

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

31 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

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Number 2, 2013



Photo by Mark Hirsch

A tree survives in farm country, giving back a year of images...and more (see page 4).

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- Legislature: Frac Sand, Health Care, ‘Buy the Farm,’ Sustainable Ag*—
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- A Step Backward on Saving Soil?*—
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The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published quarterly 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 publication as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

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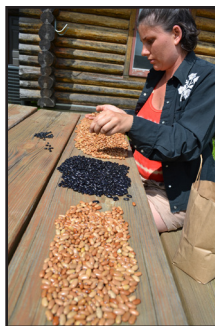
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Farmland, Trophy Hunters & the Elephant in the Room

By Brian DeVore

What with farmland changing hands at price levels that would make a Beverly Hills realtor blanch, this is a critical time to ask an important question of landowners: is getting the highest price possible for that acre of land worth the cost it imposes on the community? That's a question that's posed in the Land Stewardship Project's popular one-act play about the future of farming, *Look Who's Knockin'* (see page 6). It's also a question organizers with LSP's Farm Beginnings program are working with our members to address (see below).

Dealing head-on with this question couldn't be more timely. Sometime ago, I was forwarded an e-letter that had been sent

out by a Texas financial adviser to his clients. The memo, which uses that breathless, go-go writing style common during a bubble market, makes the argument that Midwestern farmland is now a "trophy asset" that should be captured, drug home and put on display, so to speak. Here's an excerpt:

"Trophy assets are the world's most valuable assets. These are the types of assets that wars are fought over. We're talking about assets like the Grasberg Mine in Indonesia, the world's most productive copper and gold mine... gigantic casinos on the Las Vegas Strip... prime Manhattan retail space... and Texas' giant oilfields.

"When you can acquire the world's elite mines, oilfields, retail locations, and casino properties for bargain prices, they are 'one decision' financial moves. You

buy them... and never sell. You sit back and collect huge rents and capital gains. You can pass these assets onto your children (if you can stand them).

"Most people don't realize how important the black earth of Iowa and its neighboring states was to the formation of the American empire. To this day, the farmland of Middle America is a key component of America's dominance. On the geopolitical stage, it's 1,000 times more important than Las Vegas casinos."

I suppose it's a bit flattering to hear that a big-time financial expert thinks so highly of our farmland. In fact, our fertile topsoil is "1,000 times more important than Las Vegas casinos." But trophies are items you hunt down and conquer, not a resource you steward for coming generations.

We should all get a little queasy when farmland is compared to an extracted resource like oil or copper. Part of the problem with agriculture today is that we're already mining the soil like it's just so much coal to be dug up and burned, making our food production system less sustainable every year (see page 25). Keeping land productive for the long haul requires a farming system based on a living, biologically-based cycle, not an extractive, one-way industrial process.

A truly sustainable agriculture consists of people actively living on and working the land. Trophies are to be mounted on walls and admired remotely; they aren't an active part of our everyday lives.

The idea that you "never sell" and just "sit back and collect huge rents" leaves no room for the next generation of farming entrepreneurs (see page 14). It's a recipe for exporting even more wealth, soil, water, and eventually, people, out of our rural communities.

Treating soil like dirt isn't the answer, but putting it up on a pedestal only reachable by a select few isn't sustainable either. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Land Access Bite-by-Bite

By Sarah Claassen

This spring, Land Stewardship Project members gathered in Menomonie, Wis., and Northfield, Minn., to discuss the challenges they face as beginning farmers seeking land to farm. These conversations and others around Minnesota and Wisconsin are shaping LSP's initial organizing effort to win affordable, secure land tenure.

These farmers shared stories about how skyrocketing land prices create a crisis for them, neighboring farms, their communities and the land. People are making enormous sacrifices to find land, buy land, keep land, and make a living off of the land they've got. These sacrifices put at risk our effort to create a farm and rural revival and get more farmers on the land.

These stories are plentiful and being told in every small town and farmhouse across the upper Midwest. Skyrocketing land prices are creating a crisis for family farmers of all stripes.

Consolidation of power and profit over land is a huge problem. Shifting this power and placing more of it in the hands of family farmers will require an equally huge effort over a long time. But that shift will consist

of small, strategic steps, and those are the steps LSP staff and members are taking today. How do you eat an elephant? Bite-by-bite.

LSP staff will be holding several more organizing meetings in Minnesota this summer. At these meetings, LSP members will shape these first steps toward attaining affordable, secure land tenure for farmers. To get involved, contact me at 612-722-6377, sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org, or LSP organizer Nick Olson at 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org. □

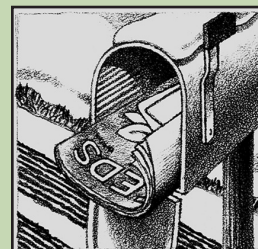
Sarah Claassen is an LSP organizer working on land access issues (see page 7).

What's on Your Mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

The *Land Stewardship Letter* believes an open, fair discussion of issues we cover is one of the keys to creating a just, sustainable society. Letters and commentaries can be submitted to: Brian DeVore, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 612-722-6474; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

We cannot print all submissions, and reserve the right to edit published pieces for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.



Report from the Field

The Year of Living Deciduously

A Tree Survives the Dozer & Gives Back a Year of Images...& More

By Finn M. Bullers

For 19 years, photographer Mark Hirsch admired a sprawling bur oak from his truck — never once stopping to ponder the giant, 60-foot shade tree on Airport Road just two miles from his home near Platteville, in southwest Wisconsin. Never once lifting his camera to shoot. More than a year ago, Hirsch, 52 — a human 5-hour Energy drink — bought his first iPhone 4s. The veteran photo-journalist was goaded by a friend to park his fancy lenses and instead shoot with the camera on his smart phone.

On March 23, 2012, the first picture Hirsch took with his phone was of “That Tree” — a barren image of limbs reaching to the heavens. He was captivated. And every day for a year, Hirsch stole away for an intimate rendezvous with Mother Nature — shivering in winter’s sub-zero temperatures and sweltering in summer’s three-digit infernos to snap at least one compelling image. Gathering on March 23, 2013, on a clear, 37-degree day in a southwest Wisconsin cornfield, 290 followers — and 12 dogs — posed with That Tree for one last picture before the iPhone experiment came to an end. Perched high in the sky in a hydraulic bucket lift, Hirsch clutched his iPhone. From 30 feet in the air, he could see friends gathered near the tree.

Some held hands. Others mirrored the silent countenance of the bur oak, rooted at the end of a farm trail on land left in pasture from 1834, when it was first surveyed in Grant County by Lucius Lyons, until 1990

when it was saved from the bulldozer by the farmer who now owns the land. The first farmer to break sod in 1990 sold the land years later to the present owner, who spared the bur oak “just because he liked it.” In spring 2012, landowner Tim Clare was maintaining waterways near the oak and clearing fencerows. When he inspected the progress, the bulldozer operator asked Clare if he should push over That Tree, an obstacle to greater crop yields. Clare’s matter-of-fact



Mark Hirsch took this photo of the bur oak tree on Oct. 18, 2012 (day 209). “I started to evolve. I started to have a greater appreciation for detail...,” Hirsch says of the year-long project. (Photo by Mark Hirsch)

response: “That tree has been here for 200 years and I’m not the guy that’s going to push it over.”

A Crazy Challenge

At 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 23, 2013, the afternoon light was ideal. After the

shoot, friends gathered at Smelser Town Hall to celebrate the digital milestone in the life of the 168-year-old tree — a metaphor for the stoic Midwestern experience. “What a crazy challenge I posed for myself,” Hirsch said in a telephone interview from his truck. “It was hard. It was extremely hard. It was hard mentally. It was hard physically.”

Creating a powerful image every day for 365 days, it turns out, is no small task, Hirsch soon discovered. “That Tree doesn’t do much. That Tree isn’t involved in a scandalous divorce from a Hollywood celebrity. That Tree is not running for president. And That Tree isn’t embedded in a combat zone,” Hirsch wrote.

The Small Things

“So what’s the story? Light, life, metaphor, metamorphosis, change and challenge. It applies as much to me as a photographer as it does to That Tree,” he said.

For Hirsch — whose clients include Getty Images, *The New York Times* and the John Deere Corp. — each day, photo after photo, the needle on his internal speedometer dropped farther and farther from Mach 1. “There were days,” Hirsch said, “that I was so frustrated. But I got to a point where I said, ‘Dude, I’ve just got to step back and take it all in.’”

That’s when the corporate photographer’s artistry flourished. “I started to evolve. I started to have a greater appreciation for detail — the leaves, the color of light through the trees, the camouflaged moth on bark,” Hirsch said. And the more time he spent, the more he began to appreciate the role the deciduous bur oak played in the tiny ecosystem living within a 400-yard radius of its span. “It was a tree of life — insects munching on the leaves, new deer tracks in the fallen snow — all heading to That Tree

for sustenance,” the photographer said. In a way, so was Hirsch. The oak offered the frenetic photographer a single daily image of beauty. But it also inspired him anew —

That Tree, see page 5...

rethinking his camera as a paint brush, not simply a cash register. And that's what paid off.

A Lucky, Lucky Guy

It's a frigid, March morning. Hirsch stands next to his deep-rooted friend. His muse awaits. The cell phone alerts him to an incoming text message. "Here I stand at work in my factory. It's 7:14 a.m., the sun has just gotten up and I am standing at my machine," his blue-collar friend wrote. "I look to my left and I'm about 25 yards from a window facing northwest. So I can't really see the sunrise, but what I do see looks amazing. I can't wait to see today's picture."

Hirsch grins wide. "Here I am sitting out in the fresh air thinking, 'I'm a lucky, lucky guy.' I've given voice to an oak tree in the middle of a cornfield. People now have a chance to see what that solid sentinel has seen," the photographer said. "If a picture is worth 1,000 words, That Tree has had a lot to say." And at the end of the day — "There it is, a tree standing tall, dominating the backdrop of the horizon — a never-ending constant in the seasons of life." □

Finn M. Bullers, a freelance writer/editor and national advocate for people with disabilities (trees), lives in Kansas City with his wife and two children. He can be contacted at finnannb@aol.com, or 913-706-2894.

More on the *That Tree* Project

→ Photo gallery: www.thattree.net

→ Facebook: www.facebook.com/photo-softhattree

→ Photo journal: <http://thephotobrigade.com/2012/08/that-tree-by-mark-hirsch>

That Tree, a 192-page hardcover photo-journal by Mark Hirsch, will be available in August. Collectors' edition pre-orders include a limited-edition print. For more information, see www.thattree.net.

Myth Buster Box

An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

→ *Myth:* A New Class of Pesticides is Harmless to the Environment

→ *Fact:*

Over the years, a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids have become increasingly popular on farms, as well as in backyards and greenhouses. Derived from nicotine (yes, the same stuff that makes a body crave Marlboros and Copenhagen), these bug killers are systemic, meaning they are put on a plant's seed, or injected straight into the roots or stem. They work their way up to the leaves, killing insect pests that feed on the plant.

The advantages to these kinds of bug killers are many. For one thing, farmers, greenhouse keepers and homeowners aren't spraying toxins in the open air, reducing the chance of the chemical going where it's not supposed to. In addition, it works specifically on insects, offering little threat to other creatures, including humans.

That's the main reason neonicotinoids have fast become one of the most widely used pesticides, replacing chemicals such as organophosphates, which are outright toxic to mammals and birds. If you bought a potted plant recently, it's likely been fortified with neonicotinoids. And over 90 percent of all seed corn planted in the U.S. this spring was coated with neonicotinoid insecticides.

"I can't impress on you how common this is on everything," University of Minnesota entomologist Vera Krischik told the *Land Stewardship Letter*, adding that these types

of pesticides can stay in a plant for up to a year.

A few years ago, Krischik noticed that after feeding on some potted plants that were in her backyard, bumblebees would become disoriented and fall to the ground where they would suffer from tremors before dying: a classic sign of neonicotinoid poisoning. She did follow-up research and found that plants containing the neonicotinoid insecticide imidacloprid caused high death rates in beneficial insects like pink lady beetles, green lacewings and parasitic wasps.

It also turns out this class of pesticides may not "stay put" as much as we'd like, and that's bad news for an important class of insects: pollinators such as bees. A Purdue University study found that bees near corn fields are exposed to "extremely high concentrations of neonicotinoids in waste talc" during the spring. In other words, all that dust formed when a planter passes over a field isn't just soil—it also contains neonicotinoids, and bees may be getting doused in it. This spring beekeepers reported finding honey bees that were suffering from tremors and dying the same day that neighboring fields were being planted with neonicotinoid-coated corn.

The stakes are huge: every third bite of food we take can be linked to the activities of pollinators like bees. That's why 15 European Union countries recently voted to ban neonicotinoid chemicals after they were linked with bee die-offs there. Bayer CropScience, the major manufacturer of neonicotinoids for

corn, denies there is any evidence that its pesticide is linked to bee die-offs. But the scientific evidence is getting increasingly hard to ignore.

Entomologists say it's unlikely pesticides are the only cause of the mass bee die-offs we've seen in recent years. Lack of a diverse, healthy habitat in a landscape dominated by monocrops of corn and soybeans, as well as the prevalence of new diseases, are also contributing factors. But systemic insecticides could be one more nail in the coffin for these key insects.

→ More Information

- The Purdue University study, "Multiple Routes of Pesticide Exposure for Honey Bees Living Near Agricultural Fields," is available at www.plosone.org.

- The Summer 2009 *Land Stewardship Letter* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/landstewardshipletter) describes the threats faced by bees and other pollinators.

→ More Myth Busters

To download copies of previous installments in LSP's *Myth Busters* series, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/libraryresources/mythbusters. For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377.



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LSP News

Look Who's Knockin' Spawns Farming Discussion in the City

There's a saying that art changes people, and people change the world," said Amy Bacigalupo before a March 22 performance of *Look Who's Knockin'* in Saint Paul, Minn.

The people who attended the two-night, Twin Cities run of *Look Who's Knockin'* may not see themselves as world-changers, but the one-act Land Stewardship Project play provided an alternate view of the current rush to sell farmland for top dollar. The play portrays the moral dilemma that's posed by wanting to get the highest price possible for selling or renting one's land for the sake of personal economic security. How do retiring farmers balance that search for a financial safety net with the desire to help the next generation of farmers get started farming?

At the center of the play are the characters Nettie and Gerald, long-time conservation farmers. Should they let their farm go for top dollar to the largest farmer in the county, or should they help out a young farm couple that is interested in starting a dairy and other enterprises using alternative production and marketing systems?

The play was written by LSP organizer Doug Nopar and created out of numerous interviews and stories of both beginning and retiring farmers in recent years. It has been presented throughout the rural Upper Midwest during the past two years, and has prompted post-performance discussions on challenges faced by individuals and communities hoping to transition farms onto the next generation. The Saint Paul performances, which were held at Saint Catherine's University, were the first time the play had been presented in an urban venue.

Bacigalupo, who is the director of LSP's Farm Beginnings program (see page 14) joined LSP organizer Sarah Claassen and Farm Beginnings graduate Paula Foreman in leading an audience discussion about the future of farming. In addition, Foreman and LSP member Ben Doherty talked about their own experiences in getting started farming. Joe Adams and Terrie Adams, LSP members who have a Community Supported Agriculture operation near the Twin Cities, discussed their attempts to find successors to take over their operation. Presenting *Look Who's Knockin'* to various audiences is part of LSP's ongoing work to help beginning farmers gain access to land and other resources. See page 3 for more on this work.

If you are interested in having the play presented in your community, contact Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Give it a Listen

To listen to an LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring an audio performance of the *Look Who's Knockin'* play, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/183.

Another *Ear to the Ground* podcast features an interview with the play's author, Doug Nopar: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/184. In episode 112 (www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/45), farmer Carmen Fernholz, who directed performances of the play in western Minnesota in 2012, talks about work he and his wife Sally are doing to keep their stewardship farm's legacy alive.



After the performance, beginning farmer Ben Doherty talked about how he benefited from being able to purchase an operation from a retiring farmer who wanted her legacy to continue. Also participating in the panel discussion were (left to right) farmers Terrie and Joe Adams, as well as farmer Paula Foreman and LSP organizer Sarah Claassen. (LSP photo)



ABOVE: Gerald (Kurt Schulz) and Nettie (Nadine Schmidt) engage in a tense discussion over the future of their farm during the March 22 *Look Who's Knockin'* performance.

BELOW: The audience was a mix of retiring farmers, land-owners and people who are either beginning farmers or are interested in pursuing agriculture as a career. (LSP photos)



Land Tenure & LSP

In mid-April, Land Stewardship Project members gathered in Menomonie, Wis., to discuss the challenges they face as beginning farmers seeking land to farm. They also discussed how to shape the initial stages of LSP's organizing for more affordable, secure land tenure.

Pictured are (left to right) farmers Lauren Langworthy and Rainbow Barry, along with LSP board member and farmer Jody Lenz and farmer Megan Greeson, who recently completed a stint as a Farm Beginnings organizer.

For more on land access issues, see page 3. (Photo by Sarah Claassen) □



Ahlers Ness Leaves LSP, Claassen Returns

Julia Ahlers Ness has left the Land Stewardship Project to pursue other interests related to agriculture and sustainability. Ahlers Ness joined LSP's staff in 2011 to help launch the Chippewa 10% Project (www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/foodsystems-landstewardship/chippewa10), a joint initiative of LSP and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. The initiative is working to help farmers find profitable ways to add environmentally-friendly, diverse enterprises to their operations in the Chippewa River watershed, which is a major tributary of the Minnesota River.



Julia Ahlers Ness

As the coordinator of the Chippewa 10% Project, Ahlers Ness spearheaded developing relationships with farmers, resource agencies, business owners, nonprofit organizations and community leaders. During the past year, she was a key player in making LSP a regional leader in work to promote the development of farming systems that are good for soil health and profitable. More on this initiative is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/soilquality.

Ahlers Ness has previously worked for LSP in other capacities over the years, including as a staffer with the ground-breaking Monitoring Project.

Sarah Claassen has returned to LSP to work with its Farm Beginnings Program.



Sarah Claassen

Previously, Claassen served as an LSP Policy and Organizing Program intern and as an organizer with the Community Based Food Systems Program. In her current position, Claassen is organizing around issues related to securing affordable land tenure

for new farmers (see above).

She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Baumhardt & Nesser Serving LSP Internships

Alexandra Baumhardt and **Sienna Nesser** are serving internships with the Land Stewardship Project this summer.

Baumhardt graduated from the University of Missouri this spring with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a minor in cultural anthropology. She has worked as a journalist for various media outlets, including *The Columbia Missourian*, *VOX Magazine*, *Global Journalist*, *Retomag* and *Lostgirlsworld.com*. Baumhardt's work was recognized in 2012 by the Missouri Press Association's Better



Alex Baumhardt

Newspaper Contest.

Baumhardt has also worked on farms in New Zealand and Columbia, and taught English and sustainable agriculture in Peru.

While at LSP, she is working with the Farm Beginnings program on a journalism initiative to develop profiles of farm families who are in various stages of the transition process. She is based in LSP's Twin Cities office.

Nesser is a graduate of LSP's Farm Beginnings Program (see page 14) and

is currently a student at the University of Minnesota-Morris, where she is an environmental studies major, with a minor in studio arts. Nesser has worked on various farms in

the region, as well as at Pomme de Terre Foods in Morris. She has also been involved with the UMM Student Organic Garden Club.

While at LSP, Nesser is doing a joint internship involving the organization's Farmer Network (see page 14) and LSP member Moonstone Farm. She is based in LSP's Montevideo, Minn., office. □



Sienna Nesser

Minnesota Legislative Update

Advances on Frac Sand, 'Buy the Farm,' Sustainable Ag & Health Care

Frac Sand Restrictions Pass, but no Moratorium

By Bobby King

One of the Land Stewardship Project's priorities during the 2013 session of the Minnesota Legislature was to enact state level protections for rural communities in the southeast part of the state threatened by the frac sand industry. Citizens from that region have been organizing at the county, city and township level to keep the industry out of their communities. Regulating this large and new industry has been left almost exclusively to local governments. Counties, cities and townships don't have the resources to analyze the regional impact of the industry and don't have the expertise to monitor and limit pollution. It is past time for our state agencies, including the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Health (MDH), to move from studying the issue to taking action to regulate the industry.

For an indication of where delaying action will get us, look no further than Wisconsin, where frac sand mining and processing has exploded from a few facilities three years ago to a nation-leading industry of 105 mines and 65 processing sites, according to the *Star Tribune* newspaper. The result: water and air have been polluted, rural communities devastated and thousands of people negatively impacted. There have been two documented large frac sand mine spills in Wisconsin and both incidents were reported by citizens, not the responsible companies. One was at a frac sand mine and processing facility located near Grantsburg, just 100 feet outside the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway. For five days, massive amounts of frac sand and water flowed from a holding pond through a failed berm and into an environmentally sensitive area that included a wetland, creek and the Saint Croix River.

A county enforcement officer told *Wisconsin Public Radio*: "So, we've learned that citations are pretty much ineffective for this industry. This industry has very deep pockets and a wealth of resources."

A Regulatory Framework

With input from LSP members working in their local communities to stop the frac sand onslaught in Minnesota, we called for state legislation that enacts:

- Strong state-level permitting requirements that work with local control. These state-level requirements would serve as a floor and would be in addition to any local land use ordinances.
- A moratorium on any new frac sand facilities to allow time for creating state requirements and to complete an in-depth study.
- An in-depth state study, such as a Generic Environmental Impact Statement. This study would help set state permitting standards and analyze the potential impact of the industry.
- Permitting fees and taxes on the industry that cover the costs of state regulation and damage to roads and bridges.

These proposals gave us the opportunity to fully address the scope of the problem, to show the depth of local opposition to the frac sand industry and what a comprehensive state level solution would look like. Senator Matt Schmit of Red Wing authored legislation that put this comprehensive approach forward. Citizens by the hundreds, as well as local government officials from southeast Minnesota, weighed in with strong support of these bills. Schmit pushed to the

Frac Sand Mining 101

Frac sand, also called silica sand, is a very fine, round sand found throughout the bluff country of western Wisconsin, northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota.

The frac sand is used in hydraulic fracturing, which is the process of extracting gas and oil by injecting a highly pressurized "fracking" fluid containing sand that creates new channels in the rock.

Frac sand mining is strip mining—the top of a bluff is removed through blasting or topsoil removal.

end to get as much passed as possible—without his leadership, it is likely that no meaningful legislation would have passed.

Our efforts were hampered when not enough legislative leaders were willing to stand up to the frac sand special interests. All the other legislators from the heart of southeast Minnesota — Sen. Jeremy Miller (R-Winona), Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston), Rep. Gene Pelowski (DFL-Winona), Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Red Wing) and Rep. Steve Dratzkowski (R-Mazeppa) — sided with frac sand interests in opposing a moratorium, and none proposed any meaningful legislation on the issue. The path of the Senate bills ended up in the Environment and Agricultural Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), who refused to allow the strongest provisions to move forward. On the House side, the needed provisions were not even introduced.

Working with Minnesota Trout Unlimited, Schmit also advanced a bill protecting southeast Minnesota trout streams from frac sand mining and processing. The bill banned frac sand mining within a mile of any spring, groundwater seepage area, designated trout stream or its tributary. It also limited groundwater usage to less than a million gallons a year, and prohibited frac sand mining within 25 feet of the water table. These provisions would have dramatically limited the harm frac sand mining can do in southeast Minnesota. Governor Mark Dayton had weighed in against a moratorium earlier in the legislative session. We called on him to support Schmit's proposals, telling him that, without a moratorium, strong protections were needed immediately before more frac sand mines could be established.

In the Senate Environment and Agriculture Finance Committee, Tomassoni, the committee chair, led a successful effort to strip the trout stream protections from the bill. At the next committee hearing for the bill, Schmit attempted to get the provisions reinserted. DNR commissioner Tom Landwehr testified that the provisions were necessary to protect the state's investment in some of the country's best trout streams. However, Sen. Miller of Winona ended up casting the deciding vote against the provisions. As a result, over 100 of his constituents signed an oversized postcard that many of them delivered to Miller in Saint Paul. It said, in part: "We are calling on you to start putting the well-being of the citizens of your district above frac sand special interests."

Undaunted, Schmit vowed to push the trout stream provisions on the Senate floor. In a front page *Star Tribune* article that ran May 8, Gov. Dayton was quoted as saying

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about the proposal, "I strongly support that position and will do everything I can in conference committee to get it enacted." That same day, volunteers in the Minneapolis and Lewiston LSP offices worked the phones, calling on other members from around the state to urge their Senators to support the proposal. On May 10, the *Star Tribune* ran a strong editorial in support of these provisions. LSP members along with Audubon Minnesota members were at the capitol that day to hand out the editorial and urge Senators to support these provisions. However, the day before, Dayton withdrew support for a hard setback of a mile from trout streams after meeting with industry representatives privately. That resulted in legislative leaders, frac sand industry lobbyists and state agency representatives developing alternative provisions, which were eventually passed as part of a larger omnibus bill.

Provisions Must be Enforced

In the end, we did not win the comprehensive approach that was necessary to fully protect southeast Minnesota from the frac sand mining industry. However, provisions did pass that can make a difference if implemented aggressively by the Dayton administration. The test of these provisions will be, "Do they make a difference on the ground?" That will depend entirely on how aggressively the Dayton administration implements and enforces them.

Below is a summary of the most important pieces that passed and how they could be helpful if aggressively implemented:

- In southeast Minnesota, frac sand mines within a mile of a trout stream are prohibited unless granted a DNR "trout stream setback permit." The DNR must be consistent and deny these permits.



Over 100 southeast Minnesota residents signed a postcard to Sen. Jeremy Miller protesting his deciding vote on regulating frac sand facilities. (Photo by Johanna Rupprecht)

- Local governments can now extend moratoriums on frac sand facilities until March 2015, regardless of how long moratoriums have already been in place. State law had limited local moratoriums to two years at most and some local governments are approaching this limit.
- The MPCA must create rules to address silica dust from frac sand projects. We need the MPCA to use this authority to set an ambient air quality standard that is enforceable at the property line of a frac sand facility.
- The DNR must create rules for reclamation of frac sand mines.

Among other things, this must include posting a bond so that frac sand companies that go out of business or go bankrupt don't shift this reclamation cost onto the public.

- For two years, the threshold for environmental review for frac sand mines is lowered from 40 acres to 20 acres and the environmental review requires studies dealing with water quality and quantity, air quality and traffic impacts.

- During this two-year period, the En-

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Dear Governor: Do the Math on Frac Sand Mining

Governor Mark Dayton met with representatives of the frac sand industry on May 10. After this meeting, he substantially weakened his stance on a setback from trout streams for frac sand mines. In response, an LSP member sent this letter on May 11:

Dear Governor Dayton,

I understand you met with frac sand industry representatives yesterday. I would imagine their rhetoric included the promise of jobs and state competitiveness. Before accepting their statements as fact, I encourage you to consider the following: 1) According

to *Industrial Minerals*, Wisconsin produces more frac sand than any other state. 2) According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, companies in Wisconsin have been mining frac sand since at least 2007.

I would guess that Wisconsin's economy is on the smaller side among all states in the U.S. If you believe the oil and gas industry, natural gas production (fracking) is a huge contributor to the U.S. economy. If Wisconsin is the biggest producer of frac sand in the nation, and they've been doing it for at least six years, shouldn't this important industry have had a positive effect on Wisconsin's economy

by now? According to a report released by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in April of this year, Wisconsin ranks 45 out of the 50 states in long-term job growth, and dead last (50 out of 50) in short-term job growth.

I urge you to focus on protecting the health, safety and welfare of Minnesota residents, rather than the empty promises of industry when you consider frac sand mining regulation in Minnesota. Please continue to support Senator Matt Schmit's trout stream protections.

— Sincerely,
Kelley Stange, Houston County

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Environmental Quality Board must update its environmental review rules to better address the frac sand industry. We need to ensure that, among other things, the rules set strict standards on cumulative impacts and defining as one project multiple mines that will be managed by the same owners.

Making Our Voices Heard

In early June, LSP members and others from southeast Minnesota met with Gov. Dayton and the commissioners of the DNR and MPCA at the capitol. Dayton told the group that he wants the toughest possible

implementation of newly enacted laws to control the frac sand industry. He also committed to visiting communities affected by this industry later this year.

We had a big impact at the capitol. LSP

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members and others packed hearing rooms, and literally busloads of southeast Minnesotans and others were at the capitol to demand strong action. The movement to control frac sand mining was strengthened. Activists from around southeast Minnesota came together and made deeper connections

on bus rides to the capitol. LSP, Save the Bluffs, Houston County Protectors, Winona Area Citizens Concerned About Silica Mining, Minnesota Trout Unlimited, Friends of Wabasha, Audubon Minnesota and others worked as an effective coalition. The documentary on frac sand mining, *The Price of Sand*, was shown to crowds who moved from education to action.

LSP will continue to organize at the local level to stop a proposed cluster of frac sand mines in southeast Minnesota, and to help members pass local ordinances to ban or limit such mines. We will also push the Dayton administration to use this new legislative authority to put the interests of rural communities above that of corporate profits. □

Bobby King, an LSP organizer who focuses on state policy issues, can be reached at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Legislation Ensures Fair Farmer Compensation due to Power Line Relocation

By Mike McMahon

An important clarification to Minnesota's ground-breaking "Buy the Farm" law was passed by the state Legislature on the final day of the 2013 session. It was later signed into law by Governor Mark Dayton.

"Keeping the 'Buy the Farm' law strong says that Minnesotans value family farmers above profits for energy conglomerates," says Dave Minar of Cedar Summit Farm near New Prague, Minn. "Our future as a fourth-generation family dairy farm was in jeopardy because Xcel Energy and others were trying to twist the law. This clarification means farmers will be treated fairly."

Under the unique "Buy the Farm" law, which was originally passed in 1977, farmers have the right to require that utility companies purchase their entire farm if high voltage power lines are going to pass through their property. This law was intended to require that utilities reimburse farmers for their land, relocation expenses and lost business. The law was a result of hard fought negotiations between farmers and utility companies over power transmission lines cutting across farmland in the 1970s.

With the construction of more than 650 miles of high voltage power lines—a project called "CapX2020"—across Minnesota currently underway, the law has renewed importance to family farmers and landowners throughout the state.

Backers of CapX2020, which includes Xcel Energy and 10 others, are trying to

avoid paying their fair share to family farmers affected by the project. In an attempt to blur the intent of the law, they are claiming that farmers are voluntarily relocating their farms and that any reimbursements for moving expenses and lost business would be "extra compensation."

That's why a broad range of organizations from the family farm, sustainable energy, social justice, local business and faith communities support keeping the "Buy the Farm" law true to its original intent.

The provisions passed this spring clarify this issue, making it clear that farmers will receive compensation for moving and lost business.

After stalling in conference committee, the "Buy the Farm" clarification was amended onto a bill on the Senate floor on the eve of the Legislator's adjournment, and passed on the House floor the next day.

Representative David Bly (DFL-Northfield) and Senator Kevin Dahle (DFL-Northfield) championed the "Buy the Farm" law provisions from the beginning and were key players in keeping them alive during the waning days of the session.

The bill had stalled in the Senate when key committee chairs refused to act on the proposal. Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-Saint Louis Park), Chair of the Judiciary Committee, refused to hear the bill, making it unable to progress as a stand-alone piece of legislation. In the House, the provisions completed the committee process and were included as part of the House Environment and Agriculture Omnibus Finance Bill.

However, in conference committee Sen.

David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), the Senate Chair of the Conference Committee, refused to accept the language. By amending the language onto a bill on the Senate floor, Dahle was able to overcome these procedural roadblocks. Among the handful of Senators voting "no" were Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Policy Committee, and Tomassoni, Chair of the Environment and Agriculture Finance Committee.

"When I heard that CapX was claiming that protections passed in 2010 concerning land takings under eminent domain did not apply to the 'Buy the Farm' provision, and when I listened to the stories of dairy farmers like Julie Schwartz and Dave Minar, it was clear that refining this law could make the difference in whether or not they would continue to farm," says Bly. "That's why getting 'Buy the Farm' done this session was a priority for me."

Dahle says that this bill strengthens legislation related to this issue that he helped pass in 2009.

"Corporations that skirt the law not only inconvenience us, but they can possibly put us in danger," he says. "The changes we've authored will further protect the rights of local farmers by closing loopholes and holding big companies accountable to the law." □

Mike McMahon is LSP's Director of Individual Giving and helped organize around the "Buy the Farm" issue during the 2013 legislative session. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

MinnesotaCare Program is Strengthened

By Paul Sobocinski & Megan Buckingham

This year Minnesota has taken real steps to put people at the center of our health care system. In addition to creating a strong health care exchange (see No. 1, 2013, Land Stewardship Letter, page 11), this winter the Minnesota State Legislature also acted to strengthen and improve the MinnesotaCare Program.

For 20 years, MinnesotaCare has helped working people who can't afford health insurance on the private market get access to good, affordable coverage. With the rollout of the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) this year, the future of MinnesotaCare was in question. To continue the program, Minnesota leaders needed to act to improve MinnesotaCare by making it a "Basic Health Plan," so that it would have better benefits, fewer barriers to enrollment and be more affordable.

During the 2013 session of the Minnesota Legislature, a budget was passed that continues and strengthens MinnesotaCare. The final Health and Human Services Budget makes MinnesotaCare more affordable by reducing premiums 10 percent to 50 percent for the 130,000 low-income Minnesotans who currently get their insurance through the program. Some of the barriers to enrolling in MinnesotaCare, namely the waiting period and asset cap, have also been removed.

That means people who qualify will not have to go without insurance during a four-month waiting period, and they will qualify based solely on their income, with no test on assets like land, vehicles or savings accounts. Once these restrictions are removed in 2014, tens of thousands more people—many of whom currently go without insurance or make do with high-deductible coverage—will qualify for MinnesotaCare.

This win comes out of powerful organizing. Back in January, there were leaders in Minnesota who questioned whether or not it was a good idea to do the work necessary to

keep and improve MinnesotaCare. Some considered letting the program expire and shifting participants to Minnesota's new health exchange.

But Land Stewardship Project members and allies made it clear from the beginning that MinnesotaCare was a priority. We saw an opportunity to build on MinnesotaCare's legacy to keep Minnesota moving forward, making progress towards a health care system that works for everyone, no exceptions.

LSP members joined with Minnesotans from across the state to tell our own stories about problems attaining affordable health care—the stories of real Minnesotans, urban and rural. These stories were

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critical to making decision-makers aware of what was at stake. A diverse coalition of people's organizations worked together to show that MinnesotaCare is important to all our communities—especially self-employed farmers, communities of color, and rural and urban residents with lower-paying jobs that don't offer health insurance, as well as small-business people whose voices are often usurped by corporate lobbyists. Groups like TakeAction Minnesota, Churches United in Ministry (CHUM) in Duluth, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), ISAIAH and the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, just to name a few, worked together for health care policies that would be good for all our communities.

In the end, our voices were heard loud and clear. MinnesotaCare will still be available for individuals and families whose income is between 138 percent and 200 percent of the poverty line. The state also expanded the Medicaid program that covers the poorest Minnesotans and a people-centered health exchange that

will give people more collective power and better options when purchasing health insurance from big corporations.

We also asked that corporations be made to pay their fair share and that they be held accountable for their use of public health care funds. As a result, in the overall state budget, some corporate tax loopholes were closed. That's a very good thing for MinnesotaCare and health care funding across the board. It helps limit the game-playing and money-shifting that is too often employed in state budgets to cover for the missing revenue the corporations owe but avoid paying.

The Health and Human Services bill also reforms the way HMOs pay surcharges they owe the state and caps what state-contracted HMOs are allowed to account toward administrative expenses. This means HMOs won't get to hide big executive salaries under administrative expenses.

All in all, this session was a big step forward in putting people, not profits, at the center of health care in Minnesota. □

Megan Buckingham and Paul Sobocinski are LSP organizers working on health care issues. Buckingham can be reached at 507-523-3366 or meganb@landstewardshipproject.org. Sobocinski can be reached at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@redred.com. More information is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org on the **Affordable Health Care for All** page.

What do the Changes Mean?

Minnesota made a lot of changes to our health care system this year. That's good news, but also means getting acquainted with new tweaks to the system. This summer, LSP will be holding a series of meetings to talk with members about the changes to our health care system and what they will mean for farmers, small businesses and families in different situations. See www.landstewardshipproject.org or watch the **LIVE-WIRE** e-letter for details as they are finalized.

Sustainable Ag Receives Funding...Sort of

By Paul Sobocinski

The recently concluded session of the Minnesota Legislature resulted in some mixed news for those of us interested in seeing solid support for research on, and promotion of, sustainable farming systems.

The Minnesota Department of Agri-

culture's (MDA) Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program has supported farming innovations in the state for almost a quarter-century. Farmers who qualify for these competitive grants are able to do the kind of on-farm research that they would normally never have the resources to undertake. They then report those results in the widely-read and popular *Greenbook*, which

helps get that information to farmers across the state and even across the country.

A typical *Greenbook* provides summaries of practical, on-farm studies on everything from the basics — improving quality of forages in grazing systems and establishing cover crops — to the more exotic — using solar energy to heat soil in high tunnel vegetable production.

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This is the kind of practical research you won't see featured in scientific journals, but will see replicated on farms around the state.

"This is a good incubator for good ideas in agriculture," says Dennis Johnson, a retired U of M dairy scientist who did cutting edge work on grazing while at the West Central Research and Outreach Center.

But here's the problem: the nationally respected Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grants Program has been the victim of an extremely uneven funding cycle over the years. In 2009, for example, annual funding went from \$160,000 to \$100,000, plus then-Governor Tim Pawlenty vetoed the second year of funding. This almost decimated the initiative's ability to provide even basic grants.

In 2011 the Legislature continued this inequity when it passed language that only "allowed" MDA Commissioner Dave Frederickson to spend up to \$100,000 annually on the program — no actual funding was mandated. The bottom line: the MDA's sustainable agriculture initiative has no real

commitment in solid funding.

That's why, during the 2013 session of the Minnesota Legislature, the Land Stewardship Project was asking for \$281,000 per year for the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program. The House of Representatives did provide \$190,000 in annual hard funding for the program, but it was removed in the conference committee

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process. By the time the final bill was passed on to Governor Mark Dayton, the legislation that funded the Agriculture Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Program contained no solid revenue source for the Sustainable Ag Demonstration Program.

The good news is that the MDA has produced a fact sheet that lays out a plan for spending \$500,000 every two-year funding cycle on the Sustainable Ag Demonstration Program. This is a positive move, but relies on the MDA to follow through on this paper promise. This same fact sheet also says that

during the upcoming two-year budget cycle, the MDA will spend \$3 million of AGRI money on farm-to-school local foods market development and a "Livestock Development" program that has provided some support for sustainable ag practices in the past. The MDA's budget also sets aside money for promoting sustainable practices like cover crops.

All of this is better than nothing, but it falls short of the kind of solid funding these initiatives deserve. Lacking a legislative mandate, it wouldn't take much for the MDA to adjust its priorities and slash or even completely remove funding for sustainable agriculture initiatives.

Sustainable agriculture is a public good, and it deserves its fair share of permanent funding like the rest of agriculture, and that hard money should be provided by the Legislature.

Lacking that permanent funding, LSP and its allies will be watching closely during the coming months to make certain the MDA keeps its promise. We will also be pushing in future legislative sessions for funding bills that give this sector of agriculture the support it deserves. □

Paul Sobocinski farms in southwest Minnesota and is a Land Stewardship Project organizer. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or sobopaul@redred.com.

Federal Farm Policy

Farm Bill—the Delay Continues

By Adam Warthesen

This spring we faced what can be best described as a doubleheader on farm policy as both the U.S. Senate and House rushed to complete their versions of a new five-year Farm Bill.

In some ways, the proposals coming out of the House and Senate were similar: growth in federally subsidized crop insurance, cuts to conservation and the elimination of direct commodity payments. In other ways, they were vastly different—the greatest variance being the scale of proposed spending cuts.

The Senate bill, which was passed by that body on June 10, proposed cutting \$17.7 billion overall, with a more distributed set of reductions in various titles.

The House proposal aimed to cut \$33.3 billion, with over \$20 billion coming from nutrition spending alone. The full House debated its bill for three days and on June 20 voted it down by a margin of 195 to 234. This somewhat surprising move is perhaps

a sign that rushing a Farm Bill through the legislative process doesn't make the more unpalatable proposals any more digestible to many members of Congress.

Having no new Farm Bill as the Sept. 30 government fiscal year deadline looms is troubling. But some encouraging proposals emerged this spring that might eventually form the basis of a solid piece of legislation.

LSP & the Farm Bill

The Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy web page has regular updates on the Farm Bill. It also lists LSP's priorities for creating a Farm Bill that supports beginning farmers, conservation and community based food systems.

Check it out at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/federalpolicy.

Updates on the Farm Bill are also available via *LIVE-WIRE*, LSP's e-letter. See page 31 for details on subscribing to this free service.

One encouraging amendment—authored by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tom Coburn (R-OK)—contained in the Senate bill limits the amount of crop insurance subsidies offered to wealthy farm investors and operators. Income limits are something that most farm programs embrace but shockingly, federally subsidized crop insurance has eluded such caps.

The crop insurance subsidy limit amendment reaffirms the position of the U.S. Senate—it voted to pass it once before in 2012—that if producers make over \$750,000 they would pay a greater share of their crop insurance premium. LSP focused on the "Durbin-Coburn" amendment and applauds the fact that Minnesota Senators Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar support it. Clearly, it would be preferable for this limit to be much lower than \$750,000, but establishing even this level is progress.

Federal crop insurance is the largest piece of farm-oriented spending at \$94 billion over 10 years. While an important tool to help farmers manage risk, it needs reforms

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to ensure accountability and cut waste.

In late May, during a meeting with Congressman Tim Walz at the southern Minnesota farm of Arvid, Lois and Jon Jovaag, LSP members talked about the need for a Farm Bill that supports beginning farmers and conservation, while reducing payouts to wealthy producers.

Arvid Jovaag talked about his concerns that more Farm Bill funding would be targeted at crop insurance, drawing resources away from such initiatives as beginning farmer programs.

"We need more farmers, not less," Jovaag told Walz. □

Adam Warthesen is an LSP organizer who works on federal policy issues. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.



U.S. Rep. Tim Walz met with LSP members in late May on the farm of Arvid, Lois and Jon Jovaag. Pictured are (left to right) Tim Gossman, Ruth Ofstedal, Jon Jovaag, Lois Jovaag, Arvid Jovaag and Walz. (Photo by Doug Nopar)

LSP Helps Launch MN Farmworker Justice Campaign

By Doug Nopar

Aiming to raise public awareness about violations of farmworker rights on industrial livestock farms in the state, three Minnesota organizations launched the Minnesota Farmworker Justice Campaign April 18 in Minneapolis.

Centro Campesino (the Farmworker Center), the Land Stewardship Project, and the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) have combined forces and are asking allies around the state to help document farmworker rights violations. The groups are also calling on the University of Minnesota and U of M Extension to dramatically increase their educational and research activities in the area of farm labor.

The organizations have been hearing of worker rights issues on a number of large-scale livestock farms the past several years. "Wage theft" cases were disclosed this winter when the groups learned that two of the largest industrial farms in southeast Minnesota had not been paying overtime wages (*see the No. 1, 2013, Land Stewardship Letter, page 14*).

"We've seen cases like these, particularly on large-scale dairy and hog operations, for a number of years and we continue to witness them," says Ernesto Velez Bustos,

sized farms and the environment.

"The University is the institution that everyone looks to," she says. "In this case, it's their responsibility to make sure that

farm employers are educated on the issue of worker rights. I'd bet that 80 percent of employers treat their employees well. The ones that don't follow the rules put a black mark on those that do right by their workers."

Nelson adds that the wage theft situations give violators an economic advantage over the farms that do follow the rules. "If they're in business, it's their obligation to know the labor laws," she says. □



Participants in the Farmworker Justice Campaign discussed the need to document wage theft and worker rights violations. (LSP photo)

executive director of Centro Campesino in Owatonna, Minn. "This is wage theft. Whether the farmworkers are Minnesota natives or immigrant workers, not being paid your full wages is against the law."

Barb Nelson of rural Lewiston, Minn., is a member of LSP's state policy committee that has pushed the U of M to be more responsive to the needs of small- and mid-

Doug Nopar is a Policy Program organizer in LSP's southeast Minnesota office. For more on the Minnesota Farmworker Justice Campaign, contact him at 507-523-3366 or dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org.

Give it a Listen

On LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, participants in the Minnesota Farmworker Justice Campaign talk about farmworker rights violations and the importance of reaching out to farmers, consumers and institutions on this issue: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/423.

Farm Beginnings

2013-2014 Farm Beginnings Course Accepting Applications

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is now accepting applications until Aug. 1 for the 2013-2014 class session. There will be two separate classes—one in central Minnesota (Saint Cloud area) and one in southeast Minnesota (Winona area).

In 2013, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 16th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is designed for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

This 10-month training course provides 43 hours of training and hands-on learning opportunities in the form of classroom sessions, farm tours, field days, workshops and access to an extensive farmer network.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the fall, run until March 2014, followed by an on-farm

education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions. Over the years, more than 600 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Beginnings classes have been held over the years in Illinois, Nebraska and North Dakota. Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, New York and Maine.

For application materials or more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org, or contact Karen Benson at 507-523-3366, lsps@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Farm Beginnings Video

A short video featuring Farm Beginnings graduates talking about the course is at www.youtube.com/user/lspsnow.



Farm Beginnings graduate Jason Montgomery-Riess works as a grower at Wozupi, a produce operation in Prior Lake, Minn. See page 18 for more on Montgomery-Riess. (LSP photo)

LSP Farmer Network

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program has created the Farmer Network, a group of over 130 producers who represent a broad spectrum of farming enterprises. Members of the Farmer Network share their experiences and provide informal mentoring to those in the beginning to intermediate stages of production agriculture.

For more on LSP's Farmer Network, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork, or contact Parker Forsell at 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP Journeyperson Farm Training Course Deadline Sept. 1

The Land Stewardship Project's Journeyperson Farm Training Course provides new farmers who are in their first few years of launching their operations assistance through mentorship, financial planning assistance, whole farm planning, peer-to-peer learning and matched savings accounts. The focus of this initiative, which is based on a similar initiative started by LSP's Farm Beginnings Collaborative partner the Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association, is to pair up newer farmers with veteran, mentor farmers.

Each farm in the course will also take part in a matched savings account program, where participants will deposit up to \$100 in a savings account on a monthly basis. After two years, their money will be matched and they will be able to use it toward a capital improvement on their farm.

Prospective Journeypersons should be Farm Beginnings graduates, Farm Beginnings students, or experienced farmers able to demonstrate basic competence in a range of skills, a solid commitment and reasonably clear and realistic plans for their future farming activities.

Journeypersons must be farming land and marketing a product or, at the very least, have plans to market a product during the year they are participating in the course.

The deadline for the 2014 course is Sept. 1. Fifteen farms will be accepted to the program each calendar year. For more information, contact Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, 507-523-3366, or Richard Ness at rness@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105. More information is also available at www.farmbeginnings.org under the "LSP Farmer Network" link. □

Farm Beginnings Summer Field Days

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program offers trainings throughout the spring, summer, fall and winter. This summer, it is hosting a variety of on-farm field days and farm tours throughout the region. Field days are free to LSP members and open to the public for \$35 each. Here are the events scheduled for the next several months:

→ **JULY 27: CSA Vegetables, Machinery & Finances** — Loon Organics, Hutchinson, Minn. RSVP: Nick Olson, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-1057

→ **AUGUST 3: Hogs, Cattle, Fruit, Flowers & Greenhouse Production** — Little Foot Farm, Afton, Minn. RSVP: Richard Ness, rness@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105

→ **AUGUST 17: Public Farm Tour, Grass-fed Beef** — Early Boots Farm, Sauk Centre, Minn. RSVP: Nick Olson, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-1057

→ **AUGUST 23: Fruits/Orchard and Farm Establishment** — Mary Dirty Face Farm, Downsville, Wis. RSVP: Parker Forsell, parker@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366

→ **SEPTEMBER 3: High Tunnel Field Day** — Uproot Farm, Princeton, Minn. RSVP: Nick Olson, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-1057

For the latest on these and other Farm Beginnings field days and workshops, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

PHOTOS: A Farm Beginnings workshop/field day held in May on the Grant and Dawn Breitreutz farm focused on developing grazing systems and pasture improvement. For more on the Breitreutz operation, see page 27.



Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Upper Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the Upper Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling him at 507-523-3366. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Trent Mattison is seeking to rent 160 acres of tillable farmland in **Minnesota**. No house is required. Contact: Trent Mattison, 507-430-3155.

◆ Shodo Spring is seeking to purchase 10+ acres of farmland in **southeast Minnesota's Rice, Dakota, Goodhue or Scott county**. Upon finding a farm, Spring will be seeking partners (<https://vairochanafarm.wordpress.com>). Contact: Shodo Spring, 507-384-8541, shodo.spring@gmail.com.

◆ Sarah Stai is seeking to buy 5-10 acres of farmland in the region east of the **Twin Cities or in western Wisconsin**. Features like orchards, berry patches, fencing, etc., would be a bonus. Contact: Sarah Stai, 952-223-1223, arctictern2002@yahoo.com.

◆ Sara Gustafson is seeking to buy 10+ acres of farmland in **Minnesota's Carver or McLeod County, near the Twin Cities**. She is open to alternative financing, such as contract for deed, etc. Contact: Sara Gustafson, saraderhaag@gmail.com.

◆ Kris Krol is seeking to buy 20 to 60 acres of farmland **within 90 minutes of the Twin Cities**. A barn, a house and land that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. Contact: Kris Krol, 763-670-3498, jkkrol@visi.com.

◆ Xie Cha is seeking to rent approximately 2 acres of land for gardening within **30 minutes of Minnesota's Twin Cities**. No house is required. Contact: Xie Cha, 612-521-4297.

◆ Vang Her is seeking to rent 2-4 acres of tillable farmland for gardening within **30 minutes of Minnesota's Twin Cities**. No house is required. Contact: Vang Her, 651-263-3909.

◆ Daniel Yildirim is seeking to buy 8-40 acres of farmland in **southwest Wisconsin**. Yildirim would prefer pasture and land that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact Daniel or Laila Yildirim, 928-830-3311, dyildirim@gmail.com.

◆ Diana Gerow is seeking to buy 20 acres of farmland in **western Minnesota**. She would prefer that the land has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Diana Gerow, 716-825-1306, danalyjah@westernworldtreepress.com.

◆ Aaron Olson is seeking to buy tillable farmland in **western Minnesota's Lac qui Parle County**. No house is required. He is graduating from North Dakota State University with a degree in agricultural economics and a minor in crop and weed science, and is looking to expand his operation on his family farm. Contact: Aaron Olson, 320-598-7941 aaron.olson.3@my.ndsu.edu.

◆ Josh Berge is seeking to buy 30 to 100 acres of farmland in **southeast Minnesota's Dodge or Olmsted County**. He is looking for a contract for deed or rent to own situation. Contact: Josh Berge, 507-923-5840, josh.berge@gmail.com.

◆ Tessa Feichtinger is seeking to purchase farmland in **northern Minnesota, near Ely or Duluth**. Feichtinger would like 1-5 tillable acres and 5-40 wooded acres; land that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. Contact: Tessa Feichtinger, tessa.feichtinger@gmail.com, 218-340-5614.

◆ Brad Vokac is seeking farmland to rent for deer hunting in **southeast Minnesota or western Wisconsin**. He is willing to pay cash rent or trade work hours. Contact: Brad Vokac, Bradvokac70@yahoo.com.

◆ Laurie Hawkins-Belden is seeking to buy 10 acres of pastured land in **northern Minnesota's Cook County**. No house is required. Contact: Laurie Hawkins-Belden, 651-407-2292.

◆ David and Heather Rosenberg are seeking to rent farmland in **west-central Minnesota**. They would like the property to be big enough to raise produce for selling. Contact: Heather or David Rosenberg, 320-424-9608, drosenberg1027@gmail.com.

◆ Adam Donatelle is seeking to buy pastured land in **Minnesota**. No house is required. Contact: Adam Donatelle, 651-248-0492, adamdonatelle@gmail.com.

◆ Shane Maas is seeking to buy tillable farmland in **west-central Minnesota's Big Stone or Lac Qui Parle County**. Contact: Shane Maas, 320-349-0368, shanemaas@hotmail.com.

◆ David Puppe is seeking to rent a dairy farm with pasture in the **Midwest**. He would prefer a farm with milking facilities and a house. Contact: David Puppe, 651-261-2257, dpuppe@ymail.com.

◆ John and Ann Elward are seeking to buy 40+ acres of land in **southwest Wisconsin or southeast Minnesota**. Contact: John and Ann Elward, 612-729-2096 John@elward.org.

◆ Kyle Bucholz is seeking to rent farmland in **western Wisconsin's Pierce County**. No house is required. Contact: Kyle Bucholz, 715-307-1454, malkyle@yahoo.com.

◆ Ryan Erisman is seeking to buy 40 to 160 acres of pastured farmland in **southern Wisconsin's Dane or Jefferson county**. He would prefer that the property have a functional or repairable barn and a house. Contact: Ryan Erisman, 206-755-0089 or rjerisman@yahoo.com.

◆ Marco Tejeda is seeking to buy 5-40 acres of tillable land in **southern Wisconsin's Dane County** for a direct-to-market operation. No outbuildings or house are required. Contact: Marco Tejeda, 608-208-0717, marcoanderica@gmail.com.

◆ Ryan is seeking to purchase 80-200 acres of tillable farmland in **northwest Iowa's Lyon County**. Contact: Ryan, 712-477-2343.

◆ Ryan Wessling is seeking to buy 1-5 acres of farmland in **southwest Illinois' Madison County** for his honeybee operation. He is willing to rent land on an orchard operation and other farmed land. Contact: Ryan Wessling, 708-860-5093, rwessli@siue.edu or augustusapiaries@gmail.com.

Clearinghouse, see page 17...

◆ TaMeca Mines is seeking to buy 5+ acres of farmland in *southwest Ohio's Hamilton County*. No house is required. Contact: TaMeca Mines, 513-655-1752.

◆ Kasi Richter is seeking to buy 1-2 acres of farmland in *northern Ohio's Sandusky County*. Richter would prefer pasture and fencing. No house is required. Contact: Kasi Richter, frogchickk@gmail.com.

◆ Chris Kutz is seeking to rent 25+ acres of tillable farmland in *Ohio*. No house is required. Contact: Chris Kutz, 614-653-0406.

◆ Shari Greenland is seeking to rent farmland in *Ohio*. A house and land that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. Contact: Shari Greenland, 216-906-2801, srgreenland@aol.com.

◆ Sarah is seeking to rent tillable farmland in the *tri-state area of Cincinnati, Ohio*. She would prefer that the land have a house. Contact: Sarah, 602-793-9678.

◆ Josh Turner is seeking to buy 45+ acres of farmland in *west-central Ohio's Champaign County*. He would prefer pasture, good fencing for rotational grazing, a tie stall barn and a milking parlor. Contact: Josh Turner, johndeerefarmer@hotmail.com, 937-360-4224.

◆ Bryan Cruthers is seeking to rent 40 acres of tillable farmland in *southern Michigan's Shiawassee County*. He would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Bryan Cruthers, 989-413-2175, blcruthers@juno.com.

◆ Blair Butterfield is seeking to buy farmland in the U.S. A water source would be ideal. Contact: Blair Butterfield, blair@artofculturalevolution.org.

Farmland Available

◆ Joe and Terrie Adams have for sale a 20-acre farming operation near the Shakopee/Prior Lake area in the Twin Cities region. This is a successful CSA operation and the land has been sustainably farmed for five years (it has not been sprayed for several years). There is a remodeled barn with a walk-in cooler, a chicken coop, pole barn, members' shelter, 30 x 72 hoop house, drip irrigation and a partially furnished house. The operation is located on a state highway and is in an ideal location for a vegetable stand. Contact: Joe Adams, 612-710-2062.

◆ Gwen Goretsas and Kelly Fregien have for sale 63 acres of farmland in *Chisago County, near Minnesota's Twin Cities*. It consists of pasture, open land suitable for crop growth and wooded acres. Tillable land is in native wild grasses. The trees on the perimeter of the fields are enrolled in a Department of Natural Resources program. No chemicals have been used on the land since 2000. There is a barn and house. The asking price is \$229,900. Contact: Brian Witte, 651-271-6465.

◆ Mary Rose O'Reilley has for sale an urban homestead in the *Mac-Groveland area of Saint Paul, Minn.* There are raised beds that produce enough vegetables to market. The entire yard is planted in fruit trees (cherry and apple), raspberries, strawberries, asparagus, heritage roses and native plants. The house is a 1912 Craftsman with original woodwork, floors and built-ins; three-plus bedrooms, one-bath, basement studio. The asking price is \$225,000. Contact: Mary Rose O'Reilley, 651-699-8452, mreilley@stthomas.edu.

◆ Linda Stewart has for sale a produce farm *55 miles west of Minnesota's Twin Cities*. The 83-acre chemical-free farm includes 25 acres tillable. No animals have been raised on the property since 2000 (24 chickens in that year). Produce farming equipment and bed and breakfast furnishings negotiable in purchase of farm. Contact: www.kingstonontheocrow.com or Linda Stewart, kingstonontheocrow@gmail.com.

◆ Jack McCann has 63 acres of farmland for rent in *Minnesota's Carver County*, near Watertown. The land is certified organic and has new drain tile, clover crop planted in 2012 and manure spread this past fall. There is no housing available on-site. The price range is negotiable. Contact: Jack McCann, 612-217-1770, Jack@truecostarm.com.

◆ Bob Walser has a 55-acre farm near *southeast Minnesota's Cannon Falls* in transition to organic. Three acres are tilled up at present, with 24 acres in alfalfa. He is looking for projects that will increase the understanding of the economics of small-scale agriculture and the nature of the soil and microclimate. Walser is interested in some rental agreement. Some of what has already occurred on the farm can be seen at the farm blog: www.youngwalser.net. Contact: Bob Walser, 612-377-9284, farm@youngwalser.net.

◆ Scott Miller has for sale 25.5 acres of farmland in *southeast Minnesota's Goodhue County*. It has not been sprayed for several years and no crops have been raised on the

land for over 15 years. The asking price is \$6,500 per acre. Contact: Scott Miller, 507-491-3308.

◆ Linda Ruddle has 20 acres of farmland for rent *north of Rochester, in southeast Minnesota*. The land is in transition to being certified organic—it was last sprayed in 2011. The price is negotiable. Contact: Linda Ruddle, LKRuddle@yahoo.com.

◆ Sarah Lake has for sale a 40-acre farm in *southeast Minnesota's Fillmore County*. It includes pasture, some fencing, a new well, a pole barn, a granary and a house. The land has not been sprayed for several years. The asking price is \$5,000 to \$6,000 per acre. Contact: Sarah Lake (slake58@gmail.com; 651-222-7681) or Helen Sullinger (hbsullinger@gmail.com; 651-366-7820).

◆ Christie has for sale a 54-acre farm in *southwest Wisconsin, within 30 minutes of La Crosse and Viroqua*. It includes 38 acres fenced property (ready to raise grass-fed cattle), two chicken tractors for pasture-raised chickens and woven fencing for pasture-raised pigs and grass-fed lamb. The asking price is \$386,000. Contact: Christie, 608-317-1451, spoopvolz@yahoo.com.

◆ Steven Nice has for rent 140 acres in *southwest Wisconsin*. The price is negotiable. Contact: Steven Nice, 608-386-3292, leche1@juno.com.

◆ Rick Myers has for sale (in total or in parcel) or rent 130 acres of farmland in *northeast Indiana's Wells County*. The land has not been sprayed in eight years. The asking price is \$750,000. Contact: Rick Myers, 260-820-0415, myfarmmarket@gmail.com.

◆ Brad and Meghan Dixon have for sale 190 acres of certified organic farmland in *west-central Missouri's Pettis County*. There is 120 acres in row crops, as well as pasture, and, if interested, the row crop equipment can be worked into the deal. The farm has been certified organic since 2009. The asking price is \$4,500 per acre. Contact: Brad Dixon, 660-221-1274, cottageschoolacres@live.com.

◆ Vickie Miller has for sale 19 acres of pastured farmland in *southeast Michigan's Wayne County*. There is a house and chicken coop, as well as access to water. The price is negotiable. Contact: Vickie Miller, 734-686-0173.

Farm Beginnings

Jason & Juli Montgomery-Riess

Pacing the Path to Success

Sometimes, there's nothing like a speed bump to send you on your way toward that ultimate goal. In the case of Jason and Juli Montgomery-Riess, that slight detour was in the form of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course.

Before taking the class, both had worked on some of the top produce operations in the region. The couple saved up money and their lives were so committed to a farming future that they delayed their wedding a week in the fall of 2009 so they could attend the first session of the Farm Beginnings class. Jason and Juli concede that up until then they were headed full bore into owning their own farming operation.

But when they gave their final Farm Beginnings class presentation in early 2010, they laid out a five-year plan that had one foot on the brake pedal: work on a few farms, buy a house in Minneapolis, start a family, sock away more money and in general put off buying a farm until they were good and ready.

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



Jason and Juli Montgomery-Riess are raising chickens in their backyard as one way of staying connected to their farming dream. "What appears to some people as a distraction is part of a deliberate plan for us and our future in farming," says Jason. (LSP photo)

The reaction from their classmates wasn't universally positive.

"A lot of our peers in the class were sort of shocked and almost frustrated with us. They were like, 'You all should just do it, you're ready,'" recalls Juli, 32, on a recent spring Saturday while sitting in the couple's Minneapolis home. "And we did have a lot more practical experience than many of our cohorts, but the bottom line was we just didn't feel right rushing into farming."

Blame it on the farmers and other agriculture professionals who presented during the Farm Beginnings classes, which met twice a month during the fall and winter of 2009-2010. While making it clear that there were many opportunities in agriculture, particularly if one was willing to seek out alternative production and marketing systems and do good business planning, they also shared stories of what happens when one rushes in ill-prepared: financial ruin, unsustainable

stress, even broken marriages.

"Trying to manage a new marriage, children and a business all at the same time seemed to be a lot to bite off at one time," says Jason, 36. "Those farmers who spoke in the classes taught us to be deliberative. Farm Beginnings really slowed us down—in a good way."

This from a guy who, after feasting on the writings of Wendell Berry and Michael Pollan while working as a librarian in Milwaukee, decided all of a sudden, "I had to do something." In 2009, Jason quit his job and moved to western Wisconsin to get his hands dirty on a real farm.

"Just like that," recalls the California native with a tinge of amazement in his voice.

Juli was from the Twin Cities and had organized around tenants' rights issues in California before returning to the Midwest to pursue her own farming dream. In 2009 the two met while they were both working on Foxtail Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation near Osceola, Wis. (Juli had also worked on Burning River, another CSA in the area, and Jason had volunteered at Growing Power, an urban farming operation in Milwaukee. He also worked at Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista, Minn.). The pair hit it off and within a few months Jason was ready to pop the big question: "I said to Juli, 'Do you want to farm together?'"

"When he asked if I wanted to farm together I said, 'Do you realize what you're asking me?'" Juli recalls with a laugh.

They were married in October of that year on Foxtail, a symbolic gesture of just how much agriculture was to be intertwined with their relationship. But a week before the wedding, they sat in their first Farm Beginnings class, beginning that more "deliberative" stage of their farming dream. The Farm Beginnings course, which LSP has been offering since 1997, has become a national model for providing wannabe farmers with training in innovative business planning, marketing and goal-setting, among other things. Farm Beginnings is also known for its use of established farmers and other agricultural professionals as class instructors (see page 14).

It was through those farmer-presenters that Jason and Juli got the message that it was fine to be fired up about a farming career, but allowing that passion to serve as an unguided accelerant can leave one burned out. They both say that before taking the class, they were committed to not allowing lack of money to get in the way of launching their own farming operation.

"But we learned that making mistakes

Fresh Faces, see page 19...

can cost a significant amount of money,” Juli says, conceding that she was initially slightly jealous of her classmates who already had access to farmland. “But even having land was no guarantee of success. People were losing their marriages over their differences as they farm together. And so there were many voices saying just make sure that you keep coming back to your values and checking in with each other. That planning piece was really important to me.”

Jason says Farm Beginnings made it clear to them that there were a lot of business-related aspects to production agriculture they hadn’t given deep thought to before.

“It wasn’t just knowing how to put seeds in the soil and plant them out in the field and pick them and deliver them,” he says. “There were a lot of business dimensions, and there was a quality of life dimension to this work we wanted to get right.”

Striking a Balance

Make no mistake, that speed bump hasn’t brought about a full stop—it’s more like a pacesetter. The couple is very much still immersed in activities that they hope will contribute to their ultimate goal: owning and operating a vegetable operation. Jason is in his second year working as a grower at Wozupi, a farm operation owned and operated by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in nearby Prior Lake. The operation consists of a 100-member CSA enterprise with a twist: members of the tribe are given the first opportunity to join Wozupi in a “Tribally Supported Agriculture” arrangement to improve health in the community while helping tribal members get more connected to the land. Wozupi also has an orchard, raises chickens, has 120 honeybee hives, preserves heritage seeds and provides classes on food production and preservation. Wozupi markets produce not only through the CSA enterprise, but to farmers’ markets and Mazopiya, a natural food market owned by the tribe (see page 22 for more on Wozupi).

Jason says working at Wozupi has been a tremendous help in staying on the road toward a farming career while garnering some economic security and having time to start a family—their daughter, Alma, is 1, and son, Walter, is 2. Since the garden operation is one “department” in the larger Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Jason works a 40-hour week year-round and gets health benefits, as well as access to regular equipment maintenance.

“You have the resources of the community and of the tribe to make this garden work.

I’m getting to practice agriculture and hone my skills while being held responsible for providing an excellent product to customers,” he says, adding that the one down side is that it can often be a challenge squeezing all the farm work that needs to be done into a regular work week.

Juli is working as a school counselor in Minneapolis, and tries to tie that in with farming and food production as well. She has taken sixth grade students out to Gale Woods for a tour. “It’s a beautiful thing to see a kid hold a lamb,” she says. One of Juli’s goals is to find a way to combine her passion for social justice and farming.

“I don’t think social justice stops with farming—I want to use it as a way to continue that social justice work,” she says.

The couple is also staying in close contact with Paul and Chris Burkhouse, the

Give it a Listen

Jason and Juli Montgomery-Riess talk about speed bumps in their farming plans on episode 134 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

yard coop make soft cackling sounds, a reminder of another way the couple is keeping connected to farming here in the city.

Their goal is to have a produce operation that markets either through CSA or wholesale markets, or a combination of both. One idea they throw around is a CSA model that combines the production of several farms.

One way or the other, farming is in the future—even when they take steps that to an outsider may seem to be a one-way detour, like when they bought their house in the city



Jason Montgomery-Riess and Rebecca Yoshino, the director of Wozupi, check out the operation’s greenhouse. “Farm Beginnings made us realize there were a lot of features to farming we weren’t considering. It wasn’t just knowing how to put seeds in the soil and plant them out in the field and pick them and deliver them,” he says. (LSP photo)

farmers at Foxtail, who they see as mentors. And they are part of an informal group of other beginning farmers who live in the Twin Cities. Some are farming in urban areas, others are, like the Montgomery-Riesses, working toward a time when they can move onto their own operation in a rural community. Jason and Juli are waiting for their kids to grow a little bigger, for their financial situation to improve and their farming skills to sharpen. They are also waiting for something that’s pretty much out of their control.

“I’m hoping land prices will fall for our sake,” says Juli, as chickens in their back-

in 2010.

“People said, ‘I thought you were going to buy a farm?’ And I say, ‘This is part of the path,’” says Jason, explaining that owning property seems like a better way of holding some of their savings at this time. “What appears to some people as a distraction is part of a deliberate plan for us and our future in farming.” □

Farm Beginnings Profiles

To read more profiles of Farm Beginnings graduates, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/meetourgraduates.

After the Zoning Amendments

A Year Ago, Minneapolis Cracked the Door for Urban Farming—Now, City Aggies are Working to Push it Wide Open

When Jillia Pessenda Bovino and Jim Bovino moved back to Minneapolis in January 2012, they wanted to raise food in the city. The Minnesota natives knew they could handle the agronomic end of the enterprise: they had raised produce in the state of Washington previously and had access to an empty lot in Northeast Minneapolis. The regulatory weed patch, however, was another challenge altogether.

“It was kind of this gray zone whether urban farming was even legal,” recalls Jillia, who, along with Jim, now owns and operates California Street Farm. “We were concerned whether this business endeavor was even going to be possible.”

It turned out their timing was good. During the spring of 2012, the Minneapolis City Council passed the Urban Agriculture Text Amendments, a set of zoning and planning rules that have opened the door to promoting a more vibrant economy built on the production and consumption of local food in the city. The passage of the Text Amendments was the culmination of an organizing effort by the Land Stewardship Project and other groups to not only bring urban farming out of that legal “gray area,” but also to highlight the role food production enterprises could play in economic development.

Now, a year after the Amendments were passed, urban agriculturalists say the new rules have had a positive impact on their day-to-day business already. But they also make it clear that a lot more needs to be done to make urban farming a truly viable business venture in Minneapolis. And that’s good, because the other thing the passage of the Text Amendments accomplished was

it helped create a more positive view of the role urban ag could play in developing the city’s food and economic security.

“The Urban Ag Text Amendments are just a foot in the door,” says Jim Bovino.

Market Garden Sales

Urban farmers say that one of the immediate impacts they saw after passage of the



Three of the six partners in Stone's Throw Urban Farm (left to right): Alex Liebman, Eric Larsen and John Seitz. They and other Minneapolis urban farmers say the city has opened the door to making market gardens, CSA farms and other agricultural operations a mainstay of the city's economy. (LSP photo)

Amendments was that it made it legal to sell produce right where it's raised, something that was banned previously.

“It used to be more legal to buy a gun out of someone’s trunk than to buy extra tomatoes from a market gardener,” says Russ Henry, owner of Giving Tree Gardens, a landscaping company that sells compost to urban farms in Minneapolis.

However, market gardeners are still limited to selling produce 15 days out of the year, a restriction that Henry and others say is extremely hard to work around given the vagaries of weather and other factors that are out of farmers’ control.

And that means a market garden is

severely limited in the role it can play in its local community food system, say farmers. For example, California Street Farm is currently a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation that sells shares to members. But one of the farmers’ ultimate goals is to sell more produce right in the neighborhood, increasing local residents’ access to fresh, affordable food.

“From a food access point of view, it doesn’t make that food very accessible to people in the community when you’re limited to 15 days of marketing,” says Jillia Pessenda Bovino.

Hoop Houses

Farmers are increasingly becoming reliant on the use of hoop houses—relatively cheap, plastic shelters—to extend the growing season. The Urban Ag Text Amendments

now allow hoop structures big enough to provide “significant growing space,” says Eric Larsen, one of six partners in Stone’s Throw Urban Farm, a CSA enterprise with growing locations sprinkled throughout Minneapolis and Saint Paul, as well as outside the Twin Cities. One proposal was to limit the height of a temporary hoop house on residential property to 6 feet, which would have made it harder to gain access while resulting in poor ventilation. The final rules allow them to be slightly higher.

Stone’s throw uses three hoop houses, one of which is part of a Minnesota Department of Agriculture sustainable agriculture demonstration project.

“We need at least

500-square feet to really

make the hoop house viable,” says Larsen, who was cutting salad greens growing in one of their Minneapolis hoop structures one recent May morning. “And it’s neat to have a hoop house big enough to participate in a [sustainable agriculture] demonstration like that.”

Again, there’s room for improvement. State building codes require that hoop houses not be up longer than 180 days a year. Larsen says that limits the amount of season extension they can do. However, that may be a limitation that has to be addressed

...Urban Ag, see page 21

at the state offices in Saint Paul, rather than within Minneapolis City Hall.

Side Benefits

Urban farmers say the passage of the Urban Ag Text Amendments and the discussions that accompanied them have helped usher in a smoother process for making the city friendlier to local food systems. For example, city officials recently agreed to allow urban farms to, for a fee, hook into fire hydrants as a water source, a service that community gardens have benefited from in recent years.

Giving Tree Gardens' Russ Henry says that at about the time the Text Amendments were passed, the city loosened its restrictions about the volume of compost that can be made within city limits.

"I was getting fined in my backyard for ridiculous things," says Henry of the bad old days of composting. "I think the most ridiculous note I got from the city was one saying I had violated the rule about having sticks over a quarter-inch in my compost."

He calls revising the compost rules and passing the Urban Ag Text Amendments a "one-two" punch for economic development based on local foods—farmers have a better opportunity to make money, creating a better market for his compost.

"That's absolutely integral to the conversation—we are about job creation and the economy," says Henry.

The other positive result of the Urban Ag Text Amendments is the development of the Minneapolis Urban Farmers Collaborative, an informal group of about a dozen farmers and other urban agriculturalists. The Collaborative is continuing to push for measures that support food production and marketing in the city. They would like to see an easing of restrictions related to livestock, for example. That would mean allowing hoofed animals such as goats and reclassifying critters such as chickens as "livestock" (they are now considered "companion animals" and are regulated by the same department that regulates dog and cat ownership).

Most recently, the Collaborative developed an "urban ag" questionnaire for candidates for citywide office this fall. Several candidates have responded to the questions, which address everything from land access to livestock. The candidate responses thus far, which are posted at e-democracy.org, have been overwhelmingly positive toward urban agriculture, say members of the Collaborative.

As interest in urban farming grows, one major issue will be access to land for food



The Urban Ag Text Amendments eased restrictions on how big season-extending hoop houses could be in Minneapolis. (LSP photo)

production. Many urban farmers are relying on temporary, year-to-year leases or even informal arrangements that can be dissolved without warning. Urban ag supporters would like to see the city lease empty lots and even parkland to urban farmers, much like it does with community gardens now. In fact, this winter representatives of LSP, urban farmers, community gardeners and youth organizers from Hope Community (*see page 23*) met with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to discuss including urban agriculture in the Board's long-term plan.

"Land access is a huge issue," says California Street Farm's Jim Bovino. "It needs to become a priority of the city if urban ag is going to contribute to long-term food security."

Urban agriculturalists are also starting to recognize the limits to raising food in the city. Jeremy McAdams' Cherry Tree House operation raises shiitake, oyster and other types of mushrooms utilizing a couple thousand logs. He started in his backyard in 2009 and quickly grew to the point where he had logs in other people's yards.

"By 2011, the operation had gotten too big and I was in too many people's yards and the violations were piling up," he says, explaining that he received citations for everything from "improper stacking of firewood" to utilizing a shade fabric frame that was too tall.

For the past two years he has been raising mushrooms in Maplewood, a 20-minute drive from his South Minneapolis home. He hates the daily commute, and he's "not through" with the idea of moving the operation back to Minneapolis, but concedes it

will probably have to be in a part of the city zoned industrial, given his current size. And that brings up another important point urban agriculturalists need to get across to city officials, says McAdams. In an attempt to capture more property taxes, city governments often push for developing industrial zones into condos and other "higher uses." To be at a viable size, some urban farming operations need to be in areas zoned "light industrial," says McAdams.

"Just like we should be protecting farmland, we should be protecting areas for light industrial so we can get uses like food production on that land," he says.

Homeland Security

Many in the urban ag community agree that in a way, the Urban Ag Text Amendments were just a start, but at least they show momentum going in the right direction for local food systems in Minneapolis.

"I think we feel good about coming back here from Washington and doing this endeavor," says California Street Farm's Jillia Pessenda Bovino. "We know we can produce food on this urban farm and legally sell the produce. That makes us positive about our ability to contribute to food security here in the city." □

LSP & Urban Ag

For more on LSP's urban agriculture work, contact Anna Cioffi at 612-722-6377 or annac@landstewardshipproject.org. More information is also at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood.

More than a Garden Gamble

The Mdewakanton Sioux Community Plants the Seeds of Food Sovereignty

On a sunny, late spring day, Lori Watso and Rebecca Yoshino sit at a picnic table sorting a collection of black and yellow seeds with names drenched in heritage: Cherokee Trail of Tears, Black Turtle, Dakota Black. The two women talk about how they hope such seeds will germinate more than beans and corn—they will also play an important role in bringing members of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) closer to the land, and thus control over their own health...and future.

"I want to give people the opportunity to get their hands in the earth and perhaps reawaken that connection that Native Americans have had with the land," says Watso, secretary treasurer of the SMSC.

On this day, the mechanism for that connection is all around Watso and Yoshino in the form of Wozupi (Dakota for "garden"), a 10-acre operation just down the road from the tribe's Mystic Lake Casino in Prior Lake, Minn. Wozupi is home to a 100-member "Tribally Supported Agriculture" (TSA) vegetable operation, a pastured chicken enterprise, an orchard, heritage seed repository, 120 honeybee hives and a maple syrup enterprise. Besides the TSA, Wozupi sells products through two area farmers' markets. It also provides classes on everything from backyard chickens and wild foraging to preserving and processing homegrown food.

At 4,200 employees, the SMSC is by far the largest employer in Minnesota's Scott County. At Wozupi, the five full-time employees, including Land Stewardship Project Farm Beginnings graduate Jason Montgomery-Riess (*see page 18*), and four seasonal workers are just a few of that total. But Watso and Yoshino feel that Wozupi can have an outsized influence on the health and well-being of the tribal community.

As a former health care professional and a member of the SMSC, Watso has long been aware of a hard truth: when it comes to chronic health conditions, Native Americans, like many minority populations, are disproportionately affected. That's why the registered nurse dedicated herself early on to community health education. But it wasn't until the mid-2000s when Watso made a connection between long-term health and food, a connection that she can't believe she

didn't make earlier.

"It seems really such an obvious thing," says Watso.

So she helped develop programming at the tribe's wellness center around eating healthy to address chronic problems. It was an important service, but had its limits as far as long-term impacts.

"It didn't take me long to decide that I was tired of talking to people about their health problems and talking to them about, 'You know, if you'd just eat differently, you could help yourself,'" recalls Watso. "Because I'd had lots of experience in community health education, I realized how difficult it was even to get everybody to wear their seat belts or to quit smoking."

So Watso decided to go to the root of the matter: why not show people not only the importance of healthy eating, but how healthy food is produced in the first place? She proposed the establishment of an organic gardening operation within the SMSC as a way to connect people with their food and the land that produces it.

The result was Wozupi, which planted its first seeds in 2010. And in 2011 the tribe opened Mazopiya, a now-bustling natural foods market across the road from Mystic Lake Casino that carries fresh, local products, including produce, eggs, honey and maple syrup from Wozupi. This has helped the community deal with a problem that disproportionately plagues reservations nationwide: the lack of good access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food.

"We're certainly not a food desert anymore," says Yoshino, an experienced organic produce grower who now serves as Wozupi's director.

But growing food in the community, and getting people to consume it are different things. That's why Wozupi provides classes for the public throughout the year on not only food production, but preparation and preserving.

"We're recognizing that a lot of our TSA members may not have ever peeled an onion before," says Yoshino.

Give it a Listen

Lori Watso talks about Wozupi and the importance of food sovereignty on episode 133 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

Slow to Catch On

Watso and Yoshino say that the majority of TSA members are residents of neighboring communities, but they hope for more members of the tribe to join each year.

"We've got fast food right down the street," Watso says. "I understand those attitudes that, 'Hey, it's cheaper down here, it's faster over here, and I'm young, I feel okay.'"

What gives her hope is that young families are increasingly talking about how they are glad their kids have the opportunity from the start to know what good food is.



Rebecca Yoshino (left) and Lori Watso. (LSP photo)

First, the Seed

Another positive sign is that increasingly there is talk of connecting food self-sufficiency with tribal sovereignty—in effect, power over one's own future. Both Yoshino and Watso have attended the Food Sovereignty Summit, a national meeting, where they have learned of other tribes using community gardens and other food-related enterprises to empower themselves while introducing healthy eating habits to their members.

That's why the seed sorting Watso and Yoshino are partaking in on this particular day has more than a symbolic meaning.

Wozupi, see page 23...

These are part of the seeds given to Wozupi by Dream of Wild Health, a Native American seed repository based in Hugo, Minn. This will be the first year most of these heritage seeds will be grown for food. Yoshino wants to have their nutritional content analyzed at the University of Minnesota and

plans to eventually work them into a traditional “Three Sisters” system—a gardening method where corn, beans and squash benefit each other in a synergistic fashion. Watso would like Wozupi to eventually become a seed source for other tribes that are undertaking gardening projects.

“Food sovereignty means access to lands and the ability to produce foods for the com-

munity and the ability to use that food,” says Yoshino. “I think if you’re not food sovereign, can you really say you are sovereign overall? And if you don’t have control of your seeds, do you really have control of your food?” □

More information on Wozupi is at www.smcwozupi.org.

Building Soil & Trust in an Urban Community

By Anna Cioffi

Gardeners at Hope Community in the Phillips Neighborhood of South Minneapolis worked hard this spring to prepare soil and create a design for the urban agriculture space that has come to be known as the “2012 Garden,” in honor of its address at 2012 Oakland Avenue.

The 2012 Garden has gone through many transformations since it was turned into a growing area for community use in 2010. The development of this garden is part of “Growing Neighborhood Access to Healthy Food,” a joint initiative of Hope and the Land Stewardship Project. This is an attempt to build community power and capacity to shape a strong neighborhood-scale system that ensures reliable, affordable and equitable access to healthy food. The Phillips Neighborhood is one of the most economically challenged and diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Hope provides 173 units of affordable housing that is home to some 400 people.

Through this initiative, it’s become clear that sometimes you have to start community capacity-building literally from the ground up. For example, the empty lot that is now home to the garden used to have a house standing on it, which was torn down many years ago, and the foundation was packed with a sandy mix of filler soil.

When gardeners and community members realized that the property owned by Hope Community could be turned into a garden, they jumped at the chance to raise produce right in their neighborhood. Since 2010 there has been a careful process of amending soil, adding compost and using cover crops to do remediation.

David Longsy, a Hope resident and garden volunteer, got the soil tested through the University of Minnesota Extension Service to make sure there are no contaminants.

Caretakers of the garden have also come and gone over the years. Participation was slow to start in 2010, and only a few gardeners used the space to grow melons and squash, as well as the other vegetables that were too large to grow in the small 5’ x 5’ individual garden plots nearby. During the 2011 and 2012 growing seasons, students from the Franklin Library Urban 4-H Club tended a large patch of the garden. In 2012 they shared the space with community member Omari Chatman, who used the garden to practice the permaculture design principals he learned through his certification as an urban farmer at the Permaculture Research Institute (PRI).



Omari Chatman (right) and Rhys Williams, a master gardener who serves on LSP’s board of directors, worked on expanding the Hope Community Garden this spring. (LSP photo)

This year, Chatman is once again heading up the garden, and is working with a team of dedicated community members who have come together to contribute ideas for design, plant varieties and what to do with extra produce. Some community members would like to see produce donated to local food shelves, while others have talked about starting up a mini farmers’ market to sell what is not divided up among the gardeners.

Chatman has led the way to several significant changes in the 2012 Garden. First, he negotiated with the neighbors whose

property borders the garden, and asked if gardeners could dig two more beds beside the already existing beds.

“They were happy they didn’t have to mow the lawn,” Chatman says.

Besides expanding the garden, he has lined several of the beds with concrete pavers recycled from a recent Hope Community construction project. Chatman also plans to create borders for all of the beds in the 2012 Garden, as well as a sunflower maze for neighborhood children to play in and herb spirals he learned about from PRI.

Chatman’s influence in the garden has had a pronounced effect on the community’s use of the shared growing space. His consistent presence has created a structure for gardeners who eagerly show up—often early—for garden workdays on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. During one recent garden work evening, Chatman made pizza and cookies in Hope’s kitchen, and helped to plan an open house to welcome more gardeners into the space.

Neighbors have been attributing the increased participation in the shared garden spaces to a deep connection in the community and years of dedicated programming that have anchored Hope’s presence while building long-term relationships in the neighborhood.

Mercedes Sigana, a Hope resident and community gardener for the past four years, says all of this takes time.

“It takes a while for us to build trust,” she says.

In a neighborhood like Phillips, a community garden can create the kind of safe and healthy environment needed to nurture those trusting connections. □

Anna Cioffi is an LSP organizer working in the Hope Community on developing community based food systems. She can be reached at annac@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. More on LSP’s work with Hope Community is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood.

Today's Topic: The Land Ethic

When it Comes to Stewardship Values, Silence is Not Golden

By Caroline van Schaik

Land Stewardship Project staff members are helping to unearth some surprising visions for the land from all corners of southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed—be they just in the ideas stage or very much in motion on the ground.

It can be hard to have conversations about one's feelings for a resource that is often taken for granted. Talking out loud about those things we value most is challenging, even when convictions run deep. They're private, personal and definitely not meant to be judged. That vulnerability to judgment has more than a few farmers and landowners in the watershed at odds with their otherwise serious commitment to a stewardship ethic.

Fellow LSP staffer David Rosmann and I are visiting with individuals in this 1.07 million acre watershed and then facilitating small gatherings of friends to broaden the conversation. The goal is to shine a light on a mostly unspoken land ethic — in all its forms—and to follow up with individuals to help them take further steps toward stewardship by connecting them with more resources, such as relevant government conservation programs.

Our initial expectation at LSP was that kitchen conversations would benefit from a degree of comfort between people who already know the host, if not each other. Sometimes that is exactly what happens.

But here's an example of what also transpires, more often than we anticipated. We have a visit with a landowner about crop rotations, sustainable logging and songbirds. It leads to the possibility of an expanded visit with a few neighbors. It's been a pleasant, safe hour, and the landowner says "okay" to the idea of hosting a "kitchen conversation."

Then the next day, the would-be host is on the phone, struggling for clarity in a whirl of trepidation. "Explain it to me again. What exactly will we talk about and who should I invite?" And there follows a discussion about inviting the operator of a 3,000-acre dairy, the neighbors they want to "do nice" by, and the friends who "already get it."

Who could have anticipated that an invitation to talk about the land is paramount to stepping over a line? For some, hosting a

kitchen conversation is a call to an opinion for or against conservation and the practices that express it. Put this way, conservation can feel risky and a threat to friendships.

Or we could change the landscape. Something happens when we hear others talk about their young prairie and of converting perfect corn ground to perfect grazing

Want to Host a Conversation?

If you are interested in hosting a kitchen conversation in southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed, contact LSP's Caroline van Schaik (caroline@landstewardshipproject.org) or David Rosmann (davidr@landstewardshipproject.org) at 507-523-3366.

ground. Something happens when we ourselves give voice to such commitments.

These are quiet, friendly visits by farmers and other landowners. As LSP staff, we take a light hand at facilitating, and some amazing stories/ideas are shared: the self-sufficient vegetable grower who talks about raising "butterflies and birds," the grandfather who is remembered still for falling off a tractor watching a pheasant take a dust bath and turkey producers who see "erosion

control and worms" in their soil. We also hear conventional crop farmers talk about experimenting with cover crops "to keep the dirt where it belongs." There is awareness across all backgrounds of climate change, stream bank erosion and the need to rise above inadequate government cost-share and banker-fueled incentives.

Conversation is needed to nurture what Aldo Leopold called, "a thinking community." If we want to eat and farm close to home, we need to carve out time to talk about what's important for our land. As essential to talk is the courage of conviction — when the bigger idea is bigger even than the fear of expressing it. Worms in the soil, fish in the rivers, livestock on grass, birds in song and food for all — this good life requires that we reach past the private nature of our stewardship values to invoke them in others. Such an act of landscape accountability doesn't mind the size of the audience — a public field event or the more private kitchen conversations can each relay the message that matters.

And what about those who hold true to a land ethic but can't find their voice at either a field day or around the dining table? We continue to search for venues so that more landowners can discuss their values and eventually take action on them. □

Caroline van Schaik is an LSP organizer working in southeast Minnesota's Root River watershed. For more on LSP's work in this area, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood.



Water stands in southeast Minnesota corn stubble after a rainstorm this spring. Kitchen conversations can help rural residents get at the heart of how our relationship with the land impacts its response to extreme weather events. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)

A Failure to Function

Are Recent Soil Erosion Events Part of a Deeper Problem?

By Brian DeVore

Soil conservationist Douglas Miller has been in the business for over three decades, during which time he's personally walked "hundreds of thousands of acres of cropland," by his estimate. So when someone like Miller says that something is awry on the land, it's time to take note.

"I've never seen soil erosion like I've seen in the last year," says Miller, the soil health coordinator for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Minnesota. While saying this, he shows photos from the 2012 growing season of southern Minnesota dust storms that have turned day into dusk and sides of moderately sloped hills suffering from severe erosion. Miller relates how one storm muddled the side of his rural home with topsoil, giving his teenaged son a real-life "Dust Bowl" experience similar to what he was studying in school at the time.

"So we've gone back and forth and back and forth between wind erosion events and rain erosion events," Miller says on a recent winter day. As he talks about that troubling growing season, the low-lying farm fields that surround his office in Scott County are dormant, but the damage caused by wayward soil is still evident: road ditches have a grayish pallor thanks to the presence of "snirt"—a mixture of snow and dirt.

So far, 2013 hasn't been much better. Weather conditions are different—much of the Corn Belt suffered through drought in 2012 and in many areas this growing season has been tropical-like. But farmers, conservationists, soil scientists and even members of the general public are noting that soil erosion seems worse than ever.

A late winter and waterlogged spring meant crops were planted late, and even fields with only a gentle slope were veined with erosion rivulets into May. In early June, an NRCS official in southwest Wisconsin told the *Winona Daily News* he's never seen

erosion as bad as he's seen it this spring.

A temporary setback in erosion control caused by once-in-a-lifetime events? Maybe not, say soil experts. Last year's dust storms were the result of drought; this year's gullies are being caused by too much precipitation. But, say Miller and others, even when weather conditions are "normal," it doesn't seem to take much to send soil into the air or water.

"The soil has failed to function as it



Soil erosion estimates often fail to take into consideration the impact of severe gully erosion, an increasing problem as intense precipitation events become more common. (LSP photo)

should," says Miller.

High land prices, climate change and government policy are threatening to undermine decades of soil conservation advances that were made since the Dirty Thirties. And years of reliance on chemical-intensive mono-cropping systems have decimated the soil's natural ability to build resilience and, among other things, stay in place.

"The net effect is, we are going backward on soil conservation," says Richard Cruse, an Iowa State University soil scientist and director of the Iowa Water Center. "That's not science, but that's my impression."

Cruse's "impression" is based on some impressive evidence. He also coordinates the Iowa Daily Erosion Project, an initiative that uses reporting stations from around that state to track township-level rain events in real time and the impact they are having on soil loss. The main national gauge of soil loss is the USDA's National Resources Inventory (NRI), which uses samplings from around the country and takes into account such factors as long-term climate data, inherent soil and site characteristics, and cropping and management practices. Computer models are then used to develop broad-brush estimates.

The last NRI report (it's done every five years) had some good news: between 1982 and 2007 average annual water-caused erosion on cropland nationally dropped from four tons per acre to 2.7 tons; annual wind erosion rates fell from 3.3 tons per acre to 2.1 tons. While any soil loss is troubling, many scientists are confident that when erosion rates are brought down to the five-tons-per-acre range that's a rate we can sustain while still maintaining enough soil to grow crops (something called the "tolerable" or "T" level).

But in 2011, Cruse and his fellow researchers had some bad news: using the real time results of the Daily Erosion Project, they estimated that some parts of Iowa were losing soil 12 times greater than originally thought. Numbers from this study were used to estimate that 20 percent of that state's land was eroding at twice the T levels.

"That doesn't mean the NRI is wrong—it's just that it's an average," says Cruse, adding that averages don't take into account the extremes that at times do the most damage.

The NRI bases its estimates on sheet and rill erosion, that routine loss of soil people usually notice on hillsides in early spring and late fall when growing crops aren't covering them. Such erosion can actually be masked with tillage every year until all the topsoil is removed in a death-by-a-thousand-cuts situation. This can take decades.

But huge amounts of soil can be lost within a matter of hours when deep gullies are formed by storms. And as the climate

Erosion, see page 26...

Profits from Perennials

...Erosion, from page 25

changes, massive bouts of precipitation are becoming increasingly common.

"We've been getting these heavy rains all the time during the past five or six years," says Dave Lanners, who farms 800 acres of corn and soybeans in western Minnesota's Morrison County. "You get these downpours and then you really see this erosion where you get washouts."

Some significant soil conservation gains were made between 1985 and 2007 because of improvements in tillage practices: less disturbance of soil, leaving more residue on top of the ground, etc. But Cruse thinks that a lot of soil was also saved during that period as a result of millions of acres of highly-erosive fields being rested through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

And now a lot of CRP is being plowed up as the lure of \$7 corn becomes too great to resist. The amount of land enrolled in CRP today is a little over 27 million acres, which represents a 26 percent reduction from five years ago—a 25 year low.

To top it off, farm program initiatives such as subsidized crop insurance (*see page 12*) are providing farmers the incentive to till acres that in the past would be considered too erosive, wet or otherwise marginal—in other words good candidates for a setaside program like CRP.

The results have been devastating. A *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* study published in February reported that between 2006 and 2011, 1.3 million acres of grassland were converted to crops in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. The researchers said such conversion rates haven't been seen since the 1920s and 1930s.

Cruse is quick to point out that the vast majority of farmers are willing to take steps to save soil, but there are concerns that in the face of a changing climate and intense pressure to till more land, agriculture is bumping up against the limits of traditional conservation measures like terraces and grassed waterways.

"We are more frequently exceeding the capacity of our conservation designs than we have in the past," says Cruse.

Indeed, at a recent field day in central Iowa where scientists demonstrated a method of reducing erosion by planting strips of native prairie on contoured row crop fields, some of the most interested participants were pioneering no-till farmers from

the region. They conceded that their once cutting-edge cropping system was at times no longer up to the task of protecting soil when confronted with precipitation events of Biblical proportions.

For the most part, the Corn Belt hides its soil problems well because it keeps doing what it's supposed to do: produce bumper crops. However, we may simply be masking soil degradation with technology and inputs, putting off the day when we have to pay the bill, says Cruse.

And sometimes the limits of high-tech agronomics do emerge when things get tough. Cruse says several farmers have told him that during the 2012 drought they could tell where they had eroded soil or low organic matter because they took a significant yield hit in those parts of their fields. In a more normal weather year, those yield drops might not show up. But with changing climate, there is less "normal" to count on.

A Return to Resilience

If terraces and even no-till aren't enough anymore, then what can be done? Go deeper, say soil scientists. Farmers and conservationists are increasingly looking at how to improve soil's biological health so that it can resist eroding and make better use of the precipitation that falls on it. The inability of land to absorb and retain precipitation is a prime symptom of soil that has lost its biological vitality and is low in carbon organic matter—that portion of the topsoil that consists of fresh and partly decomposed residues of plants and animals, along with the tissues of living and dead microorganisms. Soil low in organic matter can be so compacted and devoid of life that roots have problems penetrating and rain may as well be pounding pavement.

That's why there can be situations where a field can be flooded even after a moderate

Give it a Listen

Douglas Miller talks about the importance of considering soil from a ecosystem perspective on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/386.

rain, but be parched and full of blowing dust a few weeks later.

As soil organic matter increases from 1 percent to 3 percent, soil's water holding capacity doubles. One NRCS estimate is that if all of our country's cropland were managed for T, soil erosion would decline by 0.85 billion tons annually. If it was managed in such a way that carbon organic matter was increased, erosion levels would drop by 1.29 billion tons per year.

The first place to start in building organic matter is by getting plants on the land for as long as possible. This not only protects the field surface, but provides more food for all those soil microorganisms underground. Unfortunately, the plant system that dominates the Midwest—row crops like corn and soybeans—covers the soil only around 90 days a year. That leaves a whole lot of bare months above and a whole lot of time for the soil food web to go dormant.

That's why perennial plant systems such as pasture grass and cover crops such as rye are increasingly being recognized as key tools in the next wave of soil conservation. As farmers and soil conservationists in Burleigh County, N. Dak., are proving, combining multiple species of cover crops, rotational grazing of livestock and no-till cropping can produce huge increases in soil biological activity while generating impressive profit margins (*see sidebar below*).

"We need to take the next step in soil conservation," says the NRCS's Miller. "We need to not only protect the topsoil but build the soil's ability to function. We need to see the fields as a full ecosystem and not only preserve it, but build it." □

LSP 'Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency' Special Report



The Land Stewardship Project has created a special package of *Land Stewardship Letter* stories on what farmers, scientists and conservationists are doing to improve soil health in North Dakota's Burleigh County. It's available on LSP's **Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency** web page: www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/soilquality. For a paper copy, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Two LSP podcasts related to this topic are at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/328 (*episode 121*) and at www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/386 (*episode 128*).

Making Diversity Pay its Own Way

As the article on pages 25-26 makes clear, long term sustainability of our soil requires farming systems that can not only keep soil in place, but also help it build its own resiliency. Such systems can't just work on paper—they need to prove themselves agronomically and financially. And they need to prove it in places like western Minnesota's Redwood County, a place where the Minnesota River bisects mostly corn and soybean fields.

At a recent Land Stewardship Project Farm Beginnings field day, a grass-based production system was proving it could pull its own weight financially and practically, and then some.

"Before, this field would make a crop maybe three years out of 10," said Grant Breitreutz, who along with his wife Dawn and 14-year-old daughter Karlie, hosted the field day on their Redwood County farm. "We're grazing it three times a year now."

The Breitreutzes began rotational grazing 10 years ago and liked it.

The cattle and the pastures were healthier, and it reduced their reliance on raising crops for feed. Three years ago they cranked it up a notch and dived into mob grazing, also called short-duration, high-density grazing. As its name implies, a large number of cattle are turned out into a grazing paddock for a short—sometimes just a day—period of time. They get a chance to browse the grass but are moved quickly enough that they don't eat it all. In fact, a fair amount of the forage is trampled into the soil, helping build the biological activity so key to creating viable, drought-proof pastures that particular season, as well as for years to come, according to Howard Moechnig, a Cannon Falls, Minn.-based grazing consultant who led a workshop during the field day.

"Sometimes people think if you start rotational grazing, you can automatically double your stocking rate," Moechnig explained to the two dozen beginning farmers and others that attended the workshop. "But you're not out there to take all that grass off that pasture. You're there to match the animals to the feed available and to leave some grass behind. You need to make it so the life in the soil can do its job."

The Breitreutzes have been able to get excellent forage production even in drought years like 2012—quite an accomplishment considering that much of their farm con-

sists of a light soil type that tends to dry out easily. They feel the mob grazing system is building the kind of soil that can make better use of available moisture, something that farmers and soil conservationists working in Burleigh County, N. Dak., can confirm (see sidebar, page 26).

Their cow-calf herd is thriving, weeds are easier to control and their input costs are down. The Breitreutz farm's increased productivity is striking. On their home place, 58 cow-calf pairs was about all the farm could handle just a few years ago. Last year, they ran 125 pairs during a very dry growing season. The result: a more robust bottom line.

"Absolutely it's better financially. Some people think that's too much work to move the cows every day," said Dawn. "But when you look at the bottom line and what our inputs are and what we have at the end of the year, it's so much more worth it."

The financial benefits can show themselves in a dozen different ways. For



Grant, Karlie and Dawn Breitreutz talked at a Farm Beginnings field day about how mob grazing has helped make a field that was marginal for cropping consistently productive. "Before, this field would make a crop maybe three years out of 10," said Grant. (LSP photo)

example, the family estimates it was costing them 400 gallons of diesel fuel annually to haul manure when the cattle were penned up for a good part of the year. Now, with more than twice the number of animals, they burn roughly 25 percent less fuel hauling hay out to them during the non-grazing system.

"That's a pretty good tradeoff," said Moechnig.

And the land is starting to respond to all that biological activity in a way that makes it self-perpetuating. At one point during the tour, Moechnig kneeled down in a grazing paddock and counted five species of perennial forages. Grant said not only did the family not plant those species, but for years they

Give it a Listen

Dawn and Grant Breitreutz talk about doubling their farm's livestock capacity on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/451.

were using thistle-killing herbicides that were also detrimental to beneficial grasses and forbs. Now, mob grazing is controlling the thistles better while helping pastures undertake a form of homegrown regeneration.

"When you're managing for maximum grass production and multi-species, everything else just comes with it," said Grant. "The ground will produce on its own through the use of livestock."

And there are signs that this grazing system is having a positive impact on a landscape-wide basis. A 680-acre wildlife management area controlled by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) runs along the nearby Minnesota River and borders the Breitreutz farm. The family has a "cooperative farming agreement" with the

DNR where they help manage the state land by grazing their cattle herd there periodically.

"The wildlife management officer that takes care of our area was seeing what we're doing with our own pastures and just said, 'Do that with our land,'" said Grant.

"We're seeing birds we've never seen here," said Dawn as bobolinks, a highly grass-dependent species, fluttered around in a grazing paddock, flashing their trademark black-and-white markings. "Everything wants to be here, and we see that as a definite positive."

By everything wanting to be present on the farm, one could include the Breitreutzes' daughter, Karlie. She's quite

active in the operation, and has expressed a firm commitment to continue its legacy of balancing stewardship and food production.

"The whole idea of this is it's supposed to be fun and profitable," said Grant after the field day. "So that's what we're trying to do is make it fun and profitable so the kids want to stay and keep going and doing what we're doing." □

For information on other Farm Beginnings field days and workshops being held in coming months, see page 15.



Beautiful & Abundant Building the World We Want

By Brian Welch

2010; 310 pages

B & A Books

www.beautifulandabundant.com

America the Possible Manifesto for a New Economy

By James Gustave Speth

2012; 249 pages

Yale University Press

www.yale.edu/yup

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

It's easy to be very pessimistic about our future as humans on this planet. In the United States, our economic system is based on growth, which fuels the problems of climate change, natural resource depletion and pollution while exacerbating social and economic disparities. The path we are on does not bode well for the future of our grandchildren.

Bryan Welch and James Gustave Speth are grandfathers, and each wrote a book to envision a beautiful, more sustainable future for their grandchildren.

Welch, a media executive at Ogden Press, begins *Beautiful and Abundant* with an expression of great faith in human ingenuity and our capacity to solve problems, as long as we begin with a positive vision. He says that too often environmentalists focus on the big problems of today, creating a vision of disaster for the future. We must "picture a beautiful, abundant world for our grandchildren to live in," he writes, and his book is about the process of creating a collective vision of that world.

The vision must be idealistic, even if unrealistic, and fit four criteria: Is it beautiful? Does it create abundance? Is it fair? Is it contagious? Beauty and fairness are understandable criteria, but the other two require some explanation.

Abundance refers to extra time, space and money, which are needed to brainstorm, innovate or invent. In business, that means capital. Humans can control desires and resource consumption or be more efficient, but those approaches alone can "stunt our potential," so abundance must be included in the vision. Ideas that lead to major change are those that spread epidemically, "like a new style of blue jeans," writes Welch.

Once the vision is developed, Welch imagines that we could manage this Earth like a big beautiful garden. He admits that his optimistic perspective has been shaped by *Mother Earth News*, one of the magazines published by Ogden Press.

I totally understand. For over 40 years, this magazine has been widely read by people striving for more self reliance by growing their own food, building chicken houses, keeping bees, installing solar collectors, etc.

When I was a back-to-the-lander in the 1970s, I read stories in this magazine about such successful "do it yourself" projects with great excitement. As my family produced and preserved vegetables, harvested honey, and put up hay for our milk cow in the barn we built, we gained greater control over our own lives and, we thought, our future. I read some recent issues of *Mother Earth News* in the public library and discovered that it still projects the same positive energy that it did in 1976.

Welch and his wife Carolyn live the world of *Mother Earth News* at Rancho Cappuccino, a 50-acre farm near Lawrence, Kans., where they raise grass-fed goats, sheep, chickens and cattle, plus vegetables, to feed themselves and others. The farm reflects their values, and Welch presents Rancho Cappuccino as a case study in the book, describing how they strive to

apply the four criteria of beauty, abundance, fairness and contagiousness in farm decisions. He also describes Ogden Publishing, Inc., through this lens, explaining how the company's energy use, its aesthetic goals and employee compensation standards meet the vision criteria. Since Welch began his job in 1996, Ogden has acquired a number of other magazines that he refers to as "op-

timistic journals of personal action," such as *Natural Home*, *The Herb Companion*, *Farm Collector* and even *Motorcycle Classics* and *Utne Reader*.

Problem Solving

America the Possible is a very different kind of book, one that begins with a thorough description of "a nation in trouble," then goes on to discuss specific changes that could transform what the author calls the U. S. "political economy" and address serious problems such as income disparity and poverty, fossil fuel dependency, climate change and militarism. But Speth believes the central message of his book is "one of good hope." He bases his vision on what humans should want for posterity: "Ask a parent, ask yourself, what America you would like for your grandchildren and their children."

Speth, now 71, has had a distinguished career, analyzing big problems and policy changes that could solve a broad range of environmental and economic issues. He was the co-founder of the Natural Resources Defense Council and founder of the World Resources Institute. He chaired President Jimmy Carter's Council on Environmental Quality, was Administrator of the United Nations Development Program, served as dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and is now a professor at the University of Vermont Law School. *America the Possible* is Speth's sixth book, and the extensive documentation and references to the writing of economists and experts in various fields reflect his broad experience and knowledge of public policy.

• • •
The vision must be idealistic, even if unrealistic, and fit four criteria: Is it beautiful? Does it create abundance? Is it fair? Is it contagious?
• • •

beautiful future is ours if we are willing to struggle for it. And it will take real struggle, because we must first understand the limits to our growth economy that's dependent upon increasing consumption of natural resources by a growing population.

The meat of the book is in the section on transformations, where he outlines actions

Beautiful & Possible, see page 29...

necessary to sustain a post-growth economy. This includes “full cost pricing” of goods, limiting economic and political power of corporations, regulating banking and finance, developing tax policies that reduce the wide income gap between rich and poor, creating a better measure of progress than the Gross National Product and much more.

Speth explains that transforming our growth economy depends upon political reform and changes in our dysfunctional governance system. This requires democratization of campaign financing based upon a combination of small donor contributions and public funding of elections.

In the last chapter, Speth writes that the essential factor needed to transform the U.S. political-economic system to support a sustainable future is a powerful, unified,

progressive people’s movement. Environmentalists and social justice liberals need to unite their efforts, speak with one voice and get involved in electoral politics.

He lists the coalitions and collaborations that currently exist as models and describes characteristics that will define an “invigorated American progressive movement.” The movement must begin in local communities, with local initiatives linking to form a national strategy.

Effective messages from preachers, poets, and philosophers must replace the wonkish technical language too often used by environmentalists, but still be grounded in solid scientific analysis. Marches, protests, demonstrations, direct action and non-violent civil disobedience will be required. On this point Speth has credibility—in August 2011 he was arrested with Bill McKibben of 350.org in front of the White House, protesting the proposed Keystone pipeline carrying oil

from Canadian tar sand fields.

The more hopeful book is Welch’s, because he focuses on a beautiful vision, not on how to solve problems. Speth tries to project hope, but his realistic discussion of the struggle required to change the political economy and address environmental and social problems overwhelms this reader.

The most hopeful message I take from these books is that the genes of these two good men have been passed down two generations and may continue to work in the world in positive ways. □

Dana Jackson is a senior adviser to the Land Stewardship Project and a former LSP board member, associate director and senior staff member. She co-edited the 2002 book, The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems With Ecosystems.

My Green Manifesto

Down the Charles River in Pursuit of a New Environmentalism

By David Gessner
2011; 225 pages
Milkweed Press
www.milkweed.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

David Gessner’s *My Green Manifesto* is more than an account of his relationship with Boston’s Charles River—it’s a critique of modern environmentalism. The “manifesto” he refers to in the book’s title is an attempt to “nudge people toward something, or back toward something.” That “something” is not a magic formula for being a model environmentalist. As the author argues, it must go much deeper than that if our highly-flawed society hopes to bring about long-term sustainability.

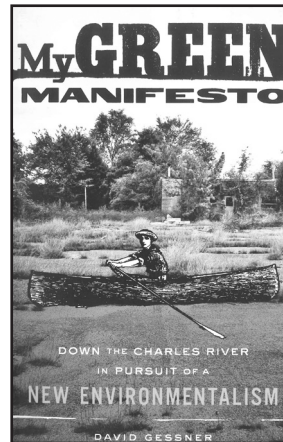
Gessner points out that to a large extent modern environmentalism contains a lot of what he calls “hypocrisy.” However, he explains that this hypocrisy, far from being a negative, is almost a necessity for environmentalism to work.

There is no perfect environmentalist. We all fall short, but continue to pursue our individual goals as we drive gasoline-powered cars, use electricity from coal-fired power plants and fail to be consistent about our recycling habits. Because of the structure of modern society, this hypocrisy is simply the nature of things, and we need to accept this if modern environmentalism is to be successful, Gessner reasons.

None of us is perfect, but there is still hope if we keep trying. The key is to “find something that you love” and that’s being threatened and then “fight for it,” writes Gessner, adding, “If everyone did that—imagine the difference.”

One of the things the author cares about deeply is the Charles River, and he describes its historical evolution from a colonial wilderness river to a polluted Boston backwater to a modern metropolitan parkway. A whole lot of caring on the part of a whole lot of imperfect people brought this urban waterway back from the brink.

• • •
There is no perfect environmentalist. We all fall short but continue to pursue our individual goals as we drive gasoline-powered cars, use electricity from coal-fired power plants and fail to be consistent about our recycling habits.
• • •



In addition to his Charles River experiences, the author also draws on the ideas of other environmental writers in the development of this manifesto, including Wendell

Berry, Terry Tempest Williams, Edward Abbey and, of course, New England’s own Henry David Thoreau.

Gessner’s discussion of Edward Abbey is probably the most fascinating. The author describes his meeting of Ken Sleight, the Utah-based whitewater rafter who was the inspiration for Seldom Seen Smith, the eco-anarchist from Abbey’s environmental classic, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*.

The author describes how Sleight’s relationship with the Colorado River evolved from a very consumptive commercial

situation to a more thoughtful approach that allowed him to be an advocate for river protection. In a sense, Gessner holds Sleight’s evolution out as hope for all of us who struggle with our own environmental hypocrisy as we come to a deeper understanding that a world exists outside of us.

“A world that reminds us that we are animals, too, animals who have evolved along with other animals on this earth,” writes Gessner. “Thinking, planning, scheming, talking, writing animals, but animals nonetheless.” □

Dale Hadler is a frequent volunteer for the Land Stewardship Project.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update



Family Farm Summer Fun

Hey kids, summer is finally here! School is out and good things are growing everywhere you look. Use the space below to draw, color, paint, etc., your favorite things about summer on the farm. We will share some of the submitted artwork on the Land Stewardship Project's website and Facebook page later this summer.

Be sure to fill out the artist information and send your completed work to:
Land Stewardship Project, c/o Megan Smith, 821 E 35th Street, #200, Minneapolis MN 55407

Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent(s) Name: _____

Address: _____

What's your favorite thing about summer on the farm? _____

Get Current With

LIVE  **WIRE**

Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* to get monthly e-mail updates from the Land Stewardship Project. To subscribe, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/signup. ☐

Want to Volunteer?

Thanks to all of our volunteers that help the Land Stewardship Project out in all aspects of our work. LSP literally could not fulfill its mission without the hard work of our volunteers.

Volunteers help us do everything from stuff envelopes and make telephone calls to enter data and set up logistics for meetings.

If you'd like to volunteer in one of our offices, contact:

• **Montevideo, Minn.** — Terry Van Der Pol, 320-269-2105, tlvdp@landstewardship-project.org.

• **Lewiston, Minn.** — Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, lpse@landstewardshipproject.org.

• **Minneapolis** — Megan Smith, 612-722-6377, megans@landstewardshipproject.org. ☐

Listen in on the Voices of the Land

The Land Stewardship Project's award-winning *Ear to the Ground* podcast showcases the voices of farmers, eaters, scientists and activists who are working to create a more sustainable food and farming system.

We now have more than 130 episodes online and are adding more each month. To listen in, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast. ☐

In Memory & in Honor...

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received the following gifts made to honor or remember loved ones, friends or special events:

In honor of Robert Kistler

◆ Lathan Kistler

In memory of Erwin Schultz

◆ Gregory Prokop

In honor of James Fassett-Carman

◆ Robert Carman

For details on donating to LSP in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Support LSP in Your Workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer 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, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. ☐

LSP & Social Media

The Land Stewardship Project is now in more places online.

Connect with LSP through *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter*.



Direct any questions about LSP's social media initiatives to Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org.




Koby Jeschkeit-Hagen (*left*), Urban Farm Manager and Community Outreach Coordinator for the Tiny Diner Restaurant in Minneapolis, gave a presentation at the recent Earth Day benefit breakfast for the Land Stewardship Project. The event was hosted by the Red Stag Supperclub in Minneapolis. (*LSP photo*)



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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **NOW-JULY 28** — “Dig It! The Secrets of the Soil” Smithsonian exhibit at the Bell Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Contact: www.bell-museum.umn.edu, 612-624-7083

→ **JULY 13** — Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Festival of Farms, various Minn. locations; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org/festival-of-farms, 763-244-6659

→ **JULY 15** — Getting a Start in Mob Grazing Farminar, 11 a.m. – noon (CST); Contact: <https://meeting.psu.edu/pawagn>, 814-865-7031

→ **JULY 19-21** — Seed Savers Exchange Conference & Camp-out, Decorah, Iowa; Contact: 563-382-5990, www.seedsavers.org

→ **JULY 21** — PFI Field Day on Alternative Takes on Vegetable CSA Marketing, Patchwork Green Farm, Decorah, Iowa, 563-387-0837, eriksessions@gmail.com

→ **JULY 22** — WEI Organic Farm School: It All Comes Down to Humus, Minneapolis; Contact: www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705

→ **JULY 25** — LSP Twin Cities potluck & summer celebration, Minneapolis; Contact: Megan Smith, 612-722-6377, megans@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY 25** — Organic Row Crops Field Day with MOSES Farmer of the Year, Johnson Farms, Madison, S. Dak.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org/FieldDays.html, 715-778-577

→ **JULY 27** — LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on CSA Vegetables, Machinery & Finances, Hutchinson, Minn. (see page 15)

→ **JULY 29** — WEI Organic Farm School: Herbs, Herbal Healing & Wild Medicine,

Minneapolis; Contact: www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705

→ **AUG. 1** — Deadline for LSP’s 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course (see page 14)

→ **AUG. 3** — LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on Hogs, Cattle, Fruit, Flowers & Greenhouse Production, Afton, Minn. (see page 15)

→ **AUG. 4** — In Her Boots: Sustainable Ag for Women by Women, Canoe Creek Produce, Decorah, Iowa; Contact: www.moses-organic.org/FieldDays.html

→ **AUG. 5** — WEI Organic Farm School: Basics of Urban Beekeeping, Minneapolis; Contact: www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705

→ **AUG. 10** — In Her Boots: Sustainable Ag for Women, By Women, Dancing Winds Farms, Kenyon, Minn.; Contact: www.moses-organic.org/FieldDays.html

→ **AUG. 10** — 8th Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: SFA, www.mn garlicfest.com, 763-260-0209

→ **AUG. 12** — WEI Organic Farm School: Future of the Good Food Revolution with Will Allen, Minneapolis; Contact: www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705

→ **AUG. 13-15** — Food Access Summit, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: www.foodaccess-summit.com

→ **AUG. 17** — LSP Farm Beginnings Tour on Grass-fed Beef, Sauk Centre, Minn. (see page 15)

→ **AUG. 20-22** — Building the Soil-Grass Connection, Bismarck, N. Dak.; Contact: www.grassfedexchange.com, Joshua Dukart, 701-870-1184, joshua_dukart@yahoo.com

→ **AUG. 23** — LSP Farm Beginnings Fruits/Orchard Establishment Field Day, Downsview, Wis. (see page 15)

→ **SEPT. 1** — Deadline for LSP’s 2013 Journeyperson Farm Training Course (see page 14)

→ **SEPT. 3** — LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on High Tunnels, Princeton, Minn. (see page 15)

→ **SEPT. 8** — LSP Farm Beginnings Fall Gathering, A to Z Produce & Bakery, Stockholm, Wis.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **SEPT. 14** — LSP Farmer Network & York Farm End of Season Hoe Down, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **SEPT. 15** — New Organic Stewards—Transitioning to Organic, Gardens of Eagan/Organic Field School, Northfield, Minn.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org/FieldDays.html

→ **SEPT. 22** — Benefit for Minnesota Food Association’s Immigrant Farmer Training Program, Marine on St. Croix, Minn.; Contact: MFA, www.mnfoodassociation.org, 651-433-3676

→ **OCT. 5-6** — Will Allen/Growing Power/WEI Training, North Branch, Minn.; Contact: www.w-e-i.org, 651-583-0705

→ **OCT. 26** — First LSP Farm Beginnings class in St. Cloud, Minn. (see page 14)

→ **NOV. 2** — First LSP Farm Beginnings class in Winona, Minn. (see page 14)

→ **NOV. 6-8** — 4th National Conference for Women in Sustainable Ag, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: WFAN, www.wfan.org, 515-460-2477

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