

# The Land Stewardship



Keeping the Land and People Together

# Letter

Vol. 21, No. 3

www.landstewardshipproject.org

JULY/AUG/SEPT 2003

## Science for the Citizens

**What happens when research takes into account more than input X and output Y? Sometimes a public good called sustainable agriculture can be produced. (first in a series)**

By Brian DeVore

The three biggest lies, goes the old joke, are: *The check's in the mail; I'll respect you in the morning; and Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help.* But the reaction Dennis Johnson got a decade ago when he first came calling on dairy farmers who were using a production system called rotational grazing was no laughing matter.

"I walked into a kind of buzz saw," recalls Johnson, who has been a Univer-

sity of Minnesota dairy scientist since 1968. "I was taken aback by the skepticism these farmers had toward the university's interest in grazing."

But a seed had been planted. Now Johnson is in the midst of revolutionary changes taking place at the University's West Central Research and Outreach Center. During the past five years, this agricultural experiment station—called WCROC for short—has gained a reputation for conducting cutting edge research on the viability of sustainable farming, and for doing it in a way that welcomes input from farmers, as well as the general public. Besides rotational grazing, WCROC has made a name for itself researching alternative swine production, water quality issues related to livestock, and the impacts of changes in farm structure on rural society. It has also recently become involved with initiatives related to local food systems and renewable energy production. In addition, WCROC's picturesque horticulture gardens are seen as a living example of how to get nonfarmers to embrace an experiment station as a community asset.

It remains to be seen whether this is an anomaly, or if WCROC can serve as a model for other stations that are trying to survive in an era of shrinking budgets, diminishing constituencies and increasingly complicated questions being asked about the future of agriculture and food production. But there's no doubt it's

already reshaping some attitudes about the role land grant institutions can play in creating a food and farming system that serves the public's interest.

"I guess the day I decide the University of Minnesota is just a funding arm of Monsanto or Cargill, then I'll give up," says Mary Jo Forbord, a farmer and Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. "But I haven't given up yet, and I guess it's because of the things I see at the West Central Research and Outreach Center."

How has a 1,000-acre collection of test plots, pastures, gardens and buildings in

Citizen Science, see page 14...



Dairy scientist Dennis Johnson (in T-shirt) discusses forage improvement with farmers at a recent WCROC pasture walk. "I walked into a kind of buzz saw," Johnson says of his experience when he first approached sustainable dairy farmers some 10 years ago. (LSP photo)

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The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published five 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.

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## Commentary !?!?!?

# The real dirt on LSP

By George Boody

An effective, grassroots organization like the Land Stewardship Project is going to be criticized at times. But criticism of LSP is one thing—outright misinformation is quite another.

In recent months, LSP has been accused of using lies and intimidation as we help farmers and rural residents participate in decisions that affect their environment and their quality of life.

Promoters of factory farms apparently feel any means justifies their ultimate goal: silencing voices of dissent. It's time to set the record straight, beginning with our organizational vision.

LSP's vision, developed in meetings with our members over a decade ago, is that one day a stewardship ethic will be the foundation for society; rural communities will be revitalized and culturally diverse; the countryside will have more independent family farms and more people on the land making a sustainable profit; understanding and cooperation will increase between rural and urban people; and policy decisions will reflect and support this vision.

#### Areas of focus

Currently, LSP's work is concentrated in three areas, each of which is nationally recognized for excellence:

**1) Creating a new regional food system by linking farmers and consumers.** For example, the Pride of the Prairie program is helping create regional markets for local production (see page 19).

**2) Promoting sustainable farming practices through education, research and demonstration.** An example of this is the Farm Beginnings program, an education, mentoring and investment program to help new farmers begin with low capital (see page 8).

**3) Creating a new vision for agriculture by organizing communities for positive change.** This includes helping develop and promote the Conservation Security Program (see page 10), working

to end the mandatory pork checkoff and assisting citizens in questioning factory farm proposals that might harm communities (see page 12).

This last area of LSP's work has drawn the ire of industrial agriculture's supporters. That's because it goes beyond promoting sustainable farming methods and dares to question the philosophy that the only viable future for our rural areas is one dominated by large-scale, concentrated agribusinesses.

A lot of effort is put into creating such a system built on high production, low margins and a "get big or get out" mentality.



George Boody

#### Questions raised

However, such an approach raises questions: How will independent farmers survive—no matter what methods they are using—if they are shut out of the marketplace? Where will our future farmers come from and will there be enough rural communities to support them? What good will the most sustainable farming methods be if the soil, water and biological diversity will not support such methods on a wider scale?

Detractors have said we are anti-animal agriculture. However, LSP's members, staff and board feel very strongly that livestock play a critical role in a Midwest agriculture that is environmentally and economically sound. Plentiful feedstuffs and excellent grass-growing potential available in places like Minnesota make this region an ideal place to produce beef, pork, milk, poultry, wool and lamb.

LSP has played a key role in developing and promoting farmer-friendly livestock production systems such as management intensive rotational grazing and deep-straw pork production. Research shows there are economic and environmental benefits to dispersing animals on farms throughout the state.

As with all of our work, guiding philosophies behind LSP's livestock-

related programs are high levels of stewardship, a commitment to promoting independent family farms, and support for healthy rural communities.

Both the Minnesota Legislative Auditor and the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture in Minnesota (see page 21) have documented the lack of regulatory oversight of large concentrated feedlots. Local citizens should have the right to raise legitimate concerns about factory farms. When farmers and other rural residents come forward, LSP may help organize them to ask questions and to take action together.

LSP does not go into a community and organize unless asked by local citizens. In doing this work, we do not use misinformation or intimidation. If we do inadvertently make a factual error, we correct it ASAP.

Government officials, lawmakers or factory farm boosters may feel threatened when an organized group of citizens from a local community show up to voice their concerns. But that is not intimidation—that is democracy in action.

Time after time when our accusers have been asked to provide evidence that we purposely lie or bully to “get our way,” they have been unable to offer proof. For example, we met with *Agri News* editor Mychal Wilmes earlier this year after he charged in his column that we “used exaggeration and distortion to stir opposition against feedlot expansions.” We asked him to provide the basis for his claims. He admitted he had no proof. None.

But lacking the facts hasn't stopped factory farming's apologists from spreading other information about LSP that's dead wrong. For example, some have said we have only a handful of members. LSP has 1,500 dues-paying members, which are the lifeblood of our work. Over the years, our membership has consistently broken down into three areas: one-third are active farmers, one-third are people who don't farm but live in rural areas and smaller communities, and one-third are from larger urban or suburban communities.

### Funding source

Others have said we shouldn't get government funding. The bulk of LSP's funding comes from private foundations and individuals. We also receive some government funding through competitive processes that fund meritorious research and

education projects that are of public benefit and help the farming sector. These are open to a wide variety of groups. We are not allowed to use those funds to lobby.

Yes, LSP's work is sometimes characterized as controversial. When people stand up for their vision of the future, and that vision is not shared by those in power, then the boat gets rocked. Progress toward sustainability sometimes requires boat-rocking, along with promotion of alternatives. □

*George Boody is the Land Stewardship Project's Executive Director. This commentary was originally published in Agri News. Boody can be contacted at 651-653-0618 or gboody@landstewardshipproject.org.*

### 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.

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## Myth Buster Box

### An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

◆ **Myth:** We no longer have a soil erosion problem in this country.

◆ **Fact:** Between 1982 and 1997, the average annual soil erosion rate in the U.S. fell from eight tons to five tons per acre. Conservation tillage practices that disturb the soil less and setaside programs that leave land covered with perennial plants are credited with these dramatic reductions in erosion. However, under ideal conditions soil can only replenish itself at an annual rate of about half a ton per acre. When soil is eroded, it truly is lost as far as productive agriculture is concerned.

One estimate is that 90 percent of U.S. cropland is losing soil above the sustainable rate. And now there are signs that the gains in erosion reductions made during the last two decades of the 20th Century are dissipating. Since 1995 there has been no statistically significant change in overall erosion or the erosion rate, according to the USDA, and there's anecdotal evidence that erosion rates are starting to sneak upwards.

Why the backsliding? For one thing, the conservation tillage revolution seems to have cooled, and many farmers are returning to the plow. But perhaps even more significant, government commodity programs are encouraging the planting of soybeans in parts of the country that had never seen the crop in great quantities before. Now more than ever forages, pasture, small grains and other soil-saving enterprises are giving way to corn and soybeans, which leave the soil vulnerable to erosion. Gyles Randall, a nationally recognized University of Minnesota soil scientist, recently wrote that this is the fourth year in a row of “severe erosion” in southern Minnesota. If something isn't done quickly, warns Randall, crop yields will drop significantly. In fact, Randall has proclaimed that the corn-soybean system of agriculture that now dominates the Midwest is no longer sustainable.

To view the USDA's Natural Resources Inventory, log onto [www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/land/pubs/97highlights.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/land/pubs/97highlights.pdf). Gyles Randall's essay on the unsustainability of the corn-soybean system can be viewed at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/newsr\\_010927.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/newsr_010927.html).





## Forbord named SFA Executive Director

Mary Jo Forbord has been named the Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Forbord, a Land Stewardship Project member, farms with her husband Luverne near the western Minnesota community of Starbuck. They recently sold their dairy herd and are now rotationally grazing Lowline Angus cattle for the direct-sales beef market. Over the years, Forbord has worked in various aspects of health care, education, administration and community programs as a registered dietitian.



**Mary Jo Forbord**

She has also worked as a board development consultant for ethanol plants in Minnesota and Nebraska and serves on the steering committee of Pride of the Prairie (see page 19).

Forbord's position was made possible by a grant to the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) from the Bush Foundation. For the past five years, DeEtta Bilek of Aldrich, Minn., has been coordinating SFA activities on a statewide level. LSP helped form SFA chapters in the 1980s as a way for farmers interested in alternative systems to network and learn from each other. The group was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1989.

Forbord can be reached at: 29731 302<sup>nd</sup> St., Starbuck, MN 56381; phone: 866-760-8732 (toll-free in Minnesota) or 320-760-8732; e-mail: [sustainablefarming@hcinet.net](mailto:sustainablefarming@hcinet.net). The SFA's Web site address is [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org). □

## Organic produces equivalent net returns

When a certified organic farms sells chemical-free corn or soybeans, the assumption is that it will receive a significant price premium, producing greater profits. But are organic production systems competitive economically *before* price premiums are taken into account?

Yes, say researchers involved with a study published in the March-April 2003 issue of *Agronomy Journal*.

The study was conducted at two Minnesota locations from 1989 to 1999. Scientists evaluated a two-year corn-soybean rotation and a four-year corn-soybean-oat/alfalfa-alfalfa rotation under conventional and organic management production strategies. The researchers found that although the organic system produced slightly lower yields when compared to conventional production, the net returns for the two systems were equivalent, without taking organic price premiums into account.

Adding alfalfa and small grains like oats to a crop rotation helps build soil quality while naturally breaking up weed and insect cycles, thus eliminating, or at least reducing significantly, the need for expensive chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The study has positive implications for producers who decide to stick with chemicals but are willing to expand their rotation beyond the typical corn one year, soybeans the next, routine. The researchers found that conventional soybeans grown in a four-year rotation yielded 3 to 6 percent more than their counterparts grown in a two-year rotation. □

## Agencies agree to help organics

In an attempt to coordinate efforts to help Minnesota's organic farming community, five state and federal partners have signed a memorandum of understanding. Through the agreement, the partners have agreed to work together to:

- ✓ Develop and implement conservation farm plans for organic crop production.
- ✓ Provide staff support for organic professional development, service delivery and outreach efforts.
- ✓ Share information about innovative organic programs taking place in other states or countries.
- ✓ Encourage the use of demonstrations and field days with organic field operations to showcase conservation and organic production.

The partners who signed on to the

agreement are: the Minnesota Department of Agriculture; University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences; University of Minnesota Extension Service; and the Minnesota offices of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and USDA's Farm Service Agency.

Minnesota has more certified organic corn and soybeans than any other state. A listing of organic-related Web sites is available at [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic). □

## Higher birth defect rates in wheat region

Children born in the Upper Midwest's wheat country are much likelier to have birth defects, according to a federal study released this summer. The study, which was conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, indicates that chlorophenoxy herbicides such as 2,4-D may be the cause of the birth defects. Such herbicides are used to control broadleaf weeds on 85 percent of the spring and durum wheat produced in Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota.

The study, published in the July issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, (<http://ehpnet1.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2003/5830/abstract.html>) tracked 43,500 births from 1995 to 1997 in 147 rural counties in those four states. It compared birth defects in "high-wheat" counties with those in counties where not much of the grain is produced. In high-wheat counties, combined circulatory and respiratory malformations were double and musculoskeletal problems increased by half.

This study bolsters research done by Vincent Garry between 1989 and 1992, which found similar connections between chemical applications and birth defects in western Minnesota (see "Getting Sucker-Punched by Pesticides," July/August 1998 *Land Stewardship Letter*). Garry has also found connections between spring-conceived babies and high rates of birth defects (spring is when many farm chemicals are applied). Scientists such as Garry say such research supports the theory that it may not always be the quantity of chemicals one is exposed to that causes the most health problems. Rather it may be the timing in one's life cycle—a developing fetus exposed to a small dose of pesticides may be at greater odds of suffering ill effects than an adult who is exposed to much larger quantities, for example. □



## 'Soil to Table' explores jumping food hurdles

If farmers are interested in selling direct to restaurants, they need to keep one thing in mind: owners and customers of those establishments are inundated with a culture that pushes a highly packaged, highly processed food system. But farmers and other people who are helping promote the concept of local food can overcome this handicap by being reliable and providing good quality products consistently.

That was the message vegetable farmer Greg Reynolds had for the roughly 100 people who gathered on June



**Chef and restaurant owner Lucia Watson talks about local food with Ray Kirsch, the Certification Coordinator for the Midwest Food Alliance. (LSP photo)**

23 at the West Central Research and Outreach Center near Morris, Minn., for "Local Foods From Soil to Table." The day-long event, which was sponsored by the Pride of the Prairie program (see page 19), provided farmers and consumers a comprehensive picture of how food produced by local family farmers can make its way into local stores and eateries. Farmers, a restaurant owner, government officials and research scientists all lent their perspective on various points in the food chain.

Reynolds, who along with his wife Mary, raises certified organic vegetables near Delano, Minn., has had good luck in recent years marketing to restaurateurs. Chefs want to use interesting ingredients in their dishes—such as an heirloom tomato that's pug-ugly but tastes great—that even natural food co-ops may find

they cannot sell. However, before they even approach an eatery, farmers face a significant barrier, said Reynolds.

"When you go in the back door, you have a better product, but you aren't as convenient as a wholesale food distributor. And for some people that convenience is very important."

That barrier can be overcome by proving to the restaurant or food store that you are willing to raise what they want, and that you can deliver the food on time and in good condition.

"And once you make that commitment to deliver that food, you have to keep that commitment," said Reynolds.

He conceded that getting a restaurant or co-op to even return a telephone call can be difficult. That's where having one's growing practices certified by a third party can help get a foot in the door. In Reynolds' case, his farm is certified organic. That certification has helped him break the ice with restaurants and food co-ops, and the personal relationship he eventually develops with them helps maintain the business arrangement over the long term.

As far as Lucia Watson is concerned, that personal relationship she has with Reynolds has been immensely rewarding.

The owner of Lucia's Restaurant in Minneapolis talked about her transition from a food preparer who bought food based solely on how it looked and how much it cost, to someone who now cares deeply about who produces it and how. Today, her popular restaurant buys as much food as possible from local farmers like Reynolds.

"I get so excited when Greg brings in his beautiful food," said Watson, who, along with writer Beth Dooley, has authored the cookbook, *Savoring the Seasons of the Northern Heartland*.

Buying local may not be as convenient for a busy urban eatery, but it can be well worth it. The fresher the ingredients, the fewer tricks a chef needs to make the dish taste better, said Watson. It has also become easier in recent

years to source food locally, she added. More farmers are approaching restaurants, and they are becoming savvier about how to be a reliable source.

The demand for local food is spreading beyond the co-op and white table cloth restaurant world, said Paul Huginin, an agriculture marketing specialist for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Minnesota Grown program. He cited a survey he did at the 2002 Minnesota State Fair asking people which they prefer: Minnesota-grown Christmas trees or trees from out-of-state. It was no surprise that the majority of respondents said they preferred homegrown evergreens. What was surprising is that while in years past survey respondents said the reason for preferring Minnesota trees was because they were fresher, in 2002 80 percent said the main reason was they "wanted to support local farmers." Huginin's theory is that when the economy is in the dumps, people think more about ways to keep their shopping dollars local. Stores which have carried Minnesota Grown products, and labeled them as such, experienced on average an increase in sales of 10 percent on up, according to Huginin.

Do Watson's customers care that the restaurant owner takes special pains to make sure their food comes from local farms using sustainable methods? She said in general they don't demand details about how the food got to their plate ("They don't want a manifesto on the back of the menu telling them how to eat."), but they do want to feel good about who produced it and how.

Good restaurants are starting to be judged based on how many local ingredients they can use. Watson finds this trend exciting, given the hospitality industry's role as one of the biggest economic engines in the nation.

"Even a slight difference in our purchasing makes a huge difference." □



**Participants in the "Soil to Table" event enjoyed a picnic lunch of locally produced food at the West Central Research and Outreach Center's Horticulture Gardens. (LSP photo)**



## Arner leaves LSP after 15 years

Audrey Arner has ended 15 years of service as a staff member of the Land Stewardship Project. Arner, who farms near the Minnesota community of Montevideo with her husband Richard Handeen, had most recently served as the Director of LSP's western Minnesota office.

Over the years, she was involved in spawning and nurturing many initiatives, including Holistic Management training, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, the Chippewa River Whole Farm Planning and Monitoring Team, Farm Beginnings and Pride of the Prairie. Arner, a popular speaker, has traveled throughout the country to talk about the importance of connecting food, environmental stewardship and farming. She has also been a key player in developing close ties between the community and the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center (see page 1).

Arner's farm, Moonstone, has hosted many field days over the years and has become an example of how food can be raised in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner in the Upper Minnesota River Valley.

LSP Executive Director George Boody says through her work at LSP and on her farm, Arner always reflected the core values of the organization.

"Her work for farmers and her ability to help them see how to evolve toward greater caring for the land and their neighbors shows in Audrey's work.



Audrey Arner

Throughout, she has clearly stood up for what she believes." □

## Olando Gunderson dies in airplane crash

Former Land Stewardship Project board member Olando Gunderson died when the single-engine Piper airplane he was piloting crashed Aug. 5 in western Minnesota. Gunderson, a semi-retired pastor, was flying from his home in Nebraska to discuss his interim pastorship at Providence Valley Lutheran Church near Dawson, Minn. He was 81.

Gunderson served two terms on the LSP board from 1986 to 1994. While a pastor at Lac qui Parle Lutheran Church near Dawson, he hosted one of the first LSP organizational meetings during the winter of 1983. A marriage after the death of his first wife led him to move to Nebraska, but he maintained close ties to LSP, as well as churches and people in the Upper Minnesota River Valley. Over the years, Gunderson gained a reputation for being passionate about rural life and good stewardship of the land. He also had an adventurous streak: he obtained his pilot's license at the age of 62.

"After his funeral I was thinking about his name—O-LAND-O—his caring was so deep and his advocacy for stewardship so profound," says LSP's Audrey Arner.

"As a rural minister, Olando was personally familiar with the anxieties, hopes and needs of people in rural communities," says Dana Jackson, who, before becoming LSP's Associate Director, served on the board with Gunderson. "His experience and insight made him an invaluable member of the LSP board, and I learned a lot from him."

The staff and board of the Land Stewardship Project sends condolences out to the family of this great friend of the land and its people. □

## New Board members

**Sandy Olson-Loy** and **Jim Scaife** have joined the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors.

**Olson-Loy** is the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota-Morris. Since coming to the University in 1985, Olson-Loy has helped develop



Sandy Olson-Loy

programs that bring together the university and the rural communities of west central Minnesota. Most recently, she has worked with the Pride of the Prairie regional food program to make connections between students and the farm community.

Olson-Loy grew up on a farm in Minnesota's Morrison County and she and her husband Doug Loy are converting 65 acres of highly erodible land to native prairie near the town of Starbuck.

**Scaife** is a minister at the Canton-Scotland Presbyterian Church in south-east Minnesota, and a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve. He and his wife Tara raise white-faced ewe sheep using rotational



Jim Scaife

grazing on their farm near Rushford, Minn. Both Jim and Tara have served on LSP's southeast Minnesota steering committee. Jim is currently on the Farm Beginnings steering committee, and is particularly interested in ways of getting new farmers established on the land. They have three children: Annie and Freddy, both 9, and Christina, who was born in May.

Going off the LSP board are **Dan French**, **Ron Kroese**, **Cheryl Miller** and **Ken Peterson**. □

## 1% Sunday in Winona Oct. 26

On the last Sunday of each month, Bluff Country Co-op in Winona, Minn., donates 1 percent of its sales for the day to an organization that shares the full service grocery store's goals and philosophies. On Oct. 26, the Land Stewardship Project will be on the receiving end of Bluff Country's "1% Sunday." If you're in the Winona area that day, stop by Bluff Country at 121 West Second Street and help support LSP. You can check out the co-op on the Web at [www.bluff.coop](http://www.bluff.coop).



## Endowed chair filled by LSPers

Two Land Stewardship Project members have been named senior fellows in the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota.

**Jim Riddle**, a consultant and organic policy specialist from Winona, Minn., will work with University of Minnesota researchers to help address issues and challenges faced by organic livestock producers. **Beth Waterhouse**, a writer and educator who formerly served on LSP's Board of Directors, will focus on exploring the creativity of the adult children whose parents were involved in the early stages of the sustainable agriculture movement.

The endowed chair program identifies major issues in agriculture and selects individuals and teams to occupy the chair for lengths of time that vary from one month to a year. The chair is managed by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), with support from board members of the School of Agriculture Alumni Association. For more information on the endowed chair, call MISA at 800-909-6472 or log onto [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu). □



Locally produced food was served up at a special “sustainable and organic foods” harvest banquet Aug. 4 at the Episcopal Church of Gethsemane in Minneapolis. Several Land Stewardship Project member-farmers served as sources of food for the meal, which was held in conjunction with the National Convention of the Episcopal Church. The food was prepared by Nathalie Johnson and staff from Signature Cafe and Catering in Minneapolis. Kelly Paulson and Gina Bermilyea volunteered their help. The sponsors of the banquet included Episcopal Ecological Network, Diocese of Minnesota's Environmental Stewardship Commission, and LSP. For more information on the Episcopal Ecological Network, log onto <http://EENOnline.org>, or contact Rev. Wanda Copeland at 763-441-5482; [scopetjohn@att.net](mailto:scopetjohn@att.net). For information on how to organize a local foods banquet, see page 19. (LSP photo)

## Gale Woods Farm Park to host LSP



The 410-acre Gale Woods Farm Park outside of Minnetrista, Minn., features sustainable livestock and crop production practices, and is striving to become as self-sufficient as possible through sales of farm products. It is managed by Land Stewardship Project members Tim Reese and Leslie Geissing, and will be the site of LSP's fall potluck Sept. 27 (see page 23). The park, which officially opened Aug. 9, has several fall activities scheduled. For more information on Gale Woods, call 952-472-9203 or log onto [www.threeriversparkdistrict.org](http://www.threeriversparkdistrict.org). (LSP photos)



## Training/hands-on experience emphasized at multi-state beginning farmer gathering

*LSP's Farm Beginnings Program spawns initiatives across the nation*

Beginning farmer programs must do more than help retiring landowners pass on their operations to a new generation. A successful transition program requires training and hands-on experience, says Marion Bowlan, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Farm Link, a beginning farmer apprenticeship program.

Bowlan was one of two-dozen participants in a meeting held in Lanesboro, Minn., June 17-19 on getting a new generation of farmers started. The "Farmers-A New Generation" meeting, which was hosted by the Land Stewardship Project, focused on developing course curriculum for beginning farmer programs. Besides Minnesota and Pennsylvania, beginning farmer programs in Nebraska, Iowa, Vermont and Canada were represented.

Participants in the meeting learned about LSP's Farm Beginnings program through panel discussions involving mentoring farmers as well as people who have graduated from the seven-year-old program.

To date, more than 100 beginning farmers have graduated from Farm Beginnings, according to Karen Stettler, coordinator of the program in southeast Minnesota. Over 60 percent of those graduates are actively farming. Farm Beginnings participants take part in a 10-month course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing, and low-cost and sustainable farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present the seminars, providing a strong foundation and community resources, networks and contacts for those interested in farming. Following the seminars, the participants receive hands-on training, a chance to apply knowledge from the seminars and an opportunity to connect with established farmers through a series of farm visits and one-on-one mentorships.

Like the other groups represented at the Lanesboro meeting, LSP belongs to the National Farm Transition Network, a coalition started over a decade ago by people who are working on beginning farmer and rancher issues. Each program is different. Pennsylvania Farm Link, for

example, sets up apprenticeships that are certified by the state. In Minnesota, established farmers serve as mentors to beginners on a more informal basis.

Many members of the Transition Network started out as "matchmaking clearing-house" services that linked retiring landowners with new beginning farmers. How-

The 2003-2004 Farm Beginnings class will begin meeting at the end of October in southeast Minnesota and western Minnesota. The deadline for applications is **Oct. 7**.

In **southeast Minnesota**, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org for more information.

In **western Minnesota**, contact Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

Information on Farm Beginnings is also available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

ever, in recent years several programs have developed an educational component of some sort, says Stettler.

Bowlan says it became clear to her organization that setting up links did little

good if the beginning farmer did not have the skills to develop a successful enterprise. That is why Pennsylvania Farm Link started offering an educational component to beginning farmers.

"To get a business started anywhere takes a lot of steps," says Bowlan. "A lot of skills have to come together in the right way, in the right place, and in the right person."

Perhaps the nation's first farm matchmaker program was the one started by the Nebraska-based Center for Rural Affairs. Joy Johnson, Farm Transition Specialist for the Center, said that program has also evolved from being purely a clearing-house and now offers an educational component through a curriculum called "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity." She says it was exciting to come to Lanesboro and talk to mentors and beginning farmers involved with LSP's Farm Beginnings program and see how much of a role "farmer-to-farmer" networking plays in the educational component.

"I think that's unique," she says.

The educational aspect of beginning farmer programs will take a step forward thanks to a new partnership involving Heifer International and the initiatives in Minnesota, Nebraska and Vermont. Through the "Farmers-A New Generation" partnership, livestock loans will be provided to farmers who successfully complete a beginning farmer course. LSP's Farm Beginnings has been offering Heifer International livestock loans for four years, and that aspect of the program has become key, says Stettler. □



Recent graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program gathered on Aug. 9 for a group photo before a potluck picnic at the Michelle and Roger Benrud farm near Goodhue, Minn. The first livestock loan transfers were made at the event. (LSP photo)



## 'Farming with the Wild' discussion Oct. 8 at the Open Book in Minneapolis

The Land Stewardship Project will co-sponsor "Farming with the Wild," a free public program, on Oct. 8 in Minneapolis. The event will be held at the Open Book, 1011 Washington Avenue South, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Besides LSP, sponsors of the event are the Wild Farm Alliance, Ruminator Books and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

The Wild Farm Alliance was founded in 2000 by a group of wild lands proponents and ecological farming advocates who continue to serve on the steering committee. Dana Jackson, LSP's Associate Director, is one of the people who helped found the Alliance and currently serves on its steering committee. Currently the Wild Farm Alliance is a project of the Tides Center, but is in the process of obtaining its nonprofit organization status. Jo Ann Baumgartner coordinates programs from the group's Watsonville, Cal., office. Through publications and educational programs, the Wild Farm Alliance is striving to bridge the gap between stewardship farming and wild lands conservation by promoting agriculture that helps protect and restore nature.

Agriculture covers roughly two-thirds of the continental landscape in the U.S., and about 40 percent of endangered species are listed because of agriculture's vast footprint.

Although farming and ranching are contributing to a dramatic decline in biological diversity, there are agricultural models that support native species and ecological processes. Dan Imhoff describes some of these models in his new book, *Farming with the Wild*, (see a review on page 20), which is the theme for the October event, and he will begin the program with a slide show based on the book.

Imhoff will be followed by short presentations from two other members of the Wild Farm Alliance steering committee, Dana Jackson and Becky Weed, and three Advisory Committee Members: Dave Foreman, Gary Nabhan and Fred Kirschenmann.

Mark Ritchie, President of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis, will facilitate the discussion. Ruminator Books of St. Paul will have copies of *Farming with the Wild* and books by the other speakers available for sale at the event.

The Wild Farm Alliance has published

a series of six briefing papers:

- ➔ Making Connections for Nature: The Conservation Value of Farming with the Wild
- ➔ Agricultural Cropping Patterns: Integrating Wild Margins
- ➔ Grazing for Biodiversity: The Co-Existence of Farm Animals and Native Species
- ➔ Linking Conservation with the Bottom Line: Incentives for Farming with Nature
- ➔ Water: Life Blood of the Landscape
- ➔ Local Control in the Global Arena: Restructuring Ecological Food Systems for the Protection of Natural and Human Communities

These papers can be ordered from the Farm Alliance at 406 Main St., Suite 213, Watsonville, CA 95076. They can also be downloaded from the Alliance's Web site at [www.wildfarmalliance.org](http://www.wildfarmalliance.org). A list of speakers available for programs can be

found at the Web site, as well as a complete list and descriptions of staff, steering committee and advisory committee members. The Web site's Resources Section also features *The Farm as Natural Habitat*, edited by Dana Jackson and Laura Jackson with several chapters written by LSP staffers and members.

For more information, contact Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 or [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Lewiston to host book reading Nov. 6

The Land Stewardship Project's southeast Minnesota office will host a *Farm as Natural Habitat* book reading event on Thursday, Nov. 6, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. It will feature LSP Associate Director Dana Jackson, who co-edited the book, and Tex Hawkins, an LSP member and wildlife biologist who wrote one of the chapters. Also on hand will be Brian DeVore, editor of the *Land Stewardship Letter* and a contributor to the book.

The event will be at LSP's Lewiston office at 180 East Main Street. For more information, contact: 507-523-3366. □

### The 'Farming with the Wild' presenters

◆ **Dan Imhoff** is a writer and researcher on issues related to food and the environment. His articles and essays have appeared in many magazines and books such as *Saveur*, *Sierra*, *Whole Earth* and *Orion Afield*. He co-hosts a monthly Farm and Garden radio program on Mendocino County Public Broadcasting in California.

◆ **Becky Weed** is co-owner of Thirteen Mile Lamb and Wool Company in Montana, which manages sheep under the Predator Friendly Label without killing coyotes, mountain lions, bears, eagles or wolves. She also raises cattle on her organically certified ranch.

◆ **Dana Jackson** is the associate director of the Land Stewardship Project and co-editor with her daughter Laura Jackson of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*.

◆ **Dave Foreman** is co-founder of the Wildlands Project and of Earth First!, and has been known as a radical environmentalist. He has worked for the Wilderness Society and Wilderness Affairs. He is the author or co-author of seven books about defending the natural environment.

◆ **Gary Nabhan** is co-founder of Native Seeds Search and has served as director of conservation science at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. He crosses disciplinary, cultural and ethnic boundaries to work with different communities in the Southwest. He is the author of many books, the most recent of which are *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods* (see review in January/February/March 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*), *The Forgotten Pollinators*, and soon to be published, *Singing the Turtles to Sea*.

◆ **Fred Kirschenmann** is the executive director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Ames, Iowa, and president of Kirschenmann Family Farms, a 3,500-acre certified organic farm in Windsor, N. Dak. He is past-president of Farm Verified Organic and has served on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Standards Board. He wrote the foreword to *Farming with the Wild*.

◆ **Mark Ritchie** is the President of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. He is the author of numerous books, articles and studies on a wide range of agriculture, food, forestry, environment, human rights and trade issues. For the past 20 years, Ritchie has worked to build bridges between farmers and consumers around the world.

# The crazy, hazy days of summer

*Fate of CSP, COOL, EQIP & Packer Ban may be decided this fall*

Politically, it was a long hot summer in farm country, as debate over issues ranging from the future of the Conservation Security Program and subsidies for factory farms to corporate concentration and the right of consumers to know where their meat comes from simmered in Washington, D.C., and at home. The result? Autumn is shaping up to be a time when a lot of issues affecting family farmers, sustainable agriculture, and our food system will be dealt with.

## Conservation Security Program

So far, one of the most innovative agricultural policy initiatives to ever be included in a farm bill, the Conservation Security Program (CSP), has been bogged down by USDA inaction and the opposition of the Republican leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives. Signed into law in May 2002, the program marks a watershed in farm policy by rewarding farmers for producing real conservation benefits on working lands. However, officials within the USDA and the Bush Administration have dragged out the implementation of the program for so long that its very survival is threatened, says Mark Schultz, Policy Program Director for the Land Stewardship Project. The program cannot be implemented until rules are developed by the USDA. In fact, the final rule to guide the operation of the CSP was, by law, supposed to be fully implemented by February 2003. But as of this writing, not even a proposed rule had been issued for public comment yet.

"We could have had the Conservation Security Program up and running and delivering conservation benefits to the public and payments to farmers today if the USDA and the Bush Administration had just done their job," says Schultz. "Farmers have already lost the ability to utilize CSP in 2003, and now there's a chance the 2004 growing season will also be lost. For farmers to take advantage of the program they need to know the rules as soon as possible."

Another concern is that USDA will issue the proposed rule for public comment during fall harvest, greatly reducing opportunities for farmers to provide input for how the CSP should be

run. LSP and its allies across the country are working to get the proposed rules issued prior to harvest. To roil the waters even more, the U.S. House of Representatives voted this summer to eliminate funding for CSP implementa-

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***"We could have had the Conservation Security Program up and running and delivering conservation benefits to the public and payments to farmers today..."***

• • •

tion in 2004. On the other hand, the Senate Appropriations committee voted to fully fund implementation of the \$3.77 billion program, setting up a showdown this fall when a conference committee is expected to meet to hammer out what the funding for programs like CSP will look like.

## Cutting factory farm subsidies

September will also likely be the month when the U.S. Senate considers the amount of tax money large-scale concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) can receive to build massive manure handling facilities. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) is planning to introduce an amendment to limit the maximum per-farm payment for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) from \$450,000 to \$300,000 and close the partnership loophole to stop multiple payments to one operation. A \$300,000 payment limit has no effect on 97.8 percent of livestock operations. The Grassley amendment will put some brakes on the use of EQIP to subsidize expansion of industrial livestock facilities, while allowing for a wider, fairer distribution of EQIP funds to more farmers (EQIP has been used in the past to fund sustainable livestock production systems like rotational grazing). Senator Mark Dayton (D-Minn.) strongly supports the Grassley amendment, while Senator Norm Coleman's (R-Minn.) staff indicate he is likely to vote against it.

## COOL

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is another good idea to come out of the 2002 Farm Bill debate that may not even

get off the ground because of funding cuts being proposed by the U.S. House. Under the law, which is scheduled to become mandatory on Sept. 30, 2004, beef, pork, lamb, fish, perishable agricultural commodities and peanuts must carry labels that tell consumers the country of origin. Such a system would provide consumers with the same information they get when they purchase everything from shirts to cars. However, large meat packers, processors and commodity groups like the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) have lobbied vigorously to prevent COOL from being implemented, not wanting any regulation of international trade, even simple labeling that benefits consumers and farmers.

Their lobbying paid off this summer when the House Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee voted to eliminate

**Policy, see page 11...**

## What can you do?

Farmers need to contact the USDA and the Bush Administration immediately to let them know how critical it is to issue the proposed rules for the CSP.

Once the proposed rules are issued, it will be important for many citizens (farmers and non-farmers alike) to comment on the rules. The public needs to provide guidance to improve USDA's proposal so that the CSP really does serve to deliver conservation benefits to society at large, and in particular support the development of sustainable systems on working farmland.

Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) or call LSP's Policy office at 612-722-6377 for information on the CSP rules. We will send out an action alert and summary of the proposed rules once the comment period begins.

Fall is a great time for *letters to the editor* from LSP members advocating for funding of the Conservation Security Program and COOL, and passage of the packer ban and the EQIP payment limitation amendment. Congress is reconvening in September, and we want them to act on each of these concerns.

You can call the LSP Policy office at 612-722-6377 if you have any questions or need more information. Writing letters to the editor is a very effective way to educate the public about important issues, and elected officials pay close attention to the weekly and daily newspapers in their state and district.

USDA funding for the implementation of the red meat portion of COOL. Such a move makes the House-Senate conference committee on the ag budget even more critical, says Schultz. At a USDA listening session for COOL in June, livestock farmers from across the Midwest made it clear that they want the program fully funded and implemented. See [www.landstewardshipproject.org/opinions/03/opin\\_030624.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/opinions/03/opin_030624.html) for the text of testimony given by hog farmer and LSP staff member Paul Sobocinski.

### Packer ownership

The need for a law that bans meat packers from producing the animals they process became clear again this summer when Smithfield Foods announced plans to buy the hog production and pork processing division of Farmland Industries. Smithfield is already the world's largest pork packer and processor, and has lobbied hard against efforts to ban companies like it from owning livestock before slaughter. According to *Successful Farming*, Farmland Industries owns 36,000 sows in four states, including Minnesota. If the sale goes through, Smithfield would own nearly 800,000 sows, and control more than 30 percent of the daily hog slaughter. Economists say such dominance of the pork industry by one company is unprecedented. Hog farmers like LSP member Mick Thiesse of Ceylon, Minn., say one company owning so much of the market will make it almost impossible for producers like him to survive.

"Ten years ago I could get four or five bids for my hogs any day of the week," he says. "Now with a handful of corporations controlling the livestock market, I can hardly sell my hogs at all. If Smithfield acquires Farmland, things will only get worse for hog producers."

LSP members and staff in Minnesota took action by holding a meeting with Attorney General Mike Hatch on July 31. At the meeting, Hatch agreed to officially press the U.S. Justice Department to give the proposed Smithfield buyout of Farmland the "highest level of scrutiny." He also endorsed a federal ban on packers owning livestock, and agreed to meet with LSP members again on Sept. 9.

At the federal level, there are currently packer ban bills in both the U.S. House and Senate, with bipartisan support. For a list of co-sponsors nationally, call the LSP Policy office at 612-722-6377. In Minnesota, Senator Dayton has co-

sponsored the Senate packer ban bill authored by Senator Grassley. Thus far, no other Minnesota member of Congress has co-sponsored, including Senator Coleman and Representatives Gil Gutknecht and Collin Peterson, all of whom serve on the Agriculture Committees in their respective houses of Congress.

LSP and other members of the

Campaign for Family Farms worked successfully to get the U.S. Senate to pass a ban on packer ownership in 2002. However, after heavy lobbying from Smithfield and other members of the American Meat Institute, the leadership of the U.S. House forced the removal of the packer ban from the final version of the Farm Bill. □

## Precedent-setting lawsuit advances

The Minnesota Supreme Court this August decided it would not review an appellate court ruling that allows a precedent-setting nuisance lawsuit against a factory hog farm to advance. The Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled in June that a nuisance lawsuit against a Nicollet County factory farm could move forward. The ruling reverses a Nicollet County District Court's decision to dismiss the case of Gerald Wendinger et al. vs. Forst Farms, Inc., and Wakefield Pork, Inc. Forst Farms had asked the Minnesota Supreme court to review the ruling.

The Appellate Court ruling allows the nuisance lawsuit to proceed to a jury trial (no date for the trial had been set as of this writing). The Land Stewardship Project and Citizens Organized Acting Together (COACT), along with the Minnesota Attorney General, filed amicus briefs in support of the appeal. Amicus briefs are sought to support points of law that the applicants believe are critically important to the public and which are potentially precedent-setting.

The case involves Gerald and Julie Wendinger, a husband and wife from West Newton Township in rural Nicollet County, about seven miles northwest of New Ulm. The couple is attempting to recover damages caused by a factory style hog operation that was built near their farm in 1995. The hog confinement is permitted for 2,400 hogs and uses a 1.6 acre unlined open-air lagoon to store the liquid manure produced by the operation. Persistent, obnoxious odors from the lagoon forced the Wendingers to leave their farm over a year ago, says Gerald Wendinger, who lived on the farm for 52 years. Wakefield Pork, Inc., located in Gaylord in Sibley County, owns the hogs and pays Forst Farms, Inc., to raise them.

The Nicollet County District Court dismissed the Wendingers' case by broadly interpreting Minnesota's so called "Right to Farm Act" as exempting Forst Farms' operation from a nuisance suit. However, the Appellate Court reversed that ruling, stating that the lower court's interpretation of the "Right to Farm" law was overly broad and that the law does not apply in cases of negligence. The Appeals Court ruled that the Wendingers' claim that the hog facility was operated in a negligent manner should proceed to trial.

The Appeals Court also instructed the trial court to determine whether Wakefield Pork, the corporate integrator who owns and controls the hogs in the facility, is also responsible for damages caused by the hog operation.



## MSAWG has a new address

The Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) has a new address: 1614 Morningside Drive, Iowa City, IA 52245; phone: 319-354-0258; e-mail: [teresa@msawg.org](mailto:teresa@msawg.org). The Land Stewardship Project is a founding member of MSAWG. □

## Lending law guide

An updated edition of *Farmers' Guide to Minnesota Lending Law* is now available from Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG). It provides farmers with current information on important legal issues such as foreclosures, obtaining credit and Minnesota's Farmer-Lender Mediation Program.

Bound copies of the book are available free to financially distressed Minnesota farmers by calling 800-233-4534. For others, the charge is \$20 per book. Orders can be placed by calling 651-223-5400. A free copy can be downloaded from [www.flaginc.org/pubs/mnlend](http://www.flaginc.org/pubs/mnlend). □



# A community takes control of its future

*A funny thing happened on the way to a factory farm takeover: some citizens got organized*

When the Board of Commissioners in southeast Minnesota's Dodge County voted in June not to order an Environmental Impact Statement study for a 2,400-head sow operation, farmers and other rural residents in the area took note.

The board voted 3-2 against the study although the facility would be located on top of karst geology, which is characterized by Swiss cheese-like limestone structures that can allow contaminants to make it from the surface to underground water within hours. The site has been rated by two karst experts as a "five" on a sinkhole probability risk scale—with "seven" being the highest probability. It was clear that scientific evidence about environmental risks was not going to sway the board's vote when it came to big industrial agriculture.

"All the commissioners heard expert testimony on how uniquely stressed this area is because of the karst," says Milton Township resident Scott Glarner. "But for whatever reason three commissioners did not follow the law and order an environmental review." Glarner has joined 35 other local farmers and residents in filing a court challenge to the vote.

"I think the county commissioners tipped their hand that day," says Shirley Bowman, who farms with her husband Earl in Dodge County's Ashland Township, which is about 10 miles south of the Milton Township site where the hog operation is being proposed. The vote signaled that if factory farms were not to become the dominant form of agriculture in the county, it was up to the township's citizens to work with their supervisors and take control of their own destinies.

Indeed, the commissioners' action mobilized the Bowmans and their neighbors to begin the process of developing planning and zoning rules for Ashland Township. On July 21, its three supervisors voted unanimously to adopt an interim ordinance. The ordinance puts on hold the building of livestock operations over 900 animal units (2,250 sows or 643 mature dairy cows), as well as the construction of earthen manure lagoons. The ordinance does not apply to existing facilities or repairs, renovations or replacement of structures. It's in effect until July 2004 or upon completion of a comprehensive plan for guiding development, whichever comes first.

"We want something that will allow



**Some local residents gathered at the Kim and Dan Bowe home soon after an interim ordinance was passed in the community. (LSP photo)**

people of our community to be able to continue with their livestock operations," Ashland Supervisor Lee Bryngelson told the *Rochester Post Bulletin*. "What we're really dealing with is the future of the people in our community."

Interim ordinances have been used by numerous townships in Minnesota to develop well thought out guidelines for development. In farm country, such planning has taken on a sense of urgency in recent years as large-scale concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) proliferate. Ashland Township has its work cut out for it in the coming year. But by organizing and getting involved, its residents have already taken a major step toward controlling their future.

## The threat

Walk out the back door of Kim and Dan Bowe's house in Ashland Township, take a right at the garage and stop at the edge of a soybean field. The field rises to the top of a low hill, a little over two city blocks distant—that's where the New Jersey-based Zaitz Trust wants to build one of the largest dairies in Minnesota.

Rumors of a dairy CAFO being built in the area have circulated for more than a year. But it wasn't until last fall that the rumor took shape as a reality. Ben Zaitz revealed he had plans to build a pair of dairies roughly four miles apart in Dodge County—one in Ashland Township and one in Ripley Township. When he first made the announcement, Zaitz said each would house 3,000 animal units (2,143 mature dairy cows), the limit for livestock operations in the county. Such operations would require massive open liquid

manure lagoons, producing huge potential air emissions and water quality problems, while posing a threat to property values.

The Bowes have a teenage son who suffers from asthma, and their family physician expressed strong concerns about the effects a manure lagoon would have on his breathing (two other children and one adult suffer from asthma within a half-mile of the proposed dairy). The Bowes, who have jobs in nearby towns, started talking to their neighbors, many of whom are farmers. They soon

realized that most of the people in the neighborhood didn't consider CAFOs farms. In other areas, human health and environmental problems were emerging near livestock factories, even when they had been built to "state of the art" specifications. Citizens across the country were organizing to prevent these facilities from ruining communities. This wasn't just a local issue involving one family and one factory farm in one township.

One of the farmers the Bowes talked to was corn and soybean producer Evan Schmeling, who lives just down the road. Schmeling never considered himself an "environmentalist" or "activist," but he knew an operation this size wouldn't be good for the community—he'd seen too many large operations go under financially, pulling local businesses and co-ops with them. In October, he invited Land Stewardship Project organizer Adam Warthesen to meet with local residents. At that meeting, residents learned their rights and what they could do to stop unwanted development. One of the options that appealed to the citizens was to implement an interim ordinance, and thus obtain some breathing room to plan.

Meanwhile, it has become clear that the size of the Zaitz Dairy proposal is a moving target. After the announcement last fall that the plan was for two 3,000 animal unit facilities, in February Ben Zaitz told the Dodge County Board of Commissioners his plan was to submit a proposal for a 3,000 animal unit dairy in Ripley Township and a 1,000 animal unit

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**Township, see page 13...**

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heifer operation in Ashland.

Zaitz, who in 1994 founded Farms.com, an Internet company that sells agricultural commodities, has said publicly he is flexible about the size of the operation—up to a point. He sees a large CAFO as the only future for dairying, despite the fact that 96 percent of all dairy farms in Minnesota are under 200 cows.

“You have to build livestock facilities that are competitive and it takes about 3,000 to 4,000 head to be competitive,” the New Jersey resident was quoted as saying in a *Post Bulletin* article. Zaitz has also told the newspaper that if dairy farming is to exist in the future, “it’s going to be this kind of thing or not at all.”

It’s also evident he has plenty of friends in high places that have more than a passing interest in seeing his brand of mega-agriculture succeed. Again, these supporters see this as more than an issue of one CAFO in one community: it’s a make or break opportunity for opening the doors to factory farm development throughout the state. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Harold Stanislawski spoke at an Ashland Township meeting in favor of the operation. In June, the Agriculture Department’s Agricultural Marketing Services Division did an analysis for Zaitz of what economic impact a 2,500-cow dairy would have in Dodge County (see sidebar). In addition, an organization called the Southeast Minnesota Ag Alliance is promoting the project. The Ag Alliance is funded by milk processing giant Land O’ Lakes and Ag Star Financial Services. The Ag Alliance’s treasurer, Bill Rowekamp, is Zaitz’s business partner on the Ripley Township proposal.

If action isn’t taken to guide development in the township soon, then it will be engulfed by the kind of outside-controlled projects that will have long-term negative consequences—the kind that affect more than just downwind neighbors, says Shirley Bowman, who lives within a half-mile of the Ashland site.

“This is not our land, it’s going to be passed on to the next generation, and if this one gets built, it won’t be the last of them. And the next generation is who will have to pay for it.”

About a dozen residents have spent the past year taking action by gathering as much information as possible on the economic and environmental impacts of CAFOs, writing letters to the editors of

local newspapers, talking on the telephone, mounting a local petition drive and attending lots of meetings: county board meetings, township meetings and informal meetings around kitchen tables.

Also created at the request of Zaitz was a Dairy Review Committee. The committee was made up of residents of Ashland and Ripley townships, and it spent more than six months looking at a variety of issues related to the project.

### A key tool

Attending meetings, writing letters, gathering information and working with township supervisors helped build a case for planning and zoning in the township. To make it a reality, the Ashland residents needed to show their supervisors that voting residents supported such action. That support came in the form of a petition drive calling for an interim ordinance. Over a period of several months, 144 signatures—out of a possible 227 registered voters—were collected in

## Milking the losses

Ben Zaitz says he has to milk at least 3,000 cows to stay viable. He might want to look at some recent dairy profitability statistics before committing to mega-cow numbers.

According to the Minnesota Farm Business Management Program database, in 2002 dairy operations with 51 to 100 cows had a net return of \$141 per cow, while the 500 cow-plus operations lost \$44 per cow.

Keep in mind these figures are for 2002 only, a year when farmers received very low prices for their milk. But these figures show when times are tough, smaller farms—with their lower fixed costs—may have more flexibility to tighten belts.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) did an analysis for Zaitz of what economic impact a 2,500-cow dairy would have in Dodge County. In the basic scenario, the dairy would produce a total “employment impact” of 95 jobs and a total “labor income impact” of almost \$2.7 million.

That sounds impressive, but remember: according to the Minnesota Farm Business Management Program analysis, in the real world large dairies lost \$44 per cow last year. How long can any dairy farm stay in business when it’s sucking wind at that rate? The MDA’s theoretical economic impact may be big, but short-lived.

the township. Earl Bowman collected three-quarters of the signatures himself. He took out a plat book and started driving his pickup from house to house. All that driving paid off.

Says one Ashland supervisor: “As a township officer, having that many signatures on a petition is the best thing that ever happened because it gives you support when you vote.”

Meanwhile, as the residents of Ashland Township continue to ask hard questions about the impacts of CAFOs, factory farm supporters have called them everything from anti-animal agriculture and anti-growth to un-American.

But the citizens have done their homework and know factory farms are not the keys to economic growth. Livestock are critical to a healthy rural economy, but the answer is not concentration of animals on a few huge operations, says Shirley Bowman.

“We are absolutely not against livestock. We raise corn and beans and we have to have a place to sell our crop for feed, but this kind of development is not good for our community in general and it’s not good for family farmers.”

One recent Wisconsin study found that the percent of feed purchased locally declined as the dairy herd size rose. A similar analysis of the purchasing patterns of southwest Minnesota farms showed local expenditures dropped sharply when the scale of the livestock operation increased (see [www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ehsrc/CAFOstudy/CAFO\\_7.pdf](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ehsrc/CAFOstudy/CAFO_7.pdf) for more on the economic impacts of CAFOs).

Evan Schmeling, who belongs to a local ethanol cooperative, was told the mega-dairy would add profits to that plant by buying its by-products. But, he says, “They’re going to buy this stuff as cheap as they can. They’re not going to pay more just because it’s local.” □

*Future issues of the Land Stewardship Letter will provide updates on Ashland Township’s planning process.*

## Township guide

*When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development* is a Land Stewardship Project guide for using the interim ordinance and other tools in Minnesota’s Municipal Planning Law. For a copy, contact LSP’s Policy Program office at 612-722-6377.

the middle of corn and soybean country come to elicit such optimism from an advocate of sustainable agriculture? It's been equal parts citizen activism, community pride, visionary leadership and dumb luck. But let's begin with one other major factor in WCROC's transition: an innovative research system that uses big picture methods to answer local, down-to-earth questions.

## The maker of mistakes

WCROC is one of six geographically based University of Minnesota experiment stations. As in other states, these facilities conduct agricultural research that can't easily be done on a land grant institution's main campus: field trials, livestock production research, etc. Ideally, the results reflect local weather, soil, economic and geographical conditions. It's the closest agricultural scientists are going to get to the real world without actually doing the research on a farm. For over a century, some of agriculture's biggest changes have been hatched at experiment stations.

But in recent years, farmers and others have expressed concerns that experiment stations aren't as accountable to their constituencies—locally or regionally—as they should be. As state and federal funding for agricultural research is slashed, private corporations and commodity groups have increasingly helped foot the bill. With that financial help comes strings: namely, more control over what research questions get asked. That can mean less research on sustainable farming techniques such as grass-based livestock production, and more of a focus on methods that are likely to produce a marketable product for a company, like a row crop engineered to resist being killed by herbicides. That kind of research can contribute to the financial bottom line of agribusiness, but isn't necessarily a positive contribution to the public good.

As Dennis Johnson's rocky run-in with graziers back in the early 1990s makes clear, sustainable farmers are used to being ignored, or worse, derided by land grant researchers. Surveys of farmers who belong to sustainable agriculture organizations show they feel land grant institutions and related entities such as Extension are of little help in their efforts to seek out alternative enterprises.

"I think a lot of farmers pretty much operate as though the university isn't there," says Jim VanDerPol, a west central Minnesota farmer who has long

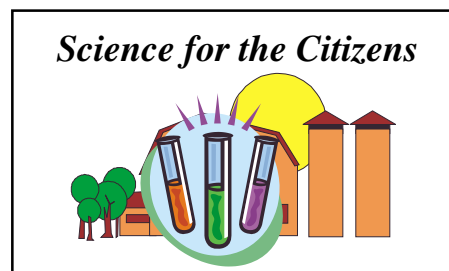
been involved in sustainable agriculture.

Greg Cuomo wants all farmers, sustainable and conventional, to know where the West Central Research and Outreach Center is. Cuomo, who has been the WCROC Station Head since 2000, says the facility's job is to take risks that would be too expensive for the average farmer.

"Making a mistake here is expensive too, but for a farmer it can mean the difference between surviving and going under. This is the place where mistakes can be made and the consequences aren't so severe."

Cuomo, who came to the station as a forage agronomist in 1996, is careful to make it clear that there are all sorts of ways to farm and it's not the station's place to judge which is better.

"For example, we have worked hard



not to say we have a conventional swine program or an alternative swine program. We have a swine program. There are pluses and minuses to all systems."

Cuomo says this while sitting in his office, a rectangular window behind him providing a view of the Pomme de Terre River as it flows through the station's grounds before emptying into the Minnesota River, which eventually dumps its own load into the Mighty Mississippi. Beyond the Pomme de Terre is the University of Minnesota-Morris campus and the city of Morris itself. The river and the college town are constant reminders that the station cannot operate effectively without staying connected to the wider world—human and natural. In some ways that makes WCROC a natural place for executing something called "interdisciplinary" or "systems" research.

## Big picture science

For much of the history of agricultural research in this country, the focus has been on how much of what input can be used to produce higher yields—a direct cause and effect relationship. How much fertilizer needs to be added to produce more bushels of corn per acre, or how much corn needs to be fed to a dairy cow

to pump up milk production? For much of the 20th Century, such a narrowly focused attitude made sense: economic returns and productivity were one and the same, so we didn't need to separate them. But during the past few decades, there has been talk of adding other outcomes to the model such as effects on society and the landscape. Researchers have even proposed that maximum yields don't always equal profitability. What good is a bulk tank-busting milk yield if the feed, energy and housing that goes into producing it cost more than what the farmer receives from the processor?

Just ask Mary Jo Forbord. Five years ago she and her husband Luverne consulted experts in an effort to increase the profitability of their dairy herd. They were told to go into "high milk production" mode and push the cows using techniques such as hormone injections.

"Each expert would come to the farm, jump out of the truck and say, 'What's your herd average?'" Forbord recalls.

They followed the advice and production did increase, but so did herd health problems and stress on the family. "We still weren't making money," she says.

On a wider scale, what if those massive yields are imposing huge costs on the environment via pollution, or on the community by putting farmers out of business? Answering such questions requires an approach that involves researchers representing a variety of disciplines. One dairy scientist taking notes on one milking herd can't do it.

About 20 years ago, Dennis Johnson became aware that the old strategy of researching ways to increase milk productivity was not keeping farmers in business. To his alarm, well-run, medium sized dairies were going under at a record pace, taking local Main Street businesses and institutions with them.

Johnson studied the systems approach to research at Cornell University while on sabbatical in the 1980s, and again while visiting Europe recently. He also visited New Zealand in 1991, where management intensive rotational grazing dominates the livestock industry. This system produces livestock on grass by moving animals frequently through a series of paddocks. It has proven to be a low-cost, efficient way to product meat and milk, and protects water quality by spreading manure in a manner that plants can take up sustainably. Grazing also slashes soil erosion because it relies on perennial grasses and forages, instead of annual



row crops. In addition, farmers who switch to grazing say their quality of life is better because they spend less time doing field crop production or handling large volumes of liquid manure.

Johnson didn't know if rotational grazing was something that would work on a wide scale in Minnesota, but he was impressed that New Zealand farmers seemed to be making a profit without pushing their cows to produce massive amounts of milk. The dairy scientist later took a Holistic Management course through the Land Stewardship Project and started pulling it all together. Holistic Management teaches that often the technique itself drives how one manages land resources, when it should really be a set of goals that take into account economics, the environment and quality of life. The idea of systems research has also been promoted heavily over the years by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), which is located at the University of Minnesota's agriculture campus in St. Paul. Helene Murray, MISA's Executive Director, and

Carmen Fernholz, a southwest Minnesota farmer long involved with the Institute, have maintained that such an interdisciplinary approach can help sustainable farmers with the sometimes unique research questions they have.

In 1992, Gary Lemme became the WCROC station head. From the beginning, he was impressed with the teams of people that had been brought together in the area by groups such as LSP to discuss sticky issues like water quality and the future of communities. These teams would often involve local government officials, farmers, small business owners, educators, environmentalists and regulators. These people realized early on that a problem like sedimentation in a river basin, for example, couldn't be solved simply by developing a technique for reducing runoff from farm fields. It required a big picture approach that involved agronomic, economic, environmental and even social factors.

"You can solve a soils problem, but unless you take care of these other issues, be it economics or social acceptance, you aren't going to solve the problem of a healthy landscape," says Lemme, who is a soil scientist by training and is now the

Associate Director of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station.

An interdisciplinary research team may not gel on a sprawling campus of a university, where an animal scientist will likely have to walk to a different building just to talk to an economist or soil expert. In some ways the more intimate setting of an experiment station is a natural place to pursue systems research because researchers are likely to be sharing office space or eating lunch together. Indeed, at WCROC Dennis Johnson's office is right across the hall from Neil Hansen, a soil scientist. And just up the stairs is Lee Johnston, the station's swine scientist.

A station is also a place where the researchers interact with the public just by virtue of the fact that they live in the community. That helps keep the station and its scientists accountable.

Johnson is in the midst of developing a team to evaluate whether a reduced input dairy system such as grazing can provide economic, environmental and social benefits that allow moderate-sized farms to be established or retained. The team consists of a dairy scientist, soil scientist, forage agronomist and economist, among others. It is using as a foundation the station's "prototype" farm—a 150-head grazing herd—that's based on what real farms are actually faced with. Perhaps most importantly, 10 grazing operations from across Minnesota have been signed on as partners to provide real world data and input. Including those farms is a significant step for Johnson, considering the "buzz saw" he ran into a decade ago.

The interdisciplinary approach has permeated WCROC's dairy research. Cuomo, the station head, is on the team as a forage scientist. And at a recent WCROC pasture walk, Johnson stood in a hillside paddock and talked to farmers about the basics of maintaining pastures. But he also discussed ways of reducing negative impacts on water quality and the economics of low input dairying.

Lemme says a station like WCROC has the best of both worlds: it can do fundamental science, but because of connections with the community, it can show practical outcomes to that research by answering the "so what" questions.

"Some of the things being done in western Minnesota are the reinvigoration of the land grant system," says Lemme. "You want to be where the puck is going to be, not where it is. [WCROC] is going to where the puck is going to be."

For now, WCROC is pretty much

## Some of WCROC's initiatives

### → Alternative dairying

This initiative is using the systems approach to look at whether reduced input systems like management intensive rotational grazing can provide economic, environmental and social benefits that allow moderate-sized farms to be established and retained.

### → Alternative swine

Swedish deep straw pork production is being examined at the station. Animal behavior and feed trials are a key part of the research, which features four hoop houses and a confinement barn that has been converted into a deep straw, open-air system (see page 17).

### → Pride of the Prairie

WCROC is one of the key partners in this initiative, which works to develop and promote a local food system (see page 5).

### → Water quality

WCROC scientists are working on strategies for keeping the nutrients contained in commercial fertilizers and manure from becoming pollutants.

### → The Horticulture Gardens

WCROC's beautiful gardens attract visitors that normally would never set foot on an experiment station. "Horticulture Night," an annual summer event, regularly attracts more than 1,000 people to the gardens, making it perhaps the best attended single public event in the University of Minnesota's agricultural research system. In addition, the University of Minnesota Children's Garden now occupies one acre of the station's grounds. This garden provides hands-on horticultural and educational activities for children of all ages.

### → Renewable energy

WCROC is working with various partners to become an alternative energy research and training center. The focus would be on how such renewable energy sources as wind can be utilized by rural communities, farmers and businesses.

*For more information on these and other research initiatives, contact WCROC at 320-589-1711 or <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>.*

# Anatomy of an interdisciplinary study

Not long ago, a visitor popped into soil scientist Neil Hansen's office at the West Central Research and Outreach Center and asked about a study related to nitrogen runoff and wintering dairy cattle. It seems the research had been mentioned in passing during a station pasture walk earlier in the day. Did Hansen have a moment to talk about it? The scientist did one better: he jumped up, climbed into his Ford Escort and drove the visitor a few hundred yards up the road. There, he pointed to a fenced-off area about the size of a city block. At one end of it was a pushed up garage-sized mound of manure and straw, shrinking in the sun. The center's milking herd spends its winters in this fenced-in area. Hansen quickly explained the relationship of this study to dairy farming economics, animal husbandry, local water quality and the "Dead Zone" in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I think it has a lot of implications."

Indeed, this study is a poster child for what can happen at an experiment station when "interdisciplinary" or "systems" science is applied. It also shows how farmer input can influence the research agenda, and how that research can produce scientifically valuable results.

The idea for this study came straight from farmers. A few years ago, Hansen and some other WCROC researchers were working with dairy producers who were using management intensive rotational grazing. These graziers developed a list of "research themes" they wanted to see pursued by the experiment station. One of the key themes that emerged was how to winter livestock in an economically and environmentally viable way.

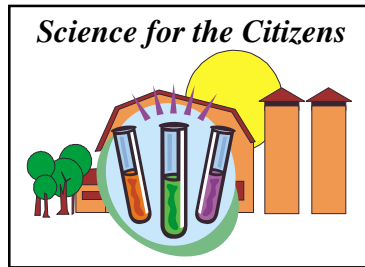
One of the advantages to grazing is that it precludes the need for expensive confinement housing. That's fine during good weather, but what about the winter? The conventional agricultural wisdom is that dairy cows in the Upper Midwest must be housed in closed-up barns during harsh weather, which usually requires utilizing a liquid manure storage and management system. But these graziers weren't buying that line of thinking.

"If you are going to practice low-input dairying during the summer, it doesn't make sense to use high-input, expensive housing during the winter," says Hansen.

So graziers often winter their milking herds outside on manure "packs"—mounded areas that receive regular loads

of straw and other bedding. The cows rest on the packs between milkings. But local and state environmental officials have raised concerns that the packs are a potential source of pollution. Of particular concern is the nitrogen contained in manure, which can contaminate water both locally and hundreds of miles away.

A few years ago, Hansen did some observational studies of two dairies using the packs. He found that the bedding acted as a nutrient sink and little pollution seemed to be leaving the area and making



its way into water. However, he needed scientific backing for his observations. That kind of research needs to be carefully controlled: all nitrogen going into the system must be measured, and all nitrogen coming out accounted for.

"I personally wouldn't have been able to do this level of work on a farm," says Hansen. "To get that amount of detail we learned from the farmers and observed them and then replicated it here."

Three years ago he and graduate student Frantisek Majs set up the station's milking herd on a winter pack and began measuring nitrogen runoff using sophisticated scientific instruments. What they've found is on average less than 1 percent of the nitrogen that entered the pack area left through runoff or tile drainage. That has Hansen excited. Concentrations of nitrogen in the water were high for such a small area. But when the general landscape is considered, a rotational grazing/winter pack-using dairy farm is a much lower water pollution threat compared to its high-input counterpart.

To come to that conclusion, one must look beyond that immediate mound of straw and manure and follow the system all the way back to a dairy's source of feed. An ongoing study at Minnesota's Southern Research and Outreach Center shows that row cropped fields are a major source of nitrogen leaching. If a dairy operation uses complete confinement, then it will utilize feed from those row-cropped fields to produce milk since the

cows will not have access to pastures. But graziers rely on perennial grasses and forages for feed. The southern Minnesota study shows that perennial plant systems have nitrogen leaching rates that are 30 to 50 times lower than row-cropped fields. Pastures are also much less erosive and offer opportunities for wildlife habitat. And straw used for a winter pack comes from small grains, which can serve as environmentally-sound elements in a farm's crop rotation.

More research needs to be done to make sure winter packs don't have localized negative environmental impacts. Using constructed wetlands and wood chips to absorb more nitrogen might help, as well as moving the packs frequently and making sure they are not sited near vulnerable water resources. Hansen would also like to see farmers spread the pack material sooner in the spring to reduce the amount of nitrogen that leaches out.

Normally a scientist like Hansen would research a specific question first, and perhaps some practical solutions with wider implications would trickle out down the road. But systems research turns that model on its head: a study of a practical problem can identify what specific, narrowly-focused research needs to be pursued further. For example, the manure pack study indicates more focused research is needed on one aspect of nitrogen management—the amount lost as a gas (32 percent) into the atmosphere and how much that contributes to environmental problems such as greenhouse warming.

The manure pack study involves soil science, environmental studies, economics, animal husbandry (the cows do very well health-wise overwintering on the pack, says dairy scientist Dennis Johnson) and even a little rural quality of life—if more farmers can stay or enter dairying because of low-cost systems like this, then small towns will benefit. Hansen was trained in a very narrow, reductionist, method of science, but is a convert to systems research.

"It's opened up my eyes to research I wouldn't even think of before," he says.

And the results are of interest to more than his scientific colleagues.

"People come out and want to hear about this study. There's nothing more gratifying than to see your research being applied practically. It's very rewarding for a young scientist." □

skating solo. Systems research is being practiced at Cornell, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of California-Davis, among other institutions, but it has failed to catch on widely within the land grant culture—or even within Minnesota, for that matter. Why? It's challenging to assign a clear cause and effect when undertaking a systems approach. When a scientist controls a few isolated variables, it's much easier to measure inputs and outcomes. And college students all the way to the freshman undergraduate level are taught to specialize and focus on an area of expertise that brings them in contact with

a limited number of colleagues. Finally, systems research doesn't lend itself easily to developing a product that can be patented and sold, which makes it unattractive in this era of public-private partnerships.

It's an uphill fight if WCROC hopes to expand its systems research—or even maintain its present status. Funding shortfalls, personnel changes and pressure from the conventional agriculture community are all imposing roadblocks. Perhaps the biggest barriers of all are deeply held beliefs throughout the land grant system about how and for what purpose science should be carried out.

Wynne Wright is a rural sociologist who came to WCROC in 1999 “super-

excited” about its work in systems research. She left two years later convinced that a true interdisciplinary approach can't be developed as long as an experiment station's primary function is increasing farming's productivity.

“I think [WCROC] has come a long ways, and they're heads and tails ahead of almost everyone else,” she says. “But they have a long ways to go.” □

*The next issue of the Land Stewardship Letter will examine the role citizens have played in WCROC's transition. We will also look at some of the stumbling blocks that may prevent the station's efforts from expanding and serving as a model.*

## Something new out of the old

On a mild summer day WCROC Senior Farm Animal Technician Jeff Young walks to a building and opens the door to the contented grunts of pigs and sows. That's the sound of what happens when citizens have a say in an experiment station's research agenda.

Five years ago, farmers working with groups like the Land Stewardship Project lobbied the Minnesota Legislature to provide funds for alternative swine research. WCROC has done conventional swine research for years, and it was felt there needed to be a balance for farmers who were seeking low cost avenues into systems that can tap into niche markets such as antibiotic-free meat.

As a result, four hoop houses for alternative pork production have been in operation for three years, and until recently a sustainable swine scientist worked at the station (she has returned to her native Australia and the filling of the position is on hold as a tight budget situation gets worked out, says Station Head Greg Cuomo).

Perhaps one of the biggest signals that the station is on the cutting edge of sustainable swine research came from the state legislature earlier this year. Like all the state's experiment stations, WCROC suffered severe budgetary cutbacks. However, the station also received \$70,000 to finish remodeling the 30-year-old conventional gestation building that Jeff Young manages. The building is being converted into a deep-straw Swedish farrowing facility. Such systems, which utilize straw bedding and large open spaces instead of slatted floors above manure pits and confined quarters, are popular

in Europe. They are also attracting interest from North American farmers looking for low-cost, environmentally sound alternatives to expensive, large-scale facilities. When completed, the remodeled facility will have three deep-straw farrowing rooms, providing enough space for 24 sows. Remodeling of one of the rooms has been completed and a group of eight sows farrowed in the facility this spring. As he walks amongst the scampering pigs and lumbering sows, Young explains that so far herd health in the facility has been excellent.

“They did very well. It was better than anyone had ever anticipated.”

Looking at the bright, airy room, it's hard to imagine what was present before the remodeling: one big room that housed four sows per pen before the pigs were born (once they are born, the sows and pigs were moved to a farrowing facility where they would be kept in individual crates). Manure was handled through a liquid-based sys-



**WCROC Senior Farm Animal Technician Jeff Young: “Absolutely a farmer could do this kind of remodeling...” (LSP photo).**

tem—the floors were slatted to allow the waste to pass through into a pit.

The remodeling project is not just a testament to what happens when the public speaks out about research priorities, it also has the potential to strike that balance between providing good scientific research and giving area farmers something practical to chew on. Many a farm throughout the Midwest has old livestock buildings that have fallen into disuse, or are producing animals in a way that's expensive and inefficient. Researchers at the station are hoping farmers will see the swine remodeling project as a practical take-home example.

“Absolutely a farmer could do this kind of remodeling, and I don't think it needs to be as elaborate as this one either,” says Young. “I've got pig buildings at home and I'm sure within a year I'll be farrowing this way myself.”

There are larger impacts looming out there as well. The station has just wrapped up trials on feeding hogs alternatives such as oats, buckwheat and barley. If small grains can be raised for swine feed, then the straw produced by those crops can be used for swine bedding. And those small grains, which are all but impossible to raise profitably for the regular market these days, are effective crops for reducing erosion and naturally breaking up pest cycles. By adding value to these grains through swine, an environmentally friendly cropping system may make a comeback.





## Help tell the story of sustainable food this fall

By Jean Andreasen

My, how the year has flown by. Already it's time to put together the final details for the 2003 Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA) in-store food demonstration program. As we have in years past, this fall MWFA will be supporting our farmers by providing in-store demo support for conventional and cooperative retail locations.

This program has been successful in past years, due in great extent to the wonderful corps of volunteers who have been willing to put their knowledge, enthusiasm, and in some cases, cooking skills to work. I have found it a most

enjoyable experience—sharing and talking to people one-on-one about the benefits of buying local, sustainably produced foods and the meaning behind the MWFA certification seal.

Last year we expanded the products demonstrated: not only did we do apples and cider, but we also did whipped cream on pumpkin pie filling, sautéed winter squash with nutmeg, and “sunshine yellow” butter on baguettes to mention a few. It can be a great opportunity to show your creativity using a spatula and electric fry pan. Demo shifts are from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Fridays or Saturdays.

We have demos scheduled at Kowalski's Markets and Coborn's/Cash

Wise stores. The stores are located in the Twin Cities, across Minnesota, and in North and South Dakota, so there's plenty of opportunities to get involved. If cooking's not your forte but you enjoy talking to people about food and sustainable agriculture, there are lots of chances to help out (see box). We'll provide the training, hats, name tags and aprons. □

*Jean Andreasen is the MWFA Marketing Coordinator.*

### Want to help?

You can find a complete listing of MWFA volunteer opportunities, including locations and times, on the LSP Web site at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mwfa.html#mwfa\\_vol](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html#mwfa_vol). A volunteer calendar is located at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mwfa.html#demos](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html#demos). To get more information and to volunteer, call Jean Andreasen at 651-265-3682 or [jean@foodalliance.org](mailto:jean@foodalliance.org).

## Taste of Tuesday at the State Fair

The Midwest Food Alliance teamed up with the Minnesota Farmers Union on Aug. 26 to sponsor “Taste of Tuesday—Minnesota Cooks” near the Grandstand at the Minnesota State Fair. The event showcased local farmers and featured Twin Cities chefs preparing MWFA-certified products. Celebrity tasters and fairgoers sampled the finished products. This is the first time local, sustainably produced food has been featured at the fair, and organizers hope to make it an annual event.

The Midwest Food Alliance is a joint project of the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services.



*Above: MWFA vegetable producer Gary Pahl talks about his farm while dairy farmer Florence Minar looks on. In the background chef Russell Klein of W.A. Frost and Co. prepares a dish using MWFA-approved ingredients. Left: Fairgoers line up for samples of the finished product. (LSP photos)*

## It's certification time

By Ray Kirsch

I want to remind farmers that there's still plenty of time to be certified yet this year to take advantage of new MWFA partnerships.

Applications for MWFA are available directly by mail or on the Web at: [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org). They take about an hour to complete. Once an application is submitted, an inspector will visit your

farm and spend two hours with you viewing your operation and discussing MWFA's certification criteria. I've helped several farmers get started on the road to certification by personally visiting their farms and discussing MWFA's work. I extend this offer to all farmers who are interested in certification. With all of our new MWFA retail partners (45 at last count; we just added the prestigious Wedge Co-op in Minneapolis to that list), the doors of opportunity have been flung wide open for certified farms. Now's the time to get our foot (and more) inside.

To receive a MWFA application or to learn more about the certification process, contact me at 651-653-0618 or [rkirsch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rkirsch@landstewardshipproject.org). You can also learn more about the Food Alliance at [www.thefoodalliance.org](http://www.thefoodalliance.org) and [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mwfa.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mwfa.html).

*Ray Kirsch is the MWFA Certification Coordinator, and is based in the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office.*

## Pride receives 'Award of Distinction'

The Pride of the Prairie initiative has received an "Award of Distinction" from the University of Minnesota's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships program. The award recognized Pride of the Prairie for "outstanding work with the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships to foster vibrant communities and a healthy environment in greater Minnesota."



Land Stewardship Project staff members Lynn Mader, Terry VanDerPol, Anne Borgendale and Audrey Arner recently accepted the award at the home of University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks (local food, including beef from Arner's home, was served at the ceremony). Also on hand to accept the award was Sandy Olson-Loy, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota-Morris, and a new member of LSP's Board of Directors (see page 6).

Pride of the Prairie is working to increase the variety and amount of locally produced foods in restaurants, grocery stores and institutions in western Minnesota. It is a coalition of local foods enthusiasts, including the West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, the University of Minnesota-Morris, West Central Research and Outreach Center and Prairie Renaissance. This initiative is led by the Land Stewardship Project and farmers in the Upper Minnesota River Valley. For more information, contact LSP's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or [lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org). More information is also available at [www.prideoftheprairie.org](http://www.prideoftheprairie.org) or [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Local meal planner

Interested in planning a meal for the next gathering of your club, group or religious community? The Land Stewardship Project has developed a *Local Foods Dinner Planning Guide*. This guide has been prepared to give you some ideas and suggestions on how to get started. It contains a planning checklist, recipes, information on sourcing local foods, and various other resources. It also contains information on why holding this kind of an event is important and how it can be used to launch a discussion of sustainable, local food systems.

The *Local Foods Dinner Planning Guide* is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) (look under Food & Farm Connection). You can also obtain a copy by calling Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618. □

## Local food guide

The second edition of the Pride of the Prairie's *There's No Taste Like Home: Local Foods Guide for the Upper Minnesota River Valley* is now available.

This year's listing includes 94 farms in the region that produce food for direct marketing to consumers. It

is indexed by farm as well as by product. The booklet also lists retailers—restaurants, grocery stores and caterers—that handle local food. In addition, there is a sustainable food vocabulary guide, a seasonal food guide, a listing of farmers' markets and information on serving local foods at an event.

For a free copy, contact the Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or [lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Pricing out the costs

Want to know the real cost of that supermarket tomato or chicken? Then check out the new set of "Price Tag/Cost Tag" fact cards produced by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Each card talks about the costs of various food items in terms of food miles, genetic diversity, social cost and environmental impact. They then provide tips on what consumers can do to support a more cost-effective food system. Cards are available on tomatoes, chicken, coffee, dairy products, sweet corn, hamburger, strawberries, water, eggs, apples, potatoes, beer and soda pop.

For information on obtaining a set of Price Tag/Cost Tag cards, contact CIAS at 608-262-5200 or [www.wisc.edu/cias](http://www.wisc.edu/cias). □

## Road-weary food

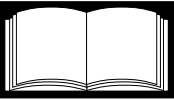
Produce from conventional sources such as large farms in California and Florida traveled on average 1,494 miles to get from the farm to the point of sale, according to a recent Iowa study. When that same produce was locally grown, it was transported on average 56 miles.

Researchers from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University looked at produce sales to institutions participating in a program that promotes buying food from Iowa farmers. The data represented fresh fruits and vegetables from 34 Iowa farms sold in 2001 to 23 conference centers, hotels and other institutions in central Iowa. Using a formula representing both distance and weight of the load transported, the researchers calculated a weighted average source distance, or the "food miles" for each of the 16 produce types in the sales data. That data was compared with 16 produce items arriving at the Chicago and St. Louis terminal produce markets, and current national produce shipment data.

The sum of the food miles to supply the 16 fruits and vegetables from local sources was 715 miles, about the distance from Des Moines to Denver. The sum of the food miles for the conventional produce was 25,301 miles, roughly a trip that would circle the earth pole to pole starting and ending in Des Moines, plus 440 more miles north to Canada.

That's a whole lot of fossil fuels going up in smoke. In fact, an earlier "food miles" study by the Leopold Center (see the July/August 2001 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 8) estimated that growing and transporting 10 percent more of the produce for Iowa consumption in a locally based food system would result in an annual carbon dioxide emissions reduction ranging from 6.7 to 7.9 million pounds.

A copy of the eight-page report, "Checking the food odometer: Comparing food miles for local versus conventional produce sales to Iowa institutions" is available by contacting the Leopold Center at 515-294-3711 or logging onto [www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubinfo/papersspeeches/food\\_travel072103.pdf](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubinfo/papersspeeches/food_travel072103.pdf).



## Farming with the Wild

### Enhancing Biodiversity on Farms and Ranches

By Daniel Imhoff

Designed by Roberto Carra

2003; 182 pages; \$29.95 (softcover)

Co-published by Watershed Media & Sierra Club Books

451 Hudson St., Healdsburg, CA 95448

www.watershedmedia.org

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Let me admit right up front that I am not an objective reviewer of this book. As a colleague of Dan Imhoff on the steering committee of the Wild Farm Alliance, I knew about the book and eagerly awaited its publication.

The book surpassed my expectations. If I have any criticism of *Farming with the Wild*, it would be that there are too many photographs. They are beautiful photographs that do help to present the major theme of the book, but not all are identified and many are too small to effectively illustrate the ideas as intended. Also, most readers who find this book in their hands will leaf through it repeatedly, studying the gorgeous photographs, and might not actually read it.

That would be a shame, because Imhoff is an excellent writer. Even without the photographs, this book is amply illustrated with compelling stories about people on the land in states throughout the U. S. (and one example each from Chile and Mexico) who actually farm as if nature mattered. Ranging from ranchers in Arizona and New Mexico to a dairy in Minnesota, a livestock farm in Virginia to a “small big farmer” growing canning vegetables in Oregon’s Willamette Valley, Imhoff explains how the systems these farmers employ respect ecosystem services on the larger landscape. These farmers are learning how to protect their crops and livestock without damaging watersheds and devastating habitat for wildlife. Many speak of the pleasure that wild flowers and birds bring them, including southeast Minnesotan Art Thicke exclaiming his passion for birds and Dan Guenther, a Land Stewardship Project board member in Osceola, Wis., who counts the nesting species each year on the Community

Supported Agriculture farm he and Margaret Penning operate.

The purpose of this book is to make the case for “farming with the wild.” In Fred Kirschenmann’s lucid foreword, he admits how farmers (himself included) have an “instinctive inclination to tear all the wildness out” in order to produce a good harvest. But he believes we are learning that “farms cannot be productively managed without wildness.”

Imhoff spent several years doing research and interviewing people throughout the country “to assemble a vision of what interconnected fully functional ecosystems and healthy farming communities might look like.” The world is fortunately populated with independent farmers, conservationists and researchers whose approach to agriculture has been influenced by writers like Aldo Leopold and Wendell Berry, as well as their personal experience and attachment to the natural world. And they are the subjects of this book, the “emerging models and wild farm pioneers.”

These include what Imhoff calls “Wild

A program on *Farming with the Wild* will be held in Minneapolis, Minn., on Oct. 8. (see page 9).

Garden Farmers.” He describes the dazzling diversity of domesticated food plants and wild species intermixed in colorful terraced gardens at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center in Sonoma, Cal. (This story needs the photographs!) We learn about food production dependent upon native forests, such as ginseng cultivation in the Kentucky mountains, and maple sugaring, wild rice harvesting and berry cultivation on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota’s north woods.

The role of conservation organizations and government agencies in developing models of farming with the wild is frequently mentioned. Imhoff explains how John and Marsha Anderson of Hedgerow Farms in California have worked extensively with the Audubon Society and the Yolo County Resource Conservation District to establish native grasses, shrubs and trees along fields and on the edges of irrigation ditches, and have gotten other farmers to do the same. The Nature Conservancy of California worked with farmer partners and the U. S. Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Fish and Game, Ducks Unlimited, etc. to acquire land and conservation easements in the Cosumnes River to breach levees and restore the

flood plain. Meanwhile, farmers continued to graze cattle and produce rice.

In many of the stories, it is clear that government cost-share programs and incentive payments were essential in stimulating farmer involvement. USDA programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wildlife Restoration Program (WRP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) have “helped restore tens of millions of acres of wetlands, bottom lands, forests and grasslands nationwide.” Although misused by some opportunists, generally these funds made it possible for farmers to take marginal land out of production, to restore duck-friendly potholes and wetlands, and plant buffers of trees along streams. Yet, there have been no programs for many stewardship farmers who have just done the right thing on productive land: for example, farmers who have taken sloping land out of their corn base (thus forgoing commodity payments) and planted it to grass to begin management intensive rotational grazing of livestock. The pasture grasses and legumes nearly eliminate soil erosion and dramatically reduce nutrient runoff into streams.

The Conservation Security Program—passed in the 2002 Farm Bill, but now running the gauntlet of the Congressional appropriations process as this is written—was intended to reward farmers for such management decisions and provide incentives for other practices that produce environmental benefits. The House agriculture appropriations bill eliminated funds for the Conservation Security Program; the Senate’s didn’t and there may be a chance for compromise (see page 10). However, both the Senate and House reduced funds for conservation programs such as WRP and WHIP.

Conservationists and sustainable agriculture activists are valiantly trying to convince Congress that it is possible and desirable to produce food without destroying the wild resources of this land. This vision must be kept alive, which is why the stories told by the words and photographs in *Farming with the Wild* are so important. □

LSP Associate Director Dana Jackson is the co-editor of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems* (Island Press, 2002).





# Navigating the GEIS: The critical role of EAWs

## An ongoing series on the Animal Agriculture GEIS

One of the most critical tools for making sure a proposed large-scale livestock confinement facility does not cause irreparable harm to a community's environment is the Environmental Assessment Worksheet. That's the conclusion of Minnesota's Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on Animal Agriculture.

The GEIS's "Role of Government" technical work paper concluded that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is overseeing a system that is not transparent enough and does not create constructive dialogue between producers, government agency staff, local citizens and public interest organizations concerning proposed livestock operations. The technical working paper was authored by Decker Planning & Research, Barbara Freese and Paddock Environmental Research & Consulting.

One bright spot the report found in the regulation of large-scale livestock operations was the Environmental Assessment Worksheet process. Such a review, known as an EAW, is designed to provide information regarding the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project to government decision-makers, project proposers and the public. All feedlot proposals of 1,000 animal units or more must undergo an EAW. An existing facility that expands beyond 1,000 animal units is also required to undergo an EAW. Until recently, Minnesota citizens had the right to petition for an EAW when a proposed facility was under the 1,000 animal unit threshold but posed potential environmental problems.

If an EAW finds the "potential for significant environmental effects," then a proposed facility must undergo a more stringent review called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). No Minnesota feedlot has ever undergone an EIS, although in recent years the courts have ruled in two different cases—one dairy and one hog operation—that the MPCA should have ordered such a study.

Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson has complained bitterly that the EAW process is a "trumped up roadblock" to livestock development. Commodity groups such as the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association have worked hard, and successfully, at the legislative level to weaken the system.

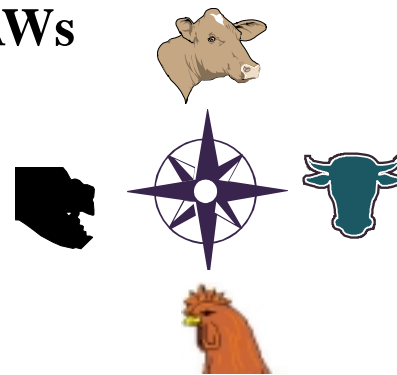
But the technical working paper found

that EAWs can be good for citizens, as well as feedlot proposers. The authors developed case studies of nine Minnesota feedlots that have undergone EAWs and found that such reviews can make available localized information/concerns that the proposer or government officials may have overlooked. As a result, changes to a proposal can be made early in the process, before too much is invested in one system.

"...it appears that an EAW may actually be beneficial for a controversial project," concluded the authors of the GEIS technical working paper. "The EAW provides an orderly method for providing information and receiving comments within a specified time limit. ...the EAW may serve to reduce the number of rumors that may be circulating about a controversial project."

Despite the impression given by Hugoson and other promoters of factory farms, EAWs are by no means common. From 1993 to 1997, the MPCA issued 3,767 permits but prepared only 47 EAWs for feedlot operations. Do EAWs hamper livestock development? No, according to the paper. In the nine case studies, three facilities were not built. Only one—an egg facility—was pulled because of public opposition and the likelihood the EAW would trigger an EIS.

And citizen-initiated reviews of feedlots that are smaller than 1,000 animal units were also relatively rare. A study done for the Land Stewardship Project by graduate student Sara Bertelsen earlier this year found that only



41 citizen petitions for environmental review of feedlots were filed between 1998 and 2002 (see April/May/June *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 9).

The technical working paper recommends strengthening the EAW process by making more information available about proposed facilities to the public (something Commissioner Hugoson opposes).

"There are some public notice requirements for some feedlot permits but the notice is usually limited to immediate neighbors and is a significantly smaller audience than an EAW distribution....The EAW is the only mechanism available to provide pre-permit project information to a wide audience," note the authors.

A major monkey wrench was thrown into that mechanism recently. The paper was published in fall 2002. In the spring of 2003, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law almost completely exempting 97 percent of all livestock operations in the state from being required to do an EAW. In short, the 30-year-old law giving citizens the right to file a petition for even the most basic environmental review has been all but gutted. □

## Navigate the GEIS yourself

To get a copy of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture, you can log onto [www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis). A CD-ROM version of the report is also available for \$5 (that covers shipping and handling). If you have a computer, the CD-ROM is a good investment: all 7,000 pages are cross-referenced, making for easier researching. For information on ordering the CD-ROM, call the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) at 651-296-2888. Some regional **Minnesota libraries** also have the report available. If your local library doesn't have it, call the EQB to find the closest library that carries it.

### To find the study discussed here

- First, go to the "Technical Working Papers" section.
- Click on "Role of Government: Technical Work Paper"
- Go to the "Executive Summary" on page 5.

If you're on the Internet, the direct address for this technical working paper is [www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis/TWP\\_Government.pdf](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis/TWP_Government.pdf).

On CD-ROM, you can find the paper by clicking on the file **TWP\_GO~1.PDF** (it's the sixth TWP file from the end).

## The 2003 Greenbook

The 2003 *Greenbook* is now available. This popular resource highlights the results of research funded by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture On-farm Demonstration Grant Program. Written in easy to understand terms, there are summary articles on alternative markets and specialty crops, fruits and vegetables, cropping systems and soil fertility, and livestock production.

To order a free copy, call 651-296-7673, or e-mail Alison.Fish@state.mn.us. A pdf version of the 168-page report can be downloaded from [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap). □

## Prairies & grazing

*A Landowner's Guide to Prairie Management in Minnesota* is a joint publication of the University of Minnesota, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It is written with the understanding that native prairie can thrive under multiple potential uses. The 40-page booklet shows how livestock grazing, management of wildlife habitat and protection of plant diversity are compatible. Copies are available through the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minn. Call 320-589-1711 for more information. It can also be downloaded from [www.crk.umn.edu/research/pubs/LandownersGuideSved.pdf](http://www.crk.umn.edu/research/pubs/LandownersGuideSved.pdf). □

## Home conservation

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has a Web page ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard)) devoted to backyard conservation. It features tip sheets on ponds, wetlands, composting, mulching, nutrient management, pest management, terracing, tree planting and water conservation. For more information, call 1-888-LANDCARE or send an e-mail request to [backyard@swcs.org](mailto:backyard@swcs.org). □

## Business planner

*Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses* is a new publication from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) and the Sustainable Agriculture Network.

It provides step-by-step strategies for getting involved in such alternative enterprises as organic farming, on-farm processing, direct marketing, agri-tourism, alter-

## Mexico travel seminar Jan. 2004

"People, Plants, and Profits: The Culture and Political Economy of Corn in Mexico" is a travel seminar sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Jan. 2-12, 2004.

During the seminar, participants will gain firsthand knowledge of the issues surrounding the cultivation and economics of corn in Mexico, both past and present. The seminar will explore agricultural and environmental issues and the idea of sustainability in a Latin American context. It will also cover regulation of agricultural biotechnology, NAFTA and the agricultural economy of free trade, as well as the broader cultural, economic and political history of Mexico. The travel seminar will be based in Cuernavaca, about an hour south of Mexico City. Each day will include field trips and opportunities for interaction with people who represent a diverse cross-section of Mexican society.

The trip leader, Karin Matchett, is a science historian who has lived and traveled extensively throughout Mexico and South America. She researches and

writes on the history of agriculture and science with a focus on corn in Mexico. The trip is being done in collaboration with the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. The center provides cross-cultural educational opportunities in order to foster critical analysis of local and global conditions.

The cost of the seminar is \$1,205, which covers all expenses in Mexico. Participants are responsible for their own airfare. The registration deadline is Oct. 15. A \$200 deposit payable to the Center for Global Education is due upon registration.

For an application form or more information, contact: Karin Matchett, Department of History, Yale University, P.O. Box 208324, New Haven, CT 06520-8324; phone: 203-436-2623; e-mail: [karin.matchett@yale.edu](mailto:karin.matchett@yale.edu).

You can also contact the Center for Global Education by logging onto [www.augsburg.edu/global/triplist.html#latinamerica](http://www.augsburg.edu/global/triplist.html#latinamerica), or calling 612-330-1159; 1-800-299-8889. The Center's e-mail address is [gloaled@augsburg.edu](mailto:gloaled@augsburg.edu).



native crops and value-added activities. This 280-page publication follows dairy farmers Dave and Florence Minar through a major transition in their operation. The Minars' experiences and excerpts from their sample worksheets lend a real-life perspective, illustrating how they and five other farm families set goals, researched alternatives, determined potential markets and evaluated financing options. Blank worksheets in the book help users create and organize their own business plan.

Copies of the book are available for \$14, plus \$3.95 to cover shipping and handling. To order, call 800-909-6472 or log onto [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu). The book, including the worksheets, can also be downloaded from the MISA Web site. □

## Local eats

"The Argument for Local Food" is an article that appeared in the May/June 2003 issue of *World Watch* magazine. It describes how a diner in Vermont is seeking to serve only food produced within a 50-mile radius. Back issues of this magazine are available for \$4 each. To order, log onto [www.worldwatch.org/bookstore](http://www.worldwatch.org/bookstore), or call 888-544-2303. □

## Organic cost-share

Minnesota's certified organic farmers and handlers (processors, distributors, retailers, etc.) are now eligible for payments of up to 75 percent of total direct costs for certification, with a maximum of \$500 per farm or company. This Minnesota Department of Agriculture program is being funded by the USDA. To qualify, an organic certificate must have an "issued" or "effective" date between Oct. 1, 2002 and Sept. 30, 2003. The deadline is Nov. 15.

For more information, contact Meg Moynihan at 651-297-8916 or [meg.moynihan@state.mn.us](mailto:meg.moynihan@state.mn.us). Information is also available at [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic) (click on the "2003/2003 Cost Share Information" link). □

## Backyard composting

A guide to backyard composting has been developed by the University of Minnesota Extension Service. The cost is \$19.95, plus shipping and handling. For information on ordering the CD-ROM, including computer requirements, log onto [www.compost.umn.edu](http://www.compost.umn.edu), or contact Tom Halbach at 612-625-3135; [thalbach@soils.umn.edu](mailto:thalbach@soils.umn.edu). □



# Membership Update



## LSP Local Foods Potluck Benefit September 27

By Cathy Eberhart

Celebrate the bounty of our local farms and our collective culinary creativity.

Mark your calendars now for Land Stewardship Project's Local Foods Potluck to be held Saturday, Sept. 27, beginning at 5 p.m. in the Pavilion at Gale Woods Farm just west of the Twin Cities. Tickets are \$5 for adults or \$13 per family. Clip the form on this page and place it in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter to RSVP.

Come early to tour the farm, canoe on Whaletail Lake or enjoy the early fall colors on the hiking trails. At 5 p.m., gather with other Land Stewardship Project members and friends to view farmer displays, listen to music, bid on items in our silent auction and catch up with friends.

Bring a dish to share that includes local food ingredients and take part in the creative feast that will result from our joint contributions.

Located on picturesque Whaletail Lake in Minnetrista, Gale Woods Farm is Three Rivers Park District's newest park (see photos on page 7). The 410-acre park features an educational farm where students and the public can enjoy experiences that enhance their understanding of agriculture, food production and land stewardship.

Visit the LSP Web site ([www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org)) for more information about the event and for directions to the park.

Contact me at 651-653-0618 or [cathye@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathye@landstewardshipproject.org) if you'd like to contribute an item to the silent auction, put up a display for your farm, or volunteer to help. See you there. ☐

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator.

### Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 18 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

A PROUD MEMBER OF

- 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, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail [lsplib@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lsplib@landstewardshipproject.org).

### Yes, I/we would like to attend the Land Stewardship Project Potluck on September 27

The following people will attend:

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Phone number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Will bring (please circle) Main Dish Appetizers Salad/Vegetable Bread Dessert

Enclosed is \$5.00 per adult or \$13.00 per family \_\_\_\_\_

I/we would also like to sponsor the event with a donation of \$25, \$50, or \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

- I have an item(s) to donate for the auction
- Our farm would like to have a display table
- I'd like to volunteer





## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **FALL**—In-store demos of MWFA-approved foods begin; see page 18 for information on volunteering
- **SEPT. 26-28**—**International Holistic Mgt. Rendezvous**, Leo, Texas; Contact: 505-842-5252; [www.holisticmanagement.org](http://www.holisticmanagement.org)
- **Prairie Festival**, Salina, Kan.; Contact: [www.landinstitute.org](http://www.landinstitute.org) or 785-823-5376
- **SEPT. 27**—**LSP Local Foods Potluck Benefit**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn. (see page 23)
- **OCT. 4**—**Barn Fund Raising Concert, Potluck with Sara Thomsen & special guests**, Seven Story Farm, Jordan, Minn.; Contact: 952-492-5314 or [amy@salvatierra.net](mailto:amy@salvatierra.net)
- **Breeding Corn, Living with Wildlife & More**, Madrid, Iowa; Contact: 515-795-3288; [www.practicalfarmers.org](http://www.practicalfarmers.org)
- **OCT. 6-7**—**Farm Ownership: The Changing of the Guard**—a conference on the transferring of farm businesses, Iowa State U., Ames, Iowa; Contact: [www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/Ownership](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/Ownership)
- **OCT. 7**—**Deadline to register for 2003-2003 Farm Beginnings course in southeast and western Minnesota** (see page 8)
- **OCT. 8**—**Program on the book *Farming with the Wild***, Minneapolis, Minn. (see page 9)
- **OCT. 11-12**—**Earth Charter Twin Cities Summit 2003—Emerging Global Civil Society: Hope for the Future**, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 651-647-1631; [www.earthcharter-minnesota.org](http://www.earthcharter-minnesota.org)
- **OCT. 15**—**Deadline for "People, Plants,**

**and Profits: The Culture and Political Economy of Corn in Mexico"** travel seminar (see page 22)

- **OCT. 24**—**15th Annual Rural Life Gathering**, Sinsinawa, Wis.; Contact: 608-748-4411, ext. 805; [cclp@mwci.net](mailto:cclp@mwci.net)
- **OCT. 25-26**—**Draft animal logging workshop**, DreamAcres, Wykoff, Minn.; Contact: 800-498-2700 or 507-352-4255; [www.wmich.edu/tillers](http://www.wmich.edu/tillers)
- **OCT. 26**—**1% Sunday at Bluff Country Market**, Winona, Minn. (see page 6)
- **OCT. 31-NOV. 2**—**Ox driving workshop**, DreamAcresWykoff, Minn.; Contact: 800-498-2700 or 507-352-4255; [www.wmich.edu/tillers](http://www.wmich.edu/tillers)

The Land Stewardship Project will hold a Local Foods Potluck Benefit on Saturday, Sept. 27, beginning at 5 p.m., at Gale Woods Farm just west of the Twin Cities (see page 23 for details).

- **NOV.**—**3rd Annual Moveable Feast** (watch LSP Web site for details), Willmar, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 320-269-2105; [lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org)
- **NOV. 5-7**—**Conference on Re-Imagining Cooperation Among Cooperatives**, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: 202-383-5450; [www.ncba.coop](http://www.ncba.coop)
- **NOV. 6**—**Farm as Natural Habitat book reading**, Lewiston, Minn. (see page 9)
- **NOV. 6-8**—**National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference**, Columbia, Mo.; Contact: 800-633-2535; [www.smallfarmtoday.com/tradeshow/](http://www.smallfarmtoday.com/tradeshow/)
- **NOV. 12**—**Grazing program on winter pasture & lot management**, WCROC, Morris, Minn.; Contact: Dennis Johnson, 320-589-1711 or

- [dairydgj@mrs.umn.edu](mailto:dairydgj@mrs.umn.edu)
- **NOV. 14-16**—**National Biodynamic Conference: Place-Based Agriculture—The Economics, Ecology and Community Ethics Behind Self-Sufficient Farms**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 888-516-7797; [www.biodynamics.com](http://www.biodynamics.com)
- **NOV. 17**—**3rd Annual Iowa Organic Conference**, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; Contact: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag/events.html> or Kathleen Delate at [kdelate@iastate.edu](mailto:kdelate@iastate.edu)
- **NOV. 22-23**—**Fall Meeting of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group**, Kansas City area; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 651-653-0618; [danaj@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:danaj@landstewardshipproject.org)
- **DEC. 7-10**—**National Conference on Grazing Lands**, Nashville, Tenn.; Contact: 703-455-4387; [www.glci.org](http://www.glci.org)
- **JAN. 23-24**—**Minnesota Organic & Grazing Conference**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: Meg Moynihan or Mary Hanks, 651-296-1277
- **JAN. 30-31**—**6th Annual Midwest Value Added Conference: Enhancing Profit on the Farm**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: 715-834-9672; [heather.amundson@wi.usda.gov](mailto:heather.amundson@wi.usda.gov)
- **FEB. 21**—**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Meeting**, Crow River Chapter area (details to be announced); Contact: Mary Jo Forbord, 866-760-8732 or 320-760-8732; [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org)
- **FEB. 26-28**—**2004 Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-3153; [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org)

Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) for the latest on upcoming events.



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