

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

33 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

Volume 33

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LSP's Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol hits the decade mark (pages 6-7).



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- Buffers on Working Farmland—*
 - A New Way for Farmers to Network—*
 - 2015 Minnesota Legislative Roundup—*
 - Fast-Tracking a Bad Trade Deal—*
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 - Farmer, Professor, Student—*
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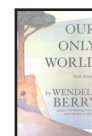
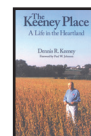
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Commentary?!?

Banking on Buffers

A Grassy Border Between the Land & Our Water isn't Just Good for the Environment—From it Can Flow Economic Benefits for the Farmer as Well

By Darrel Mosel

I did some disturbing dashboard math the other day while driving to Austin, Minn., to attend a meeting on Governor Mark Dayton's buffer initiative (*see page 9*). In one 40-mile stretch, I must have counted 50 streams that were farmed right up to the edge. I'm not talking about within a few yards or feet of the stream bank — it was a matter of inches. That reconfirmed for me what I was driving to Austin for, to tell the Governor that his buffer initiative is much needed and makes sense for farmers.

As a farmer who has a drainage ditch, a small creek and larger creek flowing through my land, I know that when there isn't a buffer between the crop field and the stream bank, runoff goes right over the edge and takes soil and any chemicals present along for the ride. I have buffers on all of these waterways, which range from 50 to 120 feet in width. That leaves me plenty of room to raise crops on the rest of my land. And it makes a difference — the stream banks are stable and I know my soil and inputs are staying where they belong.

But upstream and downstream, some people are still trying to farm right up to the edge, and when heavy rains come, it's a disaster: creeks turn chocolate and the banks cave in. This type of farm run-off is a major contributor to the water pollution problems we are facing in our state. It's also an incredible waste of seed, fertilizer and chemicals.

It's no secret that having a strip of year-round vegetation between your farm fields and a stream is good for the water. But

• • •

What's been overlooked in all this discussion over buffers is that they can make a lot of economic sense for farmers.

• • •



In one 40-mile stretch, I must have counted 50 streams that were farmed right up to the edge. I'm not talking about within a few yards or feet of the stream bank — it was a matter of inches. (LSP Photo)

what's been overlooked in all this discussion over buffers is that they can make a lot of economic sense for farmers. As a farmer, it's tempting to make use of every last speck of ground when growing row crops, but sometimes we have to look at just how productive such edge acres are and whether they'd be put to better use growing grass or hay.

Ask any farmer how many good crop years they get out of land adjacent to a creek and odds are most growing seasons it was a waste of time and money to plant those acres. Such saturated land can be a nightmare to grow corn and soybeans on. And dredge material dumped next to a waterway makes for poor growing soil.

And considering that a farmer can actu-

ally get paid to have a buffer between a field and the water, these plantings make more economic sense than ever. If the buffer is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), we're guaranteed a rental payment, and CRP rental rates are quite competitive these days. But even if it's not enrolled in CRP, the buffer initiative allows you to hay or graze it, which produces direct income for a farm. This isn't pristine native prairie we're talking about — anything that is perennial vegetation will work and there are

a range of forages that could be used to filter out contaminants while providing cheap livestock feed. Farmers can work with the local Soil and Water Conservation District to establish a buffer that fits their individual situations, and funds are available for putting in such structures as fencing for grazing systems.

Buffers make particularly good sense now that corn and soybean prices are down. But the bottom line is I don't see how buffers can lose a farmer money, whether commodity prices are high or low. Even if corn goes back to \$7, I'm not going to worry about three or four acres in a buffer. I'm going to make money on the rest of my acres and have the peace of mind that goes with knowing I'm doing my part to keep water clean.

Opponents of buffers like to call them a land grab, when in reality they're an opportunity for farmers to grab ahold of a commonsense, proactive approach to improving water quality on parts of their farms that aren't producing bin-busting yields anyway. It's the definition of working lands conservation. □

Land Stewardship Project member Darrel Mosel raises crops and livestock in Minnesota's Sibley County. See pages 8-11 for details on the buffer initiative and other LSP priorities that were considered during the 2015 session of the Minnesota Legislature.

What's on Your Mind?

The *Land Stewardship Letter* welcomes letters and commentaries related to the issues we cover. Submissions can be sent to: Brian DeVore, 821 E. 35th St., Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; 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.

Myth Buster Box

An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

→ Myth: 'New' Farmland is from Already Tilled Acres

→ Fact:

It's no secret we are gaining "new" corn and soybean acres every year. The conventional wisdom is that

those acres are land that has already been tilled in the recent past, so that in effect we're simply switching around cropped real estate. But a recent study out of the University of Wisconsin makes it clear we are plowing new land that was previously in grass or other perennial plant systems, and government policy is playing a big role in that conversion.

The study, which was published April 2 in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*, used high resolution satellite data to track how much new cropland we gained in the U.S. between 2008 and 2012, the time period immediately following the passage of the federal Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), which accelerated the demand for corn-based ethanol and other biofuels. Among other things, the researchers wanted to determine if demand for crops like corn fueled the conversion of previously uncultivated acres.

They found that nationwide, over 7.3 million acres of previously uncultivated land was converted to crops during the study period. Seventy-seven percent of that new cropland came at the expense of grassland—native prairie, pasture and hay ground. Corn was the number one choice for planting on newly broken ground, followed by wheat and soybeans.

About 250,000 acres of uncultivated Minnesota land was converted to row crops during the study period, according to *Minnesota Public Radio*. Most of those acres were former grasslands, but 25,000 acres had been in wetlands—more than any other state. In addition, 13,000 acres of Minnesota forests transitioned to crops during the study period, which ranks this state second nationally in that category. The perimeters of Minnesota's North Woods saw a cropland expansion of more than 100 percent.

The satellite imagery examined by the UW researchers shows the Renewable

Fuel Standard's promised goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is on rocky ground. According to the law that created the RFS, biofuels may only be sourced from land that was cleared or cultivated prior to December 2007. That requirement is a recognition that the environmental benefits of biofuels can be quickly wiped out by releasing carbon into the atmosphere to produce corn and other crops to feed energy factories. But the study shows that nationwide 3.5 million acres of corn and soybeans growing from 2008 to 2012 were on new, rather than pre-existing, cropland, which would make them potentially ineligible for producing biofuels under RFS.

Carbon emissions produced from corn and soybeans planted on recently tilled land would be equivalent to a year's carbon dioxide release from 34 coal-fired power plants, or 28 million cars, according to the UW study. Given that major impact, the researchers conclude that stricter enforcement of rules around expanding cropland for biofuels production is needed.

The researchers also call out another federal program—crop insurance—as in need of modification in order to stem the tide of land conversion. By providing generous subsidies for insurance premiums, the program removes much of the risk of farming land that would normally be considered too marginal to produce a profitable yield. When federally subsidized crop insurance was greatly expanded in the 2014 Farm Bill, it had a "sodsaver" provision attached to it that limits insurance premium subsidies on acres converted from native sod after January 2014.

Unfortunately, that rule only applies to six states—Minnesota, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. These states accounted for 36 percent of the documented cropland expansion on previously unbroken land from 2008 to 2012. That leaves a whole lot of farmers in a whole lot of states who can break new ground and still receive the full benefits of crop insurance premium subsidies. And the sodsaver provision does not prevent conversions of forests or other native ecosystems, which has greatly benefited agribusiness giant R.D. Offutt Corporation's efforts to convert timber to potatoes in Minnesota.

According to the *Environmental Research Letters* paper, during the study period, "...total marginal cropland area expanded at twice the rate of cropland on well suited soil."

Losing marginal land also means eroding our base of opportunity for beginning farmers. Historically, marginal land has often been more affordable, providing new farmers with a relatively low-cost entry into agriculture. Many a pasture-based livestock operation was started on land otherwise not suitable to raise row crops on. As the Land Stewardship Project's recent series of white papers show, by inflating the price of land, crop insurance has helped put such acreage out of the price range of farmers who are just getting started or otherwise don't have access to large financial resources.

One thing has changed since 2012: prices for commodities like corn and soybeans have taken a major tumble, and high crop prices certainly played a factor in the big plow up. But the mechanics of another major factor in all that acreage conversion—crop insurance—are the same. In fact, with the major expansion of crop insurance in the last Farm Bill, it is certain to play an even bigger role in incentivizing the tilling of marginal land. Expanding sodsaver to more states may help save soil, but it's not the ultimate answer, particularly for beginning farmers.

→ More Information

- The University of Wisconsin study, "Cropland expansion outpaces agricultural and biofuel policies in the United States," is available at <http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/10/4/044003/article>.

- LSP's special series of white papers on crop insurance are available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/cropinsurance, or by contacting LSP's Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377.

→ More Myth Busters

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



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LSP News

LSP Local: A New Communication Tool for Our Farmer-Members Across the Region

By Dori Eder

One of the pleasures of working for the Land Stewardship Project is that our members provide the leadership that informs how we do our work. LSP's Farm Viability Steering Committee (formerly known as the Advanced Farmer Training Steering Committee) has long wrestled with the question of how to get farmers more connected to each other beyond the Farm Beginnings (*see page 20*) and Journeyperson (*see page 24*) courses in ways that deepen the network of support critical to thriving family farms.

We've employed a variety of strategies over the past few years, including the *Farmer Network Newsletter*, informal farm

tours, potlucks and LSP social events. These efforts are all geared toward facilitating relationships and farmer-to-farmer learning, with varying degrees of success. Out of our discussions grew the concept of connecting farmers on a regional level, since farmers in a close geographic area would be more likely to be encountering similar questions related to climate, infrastructure and resources. These "neighbors" would also be more likely to visit each other's farms during the growing season, when time is so limited. One strategy that rose to the top of our list was the development of regional e-mail listservs for our farmer-members to encourage that information sharing and communication. Thus, **LSP Local** was born.

In undertaking the long process of mapping LSP's network of member-farms,

getting feedback about the size and scope of regions and determining how to serve the needs of farms between regions, those not yet farming, and those farming in urban settings, we settled on 14 regions across Minnesota and Wisconsin. These regions are geographically small enough to facilitate travel between farms and farmer-rich enough to make each list dynamic, useful and inclusive of a diversity of operations. Two additional lists will serve "Urban Farmers" and people in the general "Farm Beginners/Looking for Land" category.

With the leadership of the Farm Viability Steering Committee, we launched the **LSP Local** listserv on May 4. It's our sincere hope that these regional e-mail lists will facilitate deeper connections, improved relationships and regular opportunities for farmer-to-farmer learning. If you want to take part in this network and have not yet received an invitation to join via e-mail, please visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/lsplocalnetwork.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about **LSP Local**, contact me. ☐

LSP Farm Beginnings organizer Dori Eder can be reached at dori@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-578-4497.

Connor Departs LSP

Shelly Connor has left the Land Stewardship Project to become the associate director of the Wild Farm Alliance (www.wildfarmalliance.org), a national organization working to "promote a healthy, viable agriculture that helps to protect and restore wild nature."

During the past few months, Connor has worked in LSP's Twin Cities office as an Individual Giving Program associate. Connor assisted with LSP membership renewals, new member recruitment and major donor fundraising. Connor has a master's of science degree in environmental studies with a concentration in sustainable food and farming from the University of Montana. She has worked as an associate director of the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides, associate director at Appalachian Voices and citizen outreach director for the Fund for Public Interest Research. ☐



Shelly Connor

LSP Earth Day Breakfast Features Food, Discussion about Women & Land



The Red Stag Supperclub hosted an Earth Day Breakfast fundraiser for the Land Stewardship Project in April. Proceeds from the breakfast went to support LSP's work. During the event, there were presentations by LSP staff and members about the connections between women, community and the land. Thanks to the Red Stag for generously hosting this event. (LSP Photo)



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LSP News

LSP's Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol Marks 10 Years of Food, Farms & Organizing

The Land Stewardship Project's Family Farm Breakfast and Day at the Capitol marked its 10th Anniversary on March 18. More than 220 LSP members, friends and state legislators gathered at Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill to dine on locally produced food and discuss legislative priorities such as keeping the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Citizens' Board strong, making affordable healthcare available for everyone, establishing more buffer strips along waterways and funding for sustainable agriculture research such as the Forever Green initiative at the University of Minnesota. After the breakfast, a lobby training was held for LSP members, who then paid office visits to lawmakers to further discuss policy issues.

A summary of how LSP's priorities fared during the 2015 legislative session is on pages 8-11. (*LSP Photos*)



Right: Land Stewardship Project members and friends had an opportunity to discuss policy priorities with lawmakers as well as officials with various state agencies.

"Land and water, it's all connected. Land stewardship is the key to water stewardship."

— Tom Landwehr,
Minn. DNR commissioner,
speaking at the breakfast



Above: "We need this kind of research," said LSP farmer-member Darrel Mosel, referring to the U of M's Forever Green initiative.



Left & Above: Food for the breakfast was sourced from LSP members who farm throughout the region.

"I consider myself real ag because I take care of the land. I'm real ag because I love my family and my neighbors. I'd rather have more neighbors than more land."

— LSP farmer-member
James Kanne, speaking
at the breakfast



Who Provided the Food?

The food for the 10th Annual Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol was sourced from LSP members:

Eggs

- Earthrise Farm
- Kalliroe Farm
- Earth-Be-Glad Farm
- Listening Stones Farm

Bacon

- Niman Ranch
- Pastures A' Plenty
- Prairie Point Farm

Oatmeal

- Whole Grain Milling

Cinnamon Rolls & Muffins

- Benson Bakery

Sausage

- Hidden Stream Farm
- Pastures A' Plenty
- Farm on Wheels



Bagels & Cream Cheese

- Common Roots Café

Donuts

- Birchwood Café

Milk & Cream

- Organic Valley

Apple Cider

- Pine Tree Apple Orchard

Coffee

- Equal Exchange
- Velasquez Family Coffee

Honey

- Honey & Herbs

The Chef

- T.J. Rawitzer

Thanks to the Breakfast Volunteers & Advertisers

The Land Stewardship Project would like to thank the volunteers who helped make the 10th Annual Family Farm Breakfast and Lobby Day at the Capitol a success. LSP would also like to thank the businesses and organizations who chose to support our work by placing an advertisement in the event program:

A Couple of Gurus ♦ Albert Lea Seed House ♦ Atlantic Press ♦ Bennett Office Technologies ♦ Birchwood Café ♦ Blue Heron Coffee House ♦ Bryant Lake Bowl/Red Stag Supperclub/Barbette ♦ Clancey's Meats & Fish ♦ Clean Up the River Environment ♦ Common Good Books ♦ Common Roots Café ♦ CSP & Associates ♦ Eastside Food Co-op ♦ Equal Exchange ♦ Falk's Seed Farm ♦ Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc. ♦ Foresight Bank ♦ Hampden Park Co-op ♦ Lakewinds Natural Foods ♦ Ledebuhr Meat Processing, Inc. ♦ Linden Hills Co-op ♦ Lorentz Meats & Deli ♦ May Day Café ♦ Minnesota Farmers Union ♦ Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-op ♦ National Farmers Organization ♦ Niman Ranch ♦ Organic Valley ♦ Organizing Apprenticeship Project ♦ Peace Coffee ♦ People's Food Co-op ♦ Pesticide Action Network ♦ Popp Communications ♦ Principle Financial Group ♦ Room 34 ♦ Seven Corners Printing ♦ Seward Co-op Grocery & Deli ♦ Spoonriver ♦ Tangletown Gardens ♦ TakeAction Minnesota ♦ The Databank ♦ The Matchbox Coffee Shop ♦ The Wedge Co-op ♦ Triangle Park Creative ♦ Trotter's Café ♦ Valley Natural Foods ♦ Velasquez Family Coffee ♦ Vincent Restaurant

Right: LSP volunteers helped sign-in citizens and legislators, prepare the food for the breakfast and clean up afterwards.

• • •

"If you don't have good healthcare, you won't have people out there surviving and making a living and taking care of the land."

— LSP farmer-member
Richard Handeen,
speaking at the breakfast

• • •



Minnesota Legislature

A Mixed Bag at the 2015 Session

MPCA Citizens' Board Eliminated; Forever Green Funding Approved

By Bobby King

One of the most anti-environmental pieces of legislation to come out of the Minnesota Capitol in several years became law on Saturday, June 13. The Agriculture and Environment Omnibus Budget Bill was supposed to provide funding for numerous initiatives of importance to rural Minnesotans.

However, as the session wound down, several policy provisions were plugged into the bill that did everything from tie state agencies' hands when it comes to protecting the environment to providing money for the labeling of pesticide-laced plants as "pollinator friendly."

But perhaps the most egregious provision of the Agriculture and Environment Omnibus Budget Bill—both in terms of its content and the way it was made part of the legislation—was a proposal to eliminate the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Citizens' Board. The board's role in providing the final decision on whether controversial developments should undergo stringent environmental review became a point of contention as soon as the Minnesota legislative session began in January.

The Citizens' Board was established in 1967 with the creation of the MPCA to ensure an open and transparent process for approving permits for large developments. Over the years, it's become a key venue for citizens to have a say in controversial projects such as factory farms that had significant potential to harm communities.

The role the Citizens' Board plays in allowing the public to have a say in the future of their communities came to the fore in August 2014, when it ordered an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an 8,850-cow dairy proposed in western Minnesota's Stevens County. Neighbors to the proposed dairy raised concerns about its potential use of large amounts of water, how it would handle manure disposal and the amount of

Despite all of these issues, pro-factory farm lawmakers, supported by groups like the Minnesota AgriGrowth Council and the Minnesota Milk Producers Association, vowed to weaken the Citizens' Board's ability to order environmental reviews.

A bill was introduced early in the session that would have made the Citizens' Board basically an advisory body. Land Stewardship Project farmer-members testified in committee hearings against the bill, making the point that rural citizens need open, meaningful access to decisions that could have huge impacts on their communities.

"This was my only opportunity to have input. I love the name 'Citizens' Board,' because that's who represents me," said LSP member Kathy DeBuhr during one hearing. DeBuhr lives within a mile of the proposed site of the Stevens County dairy. "I urge you not to remove the power of the Citizens' Board—they represent me," she added.

However, lawmakers not only ignored citizens like DeBuhr—as well as officials



LSP board member and dairy farmer Loretta Jaus talked with Gov. Mark Dayton and gave him a petition signed by over 700 Minnesotans expressing their support for a strong MPCA Citizens' Board. A few days after the adjournment of the official 2015 session of the Legislature, Jaus and other LSP members took part in a Minnesota Environmental Partnership press conference in front of the Governor's Mansion. (LSP Photo)

toxic hydrogen sulfide its manure lagoons would produce.

Indeed, documentation produced by the MPCA and the Department of Natural Resources showed the dairy did not have guaranteed access to about half of the land it needed to dispose of manure, and there were major concerns that its use of groundwater would tax the local aquifer at an "unsustainable" rate. In addition, modeling showed hydrogen sulfide emissions would be produced at levels that would come close to exceeding state standards.

with the MPCA—they went one better: just 48 hours before the adjournment of the official session, a proposal was stuck into the Agriculture and Environment Omnibus Budget Bill that eliminated the Citizens' Board outright. This proposal was not introduced as a bill or heard previously in any legislative committee. Instead, it was adopted in conference committee in a backroom deal late on a Saturday. Conference committee proceedings take place behind closed

Legislature, see page 9...

doors, and it was clear that such an extreme measure would have never passed in an open legislative process (the Senate version of the Agriculture and Environment Bill contained no provisions weakening the Citizens' Board).

As a sign of how provisions like this made for a particularly controversial Agriculture and Environment Bill, the entire legislation almost died on the Senate floor during the official session—it needed 34 votes to pass, and got 35.

A Visit to the Governor's Mansion

That's what brought the Land Stewardship Project and other member-groups of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership to the Governor's Mansion a few days after adjournment of the official session. We called for a veto of the bill so it could be fixed during the subsequent special session, which was convened June 12 and lasted until the morning of June 13.

One of the people who met with the Governor that day was Loretta Jaus, a dairy farmer from Sibley County. She had with her a handful of petitions that had been circulated in rural Minnesota.

"These are over 700 signatures of rural Minnesotans who want strong environmental protections," Jaus, a member of the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors, said as she handed the petitions over to Governor Mark Dayton. "That's why it's important that you veto this bill."

Jaus and others made the point that such provisions as elimination of the 48-year-old Citizens' Board go against what rural Minnesotans have long made clear: they value a clean environment and want to have a say in any developments that may threaten that.

"Minnesota taxpayers have always made it clear that clean water and the environment is a priority," Jaus told the *Star Tribune* newspaper after meeting with the Governor. "Rural people want to make sure the public is included in decision-making. That's why the citizens' advisory board was created; it was a key opportunity for people like me to get our voices heard."

Two days later, Dayton listened to these concerns and vetoed the Agriculture and Environment Budget Bill. In his veto letter, the Governor said he was "deeply disappointed"

with a bill that "undermines decades of environmental protections."

In the days running up to the special session, newspaper editorials called for a bill that kept the Citizens' Board strong, among other things. During the special session itself, DFL Senators resisted passing legislation that was so blatantly anti-environmental, and at one point on the evening of June 12 successfully stripped many of the bad provisions out. But by the early hours

money from the sales tax dedicated to the environment that Minnesota voters approved through a constitutional amendment.

Forever Green is doing cutting-edge research on developing cover cropping and forage production systems that are profitable for farmers while protecting soil and water quality (see the No. 1, 2015, Land Stewardship Letter, page 14). LSP farmer-members worked hard to gain approval for Forever Green's funding during this session, seeing



LSP member Kathy DeBuhr testifying before a Senate committee about the importance of the MPCA Citizens' Board. The Citizens' Board ordered an EIS for an 8,850-cow dairy that is proposed for construction within a mile of her farm. "[The Citizens' Board] was my only opportunity to have input. I love the name 'Citizens' Board,' because that's who represents me," she told lawmakers. (LSP Photo)

of June 13, the Citizens' Board had fallen victim to a deal between legislative leaders and Dayton that provided support for some of the Governor's priorities, such as the establishment of natural buffers along lakes, creeks and rivers (see below). As a result, after almost five decades of providing local communities a way to take part in decisions that have major impacts on environmental and human health, the Citizens' Board is being eliminated.

In addition, the Agriculture and Environment Bill allows commercial nurseries to label their plants as "pollinator friendly," even if insecticides are used that are toxic to insects. It also weakens various water pollution policies. Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville) called the bill "environmental vandalism."

Here's a rundown of how other LSP priorities fared at the Legislature during the 2015 session:

Forever Green

The bill allocating Minnesota's Clean Water Legacy funding provided \$1 million for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Agriculture Initiative. This is the

it as a critical way to support ongoing sustainable agriculture research at the U of M.

Buffer Initiative

First proposed by Gov. Dayton, the original idea behind the "buffer initiative" was to require at least 50-feet of perennial vegetation along all lakes, creeks and rivers in Minnesota. Buffers are highly effective at filtering out agricultural chemicals and reducing the amount of eroded soil that makes its way into waterways. They also provide wildlife habitat. Agricultural production would be allowed on the buffers as long as permanent vegetation is maintained. Haying and grazing would be permitted, for example. LSP sees such an initiative as a way to protect water quality on working farmland.

During the legislative session, LSP farmer-members spoke out in favor of the buffer initiative, calling it one tool for providing clean water while producing economic activity on agricultural land (see farmer Darrel Mosel's commentary on page 3).

The original proposal was watered

...Legislature, from page 9

down considerably by the final Agriculture and Environment Omnibus Budget Bill. It requires 50-foot buffers on public waters by November 2017 and 16½-foot buffers on public ditches by November 2018. It will be up to local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to determine which waterways on private land will require buffers. It's a good start, but it remains to be seen how effectively it will be implemented on working farms.

MinnesotaCare

A House proposal would have eliminated MinnesotaCare, a public, low-cost alternative to private health insurance that has provided healthcare to thousands of working Minnesotans for over 20 years. LSP has a number of members who use MinnesotaCare, including farmers. Without this program, many farmers would have to go without the healthcare they need or pay prohibitively high costs for it through the private market. Working with allies such as TakeAction Minnesota, LSP was able to prevent MinnesotaCare from being eliminated, although its budget was cut significantly. See

page 11 for more on this issue.

Factory Farm Nuisance Law

Minnesota law exempts the vast majority of livestock farms from being subject to a nuisance claim related to, for example, odor or air pollution. The largest factory farms over 1,000 animal units in size (2,400 sows, for example) are not exempt from being sued for nuisance violations. Proposed legislation would have made it possible for these mega-factory farms to be shielded from nuisance law, even preventing state agencies and local government from pursuing action to abate a CAFO that is a public nuisance. This would have undermined the rights of citizens and governments to hold factory farms accountable. Due to strong opposition led by LSP and others, this bill was defeated.

Ag Research Board

A bill was proposed to create the Agriculture Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer Board to oversee over \$18 million annually in public money for agricultural research and outreach. Directing more public funds toward agricultural research is a good idea, but as originally

drafted the legislation set up a governing board that did not represent sustainable agriculture organizations, minority farmers, fruit and vegetable growers or organizations focused on water quality.

However, the board would have included representatives from each of the commodity groups as well as the AgriGrowth Council, which represents the largest agribusiness interests in the state. Each organization on the board would name their own representative—it is very unusual for a board that oversees large amounts of public funding to be comprised of members not selected by the Governor. LSP and our allies felt strongly the board must represent all the interests and needs facing Minnesota agriculture.

We were successful in highlighting the importance of a board that has fair representation, and legislation was passed that does not give commodity and agribusiness firms final say over how tax money is spent on research. However, it remains to be seen how exactly the Agriculture Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer Board will operate. LSP will be watching this issue closely in coming months. □

LSP organizer Bobby King works on state and local policy issues. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Opportunities Resources



Get Current With LSP's

LIVE  **WIRE**

Sign up for the **LIVE-WIRE** e-letter to get monthly updates from the Land Stewardship Project sent straight to your inbox. See www.landstewardshipproject.org/signup for details. □

Riparian Grazing

The Land Stewardship Project has been working with farmers and conservation experts on utilizing managed rotational grazing of livestock to improve riparian areas such as those along trout streams and other sensitive waterways. As a result of this work, LSP has developed a fact sheet on riparian grazing and a colorful "Trout-fishing with Livestock" summary of how one farm in southeastern Minnesota's Root River watershed is showing that managed rotational grazing of cattle can improve habitat for trout (and other species) while providing the livestock producer

economic benefits.

Both resources are available at www.landstewardshipproject.org on the **Root River: Promise of Pasture** page. Paper copies are available from Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. □

LSP Township Manual

Protecting Your Township from Unwanted Development, produced by

the Land Stewardship Project's Policy and Organizing Program, provides guidance on using the Minnesota Interim Ordinance and other tools in the Municipal Planning law.

It's available online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/libraryresources/publications. Free paper copies are available from LSP's Policy and Organizing Program by calling 612-722-6377, or e-mailing bking@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Get Your LSP Cap Today

Show your support for the Land Stewardship Project with an official LSP cap. LSP's baseball-style cap is union made in the U.S. of high quality 100-percent cotton. It comes in black with LSP's green and white embroidered logo featured on the front. A fabric strap and brass clip on the back make this a one-size-fits-all cap. The price is \$15.

Caps are available in LSP's offices in Minneapolis (612-722-6377), Lewiston (507-523-3366) or Montevideo (320-269-2105). You can also order them online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/store.



Healthcare Under Attack at the Capitol

Legislators Go After a Major Source of Coverage for Rural Minnesotans

By Stephanie Porter & Paul Sobocinski

Healthcare was at the epicenter of a major battle during the 2015 session of the Minnesota Legislature. The House of Representatives pushed to eliminate MinnesotaCare, which has provided affordable health insurance to Minnesotans with low and variable incomes for over 20 years. In fact, it currently provides 90,000 to 100,000 state residents coverage annually. The House's plan would have abolished the program entirely by the end of this year.

the two-hour trek to the state Capitol three times this year to defend MinnesotaCare and tell her story.

Many other farmers and rural workers like the Hodgsons depend on MinnesotaCare for health insurance. In fact, the 25 counties with the highest number of MinnesotaCare enrollees as a percentage of 20- to 64-year-olds are all outside of the Twin Cities region. Yet most rural House Republicans voted to eliminate MinnesotaCare when the Minnesota House passed its Health and Human Services Finance Bill on April 29.

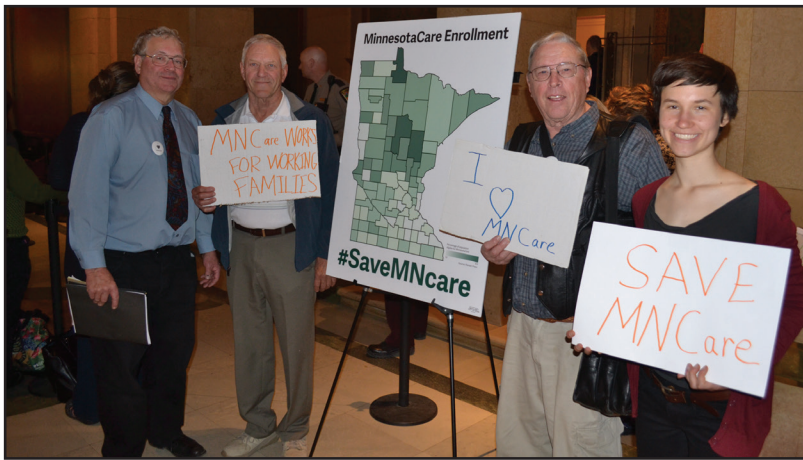
Under the House's plan, which was drafted by Rep. Matt Dean (R-Dellwood),

Fortunately, when the Legislature adjourned on May 18, lawmakers kept MinnesotaCare intact, despite intense efforts to abolish the program.

Although the program will not be repealed, the Legislature did vote to cut its budget by \$65 million for fiscal year 2016-2017 (for fiscal year 2018-2019 there will be a \$96 million cut). That will result in a significant financial impact for enrollees. According to an early analysis by the Minnesota Budget Project, the cuts will cause annual healthcare costs to more than triple for current enrollees of MinnesotaCare. Considering that the majority of people on MinnesotaCare are living in periods of uncertainty or on the edge — like independent business owners and workers living paycheck-to-paycheck — such an increase in costs will be especially difficult to manage.

It is wrong to ask Minnesotans on the edge to pay more in healthcare when our state has a budget surplus of nearly \$2 billion. □

Stephanie Porter and Paul Sobocinski are LSP healthcare organizers. Sobocinski can be reached at 507-342-2323 (sobopaul@redred.com) and Porter at 612-722-6377 (stephaniep@landstewardshipproject.org). For more on LSP's work related to healthcare, see the **Affordable Healthcare for All** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org.



LSP members and staff stood up for MinnesotaCare outside of the House chambers at an April 28 press conference and rally, organized by LSP ally TakeAction Minnesota. (LSP Photo)

For many Land Stewardship Project members, MinnesotaCare has been a source of stability during times of transition as they grow their businesses or move toward farming full time. For others, it has meant having access to much-needed — and in some cases life-saving — care that would otherwise have been unaffordable.

LSP member Leslea Hodgson and her husband Brad have struggled to afford health insurance since they began farming 17 years ago. They ultimately decided to go without insurance altogether, finding that their high deductible meant they couldn't afford to use the care they were paying such high premiums for.

"The only way we could actually get care was to go without insurance," says Hodgson. "We couldn't pay for both."

MinnesotaCare allowed them both to be covered at an affordable level for the first time since 1998. Hodgson is part of LSP's Healthcare Organizing Committee and made

current enrollees would have been forced onto much more expensive health coverage on the private market. Significantly higher premiums, increased deductibles and out-of-pocket costs would have prevented enrollees from accessing much-needed care. Tax credits would have been available, but the bill did not specify how much, from whom, or when enrollees would receive the support.

Some legislators, including Rep. Jeff Backer (R-Browns Valley) and Rep. David Baker (R-Willmar), crossed party lines and stood up for affordable healthcare for their constituents during committee votes. Unfortunately, they reversed their votes on the House floor. Senate leadership, on the other hand, said that eliminating MinnesotaCare was "not negotiable." In a newspaper commentary, Senator Tony Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) criticized House Republicans for "campaigning on the premise of protecting our most vulnerable" while threatening to eliminate MinnesotaCare.

Correction to Healthcare Article

In the No. 1, 2015, edition of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we reported on how Alphonse Mathiowetz's ongoing battle with prostate cancer requires him to undergo a regular procedure involving an injection at a health clinic ("Forward, Not Backward, on Healthcare," page 12). In that article, we reported that Medicaid reimbursed Mathiowetz \$800 for a shot that cost \$1,200 when he got the injection in Mankato, Minn., and \$7,500 when he underwent the procedure in New Ulm, Minn., and was charged \$9,534.95.

Rather, the article should have reported that Medicare, not Medicaid, provided the reimbursements, and that these payments were made to the clinics involved, not directly to Mathiowetz. As a result, although the New Ulm clinic is closer to his home, Mathiowetz now drives to Mankato to get this procedure done to save the government money for this procedure.

Federal Policy

Fast-Tracking a Bad Trade Deal

Environmental Sustainability, Health Protections, Local Control & Accountability to the Public Threatened by Massive Trade Deal

By Kaitlyn O'Connor

Over the past 12 months, the Land Stewardship Project has worked to oppose granting the U.S.

President “fast-track” authority over proposed international trade agreements. This issue has broad implications, and that’s why we have been working with a national coalition of groups associated with labor, environmental, family farm, consumer, faith, Internet freedom, open government and civil rights issues.

Why is this issue so important? Presidential fast-track authority over international trade deals virtually eliminates public scrutiny, limits Congressional debate, and prohibits any Congressional amendments to corporate-backed trade proposals if and when they are voted on for final approval. In this case, the Obama Administration is seeking fast-track authority over the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal.

The last thing the TPP needs is less public scrutiny and oversight. It would cover 12 Pacific Rim countries and if passed would be the largest trade agreement in history. Despite its highly controversial nature, there are aggressive efforts underway on the part of multinational corporations and their allies to jam it through as soon as possible.

It has been developed largely in secret, with negotiation sessions being limited to government trade officials and some 600 mostly corporate “advisers” representing multinational firms such as Cargill and Walmart. These “advisers” are required to sign a confidentiality agreement to not share information, and even members of Congress and law experts have been shut out of the discussions.

Through information released via

WikiLeaks, we know that the TPP would affect a broad span of issues relating to patents and copyright, food safety, government procurement, corporate rights, financial regulation, the Internet, immigration, healthcare, energy, the environment, labor



Map by Steve Ewest, LSP

rights and more.

One particularly troublesome component of this trade agreement is the “investor-state” provisions. These provisions would grant multinational corporations special legal rights to sue local governments for passing laws designed to protect public health, consumer safety and environmental integrity. The basis for such lawsuits would be any laws the corporations claim negatively affect their “future expected profits.”

Because such trade agreements would take precedence over U.S. laws at the federal, state and municipal level, a vast swath of public policy could be affected without any of the necessary public processes associated with democratic lawmaking.

For example, these “investor-state” provi-

sions could give oil and gas corporations the legal authority to sue cities, townships or countries for enacting regulations on frac sand mining. The justification? Such laws result in “lost profits” these corporations would have otherwise generated through silica sand exports.

The Status of Fast-Track

The U.S. Senate passed legislation granting fast-track authority on May 22, and sent it onto the House. However, U.S. Representatives on both sides of the aisle raised serious concerns about granting such powers, and on June 12 fast-track suffered a major setback. Early that day, lawmakers voted down a measure that related to providing assistance to workers hurt by global trade deals like the TPP. Since the worker aid proposal was tied in with the main fast-track legislation, its defeat stymied the larger bill for the moment.

Stopping fast-track is a huge victory for the American people, but the battle isn’t over. As this *Land Stewardship Letter* went to press, it looked like backers of the legislation in the House were going to make another serious attempt to pass it. LSP is working with our allies to get out the word on how we need to kill this bad proposal once and for all.

Keep in mind that even if fast-track authority is not granted to the President, the TPP can still happen. Check www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact me for the latest LSP action alerts related to this issue. With or without fast-track or the TPP, we must continue to fight against trade agreements that

legally prioritize profits above all else. ☐

LSP organizer Kaitlyn O'Connor can be reached at 612-722-6377 or koconnor@landstewardshipproject.org.

More on Fast-Track & TPP

The Land Stewardship Project’s Trans-Pacific Partnership web page has fact sheets, action alerts, commentaries, a *Myth Buster*, background papers and links for everything from Congressional contact information to the WikiLeaks TPP documents. Check it out at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/tpp.

LSP Hosts Crop Insurance Meeting

The Land Stewardship Project recently hosted a national strategy meeting with key allies (pictured) focused on winning major reform to the federally subsidized crop insurance program. The meeting was a step in the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's process of setting goals for a crop insurance reform campaign. LSP is a member-organization of the Coalition.

Discussion topics included how federally subsidized crop insurance adversely impacts conservation, as well as how the program supports the expansion of the biggest crop operations. Also on the agenda were the huge payments and other financial rewards reaped by crop insurance companies owned by corporations like Wells Fargo and ADM.

For more information on this issue, see LSP's "Crop Insurance: How a Safety Net Became a Farm Policy Disaster" white papers, in the No. 4, 2014, *Land Stewardship Letter*, or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/cropinsurance. More information is also available by contacting LSP Policy and Organizing Program director Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Pictured (left to right): Jeff Schahczenski, National Center for Appropriate Technology; Mark Schultz, LSP; Paul Wolfe, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition; John Crabtree and Traci Bruckner, Center for Rural Affairs; Tom Nuessmeier, LSP; James Robinson, Rural Advancement Fund International; Ferd Hoefner, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. (LSP Photo)

Policy & Organizing *Ear to the Ground* Podcasts Available

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast (www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast) frequently features conversations with farmers, organizers and others who are working to reform our food and farming system and promote policies that support stewardship of the land. Here's a selection of episodes related to policy and organizing issues:

- **Episode 162**—How federal crop insurance is harming family farmers, the land and our communities—and why we all have a stake in reforming it.
- **Episode 157**—What should you do when frac sand mining comes knocking? Get informed, get organized and get connected.
- **Episode 153**—How the Forever Green initiative could make Minnesota farming more efficient.
- **Episode 148**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 7): LSP's Bobby King talks about the role of local government and state regulations in controlling frac sand mining.
- **Episode 147**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 6): Earth Works' Jennifer Krill describes the negative impacts of extreme

energy extraction.

- **Episode 146**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 5): The MPCA's John Linc Stine talks about the role his agency plays in regulating the frac sand industry.
- **Episode 145**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 4): Scientist Crispin Pierce describes cutting-edge research on silica sand dust in Wisconsin.
- **Episode 144**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 3): Scientist Michael McCawley on the health risks posed by surface mining's production of ultrafine particles.
- **Episode 143**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 2): Farmer Bob Christie talks about how frac sand mining threatens the farming community.
- **Episode 142**—LSP Citizens' Frac Sand Summit (part 1): Tex Hawkins talks about why frac sand mining poses such a risk to the driftless region.
- **Episode 139**—NRCS staffers from Minnesota's top Conservation Stewardship Program county talk about how farmers implement CSP on working land.
- **Episode 131**—LSP helps launch the Min-

nesota Farmworker Justice Campaign to put the spotlight on ag labor violations on industrial farms.

- **Episode 125**—BFRDP: A discussion about a precedent-setting federal program for beginning farmers and ranchers.
- **Episode 123**—An LSP workshop focuses on how rural townships in Minnesota can use interim ordinances and comprehensive planning to protect the community from unwanted developments.
- **Episode 115**—How a health care exchange accountable to the public could help family farmers.
- **Episode 72**—A landmark national beginning farmer program is launched.
- **Episode 63**—How our dysfunctional healthcare system affects rural citizens.
- **Episode 61**—How changes to Minnesota's Green Acres program threaten farmland stewardship.
- **Episode 30**—John Ikerd and the true costs of agricultural globalization. □

Making Certain a Federal Beginning Farmer Program Remains Focused on Community

By Megan Buckingham

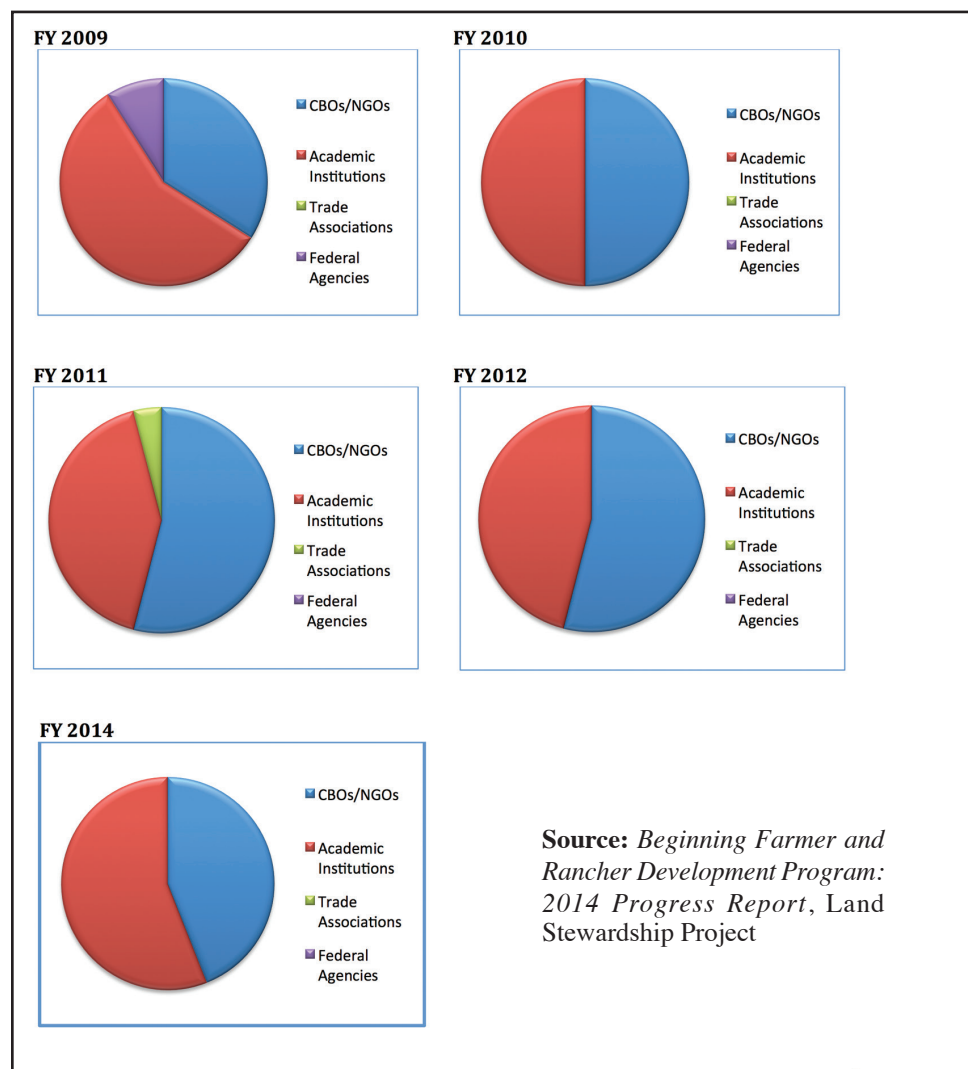
In June, the Land Stewardship Project released our latest report on grants allocated through the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). This is the fifth such report we've done in collaboration with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). These analyses are a measure of the success of BFRDP in providing public

support for effective training, education and assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States.

LSP has long made beginning farmer training and education a top priority, both through LSP's Farm Beginnings Program (see page 20), and in our priorities for public policy change. We believe there are opportunities in agriculture, and that smart, cost-effective public policy can provide the kind of support to beginning farmers that is instrumental to their success.

Historical Distribution of BFRDP Grants by Institution Type

Note: "CBOs" and "NGOs" are community-based or nonprofit organizations.



Starting from that conviction, LSP, working with NSAC staff and other NSAC member-organizations, helped to lead a nationwide effort to gain the passage of and funding for progressive beginning farmer policy in the 2008 Farm Bill. As a result, since 2009 BFRDP has been an important tool in supporting the next generation of American farmers.

Over the years, BFRDP has directed more than \$90 million to 184 projects across the country. This represents a major public investment in beginning farmer education. We believe it is critical that these public dollars are as effective as possible, which is why we advocated for, and won, language in the last two Farm Bills that prioritizes projects led by community-based organizations.

Make no mistake, the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is a result of the hard work of community-based organizations and coalitions that saw the need, developed the program, and worked with Congressional leaders to push it through. BFRDP is not business as usual—its excellence as a program is the result of it being grounded in the experience, vision and skills of community leaders literally across the country who argued for and won public support for the development of new farmers for a better food system.

For most of its years in operation, BFRDP has made grant-making decisions that give real priority to community-based organizations. Such organizations are positioned to be responsive to emerging communities of new farmers and new markets, and to build the infrastructure needed to support the success and ongoing development of these new farmers over time. In our experience, community-based organizations excel at meeting the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers on the ground—they are set-up to provide the in-person, culturally-appropriate and ongoing support that leads to the success of beginning farmers.

That's why we were concerned when our analysis found that in 2014 less than half of BFRDP funding went to projects led by community-based organizations. For the first time since 2009 the bulk of the funding was awarded to projects led by universities and academic institutions.

Congress recognized the critical role of community initiatives when it gave priority for funding to community-based organizations in both the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills. Congressional champions emphasized the innovative work already under way at the community level, and the need for funding dedicated to developing an enduring infrastructure for beginning farmer training

BFRDP, see page 15...

and support.

Congress also recognized the need to set aside funding for socially disadvantaged and low resource farmers who have not always been well-served by federal programs. Although funding for projects targeted to socially disadvantaged farmers dropped somewhat in 2014 compared with the last few years, we're encouraged that BFRDP continues to invest substantially—this year nearly half of overall funding—in programs that serve these producers. Immigrant communities, communities of color, farmworkers, urban farmers, refugees and women all face unique challenges in becoming farmers. This is yet another area in which community-based programs have been excelling, and are central to both short-term innovation and to developing long-term networks, markets and support structures specific to new communities of agricultural producers.

Our report contains details regarding the distribution of grants, as well as recommendations for the continued success and improvement of BFRDP. The number one recommendation is that the majority of funding go to projects led by community-based organizations, followed by a number of suggestions for ways to make this priority a reality. As in past years, these recommendations encourage simplifying and clarifying the application process to make it more accessible, and support USDA continuing to award high levels of funding to projects that target socially disadvantaged farmers.

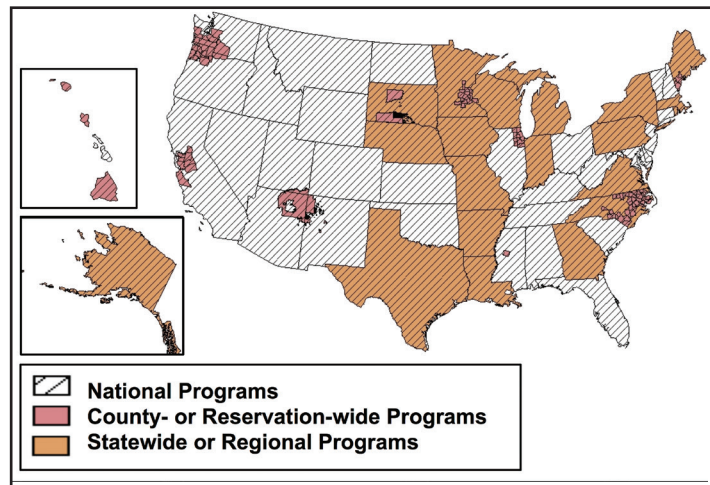
BFRDP's unique emphasis on community-based initiatives is central to its success. The top priority for coming grant cycles should be to line up the balance of the funding with the core purpose and most effective

application of the program: developing the next generation of farmers through community-based programs.

LSP and NSAC staff, as well as other organizations nationwide that see the importance of supporting the start-up and success of beginning farmers and ranchers in their communities, look forward to working with USDA to accomplish this. Because of the work of community leaders, USDA staff and institutional partners, BFRDP has been an excellent asset for communities nationwide. By making sure its unique role is maintained, we can keep it focused on community-building for years to come. □

LSP organizer Megan Buckingham is the author of Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2014 Progress Report.

Areas Served by Fiscal Year 2014 BFRDP Grantees



Source: *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2014 Progress Report*, Land Stewardship Project

Get the Report

To download the LSP publication, *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2014 Progress Report*, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Copies are also available by contacting LSP Policy and Organizing director Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP's Stettler Appointed to USDA Subcommittee on Land Tenure

Land Stewardship Project organizer Karen Stettler has been appointed by the USDA Secretary and Deputy Secretary to the agency's Subcommittee on Land Tenure.

Stettler, the former director of LSP's Farm Beginnings Program, has recently been coordinating the organization's work around land tenure issues. She organized the Plainview Land Access Committee and directed the development of the popular *Farm Transitions Toolkit* (see page 17). This winter Stettler organized a workshop series for farmers looking to transition their land onto the next generation (see page 19).

The Subcommittee on Land Tenure is within the USDA's Advisory Committee for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. Its role is to investigate, research, compile and do an initial assessment of recommendations regarding farm business transition and land tenure. The full Advisory Committee for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers will act upon the draft recommendations as it develops final recommendations for the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Stettler can be contacted at stettler@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366. □



LSP's Karen Stettler (right) has been appointed to the USDA's Subcommittee on Land Tenure. (LSP Photo)

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the 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 Dori Eder at dori@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling her at 612-578-4497. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Farmland Available

◆ Todd and Amy Voit have for sale 11.97 acres of farmland in **Washington County, near the Twin Cities**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes pasture, electric fencing around the pasture, a bee yard and three garden areas. There are also outbuildings and a house. The property has easy access to 35E near Hugo. The asking price is approximately \$475,000. Contact: Todd or Amy Voit, 651-426-8624, 651-260-5060, Todd_voit@hotmail.com.

◆ Holly Theede Kiese has for sale a 240-acre certified organic farm in **southeastern Minnesota's Fillmore County, near Forestville State Park**. There is a mix of pasture and tillable land, and there's a 40 x 60 shed, a 10 x 80 sheltered lean-to and a house. The asking price is \$1.44 million and she is willing to work with someone regarding financing. Contact: Holly Theede Kiese, 507-450-2863, theedekiese@yahoo.com.

◆ Doug and Cindy Lambert have for sale a 47-acre farm in **southwestern Wisconsin's Monroe County**. There is a high capacity irrigation well, farm ponds stocked with fish, approximately 3 acres of high bush blueberries marketed as pick-your-own, and 7 acres of cranberries. There is a house, a 36 x 70 pole shed (half of the shed is insulated and finished inside for a workshop) and a farm market building with walk-in cooler. The owners are willing to help the buyer in getting started with the operation. The asking price is in the \$500,000 range. Contact: Doug or Cindy Lambert, 608-378-4916.

◆ John Koivisto has for sale 10 acres of farmland in **east-central Minnesota's Wright County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and there is a dairy barn, two ponds, a detached three-car garage and a house. The asking price is \$230,000. Contact: 612-741-2017, johnkoivisto1@gmail.com.

◆ Kathryn Brown has for sale 40 acres of farmland in **south-central Wisconsin's Rock County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and 20 acres are tillable. There are three sheds (two suitable for chickens or goats), a house, 20+ beehives, maple syrup production, housing for seasonal workers, two ponds and a stream. Brown is interested in finding a person to buy the farm or to

transition via a rent-to-own arrangement. The price is negotiable. Contact: Kathryn Brown, kathryn.brown546@gmail.com.

◆ Dan Hein has for rent 4-5 acres of farmland in **east-central Minnesota's Sherburne County, near Elk River**. The land has not been sprayed for several years; there is no house and it is on a private road. Hein is willing to do a snow removal and tilling exchange. Contact: Dan Hein, 651-604-7163

◆ Marc Cutter has for sale 80 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes 31+- acres tillable, 30+ acres forest and 4-6 acres pasture. There are outbuildings and a house. There are good buffers separating the farm from neighboring fields. The asking price is \$329,900. Contact: Marc Cutter, 715-491-9381, marccutter@edinarealty.com.

◆ Austin June has for rent 8.74 acres of farmland in **north-central Illinois' Stark County**. The land includes pasture, fencing around the entire property and a natural spring water source; no house is available. The asking price is \$150-\$300 per acre. Contact: Austin June, bighead1410@gmail.com.

◆ Mary Narog has for sale an 80-acre farm in **south-central Iowa's Marion County**. The farm has 37 tillable acres, with the remaining land in pasture and timber. There are outbuildings and a house. The asking price is \$3,000 per acre, plus \$130,000 for the house and acreage. Contact: Mary Narog, mjbnarog@gmail.com.

◆ Steven Abel and Mary Maier-Abel have for sale a 6.5-acre certified organic farm on the **Pierce/Pepin County line in western Wisconsin**. There is a 30 x 40 pole shed, 20 x 20 greenhouse with walk-in cooler, old barn and shed in need of attention, and a house. There is also the possibility of obtaining two large hoop houses (26 x 96 and 30 x 72). More land would be available. The asking price is \$229,900. Contact: Steven Abel or Mary Maier-Abel, bloominghill1593@yahoo.com.

◆ Pete and Pam Augustyn have for sale a 12-acre farm business in **northeastern Wisconsin's Langlade County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes a 31,000 square-foot hydroponic greenhouse raising tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, sawdust-fueled heat plant/workshop, sorting

building, nutrient/generator building and a house. The business has been built up over the past 20 years and the owners are willing to train a technically-minded buyer and work together over a one- to two-year period. The asking price is \$1,100,000. Contact: Pam Augustyn, canopygardens.com, 715-623-7373.

◆ Nicholas Walter Jr. has for sale 10 acres of farmland in **southwestern Minnesota's Redwood County**. No GMO crops or sprays have been on the land in five years. There is a raspberry patch, grape vine trellis, 12 x 24 raised bed, and a flower or herb garden. There are also three wells, a 40 x 100 building with heating and air conditioning, plus several other outbuildings and a house. Three-phase power available. The farm is near several farmers' markets. The asking price is \$175,000. Contact: Nicholas Walter Jr., 507-828-5489, nicwalter454@gmail.com.

◆ James Bartelme has for rent 20 tillable acres in **southeastern Wisconsin's Waukesha County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes a large lean-to shed for machinery. The asking price is \$1,500 for hay, no planting required; possibly corn or soybeans. Contact: James Bartelme, 262-894-5086, sofortunate1@gmail.com.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Bonnie Hering is seeking to rent 5+ acres of farmland within 50 miles of the **Minnesota community of Maplewood (Chisago, Washington, Saint Croix, Dakota or Pierce County)** to expand her farm business. Land that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. Contact: Bonnie Hering, bonniehering@gmail.com or 612-462-9311.

◆ Jered Hokenson is seeking to rent farmland in **east-central Minnesota (Wattertown, Mayer, New Germany, Norwood, Plato, Glencoe or Lester Prairie area)**. Land with pasture is preferred. No infrastructure is necessary—if owner would allow, Hokenson can build fence and figure out a water supply if need be. Contact:

Clearinghouse, see page 17...

Jered Hokenson 952-491-1541, Hokelund-farm2012@gmail.com.

◆ Gary Vassall is seeking to buy farmland in the area of **southeastern Wisconsin's Dodge County**. Land that has not been sprayed for several years, and that has water, outbuildings and a house, is preferred. Contact: Gary Vassall, 920-273-8744, 1garybeato@mail.com.

◆ Sonja Hakanson is seeking to rent .5-2 tillable acres of farmland in the **Twin Cities, Minn., region (within a 30-minute drive of downtown Minneapolis-Saint Paul)**, beginning in September. A vacant lot with a water hook-up would work; no house is required. Contact: Sonja Hakanson, 608-408-0437, sonja.hakanson@gmail.com.

◆ Kristina Prawdzik is seeking to buy 5+ acres farmland within **40 miles of the Twin Cities, Minn., area**. Land that's not been sprayed for a few years or is certified organic is preferred. Outbuildings and a house are also preferred. Contact: Kristina Prawdzik, kristinaprawdzik@yahoo.com, 612-964-8667.

◆ Pa Houa Chang is seeking to rent up to 2 acres of tillable farmland in the **Twin Cities, Minn., region**. No house is required. Contact: Pa Houa Chang, 612-600-6094, pa_houa_chang@yahoo.com.

◆ Linda Mickelson is seeking to rent 2-20 acres in **northwestern Illinois (Lee or Ogle County)**. Land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has fencing, pasture and outbuildings/house is preferred. Contact: Linda Mickelson, lmick8@comcast.net.

◆ Maggie Sheehan is seeking to buy 30-80 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County**. Land with pasture, a pole barn and a house is preferred. Contact: Maggie Sheehan, 330-466-8179.

◆ Chong Lor is seeking to rent 1-3 acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. No house is

required. Contact: Chong Lor, 651-410-9421.

◆ Jim Ferris is seeking to buy 20+ acres of farmland in **eastern Minnesota or western Wisconsin**. Land with a workshop, storage shed and house is preferred. Contact: Jim Ferris, ferrij06@charter.net.

◆ Scott Klug is seeking to rent 2 or more acres of farmland in **southeastern Wisconsin, near Waukesha**. Land with forest and outbuildings is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Scott Klug, 414-202-3325.

◆ Travis Eden is seeking to purchase 400 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Barron County**. Land with a barn, pole shed, calf barn, hoop barn and house is preferred. He would be ready to move in January 2016. Contact: Travis Eden, 320-733-4303.

◆ Bonnie Stone is seeking to buy 1-3 acres of farmland in the **Twin Cities region (Washington, Saint Croix or southern Chisago counties)**. She prefers land that has not been sprayed for several years; an outbuilding would be helpful but not necessary. Contact: Bonnie Stone, 651-283-1217 or Bonpstone@gmail.com.

◆ Tamara Johnson is seeking to purchase 40 acres of farmland in **southeastern Wisconsin's Washington County**. Land with pasture is preferred. Contact: Tamara Johnson, tmb808@gmail.com.

◆ Clint and Megan Kabele are seeking to buy 15-50+ acres of farmland in **southeastern Minnesota, preferably within 20 miles of La Crescent**. Pastureland is preferred; no house is required but they would prefer outbuildings. They are interested in rotational grazing, so a water supply is needed. Stream or existing well preferred but would look to drill if residential needs could be met as well. Initially they will convert cropland (if not in pasture already) and rent to brokered rotational grazers. The plan is to work into adding their own stock once outbuildings and residence are maintained. Contact: Clint and Megan Kabele, megan.kabele@gmail.com, 563-203-7505.

◆ Darryl P. Lewis is seeking to buy 1-5 acres of farmland in **southeastern Minnesota**.

Land with pasture is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Darryl P. Lewis, realtracers@gmail.com.

◆ Liz Taylor is seeking to buy 5-10 acres of farmland in **southern or south-central Minnesota**. Land with pasture, fencing, a barn and a house is preferred. Contact: Liz Taylor, 952-201-1363.

Seeking Farmers

Mary Dirty Face farm is seeking a farmer to join the operation. The farm, which is located in **western Wisconsin near Menomonie**, grows and primarily sells a large variety of fruit and fruit products and is looking to bring animals to the farm under a cooperative management and profit sharing arrangement with someone experienced in raising livestock. The job would entail partial investment in the purchase of livestock and split management duties, offering expertise in animal husbandry. The pasture ground has not been sprayed for several years; permanent high tensile perimeter fencing of pasture ground will be put in place. The orchard has been maintained using inputs allowed in organic production but has not yet been certified (it may be certified in the future). Permanent housing is not available directly on-site but some nearby options may exist and space may be available for temporary housing. Contact: Anton Ptak, 612-387-2205, antonptak@gmail.com.

◆ Regina Burgess is seeking innovative farmers or individuals to join a start-up farming operation in the **Brightmoor Community of Detroit, Mich.** The farm is in the process of expanding as neighboring lots/land become available for purchase. This is an urban farming community. Housing may be available on-site in the form of a three-bedroom house with attached garage and basement; some furnishing and farm tools available. Pay is negotiable. Contact: Regina Burgess, 313-408-1899.

Looking to Transition Your Farm to the Next Generation? Check out the *Farm Transitions Toolkit*

Owners of farmland who are looking to transition their enterprise to the next generation of farmers can now turn to the *Farm Transitions Toolkit*, a comprehensive Land Stewardship Project/Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture resource. The *Toolkit* is for those people who want to pass their farm on in a way that supports healthy rural communities, strong local economies and sustainable land stewardship.

The *Toolkit* contains resources, links to services and practical calculation tables to help landowners establish a commonsense plan. It also features user-friendly resources on the economic, legal, governmental, agronomic, ecological and even social issues that must be considered in order to ensure a successful farm transition. It is rounded out with profiles of farmers who are in various stages of transitioning their enterprises to the next generation. An online version of the *Toolkit* is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/farmtransitiontoolkit; paper versions can be purchased by calling 800-909-6472. □

Kiva Zip Loans Offers a Crowdfunded Kick Start

KIVA-Zip is a web-based micro-lending organization that utilizes crowdfunding to finance small businesses and small farmers across the United States and worldwide. Details and application information can be found at <https://zip.kiva.org/about>.

For more information about these micro-loan opportunities, contact the Land Stewardship Project's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Switching Farmers

When a renter doesn't share a landowner's stewardship ethic, then what?

By Rebecca White

Sandy Bessingpas and her husband, Glenn, were living in Detroit Lakes, Minn., when they bought a 139-acre farm in Douglas County in 1986. He worked for Farm Credit Services, and a position opening in the area allowed them to make the move to a more rural setting.

"We rented out the cropland and had sheep on our pasture," she says. "I loved raising sheep and lambing time, especially." Sandy, who has a degree in home economics from the University of Minnesota, is 68, but is still very active in her community. She teaches quilting classes, and curates the Heritage Exhibit at the Douglas County Fair. Bessingpas also hosts two or three players each summer for the Alexandria Blue Anchors summer college baseball team, and during the rest of the year hosts players for the Alexandria Blizzard junior hockey team.

Bessingpas also produces much of her own food, including tending a large garden and jointly raising and processing a yearly broiler flock with friends.

After her husband passed away nine years ago, Sandy gave up raising sheep, and the next year had to find a new renter for the 57 acres of cropland on the farm as well.

"I was worried about how I was going to find someone, but in the end I got a phone call and it worked out." She and Glenn had five or six renters over the years, but her husband mainly handled the details of those arrangements, so Sandy needed to start thinking about what she wanted in exchange for the use of her land.

Initially, the 10-acre pasture went for \$600 per season, but in keeping with her commitment to eating good, clean, local food, she arranged a trade for meat instead. "I don't get meat from grocery stores; I've always gotten my meat directly from farmers," she says proudly. "This was a good way to accomplish that."

In addition to "meat rent" for the small pasture, Bessingpas has made other barter arrangements as well. She rents out her wooded acres to hunters in exchange for firewood they cut there. "I heat almost exclusively with wood, so having a good supply is important to me," she says. However, not all of her rental arrangements are in trade. The tillable acres on the Bessingpas farm are cash-rented, and she includes some expectations about maintenance in the lease contracts, including maintaining the field road, taking care of some noxious weed is-



Sandy Bessingpas: "There are a lot of women in the same boat who are concerned with taking care of their land." (Photo by Rebecca White)

sues and dealing with downed trees.

Over the past few years, some things around the farm seemed to be going downhill. A field road had been taken out, downed trees were simply dragged off the fences and left to rot in the grass, and every year it seemed the field margins got a little wider and the ditch a little narrower. Sandy mentioned these issues to her renter, but the situation didn't improve. "I didn't have a comfort level with him—I wanted someone who shared my vision for the place, but he didn't seem to be listening or hearing me," she says.

After becoming involved in the Land Stewardship Project's Women Caring for the Land initiative, Bessingpas began to build confidence about her vision for the farm, and about her ability to assert herself when it came to renter relationships. In recent years,

LSP has developed learning circles and support networks in the Chippewa (western Minnesota) and Root River (southeastern Minnesota) watersheds for women who own land and rent it out for agricultural production, and who are interested in learning more about conservation—grassed waterways, field windbreaks, strip tillage, grazing, cover crops, etc. These groups are modeled after a program developed by the Women, Food and Agriculture Network of Iowa.

A New Lease on Life

Last winter, Bessingpas made the decision to terminate her relationship with the renter at the end of his contract, and to look for someone who she felt comfortable working with—someone who shared her vision for good land stewardship.

"When my husband was alive, he made all those decisions, but being around other women who are concerned about taking care of their land has really helped me. Our [Women Caring for the Land] group has made me much more confident," Bessingpas says.

In addition to participating in Women Caring for the Land sessions on renter-landlord relations, perennial "third" crops and soil health, Bessingpas attended a field tour on cover crops, and hosted the group on her own farm for a pollinator habitat workshop with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources habitat specialist Lindy Ekola.

She also enjoys seeing what other women (and men!) are doing on their farms, and looks forward to more opportunities to visit with farmers and landowners in the region.

As for her new renter, she's pleased to report that the family farmer runs a diversified operation and will be bringing more diversity into the rotation on her fields as well. She met him in one of those ways that is common in close knit rural communities: when her old chicken coop burned down a few years ago with her laying flock in it, a local farmer learned about what happened, showed up with a couple of new birds and made sure she had eggs while she was getting her coop rebuilt. In passing, he mentioned that if she was ever looking for a new renter, she should give him a call.

So, having established this relationship based on a neighborly and caring gesture, this farmer was the first person Bessingpas called when she was looking for a new

Renter, see page 19...

renter. The farmer is renting both the tillable acres and the pasture on a four-year contract.

"They've got their kids involved in the operation, and they've already started doing some improvements on the fencing. He's easy to talk to; he listens to me, and he has a feel for what I expect. They're even making arrangements to bring bees out here this season," she relates excitedly.

Bessingpas says telling her previous renter that she was making a change was intimidating, but she was tired of seeing things

go downhill on her farm.

"Several times I had asked for some changes in how he took care of the little things...the margins of the property, but his practices didn't change," she says. "I gave him a lot of chances, but it didn't get better."

Bessingpas credits her participation in Women Caring for the Land for helping her build the confidence to ask for what she wanted on her land—and to make a change when her renter wasn't willing to listen.

When asked what advice she has for other women in similar situations, she recommends finding a group such as Women

Caring for the Land to network with.

"There are a lot of women in the same boat who are concerned with taking care of their land," she says. "Learning together really opens your eyes." □

Rebecca White is an LSP organizer working with the Women Caring for the Land initiative. For more about the initiative in western Minnesota, contact White at 320-305-9685 or rwhite@landstewardshipproject.org. In southeastern Minnesota, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

Women in Transition

A smooth and informed transition of farmland from one generation to another was the focus of a May 14 workshop for women farmers and landowners. The Land Stewardship Project-Renewing the Countryside workshop, which was held in Lanesboro in southeastern Minnesota, focused on the need to plan for the future of the family farm. Legal and land use experts were on-hand to answer such questions as, "What is the difference between a land trust and an S corporation?" and, "What's my style of communicating about this sensitive topic?"

This was one in a series of workshops in the Driftless Region designed by LSP and Renewing the Countryside to empower women farmers and landowners to match their values with their farming and conservation practices. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)



Who Will Farm the Land in the Future?

LSP Holds its First Farm Transition Workshop

By Karen Stettler

Planning for a farm transition, even when fully prepared, is a challenge. Throw in the fact that you are thinking and talking about money, family dynamics, land legacy, declining abilities and death—hmm, it's easy to see why avoidance is the name of the game.

Despite (or maybe because of) these realities, eight families joined together this past winter for a two-part Farm Transition Planning Workshop offered by the Land Stewardship Project with the help of legal and land transition experts. The workshop focused on getting started by gathering in-

formation and sharing resources so families could begin to create a to-do list toward a farm transition.

Why is Land Access Important?

LSP believes that thriving family farms are critical to a healthy society. When a diversity of family farms is widely successful, there is a ripple effect that brings greater balance and health to economies, ecologies, public policies, communities and the land. Yet agriculture is far from striking a healthy balance. The reality is that we are moving in the opposite direction.

Retiring farmers face uncertainty regarding affordable long-term healthcare, people are blocked from entering farming, rural

communities are disappearing, farmworkers are exploited and the land is suffering.

In the middle of this crisis, how can sustainable family farms transition their farm to the next generation? LSP member-leaders are working toward solutions.

These solutions are coming from the ground up and being tested by LSP farmer-members. LSP is engaging community members such as those on the Plainview Land Access Organizing Committee to find community-based solutions for beginning farmers looking to access land. Pilot work with LSP's third-party farm transition coaches has shown the need for individualized support for beginning and retiring farm families to determine goals, make financial farm transition projections, and adopt improved communication and decision making

Transition, see page 20...

strategies. LSP has recognized a tiered approach is needed: not all families are ready for a farm transition coach. The farm transition planning workshop we held this winter is the latest strategy of this tiered approach.

I Attended a Class, Now What?

Guidance and direction for the workshop came from the Plainview Land Access Organizing Committee, as well as LSP's relationship building with beginning and retiring farmers. We've had many conversations about farm transition topics over the years. What we've heard is that many farmers attend farm transition informational meetings only to find upon their return home that they are overwhelmed and without clarity about where to begin.

Participants in this winter's Farm Transition Planning Workshop ranged in age from 40 to 75, and included fulltime livestock

and vegetable farmers, as well as those who maintain off-farm jobs. While each situation is unique, the families found that they share many questions and challenges.

Emphasized in the workshop was determining why families are doing what they are doing and figuring out what they want to accomplish. Once goals have been established, it can be determined which transition tools will help accomplish them. The workshop spent considerable time focusing on how good communication and decision-making skills can help develop solid, attainable goals.

Participants asked important questions and oftentimes engaged in deeper, insightful conversations as a group. Some of the challenges discussed included determining what is "fair" and what is "equal," engaging family members in discussion about the farm's future, frustrations with changing tax laws, complicated legal issues, and long-term health considerations. The good news is that the participants were not alone dealing with

these issues. They could bounce ideas off experts as well as each other.

When asked what area of focus was most helpful in the workshop series, one participant wrote, "Part of what was important was just pushing us off the dime and getting some info for the next step(s)."

Another participant summarized the workshop this way: "Who'd have thought a bunch of old farmers dealing with subjects where 'the elephants in the room' are disability and death could have such a good time and laugh so much?" □

Karen Stettler works on farmland transition issues at LSP. The next Farm Transition Planning Workshop series will take place during the winter of 2015-2016. If you are interested in learning more about the workshop or have general farm transitions questions, contact Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org. See page 17 for details on the Farm Transitions Toolkit.

Farm Beginnings

LSP's Farm Beginnings Accepting 2015-2016 Applications

Classes to be Held in Western Wisconsin & Western Minnesota

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is accepting applications for its 2015-2016 class session. The early bird discount application deadline is Aug. 1; the final application deadline is Sept. 1.

There will be two classes—one in Amery (western Wisconsin) and one in Glenwood (west-central Minnesota). In 2015, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 18th 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 12-month training course provides 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 2016, followed by an on-farm education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

Over the years, more than 750 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. 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.

The Farm Beginnings class fee is \$1,500, which covers one "farm unit"—either one farmer or two farming partners who are on

the same farm. A \$200 deposit is required with an application, and will be put towards the final fee. Payment plans are available, as well as a limited number of scholarships.

For application materials or more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org or call 507-523-3366. □

Is Farming in Your Future?

Farm Dreams is an entry level, four-hour, exploratory Land Stewardship Project workshop designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether sustainable farming is the next step for them. This is a great workshop to attend if you are considering farming as a career and are not sure where to start. Farm Dreams is a good prerequisite for LSP's Farm Beginnings course (*see article on the left*).

LSP holds Farm Dreams workshops at various locations throughout the Minnesota-Wisconsin region during the year. The next workshop will be Sunday, July 19, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., at LSP's Minneapolis office.

For more information and to register, see www.farmbeginnings.org. Details are also available by contacting LSP's Dori Eder at 612-578-4497 or dori@landstewardshipproject.org. □

2015 Farm Beginnings Calendar

- June 28, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.—**Integrating Livestock with Organic Perennial Fruit Production Field Day**, Jackie & Harry Hoch, Hoch Orchard, La Crescent, Minn. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- July 12, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.—**Cut Flowers for Market Growers Field Day**, Jennifer Nelson, Humble Pie Farm, Northfield, Minn. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- July 19, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.—**LSP Farm Dreams Workshop** (see page 20). LSP office, Minneapolis, Minn. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- July 25, 1:30 p.m.-4 p.m.—**Troubleshooting the Transition to Organic Field Day & Potluck**. Twelve Tails Family Farm, Chokio, Minn. Contact: Richard Ness, LSP, rness@landstewardshipproject.org
- Aug. 1—**Farm Beginnings Course Early Bird Discount Deadline** (see page 20). Contact: www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmbeginningsclass; Karen Benson, LSP, 507-523-3366, karenb@landstewardshipproject.org
- Aug. 16, 12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.—**Multi-Species Livestock Farming Field Day**, Stephanie & Andy Schneider, Together Farms, Mondovi, Wis. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- Aug. 30—**Regional Farm Tour: Post-Harvest Handling Facilities on Vegetable Farms**, New Richmond, Wis., area. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- Sept. 1—**Final Deadline for Farm Beginnings Course** (see page 20). Contact: www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmbeginningsclass, Karen Benson, LSP, 507-523-3366, karenb@landstewardshipproject.org
- Sept. 27, 2 p.m.-6 p.m.—**Tractor & Implement Field Day: Two Sessions—Beginner & Experienced**. Hosted in Partnership with the Minnesota Food Association (MFA) at Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix, Minn. Participants may attend one or both sessions:
 - 2 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.: Tractor 101 for Beginners—A basic introduction to the safe operation and routine maintenance of a standard tractor and basic implements. Led by Rodrigo Cala, MFA graduate and owner/operator of Cala Farms in Osceola, Wis.
 - 4 p.m.- 5:30 p.m.: Tractor Troubleshooting—For those with knowledge of basic tractor operation, a more advanced session on diagnosing tractor problems in the field and repair of basic components. Led by Joel Kellum, MFA markets and production manager. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, dori@landstewardshipproject.org, 612-578-4497
- Oct. 1—**Deadline for LSP's 2016 Journeyperson Course** (see page 24). Contact: Richard Ness, LSP, rness@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Opportunities Available

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program is looking for established graziers as well as people seeking to get involved in grazing. This program offers a two-year apprenticeship for people who want to get hands-on experience with a dairy grazing operation.

The program includes guided work experiences, individual networking, peer groups, 4,000 hours of on-the-job training and 288 hours of related instruction. The goal of the initiative is to have more beginning grazing dairy farmers in rural communities and to give established grazing dairy farmers an option to pass on their operations to the next generation.

Apprentices must be paid a minimum of \$8 per hour to start, which might be cash or a combination of cash and equity within an operation. An apprentice might or might not receive housing. Apprentices train under master graziers who have at least five years experience as grazing dairy farmers.

For more about the program, go to www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org, or contact Bonnie Haugen at bonnie@dairygrazingapprenticeship.org, 507-421-7170. □



Olaf Haugen (right) of Springside Farm in Canton, Minn., hosted a Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship field day on forage management in May. Here he's shown describing a recent seeding of grazing corn. On the hillside in the distance is a cocktail planting of Italian rye, fescue, alfalfa and clover, a grazing mix Haugen calls "rocket fuel." Haugen is participating in an LSP on-farm research initiative related to cover cropping. See page 27 for details. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)

Farm Beginnings

Luke & Liana Tessum

Micro-Goals—Big Plans

Walking down a sloping lane on a spring afternoon, Luke and Liana Tessum surprise an Angus beef cow wandering up from a bottomland paddock. The lone bovine, and 18 cow-calf pairs grazing on the pasture below, represent the reaching of what the 30-something couple calls yet one more “micro-goal.” In December, the Tessums paid off a no-interest livestock loan they had received through the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Program. That loan helped them launch this herd, which is an integral part of their overall plan to bring profitable livestock production back to around 200 acres of family land in southeastern Minnesota.

“I feel like we really had a passion and an interest in farming, but before jumping in we had to break it down and develop smaller steps toward our ultimate goal of owning and operating a farm,” says Liana.

Some of the goals have been relatively modest: installing fencing and water lines, seeding pastures, re-vamping a well. Others are anything but diminutive in nature: getting a cattle herd going, setting up a marketing plan, purchasing the family farm.

The farm, which sits just outside the Root River Valley community of Preston, has been in the Tessum family since 1946. Luke grew up in Rochester, which is a 35-minute drive away. But he had the farming bug early on, and as a teenager made it clear where he wanted to be and what he wanted to be doing.

“From age 13 to 17, I was pretty much down here as much as I could be,” he recalls.

For a time, Luke’s father, Steve, was farming as much as 600 acres with a brother-in-law. Row crops were a major focus, even though raising cattle on the side-hill and bottomland pastures of the home place

was always the elder Tessum’s first love. But in the mid-1990s, Steve got out of farming, sold the beef herd and went to work for IBM in Rochester. For the next dozen years or so, the cropped portion of the home place was rented out to local farmers and the pastures were basically abandoned. That was the first time livestock had not been on the farm in almost 100 years.



Luke and Liana Tessum have spent the past five years building a grazing system on land owned by Luke’s parents. “Our goal is to own the farm and transition the land,” says Liana. “So we set that long-term goal and then worked backwards on the 10 steps that we need to do to achieve that, like installing watering systems and developing paddocks and pastures.” (LSP Photo)

Meanwhile, Luke and Liana, who were high school sweethearts, knew they wanted to farm eventually, but also realized they needed a back-up plan. They both got degrees at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and made their way back to southeastern Minnesota, where she works as the statewide community partnership director for the Minnesota Girl Scouts and Luke does energy efficient weatherization for low-income residents. They enjoy their respective jobs, but over the years have never lost sight of their original farming dream. In fact, Luke went to college with Rick Dalen, who, along with his wife Karola, operates Northern Harvest Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation in northeastern Minnesota.

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



One day Luke was helping the Dalens build a greenhouse and had an epiphany, or at least the reinforcement of one he had when he was a teenager.

“I was walking around and I realized I wanted to farm,” he recalls.

The Dalens are 2005 graduates of LSP’s Farm Beginnings course, which, through presentations given by established farmers, provides students an intensive grounding in business planning, innovative marketing and goal setting, among other things. They

recommended the class to Luke and Liana and during the winter of 2006-2007, the Tessums took the course when it was offered in Winona, Minn. While in the class, they not only learned the basics of setting up a successful farm business, but were able to network with established farmers in the region who were doing what they wanted to do: operate a pasture-based livestock farm. In fact, 2001 Farm Beginnings graduate and local grass-based cattle producer Brad Hodgson now serves as a mentor to the Tessums.

Grassroots Learning

Luke says although he has been around beef production much of his life, Farm Beginnings opened his eyes to a whole new

world when it came to getting the most out of southeastern Minnesota pastures utilizing managed rotational grazing. Such a system moves livestock frequently through a series of paddocks, which extends the grazing season while building long-term soil health and pasture productivity.

“I didn’t realize what grass-based farming really was,” Luke concedes.

Through networking with area graziers and attending on-farm workshops and field days, the Tessums were able to get a good grounding in the basics of rotational grazing. Another major helping hand came in the form of the Livestock Loan. It not only

Fresh Faces, see page 23...

made building a cattle herd affordable—with it came technical help in the form of a team of advisers/mentors. Besides Hodgson, also serving on the team was a grazing consultant and a farm financial specialist, as well as Farm Beginnings organizer and livestock expert Richard Ness.

“To be able to take your new ideas and run them by a group of people was invaluable,” says Liana. “I think that was really kind of a safety net. Not that it guarded us completely against failure, but it certainly helped drive us toward a successful position.” (See page 24 for more on the *Livestock Loan program*.)

That successful position means having a healthy herd of brood cows on well-established pastures. This is year five of their grazing plan, and Luke says it’s having a positive impact on the farm—a healthy mix of forages is replacing invasive species that had crept in since cattle were removed in the 1990s, and the soil is rebuilding itself. “It’s good to see now what it’s doing on the land,” he says of the rotational grazing system.

Making a grass-based, soil-friendly production system viable on this land is important to the Tessums. The farm has three springs on it, a constantly flowing reminder of how vulnerable groundwater is in a part of the state dominated by hills and porous karst geology.

“We are right in the middle of the Root River watershed, and all these springs flow to that,” says Luke as he points in the direction of the river less than two miles away. “This farm is not one that should be tilled too much. That’s why, infrastructure wise, everything was put into pasture development.”

They used USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program cost-share funds to put in fencing and water lines for their grazing system. On a recent spring day the cattle herd was “beating up” and disturbing the soil on a low pasture, preparing it for a seeding of teff grass, a warm season, fast-growing annual that can help provide forage when other cool season varieties tend to go dormant.

Give it a Listen

In episode 167 (www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/733) of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Luke and Liana Tessum discuss the role of “micro-goals” in service of the bigger picture: a successful livestock enterprise.

Next Micro Moves

With a solid rotational grazing system established, the couple is looking forward to making the farm a fulltime, profitable venture. They bought their brood cows from area farmer Dan Miller and have been selling calves back to him as a source of income. In January, Luke enrolled in a Farm Business Management class that Miller teaches.

One idea the Tessums have is to start a CSA operation based on offering subscribers pasture-based meat. “I work in the Twin Cities a lot, and people want to support farms like us, they really do,” says Liana.

But the couple realizes they have a lot to learn about direct marketing before they take such a significant step.

“It’s one thing to sell my feeder calves to Dan and another to deal with the general

LSP’s 2015-2016 Farm Beginnings Course

LSP is now accepting applications for its 2015-2016 Farm Beginnings course. The early bird discount deadline is Aug. 1; Sept. 1 is the final deadline. See page 20 for details.

public,” says Luke.

They’ve already dipped a toe into the sometimes-rough waters of direct marketing by selling pork raised under natural conditions to area consumers. Their Dirty Knee farm utilizes deep-bedded, open pens for hog production, which produces “Healthy, happy pigs—you can taste it in the meat,” says Luke. Eaters seem to agree—through word-of-mouth the Tessums marketed 27 hogs in just one year.

“It might be one way to diversify things,” says Luke, adding that because they provide a quicker cash turnaround than cattle, hogs could be one more tool for transitioning the farm into a fulltime business over the next several years.

“I’m not just one to jump off the ledge,” he says. “If I don’t do everything in five years, I’m okay with that.”

The Transition

With a few production and marketing goals either out of the way or well into the works, the Tessums are turning their attention to perhaps the most daunting step on their list: transitioning the farm from one generation to the next.

No one has lived on the Tessum place in years, and the only standing buildings are an old barn used for hay storage and a recently constructed machine shed. Luke and Liana live five miles away in Lanesboro, and would eventually like to buy the land and

Farm Beginnings Profiles

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

build a house on the home place for them and their children, Teague, 5, and Malia, 11, ending their days as commuter farmers.

On the face of it, they would seem to have an ideal situation many beginning farmers don’t enjoy: access to family land. Luke says it does provide a huge leg-up, but it also comes with the responsibility of balancing innovation and change with respect for a family farm’s legacy.

“There is a little pressure in that you think, ‘Gosh, if I do this and this isn’t the way that my dad did it, the whole thing’s going to fall in on me,’” he says. “So you have to make sure the new ideas you bring in are carried on in a respectful manner. It definitely takes open communication from everybody involved.”

A huge step forward in opening up communication was when Steve Tessum sat in on the Farm Beginnings classes himself. Steve, 68, is retired now and spends several days a week on the farm helping out. He attended the first Farm Beginnings session out of curiosity and was hooked, even attending on-farm field days sponsored by LSP to see firsthand some of the innovative production systems discussed in the class.

Steve says he particularly appreciated the presentations given by established farmers from the area. Enterprises ranging from pasture-based beef, pork and chicken production to CSA vegetables and specialty products were featured during the sessions. “It kind of showed what today’s farmers can do,” he says. “I think there’s a way for smaller farmers to make a living.”

Steve says it also showed him that transitioning the farm to Luke and Liana would be a way to pass on a viable agricultural business, not just land. In fact, Steve and his wife Kay went to a two-day farm transitions workshop sponsored by LSP this past winter (see page 19). One thing they learned was that many other farmland owners face the same situation they do, and successfully transitioning a farm can be, like building up the enterprise in the first place, a matter of doing things in small chunks. That’s something he and Luke talk about frequently.

“Sometimes I have to pull in the reins, but for the most part we’ve worked out a pretty good father-son relationship,” says Steve. “The youth can lead the way but there’s a lot to learn from the older farmers too. I’m pretty excited about it.” □

Farm Beginnings

Farm Beginnings Livestock Loan Program Evolves into the Journeyperson Course

By Richard Ness

The Land Stewardship Project's Livestock Loan program grew out of the desire to provide beginning livestock farmers who had taken the Farm Beginning course with assistance in building equity in their farming enterprise. The program was designed to provide zero interest loans for breeding stock, and to also support beginning farmers through a continued educational component, including connection with both an established farmer-mentor and a financial adviser. We can point to numerous successful farm startups where a Livestock Loan and the mentoring that accompanied the loan were critical in getting a new farm family established.

The first loan was made to Jon Kaiser and his family in 1999 for dairy heifers, and the last to Luke and Liana Tessum in 2009 for beef cows (*see page 22 for more on the Tessums*). Over those 10 years, 22 loans resulted from 26 applications. The most active

Journeyperson Course Deadline Oct. 1

The application deadline for the upcoming Journeyperson Course is Oct. 1. The course will be held in Amery, Wis. To apply, see the **More Farmers on the Land** section at www.landstewardshipproject.org, or contact Richard Ness at 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org.

year was 2001, with four loans made. Loans were made for dairy, beef, chickens, goats and sheep enterprises.

A steering committee of experienced farmers, Farm Business Management Instructors and Extension educators reviewed applications, conducted on-farm inspections and interviews and provided guidance for the program and the loan recipients.

Over a two-year period following the Tessum loan, the Livestock Loan steering committee received no loan applications. Based on surveys of Farm Beginning class

participants, this seemed to be a reflection of the changing demographics of the Farm Beginning classes, as well as the increasing availability of other low interest sources of money for beginning farmers.

A decision was made to continue the educational, mentoring and financial advisory components of the Livestock Loan program, but make all of that available to a wider audience of beginning farmers through the Journeyperson Course. The year-long Journeyperson Course is designed to support people who have several years of managing their own farm under their belt and are working to take their enterprise to the next level. Through advanced farm business planning and mentorship, as well as guidance on balancing farm, family and personal needs, participants will find ways to make their farms truly and deeply successful.

The Journeyperson Course also matches participants' savings on a one-to-one basis up to \$2,400 at the end of two years. So far, the Journeyperson Course has assisted 51 beginning farm families through the first three classes. Journeyperson is currently recruiting for its fourth class, which will start this November (*see sidebar*). □

Richard Ness, who directed LSP's Livestock Loan program, now coordinates the Journeyperson Course.

Farm Beginnings' Bacigalupo Participates in Women in Ag Summit

In its 18 years of existence, the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program (*see page 20*) has trained over 750 farmers in the Minnesota-Wisconsin region. Roughly 60 percent of them are women.

"I see modern farming as taking the wisdom of past generations and matching it up with the passion of a newer generation,

and women play an important role in that," said Amy Bacigalupo during the Women in Agriculture Summit held May 27 at the University of Minnesota. "I am confident that these women will lead us into an agriculture that's ecologically resilient, economically viable and socially just."

The Summit, which was hosted by Minnesota U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, featured a panel discussion involving women in all aspects of agriculture—from producing and marketing food to advocating for and developing agriculture policy.

Krysta Harden, the USDA's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, told the over 100 farmers, students, business owners, educators, government agency staffers and other women gathered that from producing food to preparing it, women have always been involved in

agriculture. But throughout much of history those critical roles have not been recognized. That's why it's exciting to see women finally gaining the kind of respect in the food and farm system that is attracting a new generation of energetic, creative leaders, she said.

"We need your voice—how you make decisions is critically important," said Harden.

Bacigalupo, who farms in western Minnesota, said not only are women stepping forward by showing that they can be successful and creative entrepreneurs, but they're also taking leadership roles in reforming food and farming policy. In recent years, Bacigalupo and other LSP organizers have accompanied women farmers to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Congress and USDA officials as they advocate for everything from beginning farmer initiatives to incentives for supporting and promoting conservation farming systems.

"It's really important that you realize how government works," Bacigalupo told the Summit participants. "When we are in D.C. we don't just talk about policy, we talk about how policy is created and how government works. We do leadership development." □



LSP Farm Beginnings director Amy Bacigalupo speaking at the Women in Agriculture Summit on May 27. (LSP Photo)

Continuous Living Cover

Land-to-Lab & Back Again

What happens when a professor, students and a farmer connect over soil?

By Brian DeVore

What can two water-logged dirt clods teach us about developing a farming system that is resilient in the long run?

“Gosh, that’s just amazing,” crop farmer Dave Legvold says under his breath on a recent winter day. “That is so cool.”

The sources of Legvold’s amazement are adjacent jars of water sitting on a table in a biology laboratory at St. Olaf College. Suspended on a screen in one is a double handful of black, southern Minnesota topsoil. The water in the jar is clear enough that one can read the writing on a whiteboard behind the lab table. Roots bristle from the sample, which is full of worm tunnels.

In the other jar, about half of the original clod is present—the rest has turned the water almost opaque, what with all the sediment suspended in it. This sample has gone the way of all soil that is so bereft of aggregate structure that it can’t hold itself together. One couldn’t read a 10,000-watt neon sign through that water.

“I just wanted to show you,” says biology professor Kathleen Shea excitedly, adding that the soil had been suspended in the jars for two days. She explains that these samples were taken last fall from plots directly across the road from each other. The difference? The sample with strong enough aggregate structure to hold itself together, even when saturated with water, had been in continuous corn under heavy tillage for 30 years before being planted to prairie in 2003. Lesson one: abused soil can recuperate and thrive again.

The land that produced the quickly-dissolving sample had grown either alfalfa or row crops under a system that excluded tillage for around 10 years. The soil had responded over that time by developing good aggregate structure. But in 2014 the field was plowed so a tile drainage system could be installed, instantly wiping out those

biological benefits. Lesson two: land does not have to be returned to pristine prairie to recover. But one year of tillage can destroy a decade of progress in building soil health.

Now for lesson three: “That’s the thing that impressed me so much about Kathy is that she does things like this to inspire students who want to dig into it,” says Legvold as he examines the jars. “Then we’ve got the Kates of the world and they get fired up.”

The “Kate” Legvold is referring to is Kate Seybold, a student of Shea’s who



David Legvold and Kathleen Shea examine the results of a soil aggregate test. “I was pretty dumb about aggregates and infiltration and macroinvertebrates and corn stalk nitrate testing, all of that stuff, until the St. Olaf people came along,” says Legvold. (LSP Photo)

graduated this spring from St. Olaf with a degree in biology and a concentration in environmental studies. She is one of a handful of students who over the past decade have benefited from a unique research collaboration involving Legvold’s farming operation and the private liberal arts college south of the Twin Cities. The initiative has produced cutting-edge research related to the benefits of reducing tillage and carefully targeting fertilizer applications. Just as importantly, it’s shown how localized, on-farm research can produce practical results that have a positive impact on the land, as well as the bottom lines of farmers, all the while producing the next generation of sustainable agriculture scientists.

The Roots of a Relationship

Legvold’s relationship with St. Olaf started in 2004, when a student of Shea’s named Megan Gregory was taking soil samples on land the college rents out to area crop farmers. She found no macroinvertebrates in fields that had been moldboard plowed and were producing respectable crop yields. None. Macroinvertebrates such as worms and insects play a critical role in the soil universe by breaking down material into organic matter and providing aeration. Soil that lacks these key organisms is essentially lifeless. But how could soil that was producing bumper crops be dead?

Heavy tillage and overuse of chemicals had decimated the life beneath the surface, and the soil’s natural fertility had been substituted with heavy doses of petroleum-based fertilizers. The problem was, all those high crop yields were creating a soil that had no natural ability to resist erosion, retain

moisture or cook up its own fertility. In addition, excess fertilizer was escaping the fields, producing water quality problems in the area.

St. Olaf rents out approximately 400 acres of farmland, and based on what students like Gregory were observing, it appeared the school needed to do a better job of stewarding that real estate, recalls Shea.

Research Gregory conducted with Shea and another professor found that soils farmed using no-till systems had healthy populations of macroinvertebrates, high organic matter content and better aggregate structure when compared to heavily tilled fields. They also found positive soil health benefits on acres that had been tilled but were managed with a rotation involving corn, soybeans, oats and alfalfa.

Unusually dry weather during the study period hurt crop production on the conventionally farmed land, but the no-till and rotated acres produced good yields, according to a 2005 paper published in the journal *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*.

Eventually, Legvold, who farms around 900 crop acres in the area, agreed to farm 200 acres of St. Olaf farmland utilizing methods that didn’t rely on heavy tillage. A former high school teacher and administrator who worked for a time with an area John Deere implement dealer, Legvold has been

Lab, see page 26...

Continuous Living Cover

...Lab, from page 25

farming for almost 40 years. He served for a time as the executive director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, and has long been concerned about the environmental impacts of cropping systems. Legvold had already been raising soybeans under a no-till system, and exposure to Gregory's research helped prompt him to convert his corn acres to a hybrid conservation tillage regime called "strip till" — it involves tilling narrow strips and building small ridges where the corn is planted, leaving the rest of the field undisturbed. Fertilizer can be banded in the strips, helping avoid over-application. Over the years, Legvold has found the strip till system saves time and fuel, and in the end is more profitable.

So over the past decade the college land Legvold farms has become a kind of living laboratory for Shea's students. His willingness to innovate and share everything from soil samples to practical insights on what it takes to raise row crops profitably has provided an invaluable learning experience for the students. But Legvold is quick to point out that the education goes both ways.

"So we have had a journey together," he says. "I was pretty dumb about aggregates and infiltration and macroinvertebrates and corn stalk nitrate testing, all of that stuff, until the St. Olaf people came along."

Nitrogen & Beer...

The most recent leg of that journey involves testing just how much nitrogen fertilizer is needed to produce a profitable crop. Corn is a voracious consumer of nitrogen, and that source of fertility can be difficult to keep in one place, which results in water pollution problems both close to home and as far away as the Gulf of Mexico.

During the past few years, Seybold, working with fellow student Nora Flynn, has been experimenting with seeing how little nitrogen can be applied to a cornfield and still produce a profitable crop. They tested four different fertilizer rates — 70 pounds to 230 pounds per acre.

They found that 70 pounds did lower profits a bit, but that maximizing applications was not necessarily better. In fact,

around 130 pounds per acre offered a sweet spot where crops were getting the nutrients they needed to produce a profitable yield. Applications over that amount didn't necessarily make the per-acre profitability higher — in fact, it was a waste of money. "As Dave says, it's like beer," Seybold jokes.

"In other words, more is not always better," explains the farmer.

Seybold says this is a perfect example of the importance of differentiating between yields and profits. Pouring on more inputs to produce impressive yields may be so ex-



Kate Seybold, shown here talking to Dave Legvold, says working directly with the farmer has helped her "humanize" research related to agriculture's impact on the environment. "I understand the complexity of the forces that impact agriculture more than ever," she says. (Photo courtesy of Kate Seybold)

pensive that there is a point of diminishing returns, particularly as prices for petroleum-based products continue to rise.

"Whether we are talking about varying fertilizer rates or cover crops, yields always come up with farmers," she says. "I'm personally very interested in yields *and* profits."

And getting such a message out to more farmers is a goal of Seybold, Legvold and Shea. They, along with St. Olaf student Connor McCormick, recently presented to farmers and agronomists at a soil health workshop during the Iowa Power Farming Show. They received a good reception, but it's clear changes won't come overnight. Shea says when she shows her students examples of what intense tillage does to soil via demonstrations such as the aggregate-jar test, their first question is, "Well, how come farmers are tilling?"

As she asks this, she turns to Legvold for an answer. He says part of the problem is that the transition from conventional tillage can be expensive and comes with a high learning curve. In his case, strip tillage has become more viable because a local implement manufacturer provided the necessary equipment and support. In addition, it takes time to build soil health to the point where it can produce profitable yields without tillage and high applications of chemical fertilizers.

But Legvold has proven it can be done. "I do it for real," he says. "I do it for profit."

The farmer is troubled by statistics showing tillage is going up in Minnesota. He recently examined a database of eight implement dealers in southeastern Minnesota and found that sales of John Deere moldboard plows are rising exponentially.

But Legvold feels the localized nature of the research taking place on the St. Olaf land can be appealing to farmers in the area. Local soil and weather conditions are being studied, and a local farmer is raising the crops. And the positive environmental impacts are local — in this case less soil and chemical runoff is going into the Cannon River.

Seybold agrees, adding, "You can't blame a farmer for saying, 'This research is awesome, but how does it apply to my farm?'"

She is so committed to homegrown on-farm research that the new graduate is launching a business called Farming Forward, which she hopes will provide customized on-farm research for farmers. She wants to finance

it through fees paid by farmers as well as grants from agencies and nonprofit groups interested in promoting environmentally friendly farming systems.

"Maybe there are farmers who are willing to spend a little money on seeing if there's a way to change their own practices," says Seybold. "It's important for farmers, but it's also important for communities as well. You know, we share the landscape."

Seybold says a big research question facing southern Minnesota farmers is how to integrate cover cropping into corn-soybean rotations, something she sees as critical as no-tillers struggle with, for example, soil compaction. Research done by St. Olaf students on area farms shows a cocktail mix of cover crops can not only protect soil but

Lab, see page 27...

produce higher yielding cash crops.

A Greenhorn Perspective

A biology program at a liberal arts college like St. Olaf would normally be known more for teaching students about the benefits of nature preserves than doing practical research on cropping systems. Seybold, for example, first thought she was going to study prairie and forest systems, and her introduction to farming was the college's small organic garden.

"I didn't look at agricultural fields as ecosystems at all," she recalls. Her professor was pretty much in the same boat. Shea was trained as a plant ecologist and her previous research had focused on trees.

"Agriculture is something I've had to learn about," says Shea. "It's a wonderful convergence of interests. A lot of students have been interested recently in food issues,

and then the college is fortunate to have the land and a farmer who is interested in finding out more about what's best for the soil."

Legvold, a lifelong agriculturalist, sees the St. Olaf researchers' lack of farm background as a plus—they are able to come at the issue of how to balance environmental sustainability and economic profitability with a fresh perspective.

"They're not approaching it from the standpoint of, 'My dad said if you put on a little more fertilizer, it's going to get better.' That's not in Kate's head," the farmer says.

"It's not," says Seybold, laughing.

That interaction showcases another result of this farmer-college collaboration. It's producing scientists who are not only able to tackle the tough issue of balancing production agriculture and a healthy environment, but can relate on a personal level with the people in the best position to make practical use of research innovations: farmers.

Seybold, for her part, would eventually like to go on to graduate school and

study agroecology or crop science, and her research has already been recognized by the Minnesota Academy of Science. That's a nice capstone to her undergraduate career, but she says her real passion is to work directly with farmers.

"Before I started this research, I kind of looked at corn production and industrial agriculture as the demise of society," she says. "But this research humanized it and I understand the complexity of the forces that impact agriculture more than ever. And I'm a people person, so I think agriculture is a good fit for me because you can't do agriculture without people." □

Give it a Listen

In episode 166 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Dave Legvold discusses his work with St. Olaf students researching the impacts of his cropping system on soil health: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/732.

Infiltrating Soil Health

The rate at which soil absorbs water tells part of the story of that soil's ability to grow plants. This spring, Land Stewardship Project staffers joined a team of field managers, a farm host and soil scientist Allen Williams (*pictured on the right*) on cornfields in central Iowa to learn how to measure infiltration rates and conduct a myriad of other tests associated with soil health.

This is part of a team initiative LSP is participating in that will take the next two years to illustrate what happens to soil fertility and farm finances when row crops are integrated with cover crops and grazed livestock. As Williams said, "We know the results—let's see how it works in real time with people trying to make their living here." LSP staff are managing two of the eight farm research sites in Iowa and Minnesota. Other partners include the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, Practical Farmers of Iowa, La Crosse Seed Co., Green Cover Seed and Winrock International. (*Photo by Caroline van Schaik*)



LSP Initiative Looking at Role of Short Season Corn & Small Grains in Cover Cropping

By Caroline van Schaik

Cover crops are a logical part of the solution to forage needs, depleted soils, profitability and environmental concerns, but standard maturing corn is an indisputable barrier to their integration in southeastern Minnesota.

Could an early maturing corn variety and greater use of small grains offer a realistic yield and open up the necessary August-September window for planting cover crops? This is the question that six cash crop and livestock farmers in southeastern Minnesota will explore in demonstration plots over the

next two years. Land Stewardship Project staff are working with farmers in the region who want to learn whether and how they can make modest changes to their cropping patterns to safeguard against severe weather as well as to reduce their use of chemicals, save on feed and veterinary costs, and build soil in the near and long term.

The results of this initiative could have a significant impact in this part of the state—almost half of cropped acres in 11 southeastern Minnesota counties are planted to fall-harvested corn. The inclusion of even a single species of cover crop into a rotation has far-reaching utility in protecting the soil beyond the four

or so months of corn and soybean growth. Answering questions related to cover crop timing could have bearing throughout the Upper Midwest, where cover crop planting and the cash grain harvest often conflict.

Research funding is being provided in part by grants from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Partnership program and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

LSP organizer and southeastern Minnesota farmer Caroline van Schaik can be reached at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.



The Keeney Place A Life in the Heartland

By Dennis R. Keeney
2015; 110 pages

www.thekeeneyplace.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

Just about halfway through Dennis Keeney's slim memoir on his life in agriculture, the author's tone changes dramatically. For 54 pages, *The Keeney Place: A Life in the Heartland*, delivers on its title—it offers a somewhat nostalgic glimpse at growing up during the mid-20th Century on a diverse family farm east of Des Moines, Iowa. The reader roots for the young Keeney as he takes the path of many a farm kid: he works hard on the land and in school, earning himself entry into Iowa State College, where he falls in love with soil science.

He eventually gets a PhD, seeing his role in “scientific agriculture” as a way he can help family farms like the one he grew up on survive and thrive. His one regret at that point in his life is that he couldn't have acted sooner: the year Keeney received his doctorate, 1965, his beloved family farm, the Keeney Place, went on the auction block, and his father was forced to go to work for the Allis-Chalmers farm implement company. A few weeks after he was laid off from that job, the elder Keeney died of an apparent heart attack.

So Keeney did what he knew best: he put his nose to the grindstone and became as good a scientist as he had a farmhand and student. He traveled the country and the world studying the latest innovations in agricultural science. He led innovative research trials and published papers. He was a leader in professional societies, becoming a fellow of the American Academy of Science, among other things.

It all sounds great: an American success story from the heartland. But Keeney jars the reader awake with a thumbnail description of his post-doctorate career on page 55: “The more I succeeded, the farther I got from the Keeney Place, and the more my enthusiasm turned to disappointment. That, in a nutshell, is the story of my twenty-two years as a Professor of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin.”

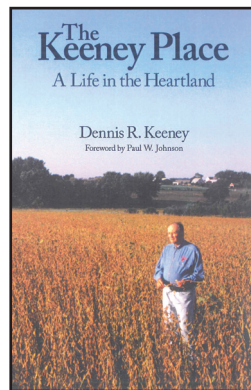
It takes courage to make such a statement. It turns out Keeney was realizing that industrialized agriculture, far from being a savior, was what killed the Keeney Place, and what led to the kind of land use decisions that went against the ethic he was raised on. All those fond recollections earlier in the book aren't just scrapbook material—they are touchstones for what is at risk when we put industrialized, corporate-controlled commodity production before the needs of the land and its people.

To Keeney's chagrin, he realized that as an employee of a land grant institution, he was a prime cog in the industrial ag machine that was destroying the Keeney Places of the world. This was particularly hard to accept from someone who had grown up under the land grant ideal that such institutions were the “people's universities”—a way for the sons and daughters of farmers to bring the latest innovations back to their communities. Now Iowa State, the very first land grant institution formed after the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, has the Monsanto Student Services Wing. Just this winter at the University of Minnesota, an agricultural economist used campus facilities to put on a “Dairy Growth Summit” dominated by large-scale corporate producers and processors.

As legendary Iowa State economist and agricultural law expert Neil Harl once put it: “We have moved in the direction of substituting large agribusiness as the primary constituency of the land grant university for the broad constituencies of decades past.”

But Keeney didn't waste two decades of his life—far from it—and this book is not a litany of regrets from a bitter old man. He did top-rate research while in Wisconsin, often focusing on how to make agriculture less harmful to the environment. Influenced by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the burgeoning environmental movement, the Iowa farm boy proved early he was willing to ruffle some feathers in the conventional agricultural academic field in order to do honest research. In fact, Keeney developed such a reputation as a scientist that it gave him significant clout inside as well as outside academia.

One can use clout as a way to solidify one's role in continuing the status quo. But Keeney chose to wield the respect he had earned in a different way: in 1988 he left



Wisconsin and returned to Iowa State, where he became the first director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, a shining example of how the land grant system can be put back in service of the people. The Leopold Center was the product of the 1987 Iowa Groundwater Protection Act, a bill passed in response to mounting problems associated with, among other things, nitrogen fertilizer contamination of groundwater in the state. It had become clear Iowa State had failed to address this issue, partly because it was so beholden to industrial agriculture's boosters. I know, because I was a student journalist at ISU in the run-up to the development of the Leopold Center. Report after report about Iowa's water quality problems came out in the early 1980s, along with increasingly bad news about the economic demise of the family farm. Keeney makes clear the two problems were not unrelated. Fewer, larger, less diverse farms meant more monocrops, which resulted in more erosion and chemical runoff.

The Groundwater Protection Act provided the Leopold Center base funding through taxes on fertilizer and pesticide registrations, a genius masterstroke that gave the center the kind of financial foundation other “sustainable ag” centers at land grant college don't have, since they are invariably reliant on annual soft funding via the college, and by extension state legislatures.

Keeney set about developing an institution that would disseminate information of use to farmers of all types. At the core of this would be interdisciplinary teams of researchers and Extension educators, a model Keeney had become familiar with while in New Zealand.

And he is most proud of this team approach, particularly around issues related to water quality and local food systems. The Leopold Center's role in establishing prairie strips in row crop fields (an innovation covered in the *Land Stewardship Letter* in recent years) is a particularly excellent example of how experts from disparate fields—everything from agricultural engineering to entomology—can come together to create a practical solution. Despite the word “Sustainable” in the title of the Center, Keeney took pains to reach out to all farmers, working with commodity groups, mainstream farm organizations and, yes, alternative agriculture groups like the Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Keeney writes about the early buzz the Center created in Iowa and beyond. Paul Johnson, the lawmaker who was behind the Groundwater Protection Act, had initially not wanted the Center to be located at ISU,

Keeney, see page 29...

given how connected the school was to industrial agriculture. But for a time, having such an institution in the belly of the beast looked like it was going to have a positive impact.

"Both Paul Johnson and I were convinced that the Center was about culture change at Iowa State University," writes Keeney. "Not just minor corrections, mind you, but big time cultural shifts."

Keeney had aspirations beyond his home state. He foresaw a time when every land grant would have its own version of the Leopold Center. That dream has been partially attained: the University of Minnesota has the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the University of Wisconsin has its Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, for example. But "sustainable agriculture centers" at most land grants are in a tenuous economic position from year-to-year—not a great position from which to bring about

"culture change."

Eventually, even the Leopold Center and Keeney found the ISU campus less than welcoming. In a particularly hard passage, the book describes how the dean of the college of agriculture became "cool" toward Keeney in that classic passive-aggressive Midwestern way. He was disinvited from key committees and it became well known around campus that relations had soured between the two. Keeney says he was perplexed at this change of relations.

But just a few lines later he provides a clue as to why things had gone south—Keeney was becoming more outspoken on some (very) hot button issues in agriculture: the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone, genetically modified organisms and ethanol. Working with all these interdisciplinary teams and being in touch with some of sharpest scientific minds around, combined with seeing firsthand the impacts of industrial agriculture, was too much for Keeney to ignore.

"I've often declared the biggest enemy

of sustainable agriculture is the agricultural college itself," Keeney writes bluntly toward the end of the book.

Keeney left the Leopold Center in 1999, and his successors have had mixed results as industrial agriculture becomes further entrenched at places like ISU. But for now, it is still considered one of the country's preeminent centers of its kind. When it was launched, a leader in sustainable agriculture research called it "the land-grant university's last hope." Let's hope not, given that it remains a bit of an island in a sea of corporate-controlled academia.

Our true last hope is people like Dennis Keeney who toil away within the confines of places like ISU, the U of M and UW, pushing such institutions, despite themselves, to fulfill their land grant mission.

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Our Only World

Ten Essays

By Wendell Berry
2015; 178 pages

www.counterpointpress.com

By Dale Hadler

Wendell Berry's *Our Only World: Ten Essays*, is an excellent addition to the collection of over 30 volumes of essays and novels written by this author over the past half century.

This book continues on with ideas developed by his 2012 collection, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lecture & Other Essays*. Berry draws on the philosophies of Aldo Leopold, Sir Albert Howard, Wes Jackson and Thomas Jefferson to critique modern American society and its attitude toward fossil fuels, agricultural land and water resources. He draws a connection between these issues and topics as diverse as the Afghan war and GMO crops.

Berry also creates an historic thread indicating that the issues regarding the abuse of natural resources have been of concern to Americans for generations. As he points out, Leopold, the father of the land ethic, was concerned about the depletion of maple trees in Michigan's Porcupine Mountains prior to the Second World War. Many of the practices Leopold condemned continue to this day.

Berry also calls on Americans to examine our use of fossil fuels, especially in light of the damage caused by our reliance on prac-

tices such as mountain top removal and the resulting damage caused by global climate change.

The author also decries the continuing disconnect between modern society and the natural world, a loss of connection that makes it hard for people to see the damage being done to the world around them. For example, Berry describes the loss of black willows along the Kentucky River in his home state. This is a loss Berry attributes to chemically intensive farming practices that now prevail in the area.

It's a loss that he and several local anglers have noticed because of how intimately they know the region. But such a loss would have been missed by those not familiar with the area, like a recreational boater or fisherman from one of the large nearby urban areas such as Cincinnati, Louisville or Indianapolis.

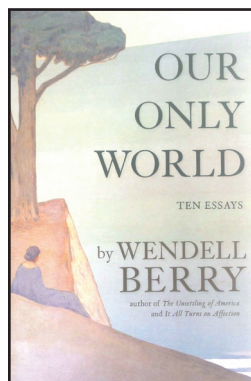
This black willow-Kentucky River example brings up another pattern that is common in this volume as well as Berry's previous work: his repeated references to his home farm in Kentucky's Henry County. These references serve as a metaphor for his observations of the world around him and give this work a sensitive and personal touch that add to the sincerity of his writing, making it all the more enjoyable and pertinent for the reader. Overall, this work, like most

of Berry's writings, demonstrates that he is a man who is concerned about the state of the world and makes no bones about what he sees as the source of the problems. Whether it be in agriculture, energy or the use of the military, that problem is the separation of modern society from the rest of creation, a separation that gives humanity the license to abuse the natural world.

Berry calls us to change, but also provides hope that our reconnecting to the natural world will provide what is needed to make that change happen. Nowhere is that more true than in agriculture, where highly diversified farms that are "rightly scaled" and serve as both work places and homes for families provide a way for humans to be involved in conservation of the land, human community and the local economy.

In the essay, "Our Deserted Country," Berry writes, "Without such involvement, farmers cease to be country people and become in effect city people, industrial workers and consumers, living in the country." □

Frequent Land Stewardship Project volunteer Dale Hadler lives in Winona, Minn.



Give it a Listen

Episode 165 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast features farmer-members reading selections of Wendell Berry's works at a recent event in Winona: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/710.

LSP Staff Pay it Forward...

By Karen Benson

Pay^Paying it forward is not just a popular, feel-good phrase these days—it truly is a way for all of us to make the world a little better. One way to pay it forward is through volunteering. By volunteering and working together we inspire one another to engage in improving things for all of us, now and into the future.

The Land Stewardship Project recently acknowledged the many folks who volunteer so generously with our organization. They are a spoke in the wheel of our work and we couldn't do the work we do without them. This acknowledgement led to a great conversation within our offices about volunteering in general, and it turns out many LSP staff members are also dedicated volunteers—which should be no surprise. And it shouldn't be surprising where they

volunteer. Combined, LSP's 32 staff members volunteered approximately 1,820 hours in 2014. We, too, are a spoke in the wheel of

our schools, local food co-ops, women and children's shelters, community gardens, our places of worship, our local communities, farm organizations and other nonprofits, to name a few.

Together, we pay it forward...for a better tomorrow. □

Karen Benson, office manager for LSP's Lewiston, Minn., headquarters, volunteers at Grace Place in her free time.



LSP staffers donated approximately 1,820 hours of their time in 2014. (LSP Photo)



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update

An Important Membership Landmark

By Mike McMahon

The Land Stewardship Project reached an important milestone this spring when we surpassed 4,000 dues-paying memberships for the first time.

I want to thank those of you that have stuck with LSP through the years and those of you who have recently joined us for the first time. Growing LSP's membership is a priority for the organization. In fact, it's one of the major strategic initiatives in LSP's long-range plan.

Membership growth is more than just a number—members are the creative force and power that drive LSP. Engagement of members and their financial contributions through annual dues and other gifts make the work for people and the land possible.

LSP members provide leadership by serving on steering committees and the board of

directors, guiding and overseeing the work. They teach and mentor young and experienced farmers, in the classroom and in the fields. They speak up for rural communities, family farms and stewardship of the land, from township halls to the halls of Congress. They volunteer their time at LSP meetings, events and in LSP's offices, sharing with others what they know and learning from each other along the way. LSP would not be the organization it is or have accomplished what it has without the dedication of its members.

One of the benefits of working in LSP's Membership Program is reading the notes people send in when they renew or join for the first time. The notes come from people engaged in all different parts of the work and from all kinds of places across Minnesota and beyond.

People send in notes of gratitude for a meeting or field day they attended or praise for something they read in the *Land Stew-*

ardship Letter. They express their thanks for the work of LSP's staff and most often, encouragement to "keep up the good work."

We read all of them and they mean a lot to us. They are affirming and remind us of the connections and relationships that we are helping nurture across LSP, especially on days when we are buried in the details of our database or rushing to get the next renewal notice out the door.

Reaching 4,000 memberships is an important step, but the long-range goal is to attain the 5,000-member level. Continued growth means continuing to ask people who believe in this work to become members. One of the most efficient and effective ways to do this is to engage more people in recruiting new LSP members.

Current LSP members are in a great position to help us reach this goal. They are knowledgeable about the organization, believe in the work and know lots of other people who are not currently members but share LSP's values. This spring LSP led a membership effort we called the Member-to-Member Drive. During the drive LSP members identified people they know who they thought would be interested in LSP's work,

Membership, see page 31...

and asked them to join. LSP's membership staff provided support, training and materials. It's the second time we'd done this kind of membership drive. It's helping us grow and we are learning a lot along the way. I hope it's something you'll consider participating in the next time we do it. But that said, there's no need to wait to ask someone to join.

If you know someone who you think would be interested in the work LSP does, give them the envelope attached in the center of this *Land Stewardship Letter* and ask them to join. Let them know why you're a member, tell them how much membership dues are (\$35 for basic dues) and ask them to fill out the envelope and return it with their dues.

Again, thanks for being an LSP member. If you have any questions about your membership or the membership program, please contact me or another member of LSP's membership team. ☐

Mike McMahon is LSP's director of individual giving. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Give a Gift LSP Membership

Know someone who would enjoy becoming a member of the Land Stewardship Project? Give them a gift LSP membership. We can send a special card describing the gift, along with a new member packet. For details, call 612-722-6377 or see www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate. ☐

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 Memory of Lorraine Wachholz

- ◆ Gift membership from Barb & Martin Nelson given to Jim & Marlys Heldner
- ◆ Gift membership from Barb & Martin Nelson given to John, Kathy and Blake Griffin

In Memory of Betty Crompton

- ◆ Brad & Sherrie Beal

In Memory of Gordon King

- ◆ Michael & Jennifer Rupprecht
- ◆ Sandra Tschida
- ◆ Charlotte Rupprecht

For details on donating to LSP in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. Donations can be made online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate.



Member-to-Member Meeting

Land Stewardship Project members Ryan and Tiffany Batalden hosted a membership gathering in March near their farm in southwestern Minnesota. Families gathered to share food, meet new friends and learn from one another about what's happening on their farms and in their community. The Bataldens organized this event with help from Megan Smith of LSP's Membership Program. The Land Stewardship Project would like to thank Ryan and Tiffany for hosting this event. (Photo courtesy of Ryan and Tiffany Batalden)

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.

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 details, contact LSP's Mike McMahon (mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) or Abby Liesch (aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org) at 612-722-6377.





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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JUNE—Restaurant Alma month-long benefit for LSP: \$1 donation for every “Tasting Menu” purchase**, Restaurant Alma, 528 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, www.restaurantalma.com, 612-379-4909

→ **JUNE 27—Land of Milk and Uncle Honey reading, by Alan Guebert & Mary Grace Foxwell**, 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m., Trotter’s Cafe, St. Paul. Contact: mguebert@gmail.com, www.farmandfoodfile.com/the-land-of-milk-and-uncle-honey

→ **JUNE 28—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Integrating Livestock with Organic Perennial Fruit**, 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Hoch Orchard, La Crescent, Minn. (see page 21)

→ **JUNE 28—Land of Milk and Uncle Honey reading**, 3 p.m.-5 p.m., Birchwood Cafe, Minneapolis. (see June 27)

→ **JUNE 29—Land of Milk and Uncle Honey reading**, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., Northfield Senior Center, Northfield. (see June 27)

→ **JUNE 30—LSP Discussion on Beginning Farmers, Farm Success, Farm Transition & Vibrant Local Communities**, 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m., Starbuck (Minn.) Community Center. Contact: Robin Moore, LSP, 320-269-2105, rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY 10-11—Simon Lake BioBlitz**, Pope County, Minn. (see sidebar this page)

→ **JULY 12—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Cut Flowers for Market Growers**, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., Humble Pie Farm, Northfield, Minn. (see page 21)

→ **JULY 19—LSP Farm Dreams Workshop**, 1 p.m.-5 p.m., LSP Twin Cities office, Minneapolis. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, 612-578-4497, dori@landstewardshipproject.org (see page 20)

→ **JULY 25—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day & Potluck: Troubleshooting Transition to Organic**, 1:30 p.m.-4 p.m., Twelve Tails Family Farm, Chokio, Minn. (see page 21)

2015 BioBlitz July 10-11 in West-Central Minnesota

Join naturalists and other volunteers for a fun, intense 24-hour biological “scavenger hunt” during the 2015 Simon Lake BioBlitz, which runs from noon on Friday, July 10, until noon on Saturday, July 11. The event will be held at Sheepberry Fen near Glenwood, Minn. Individuals, along with youth, church and service groups, as well as science classes, are all invited to participate. Come for as long as you can, for one day or both. To reserve a spot and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact LSP’s Robin Moore at 320-269-2105, rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org.



Photo by Ben DeVore

→ **JULY 29—Showing of the film *The Price of Sand*, plus discussion about frac sand mining**, 6:30 p.m., Stockton (Minn.) Community Center; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366

→ **JULY 30—LSP Twin Cities Summer Potluck Cookout, Celebration, Silent Auction & Pie Raffle**, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., LSP Twin Cities office, 821 E. 35th St., Minneapolis. Contact: Rick Morris, 612-722-6377, rmorris@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **AUG. 1—Early Bird Discount Deadline for LSP’s 2015-2016 Farm Beginnings Course** (see page 20)

→ **AUG. 16—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Multi-Species Livestock Farming**, 12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Together Farms, Mondovi, Wis. (see page 21)

→ **AUG. 30—LSP Farm Beginnings Regional Tour: Post-Harvest Handling Facilities on Vegetable Farms**, New Richmond, Wis., area (see page 21)

→ **SEPT. 1—Final Deadline for LSP’s 2015-2016 Farm Beginnings Course** (see page 20)

→ **SEPT. 27—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Tractor & Implement Maintenance**, Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, Minn. Two sessions: Beginner & Experienced (see page 21)

→ **OCT. 1—Deadline for LSP’s 2016 Journeyperson Program** (see page 24)

Check Upcoming Events at www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest workshops, classes, field days and deadlines.