The Land Stewardship Letter
Keeping the Land and People Together
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Eyes on the Perennial Prize

The connection between a dead town, a hang gliding accident, perennial plant cover and one farm's search for economic and environmental stability.

Farmers, conservation agency staff, researchers and wildlife enthusiasts recently took part in a bird walk on John and Donna Bedtke's dairy farm. (*LSP photo***)**

By Brian DeVore

First went the trees. Then the grass. And then, in torrents, the soil. That's the 100-year environmental history of a southeast Minnesota community called Beaver. In 1938 alone, the town was swamped more than two dozen times by waters carrying soils loosened from the surrounding hills. Basements were filled with muck. Bridges were raised thrice in 25 years—about a yard stick's length each time—to keep ahead of the growing piles of sediment. By 1950, barely a century after Beaver's first house was built in the Whitewater River Valley, the flooding, silt and mudslides had won; the community was abandoned, doomed to become an infamous footnote in soil conservation history. Beaver will forever be known as the town that was smothered by erosion.

Never again, say conservationists. Never will abuse of the land be allowed to get so out of hand. Maybe so. No-till farming, land retirement and other conservation techniques have reduced erosion significantly during the past half-century. But 90 percent of U.S. cropland is still losing soil more quickly than it can be replenished, according to one USDA estimate. A major, headline-grabbing environmental catastrophe like the one that destroyed Beaver may never be repeated, but that's not to say the land isn't being diminished in many more less dramatic ways—a "death by a thousand cuts" sort of demise.

Flash forward more than half a century to a hilly farm just a few miles north of the old Beaver town site. On a morning this past June John Bedtke stood on a high spot overlooking his dairy operation and told a handful of visitors to take a look around.

"What do you see?" Bedtke asked the

Perennial, *see page 14…*

Inside

The Land Stewardship Letter

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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 endless segmenting of society

By Andria Williams

In the late 1950s, product manufacture and advertising underwent a dramatic shift in the United States. Instead of marketing products to a unified, undivided market (trying to appeal to all ages, genders, income groups), manufacturers began to divide the market into perceived segments and appeal to each segment individually. Today, this is the rule rather than the exception, and in some ways, it seems merely logical: different people have different interests and it makes sense to try to cater to these interests.

So, why would this be a problem? Market segmentation coexists with a paradigm that I find troubling: a belief in an inherent difference between what are sometimes false or arbitrary population divisions. I believe that this has been a roadblock to efforts that interest us as members of the Land Stewardship Project: the movement for sustainable, local, and environmentally friendly products and food systems.

What market segmentation assumes is that people of certain classes, ethnicities and regions will be interested in or concerned about one thing, while others will not. Overwhelmingly, we see organic produce marketed to white, urban professionals—often alongside products promoting personal indulgence, like home spa and aromatherapy treatments. This in itself is not frightening, but what *does* worry me is the message that these are the only people who are or should be interested in organically grown food—and the implicit assumption that other types of people "deserve" *less* healthy, *less* safe food systems, just as they "deserve" or will tolerate tainted water supplies or landfills or factory farms in their townships and neighborhoods.

An interesting related development has been the federal decision to prohibit people on food stamps from using those stamps to buy organic foods, thereby *institutionalizing* the viewpoint that people of different classes must have different value systems and even that they deserve less than other people. Another example is the push for irradiated meat in school cafeterias. Let the kids whose parents *pack* their lunches eat safe, natural food—if you're eating in the cafeteria you get the nuked beef.

Market to the voting box

Market segmentation has crossed over to become a form of political segmentation, as well. As constituents we are divided into areas of concern and interest. Assumptions about our political beliefs are made every day based on demographics. I experience this firsthand each time I attend a political meeting or event. I introduce myself as "Andria, a grad student from St. Paul"—which would mean that I care about the environment, mostly, and perhaps my recreational access to clean waterways. This isn't *un*true, and it's perfectly logical. I understand the importance of giving politicians your angle—they seem to like things neatly packaged—and as a political strategy, it makes sense. Farmers explain that they care about, say, the pork checkoff or Conservation Security Program because it affects their livelihood. Health care workers are concerned about factory farms and the physical impacts on those forced to live close by. These are straightforward connections that work well on postcards to your Representative, or in a letter to the editor. But occasionally I am troubled by the fact that it would make less sense for a politician to evaluate my demographic—city dweller, renter, student, early 20s—and think, "Oh, she's from the city, she must be concerned about Minnesota farmers." But why not? Why do such connections have to seem so unusual?

A few reasons, admittedly, come to mind. For one, agricultural policy is naturally a less common preoccupation of city dwellers. More young, educated city dwellers, if surveyed, would probably say that they care about the (rather nebulous) "environment"—an airy, atmospheric sort of word, without people in it—rather than express concern for something like the viability of dairy farming as a family business. I understand all this, and yet I have trouble accepting that our population has become so segmented as to be

Market, *see page 3…*

…Market, *from page 2*

blind to more complex interconnections. Has market segmentation won? Can it so completely define us?

The common good

I cannot help but think that this narrowness of vision, and the too-specific ways we now describe ourselves, are linked to the singular way in which we view our food supply and our options within it. By giving various segments of the population only what is assumed they supposedly want, manufacturers and retailers have divided our interests, making it harder for us to be interested in one *another*. What kind of a food system leaves only farmers interested in the good of farmers, migrant workers interested in the good of migrant workers, and consumers in pursuit of nothing more than a good deal?

Market segmentation may be the norm, but it doesn't need to leave us segmented from one another. I do not think it is radical for people to care about how their actions affect others. In fact, it is a normalcy and a decency to which I would like to return. ❒

Andria Williams is an office assistant for LSP's Policy Program (see page 8).

Factory farm subsidies reek of corporate welfare

By Brad Trom

Efficient. Advanced. Inevitable. These are some of the words used to describe the radical changes in livestock production by the proponents of factory farms.

Factory farming's boosters claim the reason these operations are becoming so common is because economies of scale give them an unbeatable advantage.

But factory farms have a dirty little secret: Millions of taxpayer dollars are doled out every year to subsidize these unwanted, potentially dangerous, often corporate-backed operations. Ironically, American taxpayers are told their money is being used to support a public benefit like a clean environment or family farms. In reality, their tax dollars—in a time of budget shortfalls and a $700 billion federal deficit—are being used to prop up an industrial system of agriculture too inefficient to stand on its own legs.

The majority of dollars doled out every year to large-scale livestock operations are used to manage the unbelievable amount of manure these operations produce. For a well-managed family-sized farm, manure is a source of fertilizer; for a factory farm it's a waste product to be gotten rid of.

The storage and disposal of massive quantities of waste inevitably leads to serious problems such as manure spills, fish kills and air pollution.

But factory farms aren't cleaning up their act or being accountable for the problems they have created. Instead, they've become adept at using tax-funded environmental programs to subsidize their incredibly inefficient manure management systems.

This corporate welfare boondoggle didn't come about by accident—factory farm supporters in Congress and in the Bush Administration made it possible.

Consider the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which was originally crafted as a watershed-based conservation program. It was retooled in the 2002 Farm Bill by the U.S. House leadership to subsidize factory farms' manure lagoons.

The House leadership pushed through two major changes to the program. For one, it increased the maximum EQIP grant ninefold to $450,000, far more money than family farmers need to upgrade aging manure systems. And they removed the animal unit cap, which means the very largest factory farms were eligible to receive taxpayer dollars to build new manure lagoons or expand current ones.

In 2003 more than $3.6 million was used to subsidize manure systems in Minnesota alone. And the factory farm gravy train keeps rolling: Factory farms in 2003 siphoned more than $7 million from the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficient Improvement Grants program—with many awarded grants reaching as high as $500,000—to subsidize new and expanding factory farms that use methane digesters to deal with all their liquid manure.

In Dodge County, Minn., a $409,910 grant was recently awarded to a proposed 3,000-cow dairy to subsidize the cost of a methane digester. This was done although 75 percent of local registered voters signed a petition opposing the facility, which has not been built or received a single permit. The facility's promoters have changed its location and they have hired different engineers since the awarding of the grant.

Digesters may be a useful technology, but financing them with public dollars is inappropriate. The investors were able to pull together $12 million to build the facility—couldn't they have found the money to pay for their own digester? Well, why would they when it is easier and obviously cheaper to get taxpayers to pay for it?

Not only are factory farms gobbling up taxpayer dollars, but they also are avoiding paying their fair share. Tax abatements and forfeited taxes of certain capital investments like lagoons have led to reduced government revenues.

On top of that, the value of properties near factory farms often drops substantially, subsequently lowering property tax revenue local governments rely on to provide goods and services.

Our tax dollars are being stressed and stretched as more Americans are going without health care, education budgets are being slashed and the national debt is skyrocketing. The corporations that own or control most of the factory farms in this country—Smithfield Foods, Cargill and Premium Standard Farms to name a few—have enough money to pay their own bills. It's time to stop pumping public dollars into factory farms at the expense of family farmers and the environment. ❒

Land Stewardship Project member Brad Trom farms with his father in Dodge County.

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.

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

Glyphosate's last roundup?

Glyphosate, the silver bullet in crop farming's weed killing arsenal, is beginning to show signs of tarnish.

Farmers and scientists are reporting increasing cases of weeds surviving applications of the herbicide. In particular, glyphosate-resistant marestail and waterhemp are showing up in American farm fields, according to the Feb. 2004 issue of *Successful Farming* magazine. In 1996, waterhemp could be controlled with about half a pound of glyphosate sprayed per acre. Six years later, it took more than double the herbicide to kill the weed, according to Southern Illinois University. In addition, there are reports of common lambsquarter, giant ragweed, prairie cupgrass and wild buckwheat failing to yield to the spray.

The reason? It's the old survival of the fittest game at work. Glyphosate, which has been on the market for 30 years, has long been popular with crop farmers. But it is also the active ingredient in Roundup, Monsanto's Golden Boy weed killer. Use of Roundup has quadruped in the past seven years, thanks to the development of genetically engineered soybeans and corn plants that can withstand applications of glyphosate. Farmers are now able to spray for weeds in their corn and soybean fields without damaging their crops using the Roundup Ready seed and chemical "package." This system has been particularly attractive in farming operations using minimum till or no-till systems to save soil and fuel.

Roundup Ready technology has become so handy, in fact, that in many areas it's one of the only weed control methods being used. That has provided plenty of opportunities for weeds to be exposed to glyphosate repeatedly. Whenever that happens, it's inevitable that a few rebel plants will survive, reproducing generations of resistant superweeds.

Monsanto says resistance is not a major issue, and farmers should just make sure they use enough herbicide to kill every last weed in a field. But farmers are concerned that if glyphosate becomes ineffective on a widespread basis, there will be no new blockbuster herbicides in line to replace it.

Ironically, the Roundup Ready cropping system may be its own worst enemy. As *Successful Farming* points out, the system simplifies weed control to the point where it may be contributing to the increase in crop farm size. But as the farms get bigger, they may not have the flexibility to manage the system properly—instead of mixing things up and using a diversity of weed control methods, the larger farmers just spray more Roundup, for example. Such a generic, uncreative weed control method is the perfect environment for resistance to develop.

For more on genetically modified crops, check out the January/February/March 2000 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html). More information on herbicide resistance issues is available at www.weedresistance.com. ❒

Manure math

Heavy summer rains that left some parts of the Midwest saturated with moisture have environmental officials concerned about the holding capacity of liquid manure lagoons.

In a press release dated Aug. 12, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) warned that many earthen basins in the state are filled to "dangerously high levels." Large earthen basins, also called lagoons, are often used by large-scale livestock operations to store the millions of gallons of liquid waste that can be produced by concentrating thousands of confined hogs or milk cows in one place.

"I've seen several basins where the soils were saturated and the sidewalls could be in danger of collapsing," said Mike Wade, an environmental specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Earthen basins are supposed to be designed to have a certain amount of "freeboard" or open space at the top of the basin. Full basins are more likely to be eroded by wave action, particularly because the freeboard space often does not have a clay liner to help make the soil less vulnerable to soaking up liquid manure. In Iowa, state law requires producers to keep manure levels at least two feet below the top of an earthen basin and one foot below the top of a concrete or steel storage structure. In Minnesota, the required freeboard for manure storage facilities is one foot.

The trouble is, in late summer and early fall many large-scale livestock facilities have few options for lowering the manure levels in their lagoons. Most facilities are designed with the idea that manure will be spread in late fall—after corn and soybean crops are harvested—or early spring before crops are planted. Spreading manure now would probably mean sacrificing a field or two of row crops. To Wade's consternation, some farmers are calculating the costs of a manure spill or fish kill against the lost profit that would come from losing a corn field. But such cost-benefit analyses are excluding some critical factors.

"[Producers] should weigh in the costs to the environment and replacing a basin if it fails," said Wade. ❒

1,160…

…That's the number of acres given over to organic research within the U.S. land grant university system, according to the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF). OFRF rates five states as having the strongest organic research programs: Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, North Carolina and West Virginia.

The total number of organic research acres in the land grant system more than doubled between 2001 and 2003. That's a good trend, but OFRF officials express concern that organic research acres are still a drop in the bucket compared to land devoted to chemical-based farming. Organic research acres amount to only 0.13 percent of the 885,862 available acres within the land grant system. Overall, 0.3 percent of all U.S. farmland is certified organic, according to the USDA. In high-value crops such as vegetables, 2 percent of U.S. acreage is certified organic.

For a copy of the OFRF organic research report, *State of the States II*, visit www.ofrf.org or call 831-426-6606.

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

➔ ***Myth*:** Genetic engineering is the only viable method available for improving food crops.

➔ ***Fact*:** Long before the first gene jockeys shot daffodil DNA into rice, people were using traditional plant breeding to make crops more productive and nutritious, as well as pest and drought resistant. Such traditional breeding methods, which consist of crossing related plant species (sometimes a domestic line with a wild cousin) and waiting for the desired characteristics to emerge in later generations, are not as controversial as genetic engineering. Unfortunately, they also have a reputation for being slow and imprecise. But in recent years, advances in "smart breeding" have shown that some pretty exciting traits can emerge in a plant without the use of genetic engineering. The foundation of this type of breeding is an intimate knowledge of the plants themselves. Credit for that knowledge partially goes to biotechnology—one offshoot of this discipline is the extensive mapping of plant genomes and the development of supercomputers that can handle all that information. Smart breeders have been studying that information to determine what dormant characteristics a plant may already contain.

"Rather than inserting, say, a bacteria gene to ward off pests, it's often possible to turn on a plant's innate ability," writes Richard Manning in the May 2004 issue of *Wired* magazine. Smart breeders are searching gene banks and finding vitamins, antioxidants and other dormant characteristics that could possibly be "turned on."

Because no new traits are being added to the plants, these improved lines cannot be patented—a major relief for farmers and public pant breeders who are finding an increasing share of our germplasm is being locked up by life science companies like Monsanto. According to Manning, smart breeding is also a lot quicker and cheaper. For smart breeding to work, knowing a plant's gene map is not enough—scientists also need to have access to all the various lines of wheat, corn, tomatoes, etc., that are out there. One never knows when a plant variety that seemed useless, say, in 1904, may suddenly become invaluable as a source of a certain dormant characteristic. That means the saving of seeds and their proper storage is critical.

➔ ***More information*:** To read Richard Manning's "Super Organics" article in Wired, visit www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.05/food.html?tw=wn_tophead_4. For a free pdf copy of the special Land Stewardship Project report, "Public Seeds—Public Goods," log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/04/newsr_040228.html.

Who's the real gambler?

"Therefore, using the data from this study and the resulting profitability and risk analysis, the perception that conventional agriculture is more profitable, and/or involves less risk than a 4-year organic strategy, is not true for this part of southern Minnesota."

—The conclusion of "Profitability of organic cropping systems in southwestern Minnesota," a study recently published in the journal *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*. For details, visit www.misa.umn.edu/Other/profitabilityorganiccropping.html or www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/Publications.htm?seq_no_115=129996. More information is also available by contacting one of the researchers involved with the study, Kent Olson, at 612-625-7723.

A mingling of muddy waters

University of Minnesota soil scientist Gyles Randall has been sounding alarm bells recently about the erosiveness of our current corn and soybean cropping system. To illustrate his point, Randall often flashes this photo of the Root River draining into the Mississippi in southeast Minnesota. The Root, which is shown here flowing from the left bottom corner of the photo into the much larger Mississippi, is recognized nationally as a premier trout stream. But in this photo it is so laden with eroded soil that it appears chocolate brown against the relatively blue waters of the Mississippi (which is no pristine stream itself). Intensively farmed corn and soybean fields dominate parts of the Root's watershed. To view a color version of this and other photos that more dramatically tell the story, as well as a commentary Randall wrote on the unsustainability of the corn-soybean cropping system, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/newsr_010927.html. See this issue's cover story for more on cropping and erosion. (*photo by Jeff Janvrin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources***)**

LSP News

2004-2005 Farm Beginnings classes begin Oct. 23

Classes held in central location; application deadline Oct. 5

The application deadline for the 2004-2005 edition of the Farm Beginnings program is Tuesday, Oct. 5. Classes will begin Oct. 23 and will run twice a month until the middle of March. After March, course participants will have the opportunity to attend a series of on-farm educational field days. The course fee is $400, which covers 34 hours of class time, on-farm education including farm tours, and one-on-one mentoring.

As in the past, Farm Beginnings will continue to emphasize goal setting and business planning in its classes. But a couple of new twists are being added to the program. First, instead of holding classes in two locations—in the past they've been held in southeast and southwest Minnesota—Farm Beginnings will convene at one central location in New Prague, just south of the Twin Cities.

Class presenters will be established farmers—that's nothing new. But, thanks to the fact that Farm Beginnings is now entering its eighth year and has more than 185 graduates to its credit—60 percent of whom are farming—many of those presenters will be alumni of the program. This aspect will make the program, already known for its practical nature, even more steeped in the real world of getting started in farming.

For information on enrolling in Farm Beginnings or serving as a mentor, contact Amy Bacigalupo in LSP's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. In southeast Minnesota, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

Details on Farm Beginnings are at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html. A new pdf format fact sheet on Farm Beginnings is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/fb_factsheet16.pdf. For a free paper copy, contact Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. ❒

Farm Beginnings 2004-2005 class dates & times

- Saturday, Oct. 23—10 a.m to 4 p.m.
- Saturday, Nov. 6—10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 18—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 2—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 16—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Jan. 6—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Jan. 20—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 3—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 17—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, March 3—(snow date) 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 16—6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Kate Stout showed some of the equipment she uses to produce vegetables on her Community Supported Agriculture operation during a Farm Beginnings field day in July. Besides vegetables, Stout's North Creek Community Farm also has a diversity of livestock, including horses, poultry, hogs and sheep. During the field day, she shared some insights she's gained from participating in a study of the economics and efficiencies of different scales of farms. She also talked about strategies for being a successful beginning vegetable farmer. On-farm field days are a key part of the Farm Beginnings course. (*photo by Karen Stettler***)**

Food, family & farming celebrated in s.e. Minn.

Some 100 people gathered at Hidden Stream Farm on June 26 for the annual meeting/ celebration of the southeast Minnesota office of the Land Stewardship Project.

During the event, Hidden Stream's owners, Eric and Lisa Klein, showed how they produce poultry, pork and beef using rotational grazing and deep straw systems. The Kleins direct market the meat through farmers' markets and via the Internet.

During one of the keynotes, Jim Riddle discussed the results of a recent survey he did on what kind of research is needed to support organic livestock production (see April/May/June 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 5). Riddle did the research while serving as the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota. He said his experience as the Endowed Chair provided invaluable insights into what kind of research is needed within the land grant system to support sustainable livestock systems.

Lisa Klein, along with her sons Andy and Ben, showed how they use portable chicken pens to move the birds to fresh pasture on their farm. The Kleins hosted the Land Stewardship Project's southeast Minnesota celebration June 26. (*LSP photo***)**

But the veteran organic inspector and farmer says he is also now less cynical about the role the University of Minnesota could play in promoting and supporting sustainable farming. Riddle recalled how a few years ago he organized a protest of an Extension Service meeting because the meal being served was paid for by agribusiness firms. At that time, Riddle said he felt the University of Minnesota was too much in bed with chemical and life sciences companies to ever be of help to farmers seeking alternatives. But today he realizes there is some valuable research being done by individuals within the university that could benefit sustainable farming systems.

"My relationship with the university has changed," said Riddle, adding the caveat that still too often good research remains hidden from farmers and other members of the public.

Steve Morse, who also recently served as an Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems, spoke about the "Green Lands, Blue Waters" initiative, which is a comprehensive effort to support development and adoption of new agricultural systems in the Mississippi River basin. The initiative is promoting farming systems that cover the land with more perennial plants such as grass, legumes, shrubs and trees. The initiative is also promoting the establishment of more small grains and other cover crops within row crop systems (see April/May/June 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 8).

Getting vegetative cover on the land year-round is critical if there is any hope of reducing the kind of runoff that contaminates water both in the Upper Midwest and downstream as far as away as the Gulf of Mexico, said Morse, who is a former Minnesota state Senator and deputy commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. Grass-based systems such as what the Kleins use on their farm are one way to return perenniality to the landscape, he said. ❒

A potluck meal was served along with pork produced at Hidden Stream Farm. (*LSP photo***)**

New LSPers

Ella Barber is working as an office assistant in the Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office. Barber worked for 40 years as a county home health aid. She and her late husband Virgil also farmed. Barber is working for LSP under the "Experience Works" program, which gives elderly people a chance to supplement their income.

Ella Barber

Alex Jarvis is helping develop and design a database for LSP's western Minnesota office. Jarvis is studying computer science and statistics at the University of Minnesota-Morris, and has extensive experience with database design and management. Through his work with LSP, Jarvis is helping develop a searchable database and on-line survey for the Farm Beginnings program. His position is made possible by the UMM's Learn to Serve program, the Center for Small Towns at UMM and the Southwest Minnesota Foundation.

Alex Jarvis

Shelly Slocum is serving an internship with LSP's Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project. Slocum recently graduated from Berea College in Kentucky with a double major of sustainability/environmental studies and studio art. She has worked for the college's Sustainability and Environmental Studies program, and has served an internship in ecological design. During her LSP internship, Slocum is helping design resource materials for the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project.

Shelly Slocum

Andria Williams is working as an office assistant for LSP's Policy Program. Williams recently received a master's of fine arts in creative writing from the University of Minnesota and has long volunteered for LSP. While living in Maine, she helped in an effort to unionize employees of DeCoster Farms, a large egg and pork production company with a poor record in terms of workers' rights and the environment. ❒

Andria Williams

Thanks MNFAIR, St. Martin's Table

The Land Stewardship Project would like to thank MNFAIR and St. Martin's Table for their recent generosity.

MNFAIR

MNFAIR, which stands for Minnesota Future Agricultural Interests Recognized, was founded in 1980 by a group of rural western Minnesota citizens. Until it disbanded earlier this year, the organization worked to protect the environment in the Upper Minnesota River Valley, fighting successfully to prevent the storage of nuclear waste and the burning of PCBs in the region, among other things. At its final meeting in June, MNFAIR's members chose to disperse the group's remaining funds to organizations like LSP.

St. Martin's Table

For several years, St. Martin's Table in Minneapolis has been the epicenter of activities related to promoting non-violence, economic/social justice and hunger prevention (meetings that launched the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Twin Cities region were held at St. Martin's, for example). During the month of August, volunteer servers at the restaurant donated their tips to LSP. The restaurant/book store is located at 2001 Riverside Avenue in Minneapolis (near the west bank campus of the University of Minnesota). The phone number is 612-339-3920. ❒

During a Farm Beginnings field day on July 20, David Schmidt (*right*) described the pastured poultry system he uses on his farm near Menomonie, Wis. Besides chickens and eggs, Schmidt, along with his wife Karen Bumann, produces turkeys, cheese, milk and beef on grass. They direct market through the St. Paul Farmers' Market, and also sell their products under the Organic Valley label. For more on Farm Beginnings, see page 6. (*LSP photo*)

Update Twin Cities

Local food, self-sufficiency & sustainability

By Marjorie Ross

Sustainability is a word that I first had to define in my senior thesis for my bachelor's degree. It was a good exercise then, and as I change and refine the definition it continues to be a great way to forge my thoughts and experiences. After my recent Land Stewardship Project internship, in which I served as coordinator for the 2004 Community Food and Farm Festival, I have plenty of new pieces to add to my concept of sustainability.

In addition to the main responsibilities of coordinating the Festival, I was able to participate in several interesting projects. Within my first two weeks on the job I assisted Brian DeVore with the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) roundtable discussion (see January/February/March *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 17). This was a great opportunity to hear farmers' thoughts on sustainability and to examine the CSA model and its long-term prospects for sustainability. I also had a second opportunity to talk directly with farmers about sustainability through a survey of CSA farmers I conducted. The survey was designed to look at the relationship between CSA farms and LSP, and work to develop projects that support that relationship.

Finally, meeting the 20 farmers who participated in the festival this year, I was able to see firsthand the steps they are taking toward sustainability. Every booth, display and brochure highlighted the uniqueness of the farm and its farmers. And if you paid attention you could see careful consideration of sustainability in each piece. From packaging to drop sites to share pricing—these farms clearly represent the farmers' ideas and goals for sustainability.

Several months after the Food and Farm Festival, I was invited to speak at an on-farm outreach session sponsored by Webster Farm Organics. At each weekly session members of the local community (Foreston, Minn.) are invited to enjoy home-cooked recipes prepared from freshly harvested organic foods. After the food sampling, guests can stay for a discussion held in the cozy loft of the barn or out in the yard, overlooking one of the vegetable gardens. The idea is to make organic food and farming understandable and comfortable; to give people a chance to *see* organic crop fields, *taste* organic produce and finally, *learn* about the ideas and practices behind the farm.

From all of these experiences over the past six months, one of the most important ideas I'll add to my version of sustainability is that of connections between people and groups. A key element to long-term sustainability is diversity—this is true in nature, in agriculture and in business. While each of the projects I worked on highlighted individual elements of sustainability, it is through the combination of our efforts that we truly have a diversity of action to support sustainability. These efforts are inherently connected and dependent upon each other, and the overall sustainability of the movement is dependent upon this cooperation.

To focus on local foods as an example, local farmers produce foods in sustainable ways. Through the direct marketing/CSA model, an educated local market begins to develop. Meanwhile, LSP and other organizations continue those educational efforts through events like the Food and Farm Festival while working to develop new local markets with restaurants and groceries. LSP members contribute financial and volunteer services to help LSP work for sustainability in local and national political arenas. CSA shareholders explain the CSA concept to one, or many friends. On-farm gatherings and public drop-sites strengthen the connections between farmers and consumers who care about sustainability.

Through these links among people, the concept of sustainability gains strength and momentum. Most of all, it gains permanence. The diversity of goals and ideals lends a resilience that fosters change and growth; and the ideals of each component contribute to the overall stability of the sustainable community. By building these relationships and seeking new partners for sustainability we create a movement that is itself sustainable. ❒

Marjorie Ross is pursuing a master's of science degree in applied plant sciences at the University of Minnesota. She recently served an internship in LSP's Twin Cities office.

Nett Hart of Webster Farm Organics talked to consumers about Community Supported Agriculture during the 2004 Community Food and Farm Festival. (*photo by Marjorie Ross* **)**

Farmers & rural residents criticize Minnesota Governor's Livestock Task Force

Governor Tim Pawlenty's recently released Livestock Advisory Task Force report undermines independent family farmers and township and county rights, according to a collection of family farm, rural and citizen groups. The organizations met recently to evaluate the report as part of the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farming and Rural Communities. The strongest criticism was aimed at the report's recommendation of weakening the right of township and county governments to determine where large feedlots are located in their communities.

"At Governor Pawlenty's news conference on this issue, I was pleased to hear him say that he does not want to trample on local control and is concerned about concentration and consolidation in the food industry," says Doug Peterson, President of Minnesota Farmers Union. "But in fact his task force report contradicts his words and recommends weakening local control and local democracy."

The group was also critical of the closed-door process used to create the report, which excluded input from family farmers and was dominated by corporate ag interests. The Governor's Task Force included representatives from Hormel Foods and Jennie-O Turkey Store, AgStar Financial Services, Land O'Lakes and the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council.

"Farmers and consumers that I talk with want more livestock on the land, but they also insist that we use livestock systems that benefit farm families, local communities, human and animal health and the environment. Rotational grazing is just one of these multi-benefit systems that was excluded from the report," says Mary Jo Forbord, executive director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. "Farmer and consumer viewpoints are essential when so much is at stake for all of us, so we intend to create the opportunity for more voices to be heard."

The Governor's report contains a recommendation that suggests Minnesota's corporate farm law needs to be relaxed. It also ignores the issue of low, volatile prices for farmers.

"Minnesota has been a champion of keeping livestock and dairy production in the hands of independent family farmers," says Bob Arndt, President of the Minnesota National Farmers Organization. "That means keeping our corporate farm law strong, not weakening it. It also means encouraging independent farmers to participate in the process of group negotiating to increase net farm income. The report ignores that issue."

The Citizen Task Force analyzed the report against a list of guiding principles (see page 11) that it is using to develop a set of its own recommendations.

"What was most disappointing about this report is that there is almost nothing in it that will encourage the growth of independent, family livestock farmers. In fact, the recommendations in this report are about replacing independent family farms with corporate-backed factory farms," says Paul Sobocinski, a Land Stewardship Project organizer who farms in southwest Minnesota. "This report is a slap in the face to Minnesota's independent livestock producers who are the backbone of our livestock industry."

The four founding organizations of the Citizen Task Force are the Minnesota

Task Force, *see page 11…*

This summer the Land Stewardship Project helped Minnesotans express their concerns about the effects Gov. Pawlenty's Livestock Task Force could have on local democracy. By early August, citizens were signing pro-local control postcards addressed to the Governor at a rate of 300 per week. For more on how to express your views on the Governor's Livestock Task Force, call LSP's Policy office at 612-722-6377. (*LSP photo***)**

…Task Force, *from page 10*

Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization, the Land Stewardship Project and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Other organizations that are part of the Citizen Task Force are the Minnesota Dairy Producers Board, League of Women Voters, Minnesota Catholic Conference, COACT and Milk Power.

The Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farming and Rural Communities will make recommendations to policy makers and community leaders on how to increase the number and profitability of Minnesota livestock farmers in ways that benefit rural communities.

The task force's solutions will be based on:

Residents of southeast Minnesota's Ripley Township showed their opposition to a Minnesota Agri-Growth Council tour of their community on Aug. 11. Farmers and other rural residents of the township have been fighting the construction of a 3,000-cow dairy that's being proposed by a New Jersey trust. (*photo by Adam Warthesen***)**

➔ Economic models that are sustainable and benefit rural main streets.
➔ Private enterprise as opposed to corporate investment.
➔ Benefiting existing livestock farmers and encouraging beginning farmers.
➔ A commitment to promoting a family farm based system of agriculture.
➔ A commitment to stewardship of the land.
➔ Increasing farmers' access to capital.
➔ Consumer demand for high quality, safe food.
➔ Promoting competition and fair markets.
➔ Increasing profit to producers.
➔ Respecting local forms of government to make decisions about development. ❒

Governor Pawlenty's Livestock Advisory Task Force report can be viewed at www.governor.state.mn.us/Tpaw_View_Article.asp?artid=1030.

Sign of the times

Members of the Campaign for Family Farms recently showed off a new lawn sign outside the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program office. LSP is a founding member of the Campaign.

Pictured are (*left***) LSP Policy Program Director Mark Schultz; Rhonda Perry, Missouri Rural Crisis Center; Mike McMahon, LSP; Hugh Espey, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement; Mark Beorkrem, Illinois Stewardship Alliance; Adam Warthesen, LSP; and Lisa Whelan, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement. (***LSP photo***)**

Creating an informed CSP constituency

Finally, two years after it was made into law, one of the most innovative farm conservation programs ever passed by Congress has gotten off the ground. The first farmer sign-up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) ended July 30.

If implemented properly, CSP would reward farmers for using environmentally friendly production systems such as management intensive rotational grazing and resource conserving crop rotations. This is in contrast to government commodity programs, which pay farmers to plant commodity crops such as corn, soybeans, cotton, wheat and rice.

In the Upper Midwest, farmers in three watersheds were eligible for CSP implementation this summer: the Blue Earth in south-central Minnesota and north-central Iowa, the East Nishnabotna in southwestern Iowa and the lower Chippewa in northwestern Wisconsin. Nationwide only 18 watersheds were selected. To put it in perspective, there are over 2,000 watersheds in the entire country.

The CSP was passed by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill as a comprehensive, nationwide program on a par with federal farm commodity programs. But the USDA has limited the program to a few watersheds each year. Rather than the continuous sign-up envisioned by the original law, the Bush Administration's plan would give farmers the chance to enroll in the program at best once every eight years. The right of the farmer to renew CSP contracts and stay in the environmental program over the long-term, which is guaranteed in the 2002 law, is effectively voided by the Administration's rule.

Despite the serious flaws, CSP still holds potential to promote and support conservation measures on farmland, says Mark Schultz, Policy Program Director for the Land Stewardship Project. LSP staff members have been working this summer to get the word out about CSP to farmers in the selected watersheds. Through mailings, phone calls and meetings, LSP has been informing farmers of the program sign-up process and urging them to push for good uses of the initiative.

"By becoming an informed CSP constituency, farmers can still make it the kind of program the law intended," says Schultz.

To help further that goal, LSP has developed three farm payment scenarios, which are included below and on the next page. These estimates provide a general idea of what kind of payments producers might expect when they enroll in CSP.

LSP has also developed a new fact sheet: "CSP: Interim Final Rule Released—Next Steps." This is the sixth CSP fact sheet developed by LSP. To download pdf versions of these fact sheets, visit www.landstewardship project.org/programs_csp.html. You can also get free copies by calling LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377. ❐

CSP payment estimates for 3 types of Midwestern farms

Three estimates of CSP payments for hypothetical farms are on this and the following page; refer to LSP Fact Sheet Number 6, "CSP Interim Final Rule Released—Next Steps," for more on eligibility, payment components, tier descriptions and the new regulatory cap on payments imposed by USDA. These estimates are not official, but are simply being used to illustrate the components of CSP payments.

Note: The first two components of the CSP payment (the "stewardship" and "existing practice" payments) can be figured out based on the total acres in the program and the tier at which the farm is enrolled. New practice payments and enhanced payments can be added to the stewardship payment and existing practice payments to increase the amount of total CSP payment.

Estimate 1: A 240-acre, 100-cow dairy/crop farm (or a 240-acre, 80-sow crop/hog farm)

Tier II enrollment (the entire farm is enrolled in CSP)

240 acres
$100/acre regional average rental rate (this is based on the average rental rate in Blue Earth County, Minn.)
0.4 Soil Conditioning Index score

Four payment components:

1. Stewardship payment = $100 x .10 (Tier II factor) x .5 (reduction factor for Tier II) = $5.00 per acre x 240 acres = $1,200
2. Existing practice payment = $1,200 x .25 = $300
3. New practice payment (cost share) = $0
4. Enhancement payment = (soil enhancement) 4 x $1.16 =$4.64 per acre x 240 acres = $1,113.60, plus (energy enhancement) an energy audit = $500, plus (nutrient management enhancement) for injection/incorporation of manure $4 per acre x 200 = $800, plus (grazing management enhancement) for rotating feeding, loafing and sacrifice areas $5 per acre x 40 = $200; $1,113.60 + $500 + $800 + $200 = $2,613.60

Total payment before contract limitation = $1,200 + $300 + $2,613.60 = $4,113.60
Contract limitation (regulatory CSP Cap for contract) = 240 acres x $100 = $24,000 x .25 = $6,000
Application of contract limitation = $4,113.60 < $6,000
Total CSP payment = $4,113.60 per year of contract (contract limited total) + $0 (one-time new practice payment)

Scenarios, *see page 13…*

…Scenarios, *from page 12*

Estimate 2: A market gardener or vegetable farmer with 40 acres near a stream

Tier III enrollment (the entire farm is enrolled in CSP)
40 acres
$100/acre regional average rental rate (this is based on the average rental rate in Blue Earth County, Minn.)
0.2 Soil Conditioning Index score

Four payment components:
1. Stewardship payment = $100 x .15 (tier factor) x .75 (reduction factor) = $11.25 x 40 acres = $450
2. Existing practice payment = $450 x .25 = $112.50
3. New practice payment = $1,000 approved improvement at 50 percent cost share = $500
4. Enhancement payment = (soil enhancement) 2 x $1.16 = $2.32 per acre x 40 acres = $92.80, plus (nutrient management enhancement) 4 acres x $99 per acre for established buffers = $396 and 20 acres x $16.00 per acre for cover crops = $320, plus (habitat enhancement), 5 acres of perennial grasses x $50 per acre = $250 and four nest structures x $40 = $160; $92.80 + $396 + $320 +$250 + $160 = $1,218.80

Total payment before contract limitation = $450 + $112.50 + $1,218.80 = $1,781.30
Contract limitation = (regulatory CSP Cap for this tier) 40 acres x $100 = $4,000 x .40 = $1,600
Application of contract limitation = $1,781.30 > $1,600
Total CSP payment = $1,600 per year of contract (contract limit total) + $500 (one-time new practice payment)

Estimate 3: A crop farmer who enrolls one part of the farm

Tier I enrollment (one part of the farm)
80 acres
$100/acre regional average rental rate (this is based on the average rental rate in Blue Earth County, Minn.)
0.1 Soil Conditioning Index score

Four payment components:
1. Stewardship payment = $100 x .05 (tier factor) x .25 (reduction factor) = $1.25 x 80 acres = $100
2. Existing practice payment = $100 x .25 = $25
3. New practice payment = $4,400 approved improvement at 50 percent cost share = $2,200
4. Enhancement payment = (soil enhancement) 1 x $1.16 = $1.16 per acre x 80 acres = $92.80, plus (nutrient management enhancement) 80 acres x $15 per acre for timely nitrogen application = $1,200 (energy enhancement) $.90 per acre x 80 acres = $72 for application of fertilizer below agronomic rates, plus (habitat management) $5 per acre x 80 acres = $400 for no-till methods; $92.80 + $1,200 + $72 + $400 = $1,764.80

Total payment before contract limitation = $100 + $25 + $1,764.80 = $1,889.80
Contract limitation = (regulatory CSP Cap for this tier) 50 acres x $100 = $5,000 x .15 = $750
Application of contract limitation = $1,889.80 > $750
Total CSP payment = $750 per year of contract (contract limit total) + $2,200 (one-time new practice payment)

• • •

"With any luck, the good idea behind CSP will survive. …if we are going to pay farmers, paying them to make the air and water we all share cleaner seems smart."
— The *Wall Street Journal*'s David Wessel,
writing in that newspaper's
July 22 "Capital" column

• • •

We want to hear from you on CSP

Have you signed up for the Conservation Security Program? Was the process simple or complicated? Were you able to customize it to fit your needs and situation? We would love to hear about your experiences with the program so far. Contact LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.

…Perennial, *from page 1*

group of farmers, conservation agency staffers and others who had come to his farm for a field day put on by the Land Stewardship Project and researcher Melissa Driscoll.

What the visitors saw was an attempt to make sure history is not repeated in the Whitewater watershed. There was grass—lots of it. An aerial photo taken a dozen years ago shows the farm's rolling hills dominated by corn. But for more than a decade, grass has been the foundation of the operation. And as John and his wife Donna make clear, using a cow's ability to harvest its own feed has been good for everything from the family's bottom line to songbirds.

"It's making the soil better. It's making the land better. It's making family better. And it makes more money," Bedtke said as a herd of Holsteins made their way through a nearby grazing paddock.

Those are important connections to make if agriculture is to take a giant step toward sustainability. Some conservationists say the key to long-term ecological health in farming areas is returning "perenniality"—having living plants present on the land throughout the year rather than for just a few months in the summer—to the landscape. That's a radical departure from the agronomic system that dominates many landscapes: row crops such as corn and soybeans are planted in the spring and harvested in the fall, leaving the land exposed to the elements the rest of the year.

For perenniality to get a solid foothold on farms, connections must be made between the environment, economics and quality of life. The Bedtke farm is an example of an operation that's making those connections. It is particularly interesting given the farm's location near an area where perenniality was removed so completely from the landscape that erosion took on Biblical proportions. The reaction in that case has been to remove land from private ownership and return it to a natural state at taxpayers' expense. That may be good for the environment. But what role can working farms like the Bedtke operation play in conservation efforts that are based on perenniality?

Part-time residents

"With row crops, we only have functional agricultural systems on the landscape two to three months out of the year," says Steve Morse, who is working with the "Green Lands, Blue Waters" initiative to encourage farming based on perennial plant systems in the Mississippi River basin.

It's an uphill battle. University of Minnesota soil scientist Gyles Randall has put together an analysis of how cropping patterns have shifted in a nine-county region in southeast Minnesota, including the county the Bedtkes farm in. What he found was that between 1975 and 2001, corn and soybeans went from 64 percent of all farmed land, to 82 percent. Those increased acres of row crops have come at the expense of perennial landscapes such as pastureland, wetlands and forests. Even hay ground, another perennial plant system, has been going by the wayside. Randall found that hay plantings dropped from 22 percent to 15 percent of all acres in that nine-county region during the same period. It's the same—in some cases worse—throughout farm country. Such trends greatly trouble soil experts such as Randall (see related photo on page 5).

But soil conservationists are also excited about the potential perenniality holds for keeping soil in place and reducing runoff. In a study using computer modeling in the Wells Creek watershed, which is within a half-hour's drive of the Bedtke farm, soil runoff into waterways was reduced 84 percent under a scenario where land was rotationally grazed, diverse cropping rotations were implemented to build soil quality and prairies and wetlands were restored. Having row crops on the landscape instead increased runoff and decreased water quality significantly, according to the modeling analysis, which was part of the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative (see sidebar on page 15). And when soil makes it into a stream, it often brings contaminants such as phosphorus with it.

Melissa Driscoll (*right*) talks to farmer John Bedtke about the interaction of grazing and bird habitat during one of her research trips on the Bedtke farm. (*photo submitted by Melissa Driscoll*)

Out to pasture

Farming systems that protect the soil and reduce runoff are not just theoretical elements of a computer model. Consider the Bedtke operation. For the first 16 years after he graduated from high school in 1973, John Bedtke produced milk conventionally—housing the cows in a barn and hauling feed to them. But in the 1980s, the Bedtkes started noticing the confined cows were having a lot of health problems. They were also frustrated that pushing milk production by intense feeding of row crop-based feeds was expensive and not always financially viable—or good for their quality of life.

"We were spending our summers making winter feed," says Donna Bedtke.

So in 1989 the Bedtkes tried a system called management intensive rotational grazing. This system consists of breaking up a pasture into smaller paddocks using portable fencing. Cows are moved to a new paddock on a regular basis—sometimes daily. This makes good use of the nutritional value of the grass, prevents overgrazing, and spreads manure in a manner that's good for the soil.

Today, the family still raises hay and some corn, but their land is mostly planted to grass. John Bedtke says grass farming has allowed them to lower their feed, veterinary and fuel costs considerably. They also got rid of a lot of the expensive equipment needed to produce row crops. As a result, profits are up, even though milk production is lower than under the conventional system. Grazing has made it possible for the operation to be certified organic, and for two years the Bedtkes have received a premium price for their milk. But even without the organic premium, the low cost of grass farming makes dairying financially viable for the family. How viable? One of the Bedtkes' five children, Adam, a graduate of LSP's Farm Begin-

Perennial, *see page 15…*

…Perennial, *from page 14*

nings program, recently rejoined the operation, and they are expanding the milking herd from 78 to 100 cows.

That's not to say transitioning into grazing was trouble-free.

"If you're looking for the perfect farm, you're not going to find it here," says John. "I've made mistakes."

For example, some cows accustomed to confinement had a hard time adapting to the grazing system and had to be culled. One misconception is that converting to grass farming simply means turning the cows out to pasture and forgetting about them. But a successful rotational grazing operation requires close observation of the land and animals.

Crashing to earth

Bedtke pays attention to how what he's doing affects everything from earthworms to his neighbors' well-being. Even when he visited a friend laid up in the hospital with a broken back, Bedtke made connections between land use and his friend's predicament. It seems the friend was hang gliding one day, taking advantage of the thermals produced by green covered hills. Suddenly, he flew over a plowed-up field; the black soil absorbed heat rather than reflected it, and the glider crashed to the ground.

One of the things the Bedtkes have been observing since they switched to grass is more wildlife, a dead-on sign that perenniality has returned to the farm. According to Driscoll, who studied songbird populations on the farm for two years, the Bedtke farm has proven to be a particularly good home for grassland birds. While she and the Bedtkes' 11-year-old son Michael took field day participants on a walk through the paddocks, Driscoll pointed out savannah sparrows, goldfinches and bobolinks. Such species rely on perennial stands of grass for survival and can't nest successfully in corn and soybean fields. So as pasture acreage has plummeted, so have populations of these birds, according to Driscoll, who is a University of Minnesota graduate student in conservation biology. During her research, Driscoll studied three rotationally grazed farms and three continuously grazed operations. What she found was that it's not just enough to have pasture on a farm; birds also need to have a secure place to hatch and fledge their young. If a grazing cow stomps the eggs, there goes that hatching. That's why the length of time between grazings is critical, says Driscoll.

"Birds are not able to just pick up their nests and move on. They are stuck."

The Bedtkes have a 30-day rest period between grazings, and that's been shown to give birds time to hatch their young and get them off on their way. Driscoll feels that farmers who use grass as the main source of their animals' feed—as opposed to just using pastures as rest areas—have better quality stands of perennial vegetation, which means better bird habitat. Farmers who save stands of grass for grazing later in the season also help birds who need undisturbed areas.

A study done on an Iowa State University research farm recently found that by planting paddocks full of cool season grasses that thrive in the spring and fall as well as paddocks with warm season (summer) species, a balance can be struck between providing feed for grazing and habitat for birds. More research needs to be done to determine how such a pasture management strategy can be undertaken on a practical basis by a working farmer. But the bottom line is such a system may offer another way to provide wildlife habitat and protect the soil throughout the year.

Death of a town

A hilltop graveyard is about all that remains of Beaver, a community that once boasted two stores, a hotel, a livery stable, a church, a school, two flour and grist mills, a blacksmith shop, a produce market and two saloons.

Founded in 1854, Beaver was the center of an economy based on farming and forestry. For decades, hillsides were logged and forestland was replaced with wheat and later corn, while pastures were overgrazed. By the late 1800s, the lack of perenniality on the landscape was taking its toll. Topsoil was sent to the river by the wagonload, making the Whitewater a silt-saturated menace.

Beaver is a dramatic lesson in how bad things can get, and a reminder of what should be done to avoid environmental (and economic) catastrophe in a community. But the problem with extreme cases is that, well, they're extreme. People can point to them and say, "We have a long ways to go before things get that bad."

Beaver's buried ruins are now in the midst of the state's Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest and the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area. And that brings up an important point: the soil there will probably never be exposed to major environmental degradation as long as it remains public conservation land. But what about private land? After all, nearly 88 percent of the water that falls on the United States as rain or snow falls on private soil before it reaches lakes, waterways or aquifers. Half of this nation is cropland, pastureland or rangeland owned and managed by farmers and ranchers.

How can perenniality be established and nurtured on working farmland? It starts with farmers who are aware that there can be a link between environmental sustainability and economic viability.

John Bedtke concedes he wasn't always so aware of those connections, but noticing how farming systems that push hard against nature seem also to push their practitioners deeper into debt got him asking hard questions about success, competition, quality of life and the kind of mark he'd like to leave on the land in his little corner of the universe.

Says the farmer as he looks out over rolling, grass-covered hills, "I'm going to have the most impact by doing what I'm doing here." ❒

Agriculture's multiple benefits

From 1999 to 2001, the Land Stewardship Project directed the first phase of a multidisciplinary research initiative called the "Multiple Benefits of Agriculture." The project involved southeast Minnesota's Wells Creek watershed, and a sub-watershed of the Chippewa River, in western Minnesota. The study used a combination of scientific modeling, focus groups and public opinion surveys. It used four land use "what if" scenarios developed by scientists and local watershed residents to predict how various farming practices—including practices that rely on perennial plants—would affect the environmental and economic health of the study areas. The study showed that farming has a lot of untapped potential for producing various public "goods," such as a clean environment and viable rural economies.

For a copy of the 52-page report, *The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture: An Economic, Environmental & Social Analysis*, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. The price of the publication is $12 ($12.78 for Minnesota residents), plus $3 for shipping and handling. A brief executive summary of the report is free. A free pdf version of the entire report is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html.

Food Alliance Midwest certified foods now available at a college near you

By Jim Ennis

At 10 colleges in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa this fall, students will find something fresh and natural in their dining hall menus—Food Alliance certified fruits and vegetables. Through a partnership with Sodexho, a leading provider of food and facilities management services, foods from farms certified by Food Alliance Midwest are being made available to students, faculty and staff. Food Alliance Midwest is a collaboration of the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services.

"There is a growing demand for products that reflect consumers' values, and we are seeing college students and faculty members demanding more environmentally friendly and socially responsible foods served on their college campuses" says Jean Andreasen, Marketing Coordinator for Food Alliance Midwest.

Over the last several years, the market for sustainably produced food has grown dramatically. According to a recent market analysis, sales of natural and organic foods in food service, currently a $420 billion industry, are expected to reach $2 billion by 2007. That is an annual growth rate of more than 45 percent. Grocery stores, restaurants, food service companies and others are responding to consumer demand for products whose sustainability claims can be verified by an independent organization such as Food Alliance.

Sodexho began exploring how it could provide local, sustainably-produced foods to its customers 18 months ago when a group from the University of Minnesota-Morris and surrounding communities began asking for more local foods served at the campus dining commons. The group, known as "The Foodies" and associated with LSP's Pride of the Prairie program in western Minnesota, met with Sodexho managers to figure out how this could be done. There were several logistical hurdles to overcome due to Sodexho's strict product requirements. Food Alliance Midwest was asked to assist in this process.

Over the past five years, we have been working to make connections between certified farms in the Upper Midwest and grocery stores (the Alliance currently has 53 grocery store and natural food cooperative partners in the Midwest).

"The food service market was a natural extension for Food Alliance Midwest," says Jean Andreasen. "Food Alliance in the Pacific Northwest had been working with Portland State University prior to our work with Sodexho, so we had some organizational experience that we could draw from."

Kirt Ingram, Regional Vice President for Sodexho, says, "We pay close attention to our customers' preferences. Increasingly we're hearing that they want us to offer healthy food grown locally with respect for the environment and farm workers. We're very happy about our new partnership with Food Alliance."

Food Alliance Midwest is also expanding into healthcare and corporate services and plans to be in 14 additional venues this fall. ❒

Jim Ennis is the Midwest Program Director for the Food Alliance. He can be reached at 651-265-3684 or jim@foodalliance.org. On the Web, visit www.foodalliance.org/producers/fa_midwest/midwest.html.

Jacobson's Pine Tree Apple Orchard, a Food Alliance certified operation located near White Bear Lake, Minn., hosted the Minnesota Apple Growers Association's annual summer tour on Aug. 6. Pictured here are the members of the Jacobson family that make up Pine Tree: (*back, left to right***) John, Bill, Mary, (***front, left to right***) Barb, Nancy, Dickey and Art. Missing from the photo was Jeanne. Apple trees were first planted at the orchard in 1904, and since then the operation has grown to over 240 acres. Besides apples, strawberries and pumpkins are produced by the Jacobsons. For more information, visit www.pinetreeappleorchard.com. (***LSP photo***)**

Dine Fresh Dine Local

Want to patronize a restaurant that shares your commitment to local producers and sustainable agriculture? The *Blue Sky Guide*'s new Dining Guide can help you put "your money where your mouth is." Sponsored by Food Alliance Midwest, the Dining Guide lists over 40 Twin Cities area restaurants and cafes that support local agriculture. For more information, visit www.findbluesky.com or call 651-698-5586.

To launch this guide, Land Stewardship Project, Food Alliance Midwest, *Blue Sky Guide*, and Twin Cities area restaurants will hold a "Dine Fresh Dine Local" event on Tuesday, Oct. 5. For details, call 651-653-0618, or visit www.dinefreshdinelocal.com. ❒

Byron Zahm has been hired as a marketing coordinator for the Pride of the Prairie (POP) program. Zahm, a graduate of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program, has worked as an account executive, general manager and business owner. As the POP marketing coordinator, he will facilitate connections between local farmers and area retailers. Zahm (*left*) **recently met with the POP steering committee: Wendy Lange, Richard Handeen, Annette Fernholz and Mike Jacobs. Also on the steering committee but not pictured are Jeremy Lanctot and Pauline Stranlund. POP is working with farmers, processors, retailers and consumers to increase consumption of local food in the Upper Minnesota River Basin. LSP is leading the initiative. For more information, call 320-269-2105 or visit www.prideoftheprairie.org.** (*photo by Terry VanDerPol*)

Food Alliance intern

Trish Johnson served an internship with the Food Alliance Midwest this summer. Johnson has a bachelor's degree in communications and French from Winona State University and an English as a Second Language (ESL) certification from the Hamline University Graduate School of Education. She has worked on a Community Supported Agriculture farm, as a trainer for Workforce Solutions, a director of marketing and communications, a community youth educator and an ESL teacher.

During her internship, Johnson planned the Taste of Tuesday-Minnesota Cooks! event at the Minnesota State Fair and wrote profiles of Food Alliance certified farmers. ❒

Trish Johnson

Slow food fundraiser Sept. 7

Land Stewardship Project members Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen have been selected as delegates to Terra Madre, an international conference on "slow food" being held in Italy Oct. 20-23. The event is a forum for those who "seek to grow, raise, catch, create, distribute and promote food in ways that respect the environment, defend human dignity and protect the health of consumers," according to the sponsors. Arner and Handeen produce beef on grass in western Minnesota and are involved with the Pride of the Prairie local food initiative.

A Land Stewardship Project event to help them raise travel funds will be held Tuesday, Sept. 7, from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at Watson Lions Park in Watson, Minn. There will be a salad bar potluck, silent auction and music. Roast pork will be provided. For more information on the fundraiser, contact LSP's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org. For details on Terra Madre, including a profile of Arner and Handeen, see www.slowfoodusa.org/events/terramadre.html. ❒

Audrey Arner & Richard Handeen (*photo by Anne Borgendale*)

Poetry

John Caddy's daily gift

By Dana Jackson

A few years ago I attended a meeting about arts and the environment, and because my name was on a sign-up sheet, I subsequently became the blessed recipient of a poem from John Caddy every morning in an e-mail. The poem was courtesy of a program called Self Expressing Earth, based at Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education. The goal of the program was to "train teachers and interpretive naturalists to help kids learn the nature of life on Earth through making art—visual arts, dance, sculpture, pottery, and, of course, poetry." The program ended, but John continued writing and sending daily poems from his "EarthJournal" to teachers and friends. Milkweed Editions published a selection of these Earth Journal poems in 2003 in a little book called *Morning Earth: Field Notes in Poetry.*

Now Morning Earth is a nonprofit organization and I have become a paying member at the "Treefrog" level ($30). Teachers join for $20 at the "Sunflower" level. There are higher priced membership levels, depending on how many e-mail addresses you wish the poems to be sent to. Each morning I drive to work from Stillwater to White Bear Lake along Highway 96, a road that winds through woods and wetlands. Since I began reading Morning Earth, I see so much more of the natural world during that daily drive. That's because I am consciously looking, noticing, and rejoicing in the treasures that are there in all seasons to appreciate. When I see a bird that has been the subject of a poem John wrote, I see it differently. Soon there will be a Web site (www.morningearth.com), and I look forward to on-line discussions with others who read Morning Earth.

On this page are a few summer poems that have inspired me to celebrate the gifts of nature. Often John writes two or three lines of explication and wisdom following a poem to stimulate further reflection, and they appear here in parentheses.

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

Entry 6.28.2004

The yellow-throated warbler
Flies from oaks to tall ripe grasses.
He forages for insects halfway down
Strong stalks, always moving, hopping
Stem to stem. His hunt is visible
In the tossing of grasses.
He begins to sing, brief bursts of song
That double a rich melody and pause.
Each time his throat opens, panicles
Of grass seed above him tremble
In the rhythms of his song.

(*Be careful when you stop and look at Earth, for you may be ambushed by delight.*)

Entry 7.13.2004

When I faced Mama Raccoon at the feeder
She stood her ground.
She would have faced me down
Had I not waved arms, hollered,
Advanced two steps. She ran five feet, turned,
Stared at me again with that female stare
All males early learn to fear. Mothers
Pass it on through all the mammal kindred,
And each male with a onetime milky chin tries
To not make Mama share her eyes
In that cold stare that turns
Grown bucks to fawns,
Boars to squealing piglets,
Knocks the high knees of giraffes,
Transforms men into sweating boys
Whose clothing suddenly bags.
What is more fierce than a mother? So, I backed off, allowed Mama Raccoon
Her imperative sway. She returned
To sunflower seeds which she would
Transform into milk for the kits
Loud in the hollow oak.

Entry 7.11.2002

Overwhelmed with green and growth
I taste this time like honey in the throat.
Summer swells so lush-
Green rushes toward the sun.
Cast a bean, tomorrow it twines root and leaves.
It's hot. Let Jack Climb,
I will sit and fear the goddess here.

Poetry, *see page 19…*

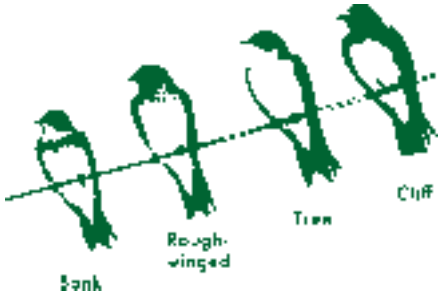
…Poetry, *from page 18*

Entry 7.16.2004

What absurd exalted vengeance I feel
For the deer fly in my palm
That I just slapped dead.
She tightened spirals around my head
And landed on my neck
Which sings now with my slap.

Close, she is a marvel—delta-winged
And copper-eyed, banded wings and body.
She wanted only to ovulate.

But regrets vanish as her sister nails me on the forehead. Blood lust
Rises quick at her bite,
But oh, she gets away.
My forehead reddens, rings.



Want more poetry?

For information about joining Morning Earth, e-mail John Caddy at jtcaddy@earthlink.net, or send a check (payable to "Morning Earth") to:
Morning Earth, 8870 202nd St. N., Forest Lake, MN 55025.

Entry 8.12.2002

How the berry-bushes shiver
With the feeding of the birds,
With the hopping and the plucking
of the always-hungry birds which
Fatten now to fly an arc of globe.
How wide the mouths of swallows, tree and barn and cliff, as
they purge the sky of flies, then
line up on the phone wires
spaced a foot apart to wait until
the sky loads up with bugs again to eat
And fatten up to fly an arc of globe.

(*Some six billion birds will soon fly down the great funnel of North America, returning to the tropics where they spend the winter. Imagine how crowded the Central American spout of the funnel becomes. Imagine how fruitful tropical ecosystems are to support six billion migrants plus a dense non-migratory population.*)

Reviews

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Broken Limbs

Apples, Agriculture, and the New American Farmer

Produced by Guy Evans & Jamie Howell
2004; 57 minutes; VHS or DVD
$250 (purchase) $85 (rent)

Deconstructing Supper

Is Your Food Safe?

Produced by Marianne Kaplan
& Leonard Terhoch
2002; 48 minutes; VHS
$250 (purchase) $85 (rent)

Bullfrog Films
P.O. Box 149
Oley, PA 19547
1-800-543-3764
www.bullfrogfilms.com

If you're looking for a video to provide background information and be the springboard for a group discussion about agricultural issues, there are two new ones from Bullfrog Films worth considering. Each of these films tells a story in which the narrator undergoes a change in the way he thinks and works as a result of asking questions and seeking the answers.

Broken Limbs

Guy Evans, the narrator of this documentary, refers to himself as the "broken limb," because after three generations of apple growers in his family, he goes to college to learn to do something else. However, he finds that taking over the family farm is not really an option, because his 60-year-old father, Denny Evans, finds himself $750,000 in debt and creditors are unwilling to loan him more money. He's forced to lay off his employees, reduce the size of his orchard and market his apples differently.

But he's not the only farmer in trouble in Wenatchee, Wash., the "Apple Capital of the World." Other apple farmers are having their mortgages called in by the banks, and orchards on the edge of town are becoming housing developments and Wal-Marts. The few apple producers who are thriving have become much larger and more mechanized. With prices being driven down by competitors in foreign countries paying lower wages, only the largest can survive. Apple packers are consolidating so they can provide eight million boxes of apples a year to the big grocery chains. Some are even importing apples. If farmers can't expand their

Videos, *see page 20…*

…Videos, *from page 19*

orchards and keep their business growing, they can't compete and will be forced out. This is explained as a "market correction," but Evans asks if it might actually be a "market mistake."

The problems that Washington apple farmers are having as a result of globalization are problems farmers producing other crops in other states also experience. Several Washington State University faculty and extension people, including David Granatstein who worked for Land Stewardship Project in the 1980s, appear in the film and comment on the impact of global markets on the future of the family farm.

Evans asks if there is any other model besides increasing growth and consolidation, and discovers an 11-page paper called "Survival Strategies for Small Farmers," written by agricultural economist John Ikerd. Here he learns about sustainable agriculture, and what Ikerd calls "the new American farmers." Ikerd is shown speaking enthusiastically about the "stewards and students of the land," whom he has met from all parts of the U. S. They seem to represent the new model sought by the narrator, so Evans sets out to find farmers like them around Washington State.

The farmers he meets are small. One couple makes a living producing organic apples on five acres. Two women have a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm. But the most interesting is Grant Gibbs, who has an integrated organic farming system that produces apples, vegetables and livestock. These farmers are creative and express the basic values of all farmers trying to be ecologically sound, economically viable and socially responsible. But his father, Denny Evans, who was awarded the title of "Farmer of the Year" in 1979 using conventional practices, sees them as hippies living on the fringe, not really large enough or making enough money to be quite respectable. Yet there is a funny twist at the end of the film when the narrator realizes that as a result of efforts to stay in business, his father has made his farm smaller and more diversified. He's started growing grapes and is even taking a class to develop a business plan for a winery. Evans realizes that his father just might be one of those "new American farmers" Ikerd talks about. And Evans finds himself becoming a new limb in the family apple business.

"We need new American consumers to support new American farmers" is a memorable line from this documentary. Opportunities for consumers to do that through farmers' markets, CSAs and food coops are clearly shown, with comments from the director of Market Basket, a 1,000-member CSA farm in Seattle, and Deborah Kane, Executive Director of the Food Alliance. I can imagine this video being shown to church classes or social justice groups and being the impetus for a church or home becoming a drop-off site for a CSA operation or meat producer.

Deconstructing Supper

The narrator in this Canadian video is chef John Bishop, whose customers are asking him if he uses ingredients from genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the food he serves. He doesn't know what they mean. To find out more about how food is grown, he starts with a book of photographs by Michael Ableman, *From the Good Earth*, which portrays farmers from all over the world. But a discussion with Ableman introduces him not to the peasant agriculture in this book, but modern, industrial agriculture. He learns that 60 percent of all the fruits and vegetables consumed in North America comes from the mammoth fields of the Central Valley of California. Ableman challenges him to learn more about where food comes from.

Suddenly, without any transitional information, the viewer is watching a corn-costumed woman wailing about being toxic because she's genetically engineered (the low point in the video). She's participating in a demonstration against genetically engineered food, which is outside an exhibition promoting GMOs. Inside, Bishop politely listens to industry representatives explain the mechanics of transferring genes from one organism to another and the advantages of this technology. This lesson is followed by a look at the real process in an Aventis lab in Saskatoon, where Malcom Devine expertly explains how bacteria is used to transfer DNA into plant tissue.

Chef Bishop learns that 60 percent of food on grocery shelves contains GMOs, most prominently from corn that has a pesticide in its tissue (Bt corn) and canola resistant to damage from the herbicide Roundup. But the product labels don't reveal the presence of GMOs. The only way to avoid eating products containing GMOs is to limit your diet to organic foods. But GM foods are safe, Bishop is told, not because the government has tested them, but because the seed developers, which are divisions of chemical companies such as Monsanto, have tested them and assured the government that they are safe.

The chemical industry's power over our food is a key message in this video. If you haven't heard the story of Percy Schmeiser's struggle with Monsanto, this video is worth seeing just to hear him tell it. This Canadian farmer had grown canola for 53 years with seed he selected to fit local conditions. In 1997, he found Roundup Ready canola in his fields, and Monsanto sued him for growing their seed without a license. Percy Schmeiser lost in court, with the judge saying it didn't matter how the seed was introduced into his fields (maybe by wind-blown pollen or birds), the canola plants were proof of theft.

The producers and proponents of genetically modified seeds have insisted that this technology is needed in order to feed the growing human population, especially in developing nations.

Chef Bishop checks this out when he visits India, home of one-fourth of the world's farmers. He talks to scientist/activist Vandana Shiva as they tour her farm in northern India where biological diversity disappeared in the 1960s when India promoted fertilizers and pesticides to ignite the Green Revolution. But once again there are wild plants on the edges of her fields that indigenous people have harvested as nutritious greens for generations. Pollinators and other beneficial insects are increasing also.

Do Indian farmers need genetically modified seed? Vandana Shiva says that India is a country where farmers have grown food for thousands of years, and the chemical companies that produced Agent Orange don't know farming. "They know how to manipulate chemicals and manipulate plants: that is not about farming. That is not about good food," she says, flashing a charming, but authoritative smile.

After attending a banquet in southern India, eating delicious foods prepared from plants and seeds gathered from the wild as well as from farm fields, Bishop concludes there's no need for genetically modified seeds to help feed people in that country. Once home in Canada, he concludes that his culture doesn't need it either and decides to serve organic food in his restaurant. Nice tidy ending. ❐

LSP Associate Director Dana Jackson reviewed the books Local Flavors *and* Recipes from America's Small Farms *in the January/February/March 2004* Land Stewardship Letter.

Announcing the second Stewardship Art Gallery show:

Abundant Harvest

The Land Stewardship Project's online art gallery is up and running. The Stewardship Gallery provides a showcase for images that reflect efforts to foster and support stewardship of our food and farming system.

The theme of the first gallery show is "The Farm as Natural Habitat." Last year we asked LSP members to send photos, illustrations or paintings they felt reflected that theme. You responded with some excellent entries, getting the gallery off to a smashing start. To see the show, check out www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-gallery.html.

Now, it's time to expand the gallery. The theme of the next show is "Abundant Harvest." We'd like to be on the receiving end of how you interpret that theme artistically. Early fall should provide plenty of inspiration.

The entries should:

- Celebrate the bounty of food that we receive from the land.
- For photos, candid shots work well, black and white or color are fine.

Entry guidelines

- Please do not send originals.
- Send entries as digitals or scanned files. If you are using pictures from your digital camera, they will work just fine if they are JPEG files. If you are scanning the images yourself from photographs or artwork, it is better to save them in either TIFF or EPS format. When scanning, use a 150 PPI (pixels per inch) setting.

Please title your photo, telling us when and where you took it.

Send entries by Dec. 1 to:

Louise Arbuckle at lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org. If you have any questions, you can e-mail Arbuckle or call her at 651-653-0618.

Two selections from the "Farm as Natural Habitat" show

Left: *June 18, 2004*
Submitted by Pat Deninger
Trempealeau, Wis.

Below: *Where Grass Meets Trees*
Submitted by Melissa Driscoll
John & Donna Bedtke's Farm
Plainview, Minn.

Filing cabinet needed

The Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program is looking for a small filing cabinet. If you have one you would like to donate, please call 612-722-6377 or e-mail Mike McMahon at mcmahon @landstewardshipproject.org. ❒

Get a buzz out of LIVE-WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* for regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Stay current on information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing. To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardship project.org and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." ❒

Natural swine feeding

Feeding Programs for Natural and Organic Pork Production provides information on standards for organic pork production, management of organically raised pigs, energy and protein sources, alternative feeds and use of forage and pasture. It contains tables with diet formulations for early and late grower and early and late finisher swine growth stages, as well as sow gestation and lactation.

More information on this 18-page bulletin is available at www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/livestocksystems/DI7736.html. Copies are available for $8 from county offices of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. It can also be ordered with a credit card by calling 1-800-876-8636 (ask for item 07736-BU). ❒

Comparing pork niche markets

Iowa State University has developed a chart describing five swine niche market opportunities available to farmers today: Niman Ranch Pork Company, Organic Valley Pork Pool, Truline Premium Pork, 100% Berkshire Pork and Five Star Premium Pork Company.

The chart compares the criteria farmers must meet to market hogs through each firm, as well as such particulars as how price is determined and transportation is handled. A pdf version of the "Comparing Swine Niche Market Opportunities" is available at www.extension.iastate.edu/ipic/information/IowaPorkNiche.pdf. For more information, call 515-294-4103. ❒

Organic ag mentors

The Minnesota Organic Farmers' Information Exchange (MOFIE) links producers who want to farm organically with established organic farmers. The program consists of a group of 21 certified organic producers from all across Minnesota who have agreed to serve as mentors. Their expertise covers many areas of organic production, including cash grains, livestock and dairy, vegetables, fruits and maple syrup. Each mentor has agreed to answer questions via the telephone or e-mail. To keep the volume of information calls and e-mails manageable for these volunteers, they are only able to take questions from Minnesota residents. For a listing of these mentors, visit http://mofie.coafes.umn.edu or call 507-752-7372.

The Information Exchange is sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Southwest Research and Outreach Center, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Risk Management Agency. ❒

Want to work on an organic farm?

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) operates a Web site that offers a network of internships and other educational opportunities in organic farming and sustainability. The Web site (www.growfood.org) gives people looking to work on an organic operation an avenue for contacting potential hosts. The site also allowed farmers to list themselves as hosts for volunteers and interns. ❒

GMO series

Clear-eyed discussions of the potential and hazards of genetically engineered crops are in short supply. But in June, the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper published an exemplary series of articles on biotechnology and the role it may play in food production. Led by Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Tom Knudson, a team of journalists spent eight months investigating issues such as biotech's potential to feed the world and reduce pesticide use, as well as the impact it is having on intellectual property rights. Human health and labeling as they pertain to biotechnology were also examined by the team. The resulting series goes beyond the hype and generalities that usually characterize the GMO debate, and digs deep into this highly controversial technology.

To read the "Seeds of Doubt" series, visit www.sacbee.com/static/live/news/projects/biotech. To order a paper copy, call 916-321-1111. ❒

Saving farmland

Are you concerned about the threat development poses to farmland? Technical information and an "answer service" on how to prevent the loss of farmland is available from the Farmland Information Center, a partnership between the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and American Farmland Trust. For more information, visit www.farmlandinfo.org or call 1-800-370-4879. ❒

Agriculture in the classroom minigrants

Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom is offering minigrants for educators during the 2004-2005 school year. The program offers cash awards of up to $200 to help educators integrate agriculture and the food system into their regular teaching routine.

There are three deadlines for applying to get a grant: Sept. 15, Jan. 15 and March 15. For more information, visit www.mda.state.mn.us/maitc/minigrant.htm or call 651-296-6688. ❒

Sustainable ag loans

Interest rates for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture Loan Program have been lowered from 6 percent to 3 percent. The program provides low-interest loans to Minnesota farmers to help them adopt economically and environmentally sound practices. The Land Stewardship Project and other groups last spring encouraged the Minnesota Legislature to lower the interest rates.

Individual farmers are eligible to receive up to $25,000 in loans for the purchase of new or used equipment and/or facilities. Eligible purchases for improvements may include equipment needed to transition into organic production, rotational grazing and hoop houses for swine, among other things.

For an application or additional information, visit www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/esaploan.htm, or contact Mary Hanks by calling 651-296-1277 or e-mailing mary.hanks@state.mn.us. Through the regular mail, Hanks can be contact at: MDA Sustainable Agriculture Loan Program 90 West Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107. ❒

Making gift-giving a part of the future

By Cathy Eberhart

Did you know that in the United States, dead people give more money to nonprofit organizations than corporations?

As I've reported previously on this page, *Giving USA* consistently reports that the vast majority of contributions to nonprofit organizations come from individuals. In 2003, 74.5 percent came from living persons and 9 percent came in the form of bequests made after the donors' death. Foundations gave 10 percent and corporations ranked dead last (sorry!) at 5.6 percent.

My point here is not to denigrate corporations, but instead to celebrate planned giving. Obviously people are not coming back from the grave to write out checks. Gifts that come after a person's death are the result of careful and thoughtful planning while the donor is still alive.

The many faces of giving

Fundraising experts (and your own experience) will tell you that giving happens in many different ways:

◆ **Impulse Gifts**—Some gifts are made on impulse in response to a letter or telephone call or some other quick contact with a group. For me, these are usually small "what the heck" kind of gifts that I make to groups that sound intriguing or interesting, but I don't know much about. As a membership coordinator, I know that these gifts are very important and are often the first step to a deeper relationship with a group.

◆ **Loyal Giving**—Some of my impulse gifts have turned into regular renewals, and even in some cases monthly donations to groups like Land Stewardship Project that I value a great deal. As I wrote about in the last issue of this newsletter, this is the solid core of faithful members that LSP depends on.

◆ **Thoughtful Donations**—A "thoughtful" gift doesn't refer to the amount of the gift so much, but rather the care and thought that goes into it. For each one of us a thoughtful gift may be at a different level, but it will be a stretch for us and require more than just a quick decision. During a McKnight matching grant a few years back, we know that many of you stretched to give significant gifts to LSP so that we could meet that challenge. We know that many of you continue to stretch on a regular basis to support the land stewardship, local food, and grassroots organizing work that you so strongly believe in.

◆ **Planned Gifts**—A planned gift in its simplest state is one that is planned now to happen at sometime in the future, usually after one's death. There are many different ways in which a planned gift can happen. A few examples are naming LSP as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance, or retirement plan, or through more complicated avenues such as a charitable remainder trust or gift annuity. We know that some of our members have already taken the extraordinary step of including Land Stewardship Project in their wills. We are honored to have been entrusted with such legacy gifts.

Act impulsively

If you are considering (or have already put in place) a planned gift to support LSP into the future, there is one **impulsive act** you can take today: call 651-653-0618 or e-mail cathye@landstewardshipproject.org for a copy of LSP's Declaration of Intent form. It is a simple non-binding form that indicates your intent to make a planned gift in the future. It allows us to thank you now and to answer any questions you might have. Then you can take the time you need to make a thoughtful plan for the future—a future with more sustainable farms and healthy food made possible by your generosity. ❐

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

- 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.

MINNESOTA Environmental Fund

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 lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

➔ *SEPT. 7*—**Fundraising event for farmers Audrey Arner & Richard Handeen, who are attending the Terre Madre "slow food" conference in Italy**, Watson, Minn. (see page 17)

➔ *SEPT. 9-10*—**The Role of Farmers' Markets in America's Food System**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: 515-271-2065; www.statefoodpolicy.org/new_developments.htm

➔ *SEPT. 11*—**2004 Northeast Minnesota SFA Harvest Festival**, Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: 218-393-3276; www.harvestfest.cjb.net

➔ *SEPT. 14*—**Conference on Hoop Barns & Bedded Systems for Livestock**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 515-294-0557; www.abe.iastate.edu/ABLS/

➔ *SEPT. 16*—**Hog Nutrition for Nutritious Pork**, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: Terry VanDerPol, LSP, 320-269-2105; tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org

➔ *SEPT. 18*—**Farm Aid Concert, featuring Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp & Dave Matthews**, Seattle, Wash.; Contact: 800-FARM-AID; www.farmaid.org

➔ *SEPT. 19*—**PFI Field Day on Vegetable Production & Marketing**, Rock Spring Farm, Spring Grove, Minn.; Contact: 563-735-5613

➔ *SEPT. 21*—**PFI Field Day on Breeding & Selecting Corn for Quality**, Natvig/Miller Farm, Cresco, Iowa; Contact: 563-569-8358

➔ *SEPT. 25*—**Farm Tour Featuring On-Farm Flour Milling & Goat Production**, Dry Weather Creek Farm, Milan, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105 or 320-269-9617

➔ *SEPT. 26*—**LSP-West End of the Year Membership & Farm Beginnings Picnic**, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 320-269-2105 Farm Beginnings

➔ *OCT. 1-2*—**Draft Animals & the Woodlot**, DreamAcres Homestead, Wykoff, Minn.; Contact: 507-352-4255; www.wmich.edu/tillers/

➔ *OCT. 2*—**Java River Local Foods Chili Cookoff & Local Arts Crawl**, Granite Falls (Minn.) Memorial Park; Contact: Patrick Moore, 320-269-9042 or 320-269-7106;www.javarivercafe.com or www.prairiewaters.com

Farm Beginnings 2004-2005

The application deadline for the 2004-2005 session of LSP's Farm Beginnings program is Oct. 5. The first class is Oct. 23. See page 6 for details.

➔ *OCT. 1-3*—**Land Institute Prairie Festival, featuring former U.S. Ag Secretary Dan Glickman and writer Michael Pollan**, Salina, Kan.; Contact: 785-823-5376; www.landinstitute.org

➔ *OCT. 5*—**"Dine Fresh Dine Local" Local Foods Restaurant Event**, Twin Cities, Minn.; Contact: 651-653-0618 or www.dinefreshdinelocal.com (see page 17)

➔ **LSP Farm Beginnings Application Deadline** (see page 6)

➔ *OCT. 13*—**Pasture Walk on Season Extension,** West Central Research & Outreach Center (WCROC) Morris, Minn.; Contact: Dennis Johnson, 320-589-1711; dairydgj@mrs.umn.edu

➔ *OCT. 23*—**LSP Farm Beginnings Classes Begin**, New Prague, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105 or 507-523-3366

➔ *NOV. 3*—**5th Annual Fall Local Foods Meal**, Morris, Minn.; Contact: Cathy Twohig, LSP, 320-269-2105; cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org

➔ *NOV. 9*—**5th Annual Pride of the Prairie Local Foods Banquet, featuring Bill Hunt, Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist,** Alexandria, Minn.; Contact: Cathy Twohig, LSP, 320-269-2105; cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org

➔ *NOV. 10*—**Pasture Walk on Preparing Pastures & Livestock for Winter**, West Central Research & Outreach Center (WCROC) Morris, Minn.; Contact: Dennis Johnson, 320-589-1711; dairydgj@mrs.umn.edu

➔ *NOV. 12-14*—**12th Annual Urban-Rural Regional Food Systems Conference**, East Troy, Wis.; Contact: 262-642-3303, ext. 100; gkahovic@Michael FieldsAgInst.org

➔ *DEC. 16*—**Holiday Open House for LSP's Western Minn. Office**, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105

➔ *JAN. 21-22*—**2005 Minnesota Organic & Grazing Conference**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 651-296-1277

➔ *FEB. 19*—**14th Annual Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conference, with the theme, "Sustainable Farmers: The Next Generation"** (location to be announced); Contact: Mary Jo Forbord, 320-760-8732; mforbord@sfamn.org

➔ *FEB. 25-26*—**16th Annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, LaCrosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-3153; www.mosesorganic.org

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

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The date above your name on the address label is your membership anniversary. Your timely renewal saves paper and reduces the expense of sending out renewal notices. To renew, use the envelope inside or go to the LSP Web site.