking to generate a viable income on acres that don't produce bin-busting crops of corn or soybeans. It's also a plus for the environment since prairie grass provides year-round protection for the soil, among other things.

The development of Bonanza and Goldmine offers a lesson in the importance of supporting innovative agricultural research over the long haul. Although USDA scientist Kenneth Vogel began breeding these new varieties almost three decades ago, their seed was made available to the public just this year. □

For more information on research into using prairie grasses to produce beef, see www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2005/051108.htm.

Ethanol: local investors = local jobs

All of the excitement over corn-based ethanol is generating more than millions of gallons of fuel. It's also spawning a lot of claims about the economic perks—jobs, higher corn prices, increased demand for goods and services—that ethanol plants can bring to rural communities. Despite all the hype and anecdotal evidence, the fact is there is a limited amount of solid economic

percent local ownership, the local ownership dimension accounted for 47 more jobs, according to the study, which was coordinated by economists at ISU's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. For a plant that was 63 percent locally owned, the local ownership dimension added 80 more jobs.

If local residents are making good money off of their investment, they are more likely to hire people and make other investments in the community that create jobs. They will also spend more money at Main Street businesses, indirectly creating a demand for employees.

Local ownership's positive impact is an important point to keep in mind as Midwestern corn ethanol's profitability makes it increasingly attractive to outside investors, some from as far away as Australia and South Africa.

But it's a kind of live-by-the-sword,

die-by-the-sword situation, the researchers warn: as long as profits in the ethanol industry are high, as they are now, these plants will create jobs. "It is instructive to also note that the ostensible gains from local ownership can work in reverse if the fortunes of these plants wane," concluded the economists. "Robust local gains become robust local losses...."

No matter how much of a plant is owned by locals, the bottom line is this: don't put all your eggs in one ethanol-saturated basket. □

For a copy of "Determining the Regional Economic Values of Ethanol Production in Iowa Considering Different Levels of Local Investment," see www.valuechains.org/bewg/Documents/eth_full0706.pdf, or call 515-294-3711.



When corn is made into ethanol, what is the impact on a rural economy? New research shows it depends on the amount of local investment involved. (LSP photo)

data on the "Main Street" impacts of such plants.

With that in mind, Iowa State University researchers recently set out to determine the real monetary effect of ethanol plants on local communities. What they found is that local ownership can make a big difference. For example, a new plant that had no local ownership created or stimulated 133 jobs in the regional community. That's impressive. But then researchers studied other ethanol plants in Iowa that had an increasingly bigger percentage of local ownership. (The researchers determined the local ownership dimension by using zip codes and share amounts of investors within the primary corn market area that was benefited by the plant.)

They found 29 more jobs would be created for every 25 percent increase in local ownership. For a firm that had 27



Ness: Sustainable farmers in good position to satisfy 'green-light' demands

The Internet has turned an old marketing rule on its head, providing a prime opportunity for farmers who are direct marketing niche products such as grass-fed meat and milk. That was the message delivered by sustainable agriculture pioneer Richard Ness Aug. 5 during a keynote at the Land Stewardship Project's "Food, Family and Farming" event in southeast Minnesota. The hog roast was hosted by John and Donna Bedtke, who produce milk near the community of Plainview.

Ness worked for LSP for 11 years before moving to Nebraska where he is now an Extension educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Among other things, he works with farmers interested in producing pork for niche markets. While in Minnesota, he was key in promoting the use of managed rotational grazing and Holistic Management in the state and region. Ness also did pioneering work with what is now called the Farm Beginnings® program.

During his keynote, Ness said that the traditional rule of thumb in marketing was the 80/20 strategy: you get 80 percent of your sales from 20 percent of your customers. But the Internet, with its ability to reach out to a lot of people in a short amount of time, makes it possible to profitably market to much narrower niches of consumers who are looking for a wide variety of choice. The Internet also allows consumers to provide instant feedback and to help market the product by writing their own online reviews. This phenomenon has been described in detail by such books as *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, said Ness.

"People like variety," said Ness. "If given the option, people will take that option."

One option consumers are increasingly choosing these days is what food writer Jeremy Iggers calls the "green-light

ethics" approach to shopping. Instead of just avoiding certain products because they are associated with environmental problems or inhumane treatment of animals — "red-light" ethical choices — Iggers argues that shoppers can have a



Richard Ness: "Those farms that are based on the nature model will have a marketing edge. It's easy to get down about agriculture, but I'm in a real positive mood about this."
(LSP photo)

more positive impact on the world by buying products that are good for society.

One example of that is grass-fed meat and dairy products, said Ness. Food raised in pasture systems helps protect water quality and prevent soil erosion, while maintaining wildlife habitat. In other words, grass-based livestock production systems follow nature's model much closer, he said.

It isn't just about healthier food. Agribusiness is trying to satisfy certain niche demands for lower fat content and higher levels of, say, omega-3 fatty acids, by bioengineering animals that provide such health benefits. But engineered products can't provide the multiple benefits to the environment and communities that animals raised on sustainable farms can, said Ness.

"Those farms that are based on the nature model will have a marketing edge. That market will only continue to grow,"

he said, adding that agribusiness, which relies on providing consumers limited choices of products to make big profits, is nervous about this trend. "It's easy to get down about agriculture, but I'm in a real positive mood about this."

Ness said the Bedtke farm, which uses managed rotational grazing to produce milk, and which borders a state wildlife management area, is a great example of a farm which is based on the model of nature.

Groups like LSP play a key role in this new "green-light ethics" marketing system by helping create and support networks of farmers who can produce these products, said Ness. LSP must also stay active on the policy level to make sure sustainable farming methods are not restricted. As an example, Ness recalled

the time a few years ago when the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency was considering severely restricting grazing as a way to protect water quality. LSP organized a group of graziers who met with Pollution Control Agency officials and explained how managed rotational grazing can actually have significant benefits for the environment. As a result, the agency backed off on their proposed restrictions.

"We have to keep fighting on the policy level to make sure people have the opportunity to make the choices they want," said Ness.

Controlled energy

During the LSP event, John and Donna Bedtke talked briefly about their farm's

Green-light, see page 9...

transition from a conventional dairy operation to a grass-based system.

For the first 16 years after he graduated from high school in 1973, John Bedtke produced milk conventionally—housing the cows in a barn most of the time and hauling their feed to them. But in the 1980s, the Bedtkes started noticing the confined cows were having a lot of health problems. The family was also frustrated that pushing milk production by intense feeding of row crop-based feeds was expensive and not always financially viable—or good for the family’s quality of life.

So in 1989 the Bedtkes tried managed rotational grazing. Popular in countries like New Zealand, this system consists of breaking up a pasture into smaller paddocks using portable fencing. Cows are moved to a new paddock on a regular basis—sometimes daily. This makes good use of the nutritional value of the grass while preventing overgrazing. The system also spreads manure in a manner that’s good for the soil.

Today, the family still raises hay and some corn, but their land is mostly planted to grass. John Bedtke said grass farming has allowed them to lower their feed, veterinary and fuel costs considerably. They were also able to get rid of a lot of the expensive equipment needed to produce row crops. As a result, profits are up, even though milk production is lower than under the conventional system.



John and Donna Bedtke hosted LSP’s “Food, Family and Farming” event in southeast Minnesota. “We’re putting our energies where we can control them and we’re getting results,” John told the LSP members who attended. (LSP photo)

Grass farming has made it possible for the operation to be certified organic, and the Bedtkes now receive a premium price for their milk from Organic Valley. But John Bedtke said even without the organic premium, the low cost of grass farming makes dairying financially viable for his family. One of the Bedtkes’ five children, Adam, a Farm Beginnings graduate, is now farming less than a mile from the home place.

“We’re putting our energies where we can control them and we’re getting results,” John said. □

Help needed for farm hit by storm

In August, an F3 tornado hit the southern Minnesota farm of Land Stewardship Project members Dan and Terese Hall. Fortunately, no one was injured. However, their home and almost all of the buildings on their farmstead—including their fencing business—were destroyed. If you would like to help the Halls get their feet under them and begin rebuilding, you can send donations to: Hall Family Tornado Fund, First National Bank of St. James, 202 First Ave. South, St. James, MN 56081. □



LSP members contributed locally-produced dishes to the hog roast. (LSP photo)

• • •
“The future of food, the land, and society requires us to make agriculture whole.”

—LSP’s George Boody & Brian DeVore, writing in the October 2006 issue of the journal *BioScience* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/itn/06/061016.pdf)

Rachel Long an organizing apprentice

Land Stewardship Project Policy Program intern Rachel Long has been accepted into the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) mentorship program.

OAP works to strengthen community organizing in Minnesota by increasing the number, effectiveness and diversity of community organizers, leaders and organizing projects in the state. OAP's apprenticeship program offers intensive training, individual mentoring and six months of fulltime paid organizing experience to a group of eight to 12 people each year.

For more information on OAP, visit www.oaproject.org, or call 612-746-4224. □

Masselink awarded Serfling Scholarship

Jim Masselink is the first recipient of the Dave Serfling Memorial Scholarship. Masselink is majoring in animal science and general agriculture at South Dakota State University. His parents are Land Stewardship Project members Robert and Esther Masselink, who raise crops and livestock near Edgerton, in southwest Minnesota. He was awarded the scholarship in September during the annual Niman Ranch Pork Company farmer appreciation dinner.

The scholarship was established by Niman Ranch in honor of Dave Serfling, a southeast Minnesota farmer and LSP member who was killed in an automobile accident earlier this year. Serfling, a leader in sustainable agriculture, was a founding member of Niman Ranch Pork Company.

The scholarship will be awarded annually to a student pursuing a degree in sustainable agriculture and/or related to a Niman Ranch farmer. The Masselinks raise pork for Niman, which requires that animals be produced in natural, humane conditions without the use of antibiotics.

For information on the scholarship, or

to make a contribution to the scholarship fund, see www.nimanranch.com, or write: Dave Serfling Memorial Scholarship Fund, Niman Ranch Pork Co., 2551 Eagle Avenue, Thornton, IA 50479.

LSP members honored for pork quality

During the Niman Ranch farmer appreciation dinner, three LSP members were recognized for the quality of pork they have produced during the past year. Dennis Rabe of Lake City, Minn., was second in pork quality, while Glen Bernard of Rushford, Minn., and Justin Leonhardt of Kellogg, Minn., were fourth and fifth respectively in that category. □

Doucet-Ber serving internship

Elena Doucet-Ber is serving a Land Stewardship Project internship. Doucet-Ber has a bachelor's degree in biology from Lawrence University and she is in the graduate program at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. She has worked as a field researcher and laboratory assistant. Doucet-Ber has also worked for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the National Wildlife Federation.

During her LSP internship, Doucet-Ber is working on the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative to develop tools for predicting management outcomes and subsequent stewardship payments. Her internship is supported by the Doris Duke Fellowship. □



Elena Doucet-Ber



Land Stewardship Project member Barbara Pumper (left) quizzed young consumers on food and farming during the Eco Experience at this year's Minnesota State Fair. Held in the State Fairground's Progress Center Building, the Eco Experience offered comprehensive exhibits of green products and services. On Sept. 1, LSP and Food Alliance Midwest were at the Eco Experience to provide information on environmentally-friendly farming and how to support such practices through food purchases. Some 350,000 people visited the Eco Experience during the Fair. For more information on the Eco Experience, see www.pca.state.mn.us/ecoexperience. (LSP photo)

Tacheny & Erkel wrap up two decades of service to LSP Board

Sister Mary Tacheny and **Jim Erkel** attended their last meeting as members of the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors on July 21, after serving a combined total of 22 years. Following the meeting, Tacheny and Erkel were honored at a dinner in the horticulture gardens at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris.

In 1995, a year before joining the board, **Sister Mary Tacheny** was honored with an "LSP Lifetime Achievement Award" for her contribution to sustainable agriculture and rural communities. She was well-known for her role in facilitating the writing of the Midwestern Catholic bishops' document, *Strangers and Guests: Toward Community in the Heartland*, in the 1970s. As director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference's Department of Social Concerns in the 1980s and 1990s, Tacheny often collaborated with LSP at the state legislature.

"She has truly been a guiding light and a reliable, or better—indomitable—ally over the years," says Mark Schultz, LSP's Director of Policy and Organizing.

The board voted to confer the status of emeritus board member to Tacheny.

Jim Erkel joined the board in 1992 and served until 2000. After a two-year respite, he returned to the LSP Board in 2002 and served another term. Erkel helped LSP start the Washington County Land Trust and the Metro Farm Project, two successful programs that were spun



Jim Erkel and Sister Mary Tacheny have served a combined 22 years on LSP's Board of Directors. (photo by Laura Borgendale)

off into independent nonprofit organizations: the Minnesota Land Trust and 1000 Friends of Minnesota. During his association with LSP, Erkel, an attorney, worked on natural resource issues as an employee of the Nature Conservancy and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. In recent years, Erkel served on LSP's Land Gifts Task Force. He also

served as the LSP Board's vice president and treasurer.

"Jim's experience and legal knowledge were of inestimable value to LSP," says LSP Executive Director George Body. "We will be benefiting from his service for years to come." □

Local foods at Morris 'Horticulture Night'

The Land Stewardship Project provided locally-produced foods at the annual "Horticulture Night" held at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minn., on July 27. LSP served smoked brats made from pork raised on Pastures A' Plenty farm.

Over the years, Horticulture Night has become a popular event for introducing

local residents to what's going on at the University of Minnesota experiment station. Participants tour the station's extensive horticulture gardens and also get a chance to learn about innovative research into such areas as managed rotational grazing, antibiotic-free pork production and wind energy.

For more on the West Central Research and Outreach Center, see <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>. For details on LSP's local foods initiatives in western Minnesota, call our Montevideo office at 320-269-2105 or visit www.prideoftheprairie.org. (photo by Terry VanDerPol)



LSP members deliver reform message to Congress

In August, Land Stewardship Project members and staff met with three different members of Congress in the Upper Midwest to discuss farm policy reform. In total, 62 LSP members were involved in these on-farm meetings.

For more information on LSP's federal farm policy work, contact organizer Adam Warthesen at adamw@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. □



ABOVE: LSP members met with U.S. Representative Ron Kind (D-WI) at the Matt Urch and Sara Martinez farm outside of Viroqua, Wis. They discussed the importance of supporting beginning farmers, the need for fundamental commodity program reform, the strong demand for a bigger and better Conservation Security Program (CSP), and how community-based food systems are growing in the area. LSP members also highlighted changes needed to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which after the 2002 Farm Bill allowed new and expanding concentrated animal feedlot operations (feedlots over 1,000 animal units) to receive \$450,000 for manure lagoons. Members outlined reforms to EQIP that would implement a \$100,000 payment limit and prohibit factory farms from using EQIP dollars. (photo by Adam Warthesen)



LEFT: Brad and Leslea Hodgson, who farm outside the southeast Minnesota community of Fountain, hosted Rep. Gil Gutknecht (R-MN). The Hodgsons are 2001 Farm Beginning® graduates as well as Tier III CSP contract holders in the Root River watershed. The meeting, which included 40 LSP members, focused on the need for enacting a Beginning Farmer Act and expanding and building CSP in the 2007 Farm Bill. A number of Farm Beginnings graduates, mentors and staff discussed the need for the next Farm Bill to include provisions to support beginning farmers. (photo by Adam Warthesen)

RIGHT: LSP members Don and Bev Struxness hosted a dinner and meeting with Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), ranking member of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, on their farm near the western Minnesota community of Milan. Nine LSP members attended the event and talked about reforms for the 2007 Farm Bill, including developing a New Farm Initiative, which includes support for beginning farmers and community-based food systems (see page 4).

Congressman Peterson is currently working on changing the interstate prohibition on meat sales across state lines. He also committed to co-sponsoring the "Beginning Farmer Act" once it's introduced.

LSP members also discussed the need to expand CSP in the next farm bill and how the commodity programs have failed taxpayers, farmers and rural landscapes. (photo by Adam Warthesen)



Petitioners call for a new Farm Bill in 2007

The Land Stewardship Project joined other members of the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment this summer in circulating a petition calling for a new Farm Bill in 2007. The petition signers called for farm policy that protects our nation's soil and water, provides a fair price in the marketplace to farmers, supports community gardens and urban agriculture and delivers healthful food produced on local family farms.

Interns Rachel Long and Mitch Hunter, along with 25 volunteers, collected over 5,000 signatures in Minnesota during street actions. Another 1,000 petition signatures were collected by individuals or at events. The petitions were delivered to Congress by LSP members during a November fly-in to D.C.

For more information, contact Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.



Land Stewardship Project intern Rachel Long (right) and LSP volunteer Sarah Jones (middle) recently collected signatures on the Farm Bill petition in the Uptown area of Minneapolis. (LSP photo)

2006 edition of township planning manual available

An updated edition of a popular guide for Minnesota township supervisors and residents interested in understanding their township zoning powers is now available. First published by the Land Stewardship Project in 1997, *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development*, is designed to help townships begin the process of creating zoning ordinances that reflect their local values and land use needs. An increasing number of townships are creating local zoning ordinances to protect the health, safety and welfare of their residents.

The 52-page guide was developed with the input of some of Minnesota's foremost experts on township zoning. It focuses on how township supervisors and residents can use an interim ordinance to promote responsible development. An interim ordinance allows a township to apply a temporary ban or moratorium on major development while the citizens consider creating or amending zoning ordinances and a comprehensive plan. The manual includes examples of interim ordinances enacted by Minnesota townships in recent years, as well as a list of resources.

The updated manual also features a

new opinion from the Minnesota Attorney General's office that supports an important principle of township rights. The Attorney General's opinion affirms that when a township enacts an interim ordinance in good faith, the ordinance is valid even if it immediately affects only a single proposed development.

The 2006 edition of the manual reflects changes that have been made to state laws over the past several years. These changes have not weakened township powers but do affect the process of adopting an interim ordinance.

When a Factory Farm Comes to Town is available at no charge on the Land Stewardship Project website at www.landstewardshipproject.org/PDF/township_manual06.pdf. Copies can also be purchased for \$8.00 (that price includes the 6.5 percent Minnesota state sales tax) by calling the

Land Stewardship Project at 612-722-6377. Information on obtaining copies is also available from LSP's offices in Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) and White Bear Lake (651-653-0618). □

When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development



A guide for Minnesota townships on using an interim ordinance to promote responsible development.

A
Land Stewardship
Project
publication



2nd Edition
August 2006

This is an updated version of a publication that was originally published in February 1997.

www.landstewardshipproject.org

Court backs Ripley Township in battle against proposed mega-dairy

A District Court Judge has ruled that a mega-dairy's challenge of a southeast Minnesota township's planning and zoning ordinance which bans the construction of livestock operations over 1,500 animal units was "without merit."

Following the court decision, the mega-dairy's investors announced that they were dropping plans to pursue having the Minnesota community of Claremont annex Ripley Township in an attempt to circumvent the township's planning and zoning rules, according to the *Winona Daily News*.

In a decision issued Aug. 9, Judge Joseph A. Bueltel ruled in favor of Dodge County's Ripley Township. The township had been sued by Ripley Dairy LLP, which for over four years has been proposing a controversial 3,000-animal unit mega-dairy in the township. The investors argued that the township had acted "illegally" and "arbitrarily" when it developed planning and zoning ordinances that banned the construction of large-scale livestock operations over 1,500 animal units. Ninety-five percent of Minnesota dairy operations are under 150 animal units, according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

But Bueltel wrote in his ruling that the Court "...does not find any of the Dairy's legal or equitable arguments persuasive." Furthermore, in the summary judgment, Judge Bueltel concluded that, "Ultimately, in drafting its ordinance, the Board exercised its discretion and decided that smaller farming organizations were more suitable for Ripley Township in Dodge County."

This is the latest in a series of court decisions that have supported the rights of Minnesota townships to develop their own planning and zoning ordinances. Ripley Township residents said Bueltel's ruling provides an important vote of confidence for all the hard work and thought they put into developing their planning and zoning ordinance.

The majority of community residents have expressed opposition to the mega-dairy. Over the years Ripley Dairy's investors have tried lawsuits, support of an annexation of the township by the City of Claremont and outside political pressure to force the project into the community—all unsuccessfully.

"The investors have tried every method to force this project into Ripley," says township resident Lois Nash. "Maybe now the investors will listen to the community and follow the law instead of trying to get around it with lawsuits and divisive annexation schemes." □

Investigations show TV ads misleading

A series of controversial advertisements sponsored by the Minnesota Farm and Food Coalition have come under fire from investigative journalists and farm groups for featuring inaccurate and misleading information and potentially violating federal law. The ads, which have run in heavy rotation on Minneapolis television station WCCO, are funded with soybean farmer checkoff money. They attempt to build support for policies that favor large-scale livestock operations and blame "anti-livestock activists" and "local control" for problems in the farm economy.

"It is wrong for my checkoff dollars to be used for ads that promote large-scale corporate operations," says Evan Schmeling, a Hayfield, Minn., soybean farmer and Land Stewardship Project member. "Not only is the message wrong, the facts in the ads are wrong. This is a misuse of my checkoff dollars."

In the Aug. 16 edition of his "Reality Check" report, veteran WCCO-TV political reporter Pat Kessler concluded that, "The ubiquitous farm advertisements promote the huge livestock expansions in Minnesota and take dead aim at people who oppose it. But they include misstatements and exaggerations about animal feedlot operations and the controversy in small towns around them." Kessler's analysis takes the ads to task for utilizing fake newspaper headlines and other misleading visual images in an attempt to portray agribusiness as a victim of "activists." Kessler's analysis is online at: http://wcco.com/realitycheck/local_story_234150807.html.

Nationally syndicated agricultural columnist Alan Guebert recently exposed the inappropriate use of soybean checkoff dollars to pay for the ads and showed that the blanket claim made in the TV spots that livestock numbers in Minnesota are

decreasing is false. Guebert's column is at <http://webstar.postbulletin.com/agrinews/294650573711604.bsp>.

Through documents obtained via a Freedom of Information Act request, LSP has confirmed that the ads were paid for with soybean checkoff funds. The ads also feature the soybean checkoff logo. Checkoff funds are mandatory fees paid by farmers on every bushel of soybeans sold and are to be used for soybean research and promotion. Checkoff funds cannot be used for "influencing legislation or governmental action or policy," according to federal law.

The Minnesota Farm and Food Coalition is a collection of the state's most powerful agribusiness interests, including the Minnesota Agri-Growth

TV Ads, see page 15...

Informing D.C.

Land Stewardship Project member Nancy Barsness recently had an opportunity to directly inform decision makers in Washington, D.C., that using checkoff funds to bankroll anti-local government TV advertisements is not okay with rural residents.

While attending the National Association of Towns and Townships Conference in early September, Barsness, of Pope County, Minn., noted that U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns was on the agenda to speak. Barsness, who as a farmer and township official has long been active in local control issues, called LSP's Policy Program office and requested a packet of materials on how soybean checkoff funds were being used to fund TV ads that blamed local government for problems in Minnesota's livestock industry.

While Johanns was speaking, Barsness spoke to a White House aide who was accompanying the Agriculture Secretary. She drove home the point that the ads were political speech, and therefore violated the rules controlling how checkoff dollars can be spent. Barsness gave the aide the packet and he promised to pass it on to Johanns as well as other USDA officials. She also met with Minnesota U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson and talked about the issue.

"All of these people promised they would get back to me," says Barsness.

Given her reputation for tenacity when it comes to local government issues, Washington officials would do best not to procrastinate.

Council, the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association. In recent years, such groups have worked at the state capital to weaken local government control or environmental review of large-scale livestock operations.

In June, Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG), on behalf of clients LSP and

the other members of the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, sent a letter to USDA outlining the alleged violations pertaining to the use of checkoff funds. Besides LSP, the other Campaign members include Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Illinois Stewardship Alliance and Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana. The FLAG letter demands that the ads be withdrawn and calls for the Minnesota Soybean Board to refund to the

United Soybean Board the checkoff dollars used in the production and airing of the ads. USDA is currently reviewing the letter. □

The FLAG letter is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/cff_soybean_chk_ltr.pdf. To read a blog on the Minnesota Farm and Food Coalition ads, see <http://looncommons.org/2006/08/25/ads-on-wcco-dont-pass-the-reality-test>.

MDA attempting to dismantle innovative farming program

One of the nation's most respected sustainable agriculture initiatives at risk

Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture Gene Hugoson has proposed a reorganization of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) that threatens the effectiveness, and even long term existence, of key sustainable ag and organic farming programs. This proposal was developed without involving the Land Stewardship Project, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, the Organic Consumers Association or any other citizen organizations that have helped create and shape many of these programs, says Bobby King of LSP's Policy and Organizing Program.

Commissioner Hugoson has proposed dismantling the "Agricultural Resources Management and Development Division," and dispersing the staff and responsibilities of this division to several other divisions. The mission of this key division is "to support the development of an agriculture that is profitable and environmentally sound." The Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP) is housed in this division.

"If this reorganization goes forward, a

cohesive group of key ESAP staff will be separated and moved to separate divisions, severely hindering the effectiveness of this innovative initiative," says King.

ESAP was established in 1987 in response to concerns over the impact of conventional agricultural practices on farm profitability, health and the environment.

More information

→ For details on the Agricultural Resources Management and Development Division, see www.mda.state.mn.us/agdev/default.htm

→ The Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program web page is at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/default.htm

"The purpose of the program is to demonstrate and promote alternative practices which are energy efficient, environmentally sound, profitable and which enhance the self-sufficiency of Minnesota farmers," states the MDA website.

This nationally-recognized program provides information to farmers about

sustainable and organic farming practices, coordinates on-farm research into sustainable and organic farming, and provides cost-share funds to farmers transitioning to organic.

ESAP is also responsible for making grants to farmers for on-farm research into innovative practices. The results of the research are published annually in the popular *Greenbook*. This hands-on, grassroots type of research has facilitated farmer-to-farmer education and helped farmers move towards more sustainable farming practices.

Despite all of the benefits produced by ESAP, funding for this program was severely cut two years ago.

"ESAP has been part of making Minnesota a leader in sustainable ag and organic production," says King. "Instead of weakening it further, the MDA should be fortifying it." □

A blog on the proposed reorganization is at <http://looncommons.org/2006/10/13/will-mda-gut-environmentally-friendly-farming>.

Take action now on MDA's reorganization plan

As this *Land Stewardship Letter* went to press, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was still considering a reorganization plan that would threaten the effectiveness of the Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program. Here is what you can do to protect this key sustainable agriculture program:

1. Contact Governor Tim Pawlenty at 651-296-3391 or 800-657-3717 or tim.pawlenty@state.mn.us.

Let Governor Pawlenty know that Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson has proposed a reorganization

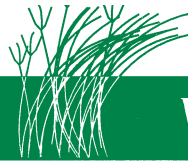
in the Department of Agriculture that will harm our sustainable ag and organic programs. Commissioner Hugoson has not consulted with sustainable and organic farmers or our state's sustainable ag and organic farming organizations about this proposal. Tell Governor Pawlenty that these programs have already suffered severe budget cuts under his administration and that you want this proposed reorganization to stop.

2. Contact Commissioner Hugoson at 651-201-6219 or Gene.Hugoson@state.mn.us

Tell Commissioner Hugoson that the MDA's sustainable and organic ag programs

are working well in the current MDA structure. Any consideration of a reorganization that affects sustainable and organic ag programs must include input from sustainable ag and organic farming organizations, including LSP, as well as provide an opportunity for input from farmers. Tell Commissioner Hugoson to drop consideration of this reorganization.

For more on how you can make your voice heard on this issue, contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.



The New Farm Initiative & rural development

By Terry VanDerPol

Standing tall on the western Minnesota prairie, the town of Morris is home to the University of Minnesota-Morris and the Pomme de Terre (PDT) Food Co-op. The PDT Co-op was founded by university students in their quest to develop strong connections to the community and to acquire higher quality food. This resilient little store has persisted for over 30 years with the tag-line: "Going out of business since 1975."

"It's no joke," says Margaret Kuchenreuther, a PDT Board member and volunteer. "This is the first time in my memory we have not had to rely on personal financial help from board members to see us over some rough times. And our focus on local foods has been a part of the change."

Since the purchase of a new freezer in 2005, sales of frozen foods has tripled. Sales in general are growing steadily, but over the past few years locally produced food has been accounting for an increasing percentage of PDT's business. According to PDT manager Jessi Gurr, in June 2006 local foods accounted for 16.3 percent of the co-op's purchases.

"That's mostly locally produced meat," she says. "The meat is the big pull. We're beginning to see customers' enthusiasm for local foods making PDT Co-op a destination point for shoppers. We're seeing a steady stream of new shoppers all the time." On Tuesdays during the summer, the co-op is a drop-off point for an area Community Supported Agriculture farm. "Interest in local foods is strong," says Gurr. "Sales really pop on Tuesdays."

And local foods have given the co-op a broader appeal, pulling customers

from the general community as well as the University.

Indeed, the freezer shelves are filled with grass-fed beef, pastured chicken, antibiotic-free, naturally-raised pork and locally grown bison. The co-op also carries locally produced grains, flax and oatmeal from area farms and artisan breads that emerge from "The Black Cat," a new bakery in nearby Glenwood. Locally sourced foods in the freezer and throughout the store are marked with the bright "Buy Fresh Buy Local" Pride of the Prairie (POP) label. POP is a regional collaborative working to advance local foods in the region's communities and in the University of Minnesota-Morris



For Pomme de Terre Food Co-op Manager Jessi Gurr, the store's tag-line, "Going out of business since 1975," doesn't apply anymore. Local foods has put it on firm financial footing. (photo by Terry VanDerPol)

cafeteria. Board members and staff of PDT Co-op have been active in this effort since its inception.

Kuchenreuther and Gurr agree that transportation logistics for delivering local product is a big challenge. As local food sales continue to grow, a farmer-owned delivery system would be a great asset. "And we'd like more grains—things like millet, buckwheat and barley," says Kuchenreuther. "These are foods you know we can grow around here."

The New Farm Initiative

PDT Co-op's experience is just one example of how local foods can be a strong economic driver in a rural community. To support further growth of community-based food systems and the positive economic development that goes with them, the Land Stewardship Project is advocating for a New Farm Initiative (see page 4) in the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill.

Seeds of change are taking root in rural Minnesota. The growing demand for fresh, nutritious and tasty food grown by local farmers is providing a real opportunity for rural economic development anchored by farmers and ranchers who produce high quality food while also providing the American public with the benefit of excellent soil and water stewardship as well as wildlife habitat.

The 2007 Farm Bill, which is currently being debated by Congress and will set U.S. food and farm policy for the next

five or six years, is a key opportunity to enact policies that advance community based food systems and help beginning farmers and ranchers get started. Through the New Farm Initiative, LSP and its allies are working to implement public policies that support beginning farmers and ranchers and community-based food systems. LSP believes even a modest public investment will help fuel an economic renaissance in our rural areas by creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs, and by retaining more of the wealth generated by our rich soils, skilled farmers and ranchers, as well as local businesspeople in our communities.

With the help of progressive policies such as the New Farm Initiative, an increasing number of Main Street "going out of business" signs could be mothballed. □

Terry VanDerPol, an organizer in LSP's western Minnesota office, can be contacted at 320-269-2105 or tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org. More information about the New Farm Initiative is available by calling LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377.

The confidence to think long-term

On a recent summer day, Katy and Peter Hemberger showed off the new irrigation setup on their organic vegetable operation west of the central Minnesota community of Hutchinson. The watering system is more than a hedge against the kind of dry weather that can decimate a stand of vegetables in a matter of days. It's also a symbol that the young farming couple has the confidence to make major investments in their budding enterprise.

"We're able to think more long-term, so we have the confidence to make big investments and see how they can pay off down the road," says Peter, 27.

In farming, it's tough to keep long term planning on the front burner. The day-to-day labor of maintaining an operation can crowd out everything else, says Katy, 26. "This week we had 23 things that were ready to harvest."

The Hembergers credit their ability to take the long view of things with their recent participation in the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings® course. Soon after buying their 40-acre farm in 2004, the Hembergers took Farm Beginnings. During twice-a-month classes throughout the winter, they got the opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. They were exposed to goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. Established farmers and other professionals presented at the seminars. The course also offered a series of on-farm educational field days during the spring and summer where students like the Hembergers got a firsthand look at the production systems they were learning about.

Before they took the course, the couple spent a growing season apprenticing on an innovative organic vegetable operation in northeast Minnesota called Food Farm. Operated by John and Jane Fisher-Merritt, Food Farm gave the Hembergers a crash course in the basics of raising vegetables. They also got a taste for an innovative marketing system called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). This type of system consists of farms selling "shares" in their operations to consumers before the growing season. In return, the farm "members" receive



weekly deliveries of fresh produce.

"It was a CSA with training wheels," says Peter of their experience at Food Farm.

They liked how CSA farming allowed them to get involved in agriculture with a



Peter and Katy Hemberger invested in a hoop house to extend their tomato production season. (LSP photo)

relatively low investment. The Hembergers also appreciated how it brought them into close contact with the people they were feeding.

"We really like the social aspect of CSA," says Katy.

After leaving northeast Minnesota two years ago, the Hembergers bought a farm in the Hutchinson area, where Katy has family. They took Farm Beginnings during the winter of 2004-2005, and then recruited some 40 people for their inaugural season as a CSA. This year, that membership list grew to 60. The farm,

August Earth (www.augustearth.com), offers certified organic vegetables for 18 weeks from mid-June to mid-October. It also provides options where members can get greens early in the spring and storage crops like potatoes, carrots and onions in late fall. A greenhouse and a hoop house—two other major investments in the operation—are used to extend the season beyond the typical June to September time period. Their members are from Hutchinson, as well as the Minnesota communities of St. Peter and Litchfield. The Hembergers also sell vegetables to the St. Peter Food Co-op.

They raise vegetables on three acres and use an additional four for rotations. That means there is room for other enterprises on the 40-acre farm. For example, this year the Hembergers have

16 acres of certified organic soybeans. They say another skill they gained from Farm Beginnings and from working on Food Farm was the ability to look at how other enterprises could fit into their overall CSA produce operation. One example of such thinking is the group of 10 energetic pigs they used to root up fallow ground this summer using a moveable pen. Selling pork from the pigs at the end of the season provides some extra income. But the pigs are not just an addendum to the operation—they have been integrated into it. Their rooting and manure provides low-cost tillage and fertility for future vegetable crops.

As the Hembergers wrap up their second growing season on their own, they are already looking ahead and thinking about what the farm will need to stay viable in 2007 and beyond. They are planning to recruit interns to help with the labor and so they can pass on some of their skills. The farmers are also considering expanding the number of shares they offer to consumers.

"We're getting excited about planning for next year," says Katy. □

Farm Beginnings

To read other profiles of graduates of the Farm Beginnings® program, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html.

For more on Farm Beginnings, see www.farmbeginnings.org, or call 507-523-3366 in LSP's southeast Minnesota office, or 320-269-2105 in western Minnesota.

POP Local Food Guide

The 2006 edition of the *Pride of the Prairie Local Food Guide* is now available in western Minnesota businesses and at the Land Stewardship Project's Montevideo office (301 State Rd., Suite 2; phone: 320-269-2105). It is also available on the Internet at www.prideoftheprairie.org, or from any of the Pride of the Prairie partners.

The *Local Food Guide* is published and distributed by Pride of the Prairie, a collaborative initiative in the upper Minnesota River watershed that is working to develop a local, sustainable food system, educate consumers about their food choices, and create a brand that easily identifies food from the region. The guide lists farmers who are direct marketing meat, produce, flowers and other products. Pride of the Prairie's momentum is indicated by a new feature of the 2006 edition: a list of area retailers who carry local food products in their grocery stores and restaurants, as well as on their catering menus.

Pride of the Prairie is a collaboration of LSP, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, University of Minnesota-Morris, West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris Prairie Renaissance, Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance, Pomme de Terre Food Co-op, area farmers and the Upper Minnesota River Valley community. □

Food finder

The Local Foods Partnership offers a comprehensive search system for Minnesota consumers looking for locally produced food.

For example, the website (www.localfoods.umn.edu) allows consumers to type in what kind of food they are looking for, the distance they are willing to travel and their home zip code. A list of farmers who are selling food within the parameters entered then pop up. Besides farm operations, the website also offers information on caterers, distributors, farmers' markets, processors and retailers, making it a useful resource for farmers and others involved in direct marketing.

For more information, contact Linda Kingery of the University of Minnesota's

Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships initiative at 877-854-7737 or kinge002@umn.edu. □

Grow fresh jobs

Increasing fresh market sales of Michigan fruits and vegetables could generate 1,889 new jobs across the state and \$187 million in new personal income. That's one of the findings of a recent economic modeling study by the Michigan Land Use Institute, Michigan State University's C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Michigan is second only to California in the variety of farm products it produces. However, 74 percent of the state's fruits and 44 percent of its vegetables are sold at relatively low prices as ingredients for canned, frozen, dried and other processed products. Much of the \$1.9 billion of higher-value fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in Michigan comes from outside the state.

Researchers ran a series of scenarios where increasing percentages of fruits

and vegetables were marketed and consumed within the state. For example, Michigan residents currently consume 56.5 percent of the vegetables produced in the state, either through the wholesale market (56 percent) or by buying direct from farmers (.5 percent). Under one scenario, that percentage of in-state consumption was increased to 84.6 percent, resulting in a net gain to Michigan farmers of \$81 million.

For a copy of the *Eat Fresh and Grow Jobs, Michigan* study, see <http://mlui.org/downloads/EatFresh.pdf>, or call 231-882-4723 (ext. 14). □

Edible Twin Cities

Edible Twin Cities is a quarterly magazine dedicated to covering the local foods scene in Minnesota. The magazine, which is a member of the nationwide Edible Communities network, contains essays, profiles and how-to articles of interest to anyone who enjoys fresh, local food produced by sustainable farmers.

Edible Twin Cities is distributed free at food co-ops, coffee shops, restaurants and other venues throughout the Twin Cities. For information on subscribing, see www.edibletwincities.net, or call 612-229-0498. □

Stewardship Food Network

The *Stewardship Food Network* is a list of Land Stewardship Project members who produce meat, dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruit, flowers, grain and other goods in a sustainable manner. The Network also lists LSP member-businesses selling or processing food produced by other LSP members.

Some of the production methods used by the Network farmers include certified organic, antibiotic and hormone-free, humanely raised and slaughtered, free of genetically modified organisms, pasture-based, integrated pest management to reduce pesticide use, deep-bedded straw livestock housing and conservation tillage. The listing provides contact information for the farmers so consumers can communicate with them directly to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

For a complete listing, see the Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter*, or contact our Twin Cities office

at 651-653-0618. The list is also at www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html. LSP periodically updates and makes corrections to its Stewardship Food Network list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, call 651-653-0618, or e-mail cathye@landstewardshipproject.org. Here is the latest addition:

Western Wisconsin

□ Valley View Ranch

Ann Gawtry & Jim Brunner
South 52 County Road AA
Durand, WI 54736

Phone: 715-672-4656

E-mail: jimmyblink@nelson-tel.net
Website: www.anasbakery.com

→ Products: **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation, brown eggs, Russian baked goods**

× Also services: **Twin Cities & Eau Claire, Wis., Farmers' Market**

Minn. Cooks draws 10,000 fairgoers

More than 10,000 Minnesota State Fairgoers flocked to the Fair's Carousel Park Aug. 29 to learn about local, sustainable food during the fourth annual Minnesota Cooks event.

The event, which was co-sponsored by Minnesota Farmers Unions, Food Alliance Midwest and Renewing the Countryside, brought together 14 of the region's best chefs to demonstrate how they use locally grown fruit, vegetables, herbs, meat and dairy products to create award-winning fare. Food Alliance Midwest-certified farmers were on hand to talk about their production methods. Panels of celebrity tasters gave the food a try while samples were handed out to fairgoers.

The Minnesota Cooks event also featured an information tent where consumers could learn more about supporting local foods. □



Will Winter and Karin Swenson of Thousand Hills Cattle Company talked to consumers about grass-fed beef at the Minnesota Cooks State Fair tent. Thousand Hills is certified by Food Alliance Midwest. (LSP photo)

Food Alliance Midwest

The Food Alliance seal certifies that a farm is producing food using environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices. Food Alliance certification is available for all crop and livestock products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat products.

Food Alliance Midwest, based in Saint Paul, Minn., was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Ser-

vices. It is the Midwestern affiliate of the Food Alliance, which is based in Oregon.

Food Alliance certified products are available for sale throughout the United States and Canada in natural food co-ops and grocery stores, and in select restaurants and food service dining halls.

For details on Food Alliance Midwest and its certification program, visit www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm, or call 651-265-3682.



Farmers, chefs and celebrity tasters talked about local foods during the fourth annual Minnesota Cooks event. As in past years, it featured live cooking demonstrations and free samples. Food journalist Andrew Zimmern hosted the event, which was co-sponsored by Minnesota Farmers Union (www.mfu.org), Food Alliance Midwest (www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm) and Renewing the Countryside (www.renewingthecountryside.org). (LSP photo)

Borderless farming

The assets these 3 farms produce extend far beyond their fencelines

By Brian DeVore

It's a hot summer day, and Loretta and Martin Jaus take a break from crop work on their western Minnesota dairy farm to stand in tall

restored this wetland on prime farmland, there were some scratched heads and rolled eyes in the neighborhood. They are just a few miles from Renville County, the state's number one corn and soybean producer.

"Does it make sense financially to take

But in the bigger scheme of things, how much of a positive impact on the general environment is it having? Environmental scientists have long warned against creating isolated chunks of ecologically healthy areas that aren't connected in some way. A wetland here or a stand of timber there is fine, but wildlife has to travel over a lot of monocropped acres to get to these havens. And if one farm has established grass or other perennial plant systems on the land, what happens if intensive row-cropping upstream or downstream wipes out all the water quality benefits produced by that one farm?

In a recent literature review published by Defenders of Wildlife called *Habitat in Agricultural Landscapes: How Much is Enough?*, the authors conclude that farmland often serves as a key buffer between natural areas and highly developed industrial or residential areas. But they say that conservation "in agricultural landscapes should focus on maintaining adequate patch size and restoring linkages and connectivity for native plants and animals. Large blocks of habitat are needed to strengthen regional networks of conservation reserves."

As far as water quality is concerned, reducing runoff enough to have a significant impact all the way downstream to the Gulf of Mexico won't require all of the Midwest to be covered with prairies and wetlands. The Green Lands, Blue Waters initiative has shown that a few key changes to the landscape could have a big payoff environmentally. If we take localized steps to reduce runoff, it will have positive impacts many miles downstream. But isolated

eco-islands won't cut it. Contiguous tracts in strategic locations are needed.

And as stewardship farmers work with conservation professionals and others to restore habitat, reestablish perennial ecosystems and in general improve the environment, they are realizing that ecosystems know no boundaries.

On the following pages are three examples of farms that are not only producing positive conservation benefits on their own acres, but are improving the environment down the road, downstream, and beyond.



Loretta and Martin Jaus stand near a pond on their farm that's fed by a tile drainage line. "You can't be an island," says Martin of their efforts to improve the environment on their farm. (LSP photo)

grass, listening and watching for signs of success on their operation. To the right is a straight-line gash of a man-made ditch, the kind that's common in this part of the state. Across the ditch is a cornfield sitting on a former lake bed, made possible by the artificial drainage the ditch provides. But in front of the couple are 11 acres of shaggy wildlife habitat: a mix of prairie and wetland. It's crackling with the sounds of bird life, including the buzzing zheee, zheee, zheee of the clay-colored sparrow, a relatively rare bird that is pretty picky about its habitat requirements.

Martin and Loretta are thrilled. They concede that back in 1993, when they

that 11 acres out of production?" Loretta asks rhetorically as she watches birds flit around after insects. "No, but we need it. For us it just made good sense because it's important for us to have diverse numbers and species of animals and plants on our farm. If the place is good for wildlife, then we know it's good for us."

Martin puts it more bluntly: "If those sounds weren't there, we would consider ourselves a failure."

A public good

By all measures, this patch of wild in the midst of hundreds of square miles of corn and soybeans is an ecological gem.

No Boundaries, see page 21...

A natural filter

One day in mid-July Greg Koether led a group of farmers and others interested in grass-based livestock production on a tour of one of the hilltop pastures he, his wife Kathy and their three children farm in northeast Iowa. Koether explained how the field used to be planted to corn and soybeans, and years ago was laced with eroded gullies.

In 1983, the Koethers stopped raising row crops and converted the farm to grass, utilizing managed rotational grazing to produce cattle and sheep efficiently while spreading manure in an ecologically sound manner. No tillage has taken place on the Koether farm in over two decades (they own 500 acres and rent another 238).

“Now you can’t find a gully on the place, I’m pretty proud of that,” says Greg as a herd of cattle graze nearby. Grazing has also helped them raise the organic matter in their farm’s soil from less than 1 or 1.5 percent to in some cases over 5 percent.

But there’s another lesson to be learned here—a lesson on how the same farming system that can eliminate gullies in one field can improve water quality in an entire watershed. Greg and his daughter Kayla, 17, and sons Scott, 26, and Klint, 24, take the entourage down a road that runs in back of the farm. The group passes a working gravel pit dug into the side of a hill. The back of the quarry provides an impromptu soil profile, a glimpse at how environmentally fragile this area is: a thin layer of topsoil is perched on top of a wall of limestone. The rock is honeycombed with cracks and holes, a textbook example of something called “karst” geology.

“The limestone rock, despite what some people think, is just a sieve,” says Greg. “There’s no filtration. There’s no water retention. Once that water soaks through that little bit of topsoil, anything in that water is in the water supply.”

That has caused problems in this part of the state. Contaminants from farming and other land uses find their way into underground water all too easily, showing up later in people’s well water. Soil conservation experts say the problem has worsened in recent decades as pasture, timber and even hay ground have been replaced by

annual row crops like corn and soybeans. That’s a major reason why this part of northeast Iowa has been studied so much by scientists and environmental professionals in an attempt to figure out how to keep the groundwater safe.

Koether leads the way into an area just beyond the quarry. Down the middle of this field runs a slough. A lush pasture rises up from both sides of the shallow waterway; limestone formations poke out here and there. The slough is dry for now, but a willow tree next to it is a sign that at times it can be quite moist. “Believe it or not, this ditch can run over with water at times,” says Koether.

The farmer explains that this pasture is near the top of the Sny Magill watershed, a coldwater trout stream that is vulnerable to contamination from soil erosion and chemical runoff. Years ago the slough was a raw, open ditch. But through rotational grazing the Koethers have been able to stop erosion and reclaim the slough’s ability to keep water from becoming a runoff problem.

“We can get a three-inch rain and it won’t even lay down the grass,” says Greg. “By the way, this is the best pasture on the place.”

By building organic matter and maintaining permanent vegetation in the waterway, the Koethers are able to slow that water enough to actually filter the contaminants out.

“We feel the location of our ground in this situation and the production methods we are using is a huge positive impact on the environment,” says Koether.

The federal government agrees—finally. After years of being denied subsidy payments for not planting corn and soybeans, this spring the Koethers qualified for a new government initiative called the Conservation Security Program (CSP). It pays them for utilizing practices that benefit the environment—a significant departure from the dominant commodity programs, which provide few incentives to diversify out of erosive row crops.

Kayla Koether says that getting rewarded financially through CSP will make it easier for she and her brothers to eventually transition into the operation and farm it in a way that’s good for the watershed. That’s another plus for the wider rural community, which has seen its share of young people leave after high school, never to return.

That benefit is not lost on Kayla’s father. Says Greg, “If things continue on the right path it’s great to realize I’m the third generation here and there could be the fourth and fifth and they could do it all while building the farm, building the soil, and not degrading the environment.”

No Boundaries, see page 22...



Greg (left), Klint and Kayla Koether farm in the environmentally fragile karst region of northeast Iowa. After years of farming in a way that protects the soil and water in the area, the Koethers have only recently been recognized by the government for their efforts. (LSP photo)

Strategic location

Steve and Diane Welle farm in Minnesota's Stearns County, just a half-a-mile from the Sauk River. Over the past several years, they have used various Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts to idle 36.4 acres of land along Stony Creek, which drains into the Sauk east of the farm. Steve, Diane and their four children have also planted over 13,000 trees with the help of government cost-share funds. A Minnesota Department of Natural Resources forester helped set up a forestry plan for them. Steve easily ticks off the species: pine, black walnut, red oak, green ash, tamarack, plum, mountain ash, cranberry, crab apple and dogwood. The Welles make a living milking cows on their 320 acres, but the land they've turned over to CRP was full of wire grass, a poor quality forage, and mucky spots that made the cows muddy at milking time. On a recent summer day Jason Selvog visited the farm to help the Welles figure out if one last 2.7 acre stretch of Stony Creek can be enrolled in CRP. It's the last section of the creek before it leaves the farm.

Selvog is a habitat specialist with the Minnesota Farm Bill Assistance Partnership, an initiative supported by the Department of Natural Resources, Pheasants Forever and the Board of Water and Soil Resources. The Partnership has been set up to help farmers negotiate the various government conservation programs available to them. The habitat specialists that work for the Partnership often strive to get several farms in an environmentally sensitive area signed up for programs like CRP or to establish grass, trees and wetlands using cost-share funds. This kind of big-picture strategy can create contiguous corridors of wildlife habitat as well as soil and water protection, greatly increasing the effectiveness of these conservation efforts on a landscape level. Partnership staffers can also sniff out technical or financial assistance for farmers by identifying what other nonprofit organizations or government agencies may be interested in seeing environmental benefits in a community.

Welle has resisted enrolling the 2.7 acres before because it allows the cows access to the creek for water. But as Selvog and Welle ride through his pasture, they pass a spring which rises out of an artesian well. Selvog has been talking to an engineer in the Farm Service Agency office he is housed in, and thinks

that a pasture watering system could be set up for the cattle by tapping into that spring. That means the cows wouldn't need to get into the creek for water. But there's a problem: CRP won't pay for fencing, and it will cost about \$1,000 to put in enough to keep the cows out of the creek. As Welle parks the truck on a hill overlooking the creek, he points out a small white box just across his property line next to a culvert. It's a water monitoring station kept by the Sauk River Watershed District. That's good news for Welle—it shows the District has a vested interest in keeping the cows out of Stony Creek, and Selvog has learned they are willing to pay for the fencing. As Selvog leans over the truck's hood and sketches

to do is create remote wildlife refuges where no economic activity takes place. That way, farmers can be free to intensively cultivate every inch of their operations without having to worry about wetlands, shelterbelts and grassy nesting areas. This philosophy of land management views farms as sacrifice areas as far as wildlife habitat and other environmental benefits are concerned.

But Martin and Loretta Jaus are proving that profitable farming and wildlife are not mutually exclusive, and they don't see their farm as an environmental sacrifice area at all.

The Jauses produce certified organic milk with a 60-cow herd on 410 acres. Before returning to the farm in the 1980s,



Steve Welle (left) and Jason Selvog discuss an addition to a natural area running along a creek that flows through Welle's farm. (LSP photo)

out what the new CRP area will look like, a cock pheasant makes its presence known somewhere in the creek bottom.

Welle says that a neighbor up the creek has decided to enroll land in CRP because of the positive impacts he's seen on the Welle place. A nice corridor of wildlife habitat and water-friendly cover is taking shape all along the waterway.

"The environment is getting squeezed into less and less space," says Welle, an avid hunter. "Wildlife can't live on a tar road."

Not an island

The argument is often made that profitable farming and top quality wildlife habitat don't mix. If we want to leave areas for birds, mammals and even frogs, goes this argument, the best thing

Martin and Loretta got degrees in wildlife biology and habitat management and worked on a private refuge near Chicago.

Soon after taking over the farm, they set to work blending agricultural productivity and wildlife habitat restoration by establishing trees, grasses and other perennial plant species utilizing various government cost-share programs. In fact, over the years the Jauses have planted five miles of tree shelterbelts alone. These trees provide wildlife habitat, but also shelter their rotationally grazed cows and prevent soil erosion on their crop fields. They've even planted native prairie grasses in their pastures. And since they are organic, there are no pesticides present on their farm to kill off insects.

That means there is plenty of food for birds and other animals to thrive on.

As much as possible, they have integrated their conservation efforts with their farming. "The more diverse the plant and animal species, the more stable, including stability for the farm," says Loretta.

Plant and animal diversity helps them break up pest cycles. For example, the tree swallows that thrive on their pastures help control flies and other insects.

They also have in place a crop rotation system that not only protects wildlife, but is good for all the subsurface critters that help make good soil. The Jaus see row crops such as corn as soil depleters, small grains such as oats as relatively soil neutral and grasses, hay and other perennial forages as soil builders.

"So with our crop rotation overall we try to be soil neutral—some years we deplete, some years we build up," says Martin.

This soil-friendly system has paid off. They are at the headwaters of the middle branch of the Rush River; the Minnesota River is 23 miles south of their farm. Back in their kitchen, the Jaus pull out a pair of photographs. One shows water flowing out of a pipe that drains land planted to row crops down the road. It is saturated with chocolate brown sediment and the volume is so great that the pipe's mouth isn't visible. The other photo is of water leaving one of the Jaus pastures. The flow is low and clear.

They have recorded over 200 species of birds on the farm over the years, including loggerhead shrikes and, most recently, egrets. They notice numerous mammals, including lesser known species like meadow jumping mice. Even frogs and other amphibians, key indicators of the health of the environment, are making a comeback. A research team from South Dakota State University has come out to study their wetland and was excited to find clay-colored sparrows. "Just about every grassland species of bird we could have, we have out there," says Martin.

But one disturbing trend is that populations of eastern and western meadowlarks are dropping dramatically in the area, an indicator that there's a limit to what one farm can accomplish on its own. "It shows that even if you have the habitat on your own place, things outside the farm can affect species," says Martin. "You can't be an island."

But there are indications the Jaus island is becoming an archipelago in the

community. Some of the same neighbors who rolled their eyes a decade ago have lately been commenting on the beauty of the farm; one concedes that he drives his 4-wheeler over to the wetland to watch and listen. And more farmers in the community are establishing conservation areas with the help of government programs such as CRP.

"At least one said he was doing it to add on to what we had already done," Martin says with a smile.

Public pays for public goods

Sometimes it takes awhile for the wider public to recognize a benefit that extends beyond a farm's boundaries. One thing the Koether, Welle and Jaus farms have in common is that the environmental benefits they are producing have been acknowledged, and that's resulting not only in a well-deserved pat-on-the-back, but real help in the form of technical and even financial assistance. The Koether family's benefits to the Sny Magill watershed are being supported by the Conservation Security Program. Because of its location in the Sauk River watershed as well as its ability to provide key wildlife habitat, the Welle farm has received technical help through the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership and "rental" payments via the Conservation Reserve Program. The Welles' conservation efforts also got them recognized as the Stearns County River Friendly Farmers for 2004. Martin and Loretta Jaus have gotten state and federal cost-share money to help them plant trees and undertake other habitat restoration projects. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helped them re-establish their wetland.

For such stewardship efforts to become even more prevalent in farm

In their own words

To listen to Greg Koether and Loretta and Martin Jaus talk about their stewardship farming methods, check out LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast. Koether is featured on installment No. 24; the Jaus are on No. 25. See page 26 for details on how to listen to *Ear to the Ground* podcasts.

country, another important force must come into play: the marketplace. Farmers like the Jaus are already seeing how consumers can play a role in supporting public goods. They have been selling their milk to Organic Valley since 1997, receiving a premium price for taking extra care of the land. For years, that "extra care" was defined by the organic label as not utilizing certain inputs such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers. But the National Organic Standards Board recently approved requirements that make ecological benefits such as providing wildlife habitat part of the criteria for organic certification. Martin is pleased with that added recognition of what farms like theirs can provide society. Other "green" labels like Food Alliance Midwest (see page 19) also have criteria pertaining to the widespread environmental benefits farms can provide such as wildlife habitat and cleaner water.

"Normally when you think of conservation projects you think of areas like this that are just set aside for wildlife," says Martin, gesturing toward the 11 acres of prairie and wetland. "But a well-managed pasture is also a conservation area. There are different ways a farm can help the environment. And it's good there are different ways the public can support what we do out here." □

For more information

→ For more on the **Conservation Security Program**, call the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program at 612-722-6377, or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html.

→ The **Multiple Benefits of Agriculture** initiative has several fact sheets and reports on how farming can provide valuable ecological services. For details, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html, or call LSP's Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366.

→ **For a copy of *Habitat in Agricultural Landscapes: How Much is Enough?***, see www.biodiversitypartners.org/pubs/Ag/index.shtml,

or call 503-697-3222.

→ The website for the **Green Lands, Blue Waters** initiative is at www.greenlandsbluewaters.org. More information is also available at 612-625-8235.

→ To read more about the **Farm Bill Assistance Partnership**, see the Nov./Dec. 2006 issue of the *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer* at www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/novdec06/farmhabitat.html.

→ Details on **Food Alliance Midwest's** environmental standards are at www.foodalliance.org/midwest/index.html.



Rural development

“Putting Farming Back in the Driver’s Seat” is a special report based on a series of articles that ran in the *Land Stewardship Letter* earlier this year. It describes firsthand the efforts of Woodbury County, Iowa, to utilize local, sustainable family farming as a rural economic development tool in the region. This 10-page publication can be downloaded for free at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/rural_develop_report.pdf. Paper copies are available by calling 612-729-6294 or e-mailing bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Dairy farm transfers

A web page for transferring Minnesota dairy farms between generations is available at www.mndairyinitiative.org/upload/ftsummary.htm. The page offers a way for retiring farmers to list information on what land and facilities they have available. Beginning farmers can also post information on the page. The page has categories for: “sale,” “partnership,” “rent” and “seeking.”

For more information, call David Weinand at 651-201-6646. □

Cash for carbon

The National Farmers Union’s “Carbon Credit Program” allows landowners to earn income by storing carbon in the soil through no-till crop production and use of long-term perennial plant systems such as pasture grass.

The Farmers Union has earned approval from the Chicago Climate Exchange to aggregate carbon credits. The Union will then enroll acreages of carbon into blocks of credits that will be traded on the Exchange, much like other commodities are traded. Companies buy the credits on the Exchange to offset their own carbon emissions and thus stay within pollution limits. Carbon dioxide has been implicated as a cause of global climate change, and storing it in the soil is one way to cut emissions.

One estimate is that no-till and grassland acres could earn up to \$4 an acre through the program.

For more information, call 800-366-8331 (ext. 116), or visit www.nfu.org. □

Slow Food Minnesota

The Minnesota chapter of the Slow Food movement has launched a website at www.slowfoodmn.org. Slow Food is an

international organization founded in Italy in 1986. Its goals are to defend the biodiversity of our food, offer taste education and link producers of excellent food to consumers.

Slow Food has 80,000 members worldwide. Several Land Stewardship Project members have participated in the Slow Food movement’s international “Terra Madre” conference. The Minnesota chapter has several events each year to celebrate regional products. □

Microwave & refrigerator needed

The Land Stewardship Project’s Policy Program office in Minneapolis needs a microwave oven and a small refrigerator. The refrigerator can be no wider than 24 inches, and no taller than 32 inches. If you have a microwave or refrigerator to donate, call 612-722-6377, or e-mail marks@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Sustainable ag loan

The Sustainable Agriculture Loan Program provides funds for Minnesota farmers who are adopting alternative management practices that will enhance profitability and benefit the rural environment.

Administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ESAP), the loan provides a maximum of \$25,000 to an individual farm. A fixed interest rate of 3 percent is charged. Applications are accepted all year-round and are competitively reviewed by a loan review panel.

Some examples of what the loans can be used to finance include: rotational grazing systems, tree plantings, on-farm energy production, composting equipment, herbicide-free weed control, cover crops equipment, alternative fertilizer management equipment and soil conservation equipment. The Agriculture Department also offers a “poultry protection” loan to help farmers mitigate the impacts of avian flu on pastured poultry production.

For more information and an application form, contact Mary Hanks at 651-201-6277 or Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us. More information is also available at www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/esaploan.htm. □

Organic farm hotline

A toll-free organic farmer hotline has been launched by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

The line—1-888-551-GROW (4769)—is set up to answer questions on a wide range of topics, from filling out certification paperwork, to specific organic production methods such as soil building, weed and pest control. The hotline can also help identify approved materials for organic production.

Harriet Behar, the Organic Outreach Coordinator for MOSES, fields the questions. When she can’t answer a question, she works to find someone who can.

If you prefer to ask your question via e-mail, you can contact Behar at harriet@mosesorganic.org. □

Voices of Minnesota Farm Women

Voices of Minnesota Farm Women is a 30-minute film documentary produced by Cynthia Vagnetti that presents a positive, hopeful story about family farming based on good land stewardship and the production of healthful food that farmers direct market to people locally or in their region.

The Land Stewardship Project is offering three options for groups that may want to use this program:

→ Schedule a showing and discussion of this film for your group or club led by a specially-trained LSP volunteer.

→ Purchase an educational packet containing a *Voices* DVD, background material, introduction, discussion guide, handouts, “take action guide,” and more. Use these materials to do multiple *Voices* programs for your group or church.

→ Purchase the *Voices* DVD for your own showings.

For more information, call LSP’s Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618, or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_linking.html. □

A wake-up call

The Sept. 11, 2006, edition of the *Nation* magazine is devoted to the issue of America’s food system. Called “Wake Up, America! Pay Attention to What You Eat!,” the issue features articles on everything from GMOs and factory farming to Slow Food and school lunch programs.

Of particular interest is an exposé on organic farming’s mixed record when it comes to treatment of laborers. Finally, it gives writers such as Marion Nestle, Eric Schlosser, Michael Pollan, Winona LaDuke, Wendell Berry, Vandana Shiva and Frances Moore Lappé a chance to discuss ways we can all work to create a sustainable food system.

Articles from the *Nation*’s special food issue can be found at www.thenation.com/doc/20060911/forum. □

Chew On This

Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food

By Eric Schlosser & Charles Wilson

2006; 304 pages
Houghton Mifflin

www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com

When I went to my local bookstore and asked for a copy of Eric Schlosser's latest work, I was sent to the children's section. There, among the oversized picture books about funky fairies and malicious monkeys was *Chew On This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food*.

Schlosser, along with his co-author Charles Wilson, is aiming this book straight at the demographic that can perhaps have the greatest impact on our fast food economy. Whereas Schlosser's previous blockbuster, *Fast Food Nation*, targeted the moms and dads that buy Happy Meals for their young children, *Chew On This* is directed at those millions of young people, teenagers, tweens, whatever you want to call them, that have enough expendable income to buy their own burgers, fries and Cokes. These are also the people who are working in fast-food restaurants, pumping out high-fat, high-energy, often great-tasting, slop utilizing the "skill less" system Schlosser so skillfully described in *Fast Food Nation*.

So is *Chew* just a *Fast Food Nation* for the younger crowd? Yes and no.

Using short, punchy sentences, a combination of history, statistics and good old-fashioned reporting, Schlosser and Wilson's book does make many of the points *Fast Food Nation* made: places like McDonald's, Burger King and Taco Bell represent more than a type of food—they are a state of mind, a way of doing business that relies on cheap inputs and a view of people (both workers and customers) as just commodities.

But the authors know that churning out a bunch of statistics won't turn the iPod generation. So as much as possible *Chew* gets its message across through the eyes of young people themselves—kids who have had to have surgery to control obesity, or who are working under bizarre conditions in fast-food restaurants. They also write about young people who are striving to make a difference by pointing out the dangers of our fast food culture. *Chew* also resorts to a little bit of the yuck factor to get the attention of young readers—describing in graphic detail the conditions in feedlots, restaurant kitchens

Reviews



and food processing plants.

In the end, *Chew On This* leaves young people with a powerful, and empowering message: "A hundred books could be written about the problems of the fast-food industry. But the solution starts with you....It's not too late. Even in this fast food nation, you can still have it your way." □

The Omnivore's Dilemma

A Natural History of Four Meals

By Michael Pollan

2006; 464 pages
Penguin Group
<http://us.penguin.com>

Michael Pollan may well be one of the most effective food journalists writing today. Sure, other people are writing about the complicated relationships we have with our food, farmers and the land. But Pollan has a powerful pulpit at his disposal in the form of the *New York Times Magazine*. His writings for that august publication have brought the message of the need to seriously question our industrial food and farming system to a very influential demographic.

In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan uses a combination of participatory journalism and good storytelling to take us through America's various food production and consumption systems—from the mainstream McDonald's version that dominates society, to "Big Organic," to local.

Anyone familiar with Pollan's work and his animosity toward corn-based factory-farming won't be surprised when he uses personal experience, facts and reportage to show the unsustainability of the mainstream food system. More surprising is Pollan's criticism of what he calls "Industrial Organic." Industrial scale organic ag rivals its conventional counterpart for its energy intensiveness and inefficient nutrient cycle. The organic food industry has come to the point where it is "floating on a sinking sea of petroleum," concludes Pollan.

The journalist is convinced that going "beyond organic" and creating a locally based food and farming system is the only real way to achieve sustainability in the long term.

"For one thing, it is much less likely to

rely on monoculture, the original sin from which almost every other problem of our food system flows," he writes.

Let's hope some of Pollan's influence seeps into Washington in time for the development of the 2007 Farm Bill. □

A Prayer for the Prairie

Learning Faith on a Small Farm

By Raylene Frankhauser Nickel

2003; 176 pages
Five Penny Press
www.fivepennypress.com

Big changes are needed to make our agriculture sustainable, and those changes will start on small farms like the one Raylene Frankhauser Nickel owns and operates near the tiny town of Kief, N. Dak. In *A Prayer for the Prairie*, Nickel has written an intensely personal series of essays on the struggles she and her husband John underwent when they returned to the family farm in 1990. They found themselves struggling with weather, low prices, difficult working conditions and a shrinking human community (the town of Kief lost its post office in 2001). It was a test of their mental and physical stamina, even the strong Christian faith the couple share.

These weren't the good times she remembers experiencing as a girl in the 1950s when the farm was a thriving dairy operation.

"...a time of taming came, and I worked on this farm during its days of silence and slow motion, when its rivers of prosperity dried to a trickle, when its life hung in the balance, tipping more toward death than life," writes Nickel in a particularly poetic passage.

She takes the reader through that time of slow motion, and shares the pain it brings. Nickel also helps connect her experience on a single farm to the global problems that plague agriculture. In one passage, a morning milking inspires a nice, clear example of how globalization affects rural communities like hers.

Eventually, hard work, their faith and a new way of looking at farming thanks to training in Holistic Management helps the couple bring biological and financial life back to the farm. Is this the end of the story? As the author makes clear, this is all a work in progress that, like sustainable agriculture itself, is never quite done. Let's hope it generates more inspiring essays from her pen. □

— Brian DeVore

Ear to the Ground podcast sounds off on farming, food & the land

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* audio magazine is now available on our website. This podcast features interviews and field reports related to LSP's work.

These shows can be listened to on a computer, an MP3 player or via compact disc (despite the name, you don't need an iPod to listen to podcasts).

To sample some of the podcasts, see www.thepodlounge.com/listfeed.php?feed=34810. For a step-by-step guide on how to subscribe to the free *Ear to the Ground* service, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html.

Looking for story ideas

We are looking for story ideas for future *Ear to the Ground* podcasts. We'd like to hear from you; contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Ear to the Ground shows thus far

- **No. 1:** First of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 2:** Second of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 3:** Third of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 4:** A farm family unearths some



unpleasant environmental history, pushing them even harder to be good stewards of the land.

- **No. 5:** The role of women in agriculture is examined through the "Planting in the Dust" play, and the *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* documentary film.
- **No. 6:** How Farm Beginnings® helps new farmers set goals and put tools in their place.
- **No. 7:** Launching a financial plan for a new farming operation.
- **No. 8:** A tribute to the late Dave Serfling, a farmer, leader, husband, father and steward of the land.
- **No. 9:** A research initiative examines how farming can produce multiple benefits for society beyond food and fiber production.
- **No. 10:** A scientist working on the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture project talks about how working farms can help

- reduce fish-killing water pollution.
- **No. 11:** A dairy farmer talks about how he has used rotational grazing to improve water quality on his land.
- **No. 12:** Fred Kirschenmann talks about the future of agriculture in the first of a two-part series.
- **No. 13:** Second of a two-part series on Fred Kirschenmann and his views on the future of agriculture.
- **No. 14:** Economist Richard Levins describes how farmers can use market power to get paid a fair price for their production.
- **No. 15:** Farmer Audrey Arner talks about her experiences with globalization.
- **No. 16:** How Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) brings farmers and consumers together.
- **No. 17:** A Farm Beginnings® discussion about planning for profit.
- **No. 18:** An introduction to innovative direct marketing for beginning farmers.
- **No. 19:** Beginning farmers learn how to successfully obtain credit.
- **No. 20:** A West African farmer talks about the negative impacts of unlimited U.S. commodity crop subsidies.
- **No. 21:** A beginning dairy farmer faces the realities of agriculture.
- **No. 22:** LSP's Mark Schultz discusses federal farm policy reform.
- **No. 23:** LSP calls for sustainable farm policy at a Congressional hearing.
- **No. 24:** A farm family gets rewarded for good stewardship.
- **No. 25:** The farm as natural habitat.
- **No. 26:** Perennial permaculture gets established on a Midwestern farm. □



Membership Update



Getting creative about cash

By Cathy Eberhart

As we prepared the 2006-2007 budget for Land Stewardship Project, it was clear that this year was different—again. Foundation and government grant-making has changed significantly since we first became an organization in 1982. Although this has been a challenge to our revenue stream, we are learning how to

adjust by getting creative.

The new budget reflects an increased focus on funding sources like fees for LSP's Farm Beginnings® program and Food Alliance certification, as well as fund-raising events and silent auctions, and especially support from our members and donors. In total, we are depending on non-grant sources of revenue to fund nearly 40 percent of our work in the coming year.

But as we make this significant shift

now and in the years to come, there is good reason to be optimistic. We know we can depend on the generous support of members like you.

We ended fiscal year 2005-2006 with the highest number of memberships (2,020) and the highest amount of revenue through memberships and other individual giving ever (\$287,313).

As we get creative with our budgeting, there are ways you can get creative in

Membership, see page 27...

your support for LSP. Here are a few ideas to get you started (many of them suggested by our members):

→ Hold a rummage sale and donate the proceeds to LSP. (Thanks to member Brad Trom for his recent sales in Dodge County.)

→ Sell some livestock and give all or a portion of the proceeds to LSP. (Thanks to farmer Bonnie Haugen for this idea.)

→ Have your friends or family over for a local foods meal (simple or gourmet as you wish) and take a collection for LSP. (Thanks to member Barb Nelson for hosting a group at her Winona, Minn., home and garden in June.)

→ Sell an item on eBay and donate all or a portion of the proceeds to LSP. (We now have an account with Mission Fish, an eBay partner that makes this simple. Visit www.missionfish.com and search for Land Stewardship Project and click through the links to find information about how your selling can be credited to LSP.)

→ Volunteer your time to help with our organization-wide telephone banks.

→ If your employer matches your gifts, simply fill out their form to double your gift.

→ Help with our next event. Watch the calendar for upcoming events in your area and volunteer to help out.

→ Your idea here _____. Let us know about your creative ideas for raising funds for LSP so we can share them with other members.

Change isn't always easy, but necessity is the mother of invention. We welcome and greatly appreciate your creative support.

Contact me at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org to share your creative idea or for more information about any of the above.

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator.

List trades

Another way you can help is by letting us trade your name once or twice a year with like-minded organizations to help reduce the costs of our membership recruitment efforts. Two list trades are planned for the coming year—please let us know if you do NOT want your name to be traded.

Going once, going twice...

The silent auctions we've had at our membership events over the years have been so successful and fun that we decided to offer an online auction this fall. This way, all of you, regardless of where you live, could have the opportunity to bid on high quality handcrafted items, excellent local food gift baskets, and other unique products and services from members and local vendors while supporting LSP at the same time. Thanks to all our members and others who participated in the auction by donating items, bidding, or both.

We're looking for your feedback on this first-time event. Did you participate in the online auction? If not, was there any particular reason? What would you have changed about the auction? Contact Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org to provide your feedback.

Get connected with

LIVE  WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* for regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Stay current on information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing.

To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail lsppwb1@landstewardshipproject.org, and put in the

subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." □

New LSP blog

LSP has entered the "blogosphere." We are writing a weekly "food and sustainable agriculture" web-based blog for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership at <http://looncommons.org/category/food-and-sustainable-agriculture>. Check out our well-reasoned rants and give us your equally well-reasoned reactions. □

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place giving as an option in making our communities better places to live.

Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

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



You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it.

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

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **DEC. 4—3rd Annual “Farmers Take the Stove” winter meal & silent auction**, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: Sustainable Farming Association of Minn.-Lake Superior Chapter; 218-393-3276; www.sfa-mn.org

→ **DEC. 4—Acres U.S.A. Pre-Conference Advanced Learning Course for Eco-Farmers**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: 800-355-5313; www.acresusa.com

→ **DEC. 6—Nourishing Traditional Diets: The Key to Vibrant Health with Jerry Brunetti**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: 800-355-5313; www.acresusa.com

→ **DEC. 6—A Recipe for Success: Organic Production & Consumer Driven Marketing for the Farmer Entrepreneur**, Bloomington, Ill.; Contact: <http://asap.aces.uiuc.org/conf/index.htm>

→ **DEC. 7-9—2006 Acres U.S.A. Conference**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: 800-355-5313; www.acresusa.com

→ **DEC. 12—Organic Livestock Production & Marketing Seminar**, Mankato, Minn.; Contact: Joe Domeier, 507-345-7418 (ext. 127); Joseph.Domeier@rednet.net

→ **DEC. 13—3rd National Conference on Grazing Lands**, St. Louis, Mo.; Contact: www.gli.org or 703-455-4387

→ **DEC. 14—LSP western Minnesota office holiday open house & silent auction fund-raiser**, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: Michele Skogrand, 320-269-2105 or lsptest@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **DEC. 14—LSP Twin Cities office holiday open house**, White Bear Lake, Minn.; Contact: Louise Arbuckle, 651-653-0618 or lsppwbl@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JANUARY—LSP Family Farm Break-**

fast at the Minn. Capital, Saint Paul (date to be determined; to volunteer or help with planning, contact LSP’s Rachel Long at 612-722-6377 or rachel@landstewardshipproject.org)

→ **JAN. 3—85th Minnesota Legislature convenes**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact LSP’s Policy Program at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org for details on legislation related to family farming, sustainable agriculture & local food

→ **JAN. 6—Crow River Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota annual conference: Connecting our Sustainable Communities** (location to be announced); Contact: Jerry Ford, 320-543-3394; www.mn-sfa.org

→ **JAN. 8—Minnesota Environmental Partnership Legislative Forum**, 5 p.m.-8 p.m. (location to be announced); Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 612-722-6377; bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 10—National No-Till Conference, Des Moines, Iowa**; Contact: www.lesspub.com/cgi-bin/site.pl?1405&ctChannel_channelID=4

→ **JAN. 12-13—Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference: Paths to Prosperity**, central Iowa; Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org or 515-232-5661

→ **JAN. 13—Tilling the Soil: Entrepreneurial Training for Ag Business Owners**, Michael Fields Ag Institute, East Troy, Wis.; Contact: 262-472-3217; www.uww.edu/sbdc

→ **JAN. 16-17—Local Energy/Local Opportunities conference**, St. Cloud (Minn.) Civic Center; Contact: www.cleanenergyresourcesteam.org; 651-645-6159 (ext. 6)

→ **JAN. 24-27—Ecological Farming Conference**, Pacific Grove, Cal.; Contact: www.eco-farm.org; 831-763-2111

→ **FEB. 1-3—Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture 16th Annual Farming for the Future conference**, State College, Penn.; Contact: www.pasafarming.org; 814-349-9856

→ **FEB. 3—Tilling the Soil: Entrepreneurial Training for Ag Business Owners** (see Jan. 13)

→ **FEB. 9-10—28th Annual Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference**, Aberdeen, S. Dak.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

→ **FEB. 10—Tilling the Soil: Entrepreneurial Training for Ag Business Owners** (see Jan. 13)

→ **FEB. 17—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 16th Annual Conference**, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 866-760-8732

→ **FEB. 21—Minnesota Environmental Partnership Citizens’ Day at the Capitol**, 1 p.m., Lakes & Plains Regional Council of Carpenters & Joiners Hall, 700 Olive St., Saint Paul; Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 612-722-6377; bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **FEB. 22-24—Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org; 715-772-3153

→ **MARCH 3—Tilling the Soil: Entrepreneurial Training for Ag Business Owners** (see Jan. 13)

→ **MARCH 9—Southeast Minnesota Local Foods Forum**, Signatures Restaurant, Winona, Minn.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

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



Land Stewardship Project
2200 4th Street
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Address Service Requested



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

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Rochester, MN
Permit No. 289

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