

# *The Land Stewardship*



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

*34 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together*

## *Letter*

Volume 34

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Number 2, 2016



Farm Beginnings approaches the second decade mark (*page 16*).

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—*The True Costs of Farming*—

—*Cattle & Climate*—

—*Potato Production & Human Health*—

—*Legislative Wrap-up: Local Control, Healthcare, Forever Green*—

—*Farmland Leases & Stewardship*—

—*Calculating Continuous Living Cover's Bottom Line*—

—*The Goals That Drive Cover Cropping*—

— *Reviews: Resilient Agriculture, Whispers & Shadows* —



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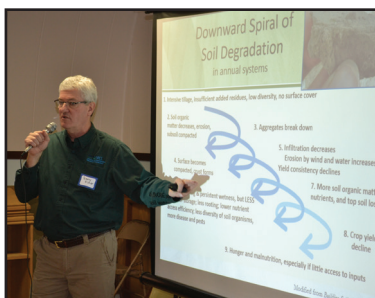
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## Making Our Farm & Food System Accountable

### *Industrial Ag Churns Out Cheap Food at a Steep Price*

By George Boody

There is no doubt a wide and abundant array of food is available in this country, but at what price? There is a lot of talk about our industrial system's ability to make food like Big Macs and Big Gulps as cheap as possible. Nutritious, affordable food for all is critical. The problem is, all that "cheap food" actually comes with significant costs: air and water pollution, de-populated rural communities, damage to public health and economic disparities, just to name a few. Costs that aren't reflected in an item's price tag are called "externalities," and they are accumulating to the point where they threaten our country's very ability to sustain a viable food and farming system long into the future. In short, we can't "afford" food that inflicts so many costs upon the public.

Throughout much of our 34-year history, the Land Stewardship Project has worked to expose the externalized costs industrial agriculture imposes upon the public. LSP has worked with farmers and scientists to show that monocultural row-cropping and factory farm livestock production decimate soil and water. We've highlighted how federal farm policy such as subsidized crop insurance supports maximum production of commodity crops while reducing diversity on the landscape and consolidating farmland into fewer and fewer hands. Beginning farmers, who are the key to the future of sustainable agriculture in this country, are being priced out by this dominant system.

Our work with farmers and others to identify costs and advance practical and structural solutions are reasons LSP was invited to attend the True Cost of American Food Conference in San Francisco this spring. This gathering focused on discussing the externalized costs of our food system and how they can be addressed through organizing for policy change and pressure from informed public opinion. Convened by leaders from the Sustainable Food Trust and co-sponsored by the Sustainable Food Alliance along with a number of foundations, groups and sustainably oriented food businesses, it was said to be the largest event

of its kind, bringing together 550 people and featuring 105 speakers. LSP helped inform parts of the program, and I moderated a panel on the externalized costs of the current corn-soybean system. I also gave a presentation on LSP's work with various partners to integrate crop and livestock systems on the land in the Chippewa River watershed and beyond (see page 24). This conference was significant not only because it focused on the often hidden externalized costs of industrial agriculture, but because it attempted to include many groups and individuals that endure the impacts of those costs.

#### True Cost Accounting

Externalized costs of our food system already place staggering burdens on the Earth, the public, farmworkers and other workers in the food system, people who eat a lot of food high in empty calories and those who don't have enough to eat. Confer-

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*Throughout much of our 34-year history, the Land Stewardship Project has worked to expose the externalized costs industrial agriculture imposes upon the public.*

• • •

ence speakers made it apparent that we face some significant challenges to knowing and addressing the true costs of our food and farming system. In addition to corporate interests profiting excessively from the current system, the Earth's human population is expanding at an unprecedented rate. The industry's response to this population explosion is akin to "grow baby grow," quipped keynote speaker Jonathon Foley. In other words, proponents argue we need to simply produce our way out of this challenge with higher yields of commodity crops. Such a strategy will result in further escalating externalized costs, threatening the long-term viability of our food and farm system, according to Foley, who is the executive director of the California Academy of Sciences.

When one digs into specific statistics related to the true costs of our current system, it can produce a severe case of indigestion.

During his remarks, Tyler Norris, a vice president at Kaiser Permanente, described the diabetes epidemic resulting from lack of physical activity and unhealthy food: "Children born today might well ask of us, 'What have you been doing?'" Every child is born "pre-polluted" with a hundred or more chemicals. The impacts of the industrial food system are worldwide, but for an example of how agrichemicals can threaten communities close to home, see the article about potato production on page 11.

Children and eaters aren't the only ones paying a "human cost" when it comes to our current food and farm system. Author and sustainable food advocate Anna Lappé moderated a panel of people representing food workers and farmworkers who spoke about the costs to laborers and victories they have attained via organizing. Racial disparities built into the food system—from restaurant workers to eaters—were raised as part of the conference. But frankly, too few people of color attended or were invited as presenters, which the conference organizers acknowledged and pledged to address in the future.

To address the true costs of our current food system will take many practical and structural changes. Conference participants heard about various mechanisms for change, including shifting institutional purchasing policies so that they focus more on locally raised food. There were also presentations by food companies that are absorbing some of those "true costs" and by farmers choosing to integrate stewardship into their operations. Many at the conference talked about growing more food with agroecological approaches and reasonable returns to farmers, organizing for fair working conditions and wages, needed structural changes to policies and economic systems, and making the health of the people paramount in decisions about where to invest resources.

A number of conference speakers acknowledged the beneficial role farming systems that integrate animals onto the land via pastures and diverse cropping systems can play in reducing the externalized costs of agriculture. LSP has long worked on the state and federal level to advance policies that support such systems, and our work in the Chippewa and Root River watersheds is centered around such integration. LSP will continue to play a key role in holding industrialized agriculture accountable for the costs it imposes, while working to develop a food and farm system that produces dividends for the land and people long into the future. □

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# Myth Buster Box

## An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

### → Myth: Cattle are a Disaster for the Climate

#### → Fact:

Sometimes the rules of simple cause and effect don't apply. Take,

for instance, the fact that cattle are ruminants, and like all ruminants they utilize a wonderfully complex digestive system to turn forages and grain into meat and milk. A major side effect of all that fermentation on four legs is the production of methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas.

So cattle are major villains in the global climate change crisis, right? Not necessarily. In fact, according to a major research editorial in a recent issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, ruminants could hold one of the keys to developing a food production system that reverses the impacts of releasing so many greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

This is just the latest recognition that agriculture has a huge potential role in bringing greenhouse gasses—carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide—under control. According to a paper published in the journal *Nature* earlier this year, land use in general contributes about a quarter of total human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Roughly 10 percent to 14 percent of emissions come directly from agricultural production and another 12 percent to 17 percent from land cover changes, including deforestation.

The good news is that soils can sequester a lot of greenhouse gases. For example, our soil holds three times the amount of carbon dioxide currently in the atmosphere, and 240 times the amount of gases emitted by fossil fuels annually. Increasing the amount of carbon stored in soil by just a few percent would produce massive positive benefits. And since farmers deal directly with the land, they could play a significant role in developing what authors of the *Nature* paper call “climate-smart soils.”

The *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* editorial was authored by researchers from the USDA, Iowa State University, Texas A & M, Ohio State University and Michigan State University, among other institutions. The team collected years of peer-reviewed research results and compared the relative contributions of greenhouse gas

emissions from various agricultural practices, both conventional and conservation-based.

Their summary shows that it all comes down to how we treat the soil. When our land is plowed and becomes vulnerable to erosion, it is a net exporter of greenhouse gases. What goes on beneath the surface matters as well. Since tillage began, most agricultural soils have lost 30 percent to 75 percent of their soil organic carbon. That's a big deal when it comes to climate change—the more carbon that stays in our soils, the fewer greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

As a result, any farming practice that can keep soil from blowing or washing away, as well as keep it healthy biologically, is going to have a major positive impact on our climate. That's why the authors of the *Soil and Water Conservation* editorial recommend a farming system that gets as much land as possible blanketed in continuous living cover 365-days-a-year. Their solution? Get livestock out on the land.

The key phrase here is, “out on the land.” Producing beef and milk in intensive confinement, where feedstuffs are trucked in and liquid manure becomes a waste product that must be stored in massive quantities before eventually getting disposed of, is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, such systems are reliant on monocultural production of corn, soybeans and other crops. This results in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of tillage, as well as the petroleum based fertilizers, fuels and pesticides involved in crop production.

But when livestock are raised on grasslands and other forages, the soil can be a sink for greenhouse gases, both because it is not being eroded and exposed to the elements, and because the world beneath the surface is building up soil organic carbon. It's important to keep in mind that it matters how those animals are being grazed. Simply turning them out onto open pastures or rangelands and allowing them to roam at will creates its own problems. Overgrazing destroys plant communities and is a major source of erosion and compaction, not to mention water pollution.

Rather, rotating livestock through a series of paddocks, a system called managed rotational grazing, helps keep the grassland

healthy above and below the surface by spreading nutrients sustainably and allowing plant life to rest and recover. The *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* editorial cites several studies showing how this system—they call it “regenerative adaptive multipaddock conservation grazing” (there's a mouthful)—can actually sequester more greenhouse gases than are being emitted.

What's particularly exciting about the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* editorial is the emphasis the authors place on integrating livestock, pastures and crop production—a perfect mix of enterprises in the Midwest. They outline a working lands scenario where a carbon-trapping farm may have some permanent pasture that is broken up into rotational grazing paddocks. But it could also be producing corn and soybeans in a system where cover crops like cereal rye or tillage radish are used to blanket that row-cropped land with growing plants before and after the regular growing season. These cover crops could provide low-cost forage for cattle and other livestock, helping justify the cost of the cover crop establishment while protecting the soil from erosion and building its biology. Cover crops can also help cut a farm's reliance on chemical fertilizers, which are another source of greenhouse gases.

The paper outlines the greenhouse gas emissions potential of several farming scenarios in North America: from keeping our current industrialized system (an increasing amount of grassland plowed under to make way for row crops while keeping livestock confined in large CAFOs) to utilizing a combination of managed rotational grazing and conservation cropping systems that involve no-till, diverse rotations and cover crops.

As the graph on page 5 shows, the differences are striking. Our current system of agriculture will continue to be a net producer of greenhouse gases, and things will only get worse as more of our world's soil is damaged or lost. But even if 25 percent of our farming system is converted to managed rotational grazing/conservation cropping,

Climate, see page 5...



agriculture will trap much larger amounts of greenhouse gases than it produces. Given a chance, a bovine can more than make up for all that methane coming out the back end by how it consumes feed on the front end.

Under these scenarios, even reducing the number of ruminants in North America by half doesn't produce a system that sequesters more greenhouse gases than it produces, as long as we keep our current soil-destroying industrialized cropping systems. We need animals out there contributing to a nutrient cycle that builds and protects soil while giving farmers an economic incentive to keep the land covered all year-round.

This wouldn't necessarily require every farm to become a diversified crop/livestock operation. Let's face it: some corn-soybean farmers are committed to raising crops and nothing else, both for economic and quality-of-life reasons. But under a more integrated system, diversity could be adopted on a more community-wide basis. Even crop farmers who do not have livestock could

utilize their neighbor's animals to add economic value to cover crops or that piece of pasture that hasn't fallen under the plow yet.

Re-integrating livestock and crop farming would bring back the kind of diversity the landscape needs to not only mitigate climate change, but to protect water from pollution. University of Minnesota Forever Green researcher (see page 13) Don Wyse recently gave a presentation on water quality that described how within a few decades the state's agricultural landscape went from a diverse mix of row crops, small grains and perennial grasses/forages to a duo-culture of corn and soybeans. What drove that change? Wyse had a direct answer to that question: "We moved animals off of the landscape."

Both the *Nature* and *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* papers recognize that there are major barriers to integrating livestock grazing/row-cropping in a soil-friendly manner, not the least of which is government policy that promotes the production of a handful of commodity crops and penalizes diversity.

"Rather than reducing ruminants and encouraging destructive agricultural land use by providing price subsidies and other subsidies,

rewarding regenerative agricultural practices that focus on increasing soil [carbon] and that lead to greater adoption by land managers is essential to creating a robust, resilient, and regenerative global food production system," conclude the authors of the *Soil and Water Conservation* editorial.

Late last year, world leaders meeting in Paris during the 2015 U.N. Climate Change Conference recognized carbon farming's role in curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate scientists and environmentalists are increasingly talking about how soil health is a linchpin in not only fighting climate change, but producing the kind of agricultural resiliency that can withstand the extreme weather events being produced by this phenomenon already.

## Rural Resiliency

Integrating livestock and conservation-based crop production can also make rural communities more resilient, economically as well as environmentally. In west-central Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed, the Land Stewardship Project and its partners are working with farmers who are figuring out how to utilize innovative systems like mob grazing, cover cropping and no-till to not only build healthy soils utilizing continuous living cover, but fortify their economic bottom lines (see page 24).

These farmers are proving that the managed rotational grazing/conservation cropping systems scenarios outlined in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* editorial aren't just the stuff of computer models—real farmers are taking advantage of such synergies. And if the impressive turnouts at recent LSP workshops on soil-friendly farming are any indication (see page 25), the interest is increasing.

These farmers may not be calling it "climate-smart" or "soil smart" agriculture. Just plain "smart" will do.

## → More Information

- "The role of ruminants in reducing agriculture's carbon footprint in North America" is in the March/April 2016 issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, [www.jswnonline.org](http://www.jswnonline.org).

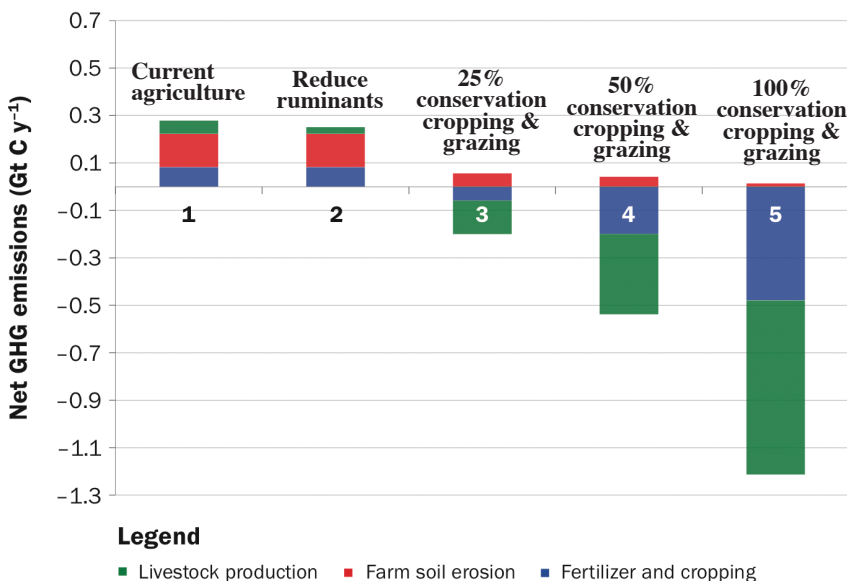
- "Climate-smart soils" is in the April 7, 2016, edition of the journal *Nature*, [www.nature.com/nature](http://www.nature.com/nature).

## → More Myth Busters

Other installments in the Myth Busters series are at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org). For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org).

**Figure 2**

Hypothetical North American net greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenarios for: (1) current agriculture; (2) current agriculture with 50% current ruminants; (3) 25% conservation cropping and adaptive multipaddock (AMP) grazing with current numbers of ruminants; (4) 50% conservation cropping and AMP grazing with current numbers of ruminants; and (5) 100% conservation cropping and AMP grazing with current numbers of ruminants.



**Source:** Teague, W.R., S. Apfelbaum, R. Lal, U.P. Kreuter, J. Rowntree, C.A. Davies, R. Conser, M. Rasmussen, J. Hatfield, T. Wang, and P. Byck, 2016. The role of ruminants in reducing agriculture's carbon footprint in North America. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 71(2):156-164, doi: 10.2489/jswc.71.2.156. Reprinted with permission of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*.



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# LSP News

## LSP Staff Changes

**M**aryan Abdinur has joined the Land Stewardship Project's staff as a Community Based Food Systems urban organizer. Abdinur is completing a bachelor's degree in Global Studies with a minor in sociology at Metro State University, and serves on the board of the Minnesota Association for Environmental Education. She grew up in a farming community in East Africa and speaks Somali, English, Swahili, Maay Maay and Barwi (South West Somali dialect). Abdinur has worked as a medical interpreter and recently served an internship with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Environmental Justice division, where she assisted agency stakeholders in developing community outreach and engagement strategies.



**Maryan Abdinur**

As an LSP organizer, Abdinur is working in the Hope Community in the Phillips Neighborhood of South Minneapolis to help build a healthy and local community based food system. She can be contacted at 612-722-6377 (ext. 223) or mabdinur@landstewardshipproject.org.

**Scott DeMuth** is serving an internship

with LSP's Farm Beginnings Program. DeMuth has a bachelor's degree and master's degree in sociology from, respectively, the University of St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota. He also has a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies from ACTC (Augsburg College/ U of M). He is currently pursuing a doctorate in sociology at the U of M. DeMuth works with a Dakota youth group from the Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, Minn., helping them increase access to traditional native foods.



**Scott DeMuth**

During his internship, DeMuth has been interviewing beginning farmers about their experiences with crop insurance. He is working with the Farm Beginnings Program to develop materials that help beginning farmers implementing diverse enterprises better manage risk (see page 17).

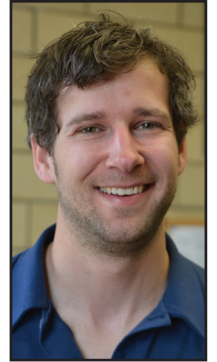
**Kaitlyn O'Connor** has left LSP's Policy and Organizing Pro-



**Kaitlyn O'Connor**

gram to take a position with Prairie Moon Nursery in Winona, Minn. O'Connor joined LSP's organizing team in 2014 after serving an internship centered around anti-frac sand mining efforts in southeastern Minnesota. Over the past two years, O'Connor helped lead a major effort to expand the Policy and Organizing Program's base of supporters. In recent months, she helped organize a series of LSP membership meetings on federal policy and lead a member fly-in to Washington, D.C.

**Mark Rusch** has joined LSP's Membership and Individual Giving Program as a membership assistant. Rusch, who has worked and volunteered for LSP in the past, has a bachelor's degree in English from Creighton University. He has worked as a manager at Seward Community Co-op and as a farm volunteer at White Violet Center for Eco-Justice in Indiana. Rusch is based in LSP's Twin Cities office and can be reached at 612-722-6377 or mrusch@landstewardshipproject.org.



**Mark Rusch**

**Rick Morris** has left LSP to become a clean energy campaign organizer for the Sierra Club in Rochester, Minn. For the past year, Morris worked in LSP's Twin Cities office as an assistant in the Membership and Individual Giving Program. □



**Rick Morris**

## Restaurants Support LSP's Work

**S**everal restaurants in the Twin Cities area recently provided patrons an opportunity to support the work of the Land Stewardship Project:

- On April 22, the Red Stag Supperclub in Northeast Minneapolis hosted a special Earth Day Breakfast LSP fundraiser.
- Common Roots Cafe and Able Seedhouse Brewery in Minneapolis donated proceeds to LSP from a "Hooray for the Earth" Earth Day themed dinner they hosted on April 25.
- On June 6, the Lowbrow in South Minneapolis supported LSP through its "Give Back Mondays" initiative.
- For the entire month of June, Restaurant Alma in Minneapolis donated \$1 of each three-course menu purchase to LSP.

LSP would like to thank these businesses for their support.



**The Red Stag Supperclub hosted an Earth Day Breakfast for LSP on April 22.**



# Land Ethic = Water Ethic

During the first half of 2016, Land Stewardship Project members and staff were in the thick of the debate over how to balance clean water and a productive, profitable agriculture.

On Feb. 27, over a dozen LSPers were part of an 800-strong group of delegates that gathered in Saint Paul, Minn., for the Governor's Water Summit. The event had been convened by Gov. Mark Dayton to gather input from citizens and experts across Minnesota on ways to protect and clean up lakes, rivers and streams. The Governor opened the summit by emphasizing the need to create a new "clean water ethic" in the state. During breakout sessions, LSP members and staff emphasized the importance of supporting research and policy changes that encourage getting more continuous living cover on the landscape. They talked to state environmental officials and the media about setting a goal of getting 20 percent more living cover on the land by 2020 via, among other things, establishing more cover cropping and putting in place managed rotational grazing systems on perennial pastures.

Input from the summit has been compiled and is being shared by the Governor's office with state agencies, policy makers and various groups throughout the state. For more information on LSP's work to promote policies that support clean water statewide, contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org).

As a follow-up to the Governor's Water Summit, this spring LSP and Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) held a pair of "Creating a Community-Based Minnesota Water Ethic" meetings in the Minnesota River Valley (the Minnesota River is one of the most polluted waterways in the Upper Midwest). The meetings were designed to engage diverse groups of people in conversations to begin crafting a Minnesota Water Ethic Charter. In these meetings, community members discussed developing a broad, ethical framework from which real solutions to growing water problems can begin to emerge.

"We can come to understand that in our agricultural region an ethic of intentional policies and practices for water also elicit a land ethic," says Terry VanDerPol, a western Minnesota farmer who directs LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program. "From that new conversation we can craft policies and practices that are sustainable and just."

For more information on the Minnesota Water Ethic Charter, contact VanDerPol at 320-269-2105 or [tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org). More information on LSP's watershed work is also at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/chippewa10project>. □



Some of the LSP participants in the Governor's Water Summit (left to right). Back: Darrel Mosel, Julie Arnold, Loretta Jaus, Bobby King, Paul Sobocinski and George Boody. Front: Margot Monson, Stephanie Porter, Kaitlyn O'Connor and Mike McMahon. (LSP Photo)



LSP member James Kanne, who dairy farms in Minnesota's Renville County, makes a point during a "Creating a Community-Based Minnesota Water Ethic" meeting. (Photo courtesy of CURE)

## Soil Health's Policy Problem

A pair of Land Stewardship Project workshops in southeastern Minnesota this winter gave participants an opportunity to learn from farmers, conservationists and other experts about the latest cutting-edge developments in building soil health (*see page 25 for more on the workshops*).

In addition to the presentations, farmers got together in smaller groups during the meetings (*right photo*) and discussed what federal agricultural policy reforms are needed in order to pave the way for healthier soil. Ideas that were shared included providing more economic incentives for planting cover crops and perennial pastures, tying subsidy payments to measurable soil health benefits, and cutting the red tape involved in signing up for government conservation programs.

But by far the most popular policy reforms discussed centered around the federally subsidized crop insurance program, an initiative that does everything from discourage diverse rotations and cover cropping to reward the farming of environmentally sensitive soils. For more on LSP's work related to crop insurance reform, see page 17. (LSP Photo) □







LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

*LSP News*

## 2016 Family Farm Breakfast

The Land Stewardship Project's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Farm Breakfast and Day at the Capitol was held March 31. Approximately 180 LSP members and Minnesota state lawmakers gathered at Christ Lutheran Church across from the Capitol in Saint Paul and dined on locally produced food. Featured items at this year's breakfast were baked goods made from Kernza, a type of intermediate wheatgrass that the University of Minnesota's Forever Green initiative is experimenting with as a way to keep corn and soybean fields covered all year-round.

After the breakfast, LSP members walked over to the House and Senate offices to talk to lawmakers about issues related to LSP's legislative priorities, including local government control, healthcare reform and funding for the Forever Green sustainable agriculture research initiative at the University of Minnesota. The 2016 session of the Minnesota Legislature adjourned at midnight on May 22. See page 13 for a summary of how LSP's legislative priorities fared during the session. (LSP photos) □

**This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the Family Farm Breakfast. As in past years, the 2016 edition of the event was held in the basement of the Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill.**



**Brian Buhr, dean of the U of M's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, talked about why it's important the Forever Green initiative is going beyond researching the agronomics of continuous living cover and developing markets for the crops as well: "If this is going to be successful, we have to provide viable markets."**



## Who Provided the Food?

The food for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol was sourced from these Land Stewardship Project members:

### Eggs

- Earthrise Farm
- Kalliroe Farm
- True Cost Farm
- Shepherd Moon Farm
- Karen & Ben Cook
- Prairie Pride Farm

### Bacon

- Niman Ranch
- Pastures A Plenty
- Prairie Point Farm

### Sausage

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

### Potatoes

- Foxtail Farm
- Prairie Drifter Farm
- Common Harvest Farm



**The chef for the 2016 Family Farm Breakfast was Marshall Paulsen of Birchwood Café.**

### Onions

- Shepherd Moon Farm
- Prairie Drifter Farm

### Garlic

- Seven Songs Organic Farm

### Milk/Cream

- Organic Valley Cooperative

### Kernza Scones, Muffins & Bread

- Birchwood Café

### Oatmeal

- Whole Grain Milling

### Cider

- Pine Tree Apple Orchard

### Honey

- Honey & Herbs

### Coffee

- B & W Specialty Coffee Co.



The father-son duo of Hans Peterson and Nelson Morlock (Dakota Road Music) performed during the breakfast. They wrote a song in honor of continuous living cover that consisted of the following chorus:

*We will not let the farms  
Be washed and blown away  
With the farmer here we stand  
The soil has got to stay  
Healthy land and healthy profit  
Every farmer's dream  
Support this great initiative  
Support "forever green"*



After the breakfast, Land Stewardship Project members received lobby training from LSP organizer Bobby King (standing). During dozens of meetings throughout the day, members from across the state talked to lawmakers about the importance of local control, sustainable agriculture research funding and the need for quality, affordable healthcare.

## Thanks to the Breakfast Volunteers & Advertisers

The Land Stewardship Project would like to thank the volunteers who helped make the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Farm Breakfast and Day at the Capitol a success. LSP would also like to thank the businesses and organizations that chose to support LSP's work by placing an advertisement in the event program:

A Couple of Gurus ♦ Albert Lea Seedhouse ♦ Arnold's Company, Inc. ♦ Atlantic Press ♦ Badgersett Research Corporation ♦ Birchwood Café ♦ Blue Heron Coffee House ♦ Bryant Lake Bowl/Red Stag/Barbette/Pat's Tap/Bread & Pickle/Gigi's Café/Tiny Diner/The Third Bird ♦ Burt's Meats ♦ Clancey's Meat Market ♦ Clean Up the River Environment ♦ Cook County Whole Foods Co-op ♦ CSP & Associates ♦ Eureka Recycling ♦ Falk's Seed Farm ♦ Farmers' Legal Action Group ♦ Foresight Bank ♦ Hampden Park Co-op ♦ Ledebuhr Meat Processing, Inc. ♦ Linden Hills Co-op ♦ Lorentz Meats and Deli ♦ May Day Café ♦ Minnesota Farmers Union ♦ Minnesota Nurses Association ♦ Minute Man Press ♦ Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-op ♦ National Farmers ♦ Niman Ranch ♦ Organic Valley ♦ Peace Coffee ♦ People's Food Co-op ♦ Pesticide Action Network ♦ Prairie Moon Nursery ♦ Room 34 ♦ Seven Corners Printing ♦ Seward Co-op Grocery and Deli ♦ Spoonriver ♦ St. Peter Food Co-op ♦ TakeAction Minnesota ♦ The Databank ♦ The Matchbox Coffee Shop ♦ Thousand Hills Cattle Company ♦ Triangle Park Creative ♦ Trotter's Café and Bakery ♦ Velasquez Family Coffee ♦ Voices for Racial Justice ♦ Wild Ones ♦ Yellow Medicine Soil & Water Conservation District

# One Step Closer to a Frac Sand Ban

## Winona County Board Gives Restriction Serious Consideration

By Johanna Rupprecht

On April 26, the campaign to pass a ban on any new frac sand mining, processing or transportation operations in southeastern Minnesota's Winona County took one big step forward. That's when a majority of the Winona County Commissioners voted to move ahead with official consideration of a frac sand ban proposal.

Last June, more than 90 Land Stewardship Project members and supporters gathered in Lewiston, in the heart of Winona County, and together set a goal of banning frac sand operations at the county level. This rural county, part of the geologically and biologically unique Driftless Area, has been targeted in recent years by corporations wanting to extract huge quantities of the sand that currently filters our drinking water.

This sand, obtained by strip-mining and destroying bluffs, hills and farmland, is desired by the oil and gas industry to use in other states for the process of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking (itself highly destructive to rural people and land). Where the frac sand industry has become established, such as in western Wisconsin, the wholesale sacrifice of land and the industrialization of rural communities have been devastating.

But together, for many reasons rooted in our most deeply-held values and beliefs, the people of Winona County are standing up in ever-increasing numbers to say "no" to the frac sand industry. Residents are working

for a ban because we understand that the health of the land and the health of people and communities are interconnected; by allowing this kind of harm to the land, we inevitably also harm ourselves.

People here also understand that land and water have inherent value beyond money, and that it is wrong to sacrifice these resources to such an excessive use that offers only fleeting economic gain for a few. Winona County residents further recognize that decisions about land use must be made with the needs of the future in mind. Frac sand operations fail this test, both because they are a part of the extreme fossil fuel energy extraction system, which we must move beyond, and because the possibility for sustainable future uses is taken away from any land this industry is allowed to destroy.

The frac sand ban campaign so far is an example of how local democracy is supposed to function. The proper role of government and all public institutions is to protect the common good and serve the best interests of the people and the land. The role of citizens is to organize together to hold public officials accountable to their responsibilities, and to move government to address problems and take necessary actions for the good of the community.

Already, hundreds of Winona County citizens have been sending a loud and clear message to county officials: we need a ban. People have spoken up by putting up hundreds of yard signs; writing dozens of letters-to-the-editor; writing, calling and e-mailing county commissioners; speaking

during the public comment period at Winona County Board meetings; and more. And now, a majority of the commissioners are listening to the people and beginning to do their part by moving the ban forward.

### Next Steps

There are still several steps in the process, and more hard work ahead in the campaign, before a frac sand ban can eventually be passed. The Winona County Board will take up the matter again this summer, after a period of staff review. Public hearings will also be required before a final vote. The final outcome is not yet guaranteed, but LSP's member-leaders in Winona County are committed to continuing to do the work necessary, reaching out to and mobilizing more people all the time, to see this campaign through to a successful conclusion. If Winona County passes the first ever outright, county-level ban on frac sand operations, it will be a huge victory not only for the land and people here—it will also set a strong example for other communities seeking similar protections from this dangerous industry. □

Organizer Johanna Rupprecht is based in the Land Stewardship Project's southeastern Minnesota office. She can be reached at 507-523-3366 or [jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org).

### Winona County Frac Sand Ban Campaign

For more on the Land Stewardship Project's work related to frac sand mining and processing in southeastern Minnesota, see the **Frac Sand Organizing** page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org).

If you're a Facebook user, check out the "Ban Frac Sand Mining: LSP's Winona County Campaign" page.

# An Unhealthy Way to do Healthcare

By Paul Sobocinski

How ridiculous has the healthcare situation gotten in this country? Consider this: in a state like Minnesota, some beginning farmers are actually trying to limit growing their businesses so that their incomes don't exceed the cutoff thresholds for qualifying for publicly-subsidized healthcare programs like MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance. It sounds counter-intuitive, but when one medical

emergency can bankrupt a young family, sometimes they have no choice.

That was just one of the hard truths that emerged from a recent meeting in Lonsdale, Minn. During this meeting, which was sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Nurses Association, we brought together farmers, rural residents and healthcare experts to talk about options for attaining quality, affordable healthcare in Minnesota, and how we can work together to reform a profoundly broken system.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

farmer Peter Skold provided a firsthand account of how our current healthcare system is stifling economic development in Minnesota. When he and his wife Anna Racer started Waxwing Farm six years ago, they did not have enough in the budget to purchase health insurance on the open market. They eventually got catastrophic coverage with a high deductible because of the dangerous nature of farming. When Skold and Racer decided to have a child a few years ago, they used the MNsure exchange

Healthcare, see page 11...



to figure out they were eligible for Medical Assistance, a publicly subsidized health insurance program for low income residents. Eventually Racer got a fulltime job at a school and obtained insurance through that.

"But her working fulltime off the farm has consequences," said Skold, describing how a CSA operation is very management-intensive. This has put them in a situation of figuring out how to obtain affordable insurance while having both on the farm fulltime.

"The plans with high premiums and huge deductibles available on the private insurance market simply aren't affordable, even with subsidies available through MNsure," said Skold. "This seems to be a perverse incentive that hurts our state, our community and our young and beginning farmers."

It shouldn't be a surprise that our healthcare system has proven to be an economic burden for everyone but the insurance companies and HMOs, said Rose Roach, executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Roach recently served on the 29-member Minnesota Health Care Financing Task Force, which was set up in

2015 to provide advice to the Legislature and Governor on strategies to increase access and improve the quality of healthcare in the state (see the No. 1, 2016, *Land Stewardship Letter*). Other members of the Task Force included legislators, as well as representatives of healthcare providers, corporate insurance companies and corporate healthcare systems. She described how many on the Task Force see healthcare as a "consumable good."

"It should be a public good. Audits often have to do more with how the clinic or hospital gets paid, rather than care of the patient," said Roach. "That's not a healthy way to do healthcare."

Dr. Laurel Gamm concurred. Gamm, who is with Physicians for a National Health Program, talked about how 60 percent of physicians surveyed in Minnesota feel healthcare needs major reform. Like many of her colleagues, Gamm became a physician because she wanted to help people and adhere to the motto, "Do no harm."

"And just being part of the system, I feel I'm doing harm," said Gamm. "I'm tired of my patients suffering because other people are making so much money."

With patients, doctors and nurses all say-

ing that healthcare is basically a sick system, what can be done to reform it? What has struck me in recent years is that the healthcare industry repeatedly refers to patients as "customers." That's code for, "You don't have any rights." One role we can all play in healthcare reform is to remind the industry and policymakers that these are people's lives we're talking about. That means sharing our own personal stories related to where the healthcare system has failed. Rose Roach and other members of the Health Care Financing Task Force have made it clear that when average people, including several LSP members, shared their stories at meetings, it was an invaluable way to put a human face on the issue.

If you'd like to share your healthcare story, you can contact me or LSP organizer Jonathan Maurer-Jones (see *contact information below*).

There is no silver bullet solution to the healthcare crisis, but the more people share their stories and demand something different, the more we all realize we're in this together as we fight to develop a system where people, not profits, come first. □

LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski can be reached at [sobopaul@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:sobopaul@landstewardshipproject.org) or 507-342-2323. LSP organizer Jonathan Maurer-Jones is at [jmaurer-jones@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:jmaurer-jones@landstewardshipproject.org) or 218-213-4008. If you would like to share your healthcare story, contact Sobocinski or Maurer-Jones. For details on how healthcare fared during the recent Minnesota legislative session, see page 13.



Some of the participants in the recent LSP-Minnesota Nurses Association meeting (left to right): LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski, LSP members Sue Griebel and Leslea Hodgson, Rose Roach and Geri Katz of the Nurses Association, LSP members James Kanne and Joe Kriegl. (LSP Photo)

### Give it a Listen

On Episode 178 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, the Minnesota Nurses Association's Rose Roach talks about working with LSP to transform healthcare from a commodity to a human right: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/842>.

## A Toxic Landscape

*What price are rural residents paying for chemical-intensive potatoes?*

By Stephanie Porter

Potato chips and French fries are often associated with health problems in America as a result of their contribution to obesity and heart problems.

But behind the processing of these foods, there lies another major public health issue right here in Minnesota: the actual production of the potatoes that become chips and fries, and the effect of that production on human health. Although potatoes are not one of Minnesota's most well known crops,

they are one of the state's heaviest users of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The effects of these chemicals on the health of Minnesotans is one reason the Land Stewardship Project is partnering with the Toxic Taters Coalition, a group of native American and other residents in north-central Minnesota who are organiz-

**Toxic, see page 12...**

## ...Toxic, from page 11

ing to hold industrial potato producer R.D. Offutt (RDO) accountable for the harm its farming practices cause rural communities. As we reported in a previous *Land Stewardship Letter* (see the No. 4, 2014, *LSL*), there are many reasons to be concerned about Offutt's current plans to dramatically expand production in the region. Mega-potato production negatively impacts everything from water and wildlife habitat to land access for beginning farmers and the health of rural economies.

## Human Health Threats

But particularly alarming is the effect of potato pesticides and fungicides on human health. In comparison to other row crops in the Upper Midwest, which may be sprayed at most a handful of times throughout the

season, the 42,000 acres of potatoes in Minnesota are exposed to a slew of toxic chemicals as often as every week. The spraying system can be long and intense: in the fall, some fields are treated with a fumigant like metam sodium to sterilize the soil in preparation for planting the following spring.

During the growing season, a cocktail of fungicides is aerially applied as often as every five to seven days to ward off blight. The fields are also treated with one to three applications each of fertilizer, as well as herbicides and insecticides to manage weeds and pests like the potato beetle. Finally, before harvest, a desiccant or defoliant is used to kill off the crop to facilitate harvest and quicken the skin-thickening process before storage and transport. At least half of the potato acreage in Minnesota is also sprayed with a "growth regulator" to prevent sprouting.

While eliminating pests and disease, this chemical cocktail also kills the beneficial insects and microorganisms that could help keep the system healthy and reduce the need for chemicals. In a 2013 study, researchers

in Maine found that improving soil health through methods like crop rotations and cover crops can reduce soil-borne diseases in potatoes by up to 58 percent.

But as the chart at the bottom of this page indicates, for the majority of Minnesota's potato fields, chemicals are king. Over 90 percent of the state's planted acres received applications of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides in 2014, according to the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. That has serious consequences for neighbors of these fields. These toxins can drift several miles, and in fact up to 40 percent of the chemicals sprayed during an aerial application—the method most often used in Minnesota's potato growing region—can be lost, according to the group Beyond Pesticides.

Over the past two decades, scientists have uncovered an increasing number of links between the chemicals commonly used on potato fields and a wide variety of health problems. Fungicides like mancozeb and chlorothalonil, along with the insecticide pymetrozine, fumigant metam sodium, and several other chemicals, are all classified as probable or likely carcinogens by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Mancozeb and metam sodium are also considered neurological and reproductive toxicants, seriously disrupting key processes like reproduction, growth and development. They are linked to birth defects, developmental disorders, fetal death and a host of other health problems.

Diseases like cancer and developmental disorders are complex, and it's difficult to isolate one factor as a cause. But the nearly continuous spraying and the links that science has unearthed leave many in Minnesota's potato growing region wondering whether this chemical-intensive system has anything to do with the health problems they are seeing among community members.

Contaminants from pesticides and fertilizers are already polluting drinking water supplies in north-central Minnesota. Dealing with such pollution has hit cities like Park Rapids hard, where residents recently paid upwards of \$2.5 million for a new treatment plant.

Heidi Neuer runs a home care business in Park Rapids. As a nurse, she has seen a rise in diseases like cancer in her community. "A lot of people are really sick around here," she says. "Why all of the sudden?"

Outside of her business, she has known eight people who have had brain cancer since her best friend died of a tumor in 1999. That includes her ex-husband, who passed away this past spring. "I could be wrong, but

Active Ingredient	Minnesota		
	Planted Acres Treated (%)	Rate Applied Per Year (lbs/acre)	Total Lbs Applied (1,000 lbs)
<b>Pesticide Use on Potatoes</b>			
<b>FUNGICIDE:</b>			
Azoxystrobin	80	0.216	7
Chlorothalonil	88	4.523	172
Cyazofamid	53	0.135	3
Difenoconazole	65	0.216	6
Fluopyram	56	0.086	2
Mancozeb	81	7.513	261
Mandipropamide technical	65	0.216	6
Mefenoxam	75	0.519	17
Pyraclostrobin	49	0.137	3
Pyrimethanil	64	0.773	21
Triphenyltin hydrox.	45	0.191	4
<b>TOTAL FUNGICIDE</b>	<b>91</b>		<b>612</b>
<b>HERBICIDE:</b>			
Glyphosate ISO. Salt	11	0.475	2
Metribuzin	70	0.417	13
S-Metolachlor	24	1.379	14
<b>TOTAL HERBICIDE</b>	<b>91</b>		<b>34</b>
<b>INSECTICIDE:</b>			
Clothianidin	7	0.183	1
Dimethoate	24	0.452	5
Esfenvalerate	45	0.056	1
Thiamethoxam	74	0.179	6
<b>TOTAL INSECTICIDE</b>	<b>93</b>		<b>13</b>
<b>OTHER CHEMICALS:</b>			
Diquat dibromide	49	0.589	12
<b>TOTAL OTHER CHEMICALS</b>	<b>52</b>		<b>4,067</b>
<b>Fertilizer Use on Potatoes</b>			
Nitrogen	100	144	6,200
Phosphate	88	73	2,800
Potash	80	171	5,900
Sulfur	66	33	900

Source: Minnesota Agricultural Chemical Use: Corn and Potatoes, Fall 2014, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov)

Toxic, see page 13...



I think there is a connection [to the potato pesticides] and we need to wake up to it," Neuer says.

### The Law's Flaws

Large producers like RDO defend their practices by saying that they are following pesticide registration rules, which set levels of pesticide exposure that, according to the EPA, minimize the risk of negative health impacts. But large gaps in registration rules leave many Minnesotans vulnerable. Many of the current registration rules fail to account for the ways that multiple pesticides interact in our bodies ("synergistic effects"); the effects of "inert" ingredients; or the variabilities in how different people are affected. Pregnant women, for instance, with their higher rates of respiration and water retention, take in higher amounts of the chemicals. Infants and young children are also especially vulnerable to the effects of the toxins during key developmental stages.

The current acceptable levels of exposure also focus on single, high doses of chemicals, rather than long-term, chronic exposure, which is the reality for many Minneso-

tans living near agricultural fields. Scientists are increasingly finding that it's not the "dose that makes the poison" — a higher dose does not necessarily mean greater harm. In fact, lower levels of exposure can be just as, if not more, dangerous when they come at key phases in a human's life cycle. This is particularly true for chemicals that affect the highly sensitive endocrine system.

"Pesticide law has major gaps that leave communities without the protections they need," says Lex Horan, the Midwest organizer for Pesticide Action Network. "In the real world, rural communities are exposed to multiple pesticides at once, often at low doses, and sometimes for decades on end."

### A Need for Investigation

Some policymakers justify the lack of action around pesticides by claiming that not enough is known to prove a causal relationship between chemicals and health problems. That makes conducting an extensive investigation of the public health implications of potato production more critical than ever. It's particularly important to be proactive on this issue now that RDO is proposing a major expansion of its area of production in Minnesota.

To understand how these chemicals are

affecting the health of Minnesotans, LSP and the White Earth Land Recovery Project are advocating for a rigorous human health study in the potato-growing region. In what's called a biomonitoring study, the "chemical body burden" or levels of chemicals in the blood or urine of residents who live near the fields would be measured.

Designing and conducting such a study is complex and costly, but recent interest from the Minnesota Department of Health's Biomonitoring Program may make a study possible. Established by the Minnesota Legislature in 2007, the program aims to use science to identify the impacts of chemical exposure on different populations, to assess what policy action needs to be taken, and to determine whether policy changes were effective in improving people's health.

The Health Department has expressed interest in such a study in potato country and is currently investigating funding sources. Watch future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter* for updates. □

*Stephanie Porter is an organizer for LSP's Policy and Organizing Program. She can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [stephaniep@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stephaniep@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## Minnesota Legislature

# Attacks on Local Control & Healthcare Turned Back; Forever Green Sustainable Ag Research Funded

By Bobby King & Paul Sobocinski

Thanks to the efforts of Land Stewardship Project members from across the state, support for local control, affordable healthcare and sustainable agriculture all received a boost by the time the 2016 session of the Minnesota Legislature adjourned at midnight on May 22.

### Local Control Remains Strong

LSP believes strong local democracy is key to healthy communities and citizens must be able to work through their local units of government to protect their land, farms and homes from unanticipated and harmful development proposals. Weakening the power of local governments to respond effectively to unwanted developments like factory farms and frac sand mines has long been a goal of corporate interests. For decades, LSP has fended off these efforts and been successful due to the engagement of

our members testifying at committee hearings, writing letters-to-the-editor and meeting and contacting lawmakers at key points during the session.

As has been the case in previous sessions, literally from the first day of the 2016 Legislature corporate interests pushed to weaken the powers of local governments. This time the threat came in the form of House File 2585, authored by Representatives Jim Nash (R-Waconia), Mark Uglem (R-Champlin), Mike Nelson (DFL-Brooklyn Park), Leon Lillie (DFL-North St. Paul), Josh Heintzeman (R-Baxter) and Linda Runbeck (R-Circle Pines). The Senate version of the proposal—SF 2694—was authored by Senator Melisa Franzen (DFL-Edina).

The bills would have dramatically weakened the interim ordinance powers of townships and cities. Interim ordinances are key to local control—they allow cities and townships to quickly put a temporary moratorium on major development. This is essential when the community is caught off-guard by unanticipated and potentially harm-

ful proposals, especially those from outside corporate interests. These are proposals that the zoning ordinance didn't anticipate and so doesn't fully address. The interim ordinance pushes the pause button, freezing the status quo and giving the community time to review and if necessary create the appropriate zoning ordinances needed. It is an essential part of effective local zoning powers.

Corporate interests have long pushed to weaken these rights because citizens have used them successfully. The 2016 bills would have made it difficult for cities or townships to pass an interim ordinance at all, and especially to pass one in time to be effective. The legislation would have required a two-thirds super majority to enact an interim ordinance, instead of the current simple majority. It also proposed requiring a public hearing and public notice before adopting an interim ordinance. Currently an interim ordinance can be adopted at any public meeting without any special notice

**Legislature, see page 14...**

### ...Legislature, from page 13

requirement. This is because it is an emergency power used to deal with unexpected situations. Requiring weeks or months of public notice would mean that in many cases the interim ordinance could not be adopted in time to be effective.

Allies in LSP's fight against this legislation included the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, a coalition of more than 80 environmental and conservation organizations, including LSP. The backers of the bill were development interests such as the Builders Association of the Twin Cities and Minnesota Relators. They attempted to portray this as a "good government bill" that would provide more public notice. We began talking with legislators and educating them about this obscure but important local zoning power on day one.

It was a tough fight, but ultimately the grassroots opposition overcame the corporate lobbying. Here are the highlights of how the issue progressed during the legislative session:

- **March 24:** House File 2585 passed the House Government Operations Committee. LSP members and many township officers let Rep. Nash and committee members know they opposed his bill. LSP members and township officers Alan Perish of Todd County and Kathleen Doran-Norton of Rice County testified in opposition. The League of Cities also gave strong testimony in opposition. As a result, the public notice requirement was adjusted down from 30 days to 10, but the bill passed out of the committee.

- **April 1:** Two bill co-authors, Sen. Karin Housley and Rep. Paul Thissen, removed their names after learning more from LSP members about the full impacts of the proposal.

- **April 4:** In an attempt to get SF 2694 through committee, Sen. Franzen amended it to remove the super-majority requirement, lower the public notice to 10 days, and exempt townships from the bill. LSP and the Minnesota Environmental Partnership testified in opposition. Sen. Jeff Hayden (DFL-Minneapolis) and Sen. Jim Abler (R-Anoka) both spoke in strong opposition. No Senator spoke in favor. With that, committee chair Sen. Patricia Torres Ray Chair tabled the bill. It needed to advance past this committee to stay viable as a stand-alone bill.

- **April 14:** With his proposal dead as a stand-alone bill, Rep. Nash amended language to the House State Government Operations Finance Bill requiring cities to give a 10-day notice and hold a public hearing before adopting an interim ordinance. This language became part of the large Omnibus Supplemental Finance Bill, which needed to be resolved in a conference committee.

- **May 11:** Rep. Nash brought his proposal up on the House Floor. LSP members flooded legislators with calls. Reps. David Bly (DFL-Northfield), Jim Davnie (DFL-Minneapolis), Clark Johnson (DFL-North Mankato) and Jack Conside (DFL-Mankato) spoke against the bill. It passed with 47 votes in opposition. However, with no Senate companion, it could not move as a stand-alone bill.

- **May 22:** The Omnibus Supplemental Finance Bill conference committee met until the final hours of the legislative session to hammer out differences between the House and Senate versions of the legislation. Senate members of the committee continued to get calls from LSP members and did not accept Rep. Nash's House language on weakening interim ordinance powers, killing the proposal once and for all.

LSP members' direct communication with legislators played a pivotal role in stopping this legislation, which was a priority for some well-connected moneyed interests. As a grassroots organization, our position, strategy and strength on this issue is derived directly from the experience and passion of our members who want strong authority at the local level to strop corporate interests pushing unwanted development. Without LSP's leadership and uncompromising position, this legislation would have passed.

### MPCA Citizens' Board

LSP pushed to reinstate the Citizens' Board of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency during the 2016 session of the Legislature. This democratic institution, which was established in 1968, was abolished literally in the dark of night during the final hours of the 2015 legislative session (see the No. 2, 2015, *Land Stewardship Letter*). The Board provided a key venue for citizens across Minnesota to have a say in the decisions that impact their communities.

Four Senate bills were introduced to reinstate the Citizens' Board, with a total of 17 authors and co-authors. Senate File 2384, carried by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), made it through two committees, but did not come up for a vote on the Senate Floor. In the House, Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield)

introduced HF 2593 with 10 co-authors, but the bill was not heard in committee.

Early in the session, LSP member Kathy DeBuhr of rural Chokio, Minn., testified in support of reinstating the Citizens' Board and talked about how its members listened to members of her rural community when they voiced opposition to a proposed 8,850-cow factory farm. In that case, the Board ordered an in-depth environmental review of the controversial operation. This angered corporate agriculture interests in the state, and set in motion a series of events that eventually led to the Board being eliminated.

### Healthcare Dodges 'Asset' Bullet

The future of access to affordable healthcare in Minnesota also came down to a conference committee's decision during the final days of the session. The conference committee had to reconcile two very different approaches from the Minnesota House and Senate: the Senate's bill aimed to simplify and expand affordable healthcare by building on public programs like MinnesotaCare, while the House bill would have complicated and cut access to healthcare.

Hiding in the hundreds of pages of budget language was one especially bad idea proposed by the Republican majority in the House: an "asset test" that would knock farmers, small business people and other hardworking families with more than \$20,000 in assets off of Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare, which are state-subsidized healthcare programs for low- and moderate-income residents. Farmers and other rural residents rely heavily on MinnesotaCare to provide basic health coverage.

The legislators who proposed the asset test, such as Rep. Matt Dean (R-Dellwood), argued the purpose was to keep "millionaires" off of public healthcare programs. But as LSP Healthcare Organizing Committee member Heidi Morlock shared in a letter to legislators, the real effect would be to kick farmers, small business people and working people who have no other access to affordable healthcare off of the state's programs. "We have a little savings in an IRA and in a college fund for our two boys," Morlock said. "Shouldn't saving be rewarded, not penalized? If an asset test for MinnesotaCare is passed this legislative session, we will not be eligible. We will not have access to affordable insurance."

LSP Healthcare Organizing Committee members led on getting calls and e-mails to legislators opposing the asset test, spent time at the Capitol talking to legislators, and published letters-to-the-editor across the

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Legislature, see page 15...



state. In the end, this organizing paid off as the asset test was taken out of the final bill.

The Legislature also stopped the placement of liens on the properties of people over age 55 who access Medical Assistance for basic medical coverage. The threat of estate recoveries surfaced in the past year and caused major concern for farm families, especially those trying to pass on farms to the next generation. There had been no notice of this threat, and no option for choosing to enroll in MinnesotaCare rather than Medical Assistance to avoid a lien. The bill passed by the Legislature eliminated any liens that have accumulated for basic care through Medical Assistance and stopped liens from being placed in the future.

Unfortunately, the main story on healthcare during the 2016 session is about missed opportunities. LSP and its allies pushed hard for changes that would make quality, afford-

able healthcare available for more Minnesotans, but lawmakers did not move these improvements forward.

For example, expanding eligibility for MinnesotaCare from 200 percent of the poverty level to 275 percent would have included 40,000 more Minnesotans in this excellent program. This is one key step in addressing the financial “cliff” families face between qualifying for MinnesotaCare and being able to afford decent insurance on the individual market.

A troublesome loophole in federal law known as the “family glitch” also went unaddressed. The federal Affordable Care Act includes sliding-scale subsidies to help families afford health insurance premiums, but the “family glitch” eliminates this help if one family member has employer coverage that is considered “affordable.” Often this coverage may be affordable for the employee, but not the whole family.

In the end, it was a significant challenge to stop the asset test that would have hurt

so many hardworking Minnesotans. But stopping this, along with House Republicans’ plan to rob \$20 million annually from MNsure was important. (This latter action would have crippled the delivery system for MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance.)

LSP’s Healthcare Organizing Committee and members across Minnesota played critical roles in these victories. Their support will be needed again as we look toward making progress on healthcare in 2017.

## Funding for Forever Green

LSP and allies, including the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, were successful in securing \$1 million for the University of Minnesota’s Forever Green Initiative again this year. This is critical public research into developing new crop lines that can provide essential public goods: clean water, healthy soil and rural economic growth.

Forever Green is doing cutting-edge research (*see sidebar below*) on developing cover cropping and forage production systems that are profitable for farmers while protecting soil and water quality.

This work is key to addressing the water quality crisis our state is facing. The science is clear that without getting more continuous living cover on farmland we will not be able to address pollution from farm runoff, which is a leading contributor to our state’s polluted waters. Corn and soybeans are planted on 75 percent of Minnesota farmland and are green for only roughly 110 days of the year. That leaves the land vulnerable to soil erosion and runoff the rest of the time.

The initiative is unique in that it is not only developing new water and soil-friendly varieties and figuring out ways to integrate them into the corn-soybean rotation; researchers are also helping develop markets for these cover crops, providing farmers an economic incentive to plant them.

Sen. Kevin Dahle (DFL-Northfield) and Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield) introduced legislation to fund Forever Green. Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL-St. Paul), co-chair of the Supplemental Budget Conference Committee, worked to ensure that the \$1 million in funding was included in the final budget bill. This was a onetime appropriation. LSP will be working in future legislative sessions to obtain ongoing funding, which is crucial to the long-term success of this work. □

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## Forever Green: Public Research for the Public Good

Recent studies and Governor Mark Dayton’s Water Summit in February (*see page 7*) highlight the need to get more cover on the corn-soybean dominated landscape in the form of cover crops and perennial grasses. During a presentation and tour at the University of Minnesota in mid-April, Gov. Dayton heard from scientists about how in just a few years Forever Green (*see article above*) research has already advanced the development and marketing of cover crops such as Kernza and pennycress.

“We really need to take these ideas out into the field,” said Dayton during the event, which was sponsored by the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (the Land Stewardship Project is a member of the Partnership).

“I’m very excited about this research,” LSP member Darrel Mosel said after Dayton’s comments. “I do a good job as a farmer, but I have my limitations. We will never get ahead of this water quality problem without this research and without changing the way we do agriculture.”



U of M forage and sustainable cropping systems scientist Craig Sheaffer showed off a sample of Kernza, a type of intermediate wheatgrass, during a tour of the school’s Saint Paul test plots in April. “What I really like about this crop is it has a dual purpose,” said Sheaffer. Kernza can be used for grazing as well as grain. (LSP Photo)

## LSP's Farm Beginnings Course Accepting 2016-2017 Applications

*Classes Offered in Northfield, Minn., & Glenwood, Minn.*

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program is accepting applications for its 2016-2017 class session. The early bird discount (\$100) application deadline is Aug. 1; the final application deadline is Sept. 1. Separate classes will convene in Northfield, which is near Minnesota's Twin Cities, and Glenwood in west-central Minnesota.

LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 19<sup>th</sup> 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 course provides training and hands-on learning opportunities in the form of classroom sessions, farm tours, field

### Farm Beginnings in Other Regions

For information on Farm Beginnings courses in other parts of the country, see the Farm Beginnings Collaborative web page at <http://farmbeginningscollaborative.org> or contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105, [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org).

days, workshops and access to an extensive farmer network. Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the region. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the fall, run until March 2017, 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-Wisconsin 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 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](http://www.farmbeginnings.org), or contact LSP's Karen Benson at [karenb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:karenb@landstewardshipproject.org), 507-523-3366. □

## Opening Farms to People with Dementia

Land Stewardship Project Farm Beginnings graduate Eilon Caspi is an experienced gerontologist with an interest in establishing "Care Farms" for adults with dementia. He is looking to connect with farmers in LSP's network who may have an interest in learning more about the prospect of opening their farms to people with dementia as part of a structured care program.

If this is something you are interested in learning more about, contact Caspi at [eiloncaspi@gmail.com](mailto:eiloncaspi@gmail.com). □



LSP Farm Beginnings graduate Sara Freid, along with her daughter Clare, checked on the pastured pigs at their southeastern Minnesota farm recently. To learn more about the Freid family's experience with the Farm Beginnings course, see page 18. (LSP Photo)

## Farm Dreams: Is Farming in Your Future? Find Out July 31

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 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 above*).

LSP holds Farm Dreams workshops at various locations throughout the Minnesota-Wisconsin region during the year. The next class is scheduled for Sunday, July 31, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., at LSP's Minneapolis office (821 E. 35<sup>th</sup> St.). The cost is \$20 for LSP members and \$40 for non-members. For more information, see the **Farm Dreams** page at [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org). Details are also available by contacting LSP's Dori Eder at 612-578-4497 or [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org). □



# A New View of Risk Management

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Earlier this year, Land Stewardship Project intern Scott DeMuth interviewed nine farmers who were in the early part of their careers and/or were utilizing a diversity of enterprises. The focus of the questions was the farmers' use of various risk management tools. These interviews were a follow-up to a series of white papers LSP issued in 2014 on the federally subsidized crop insurance program, which is now the biggest agricultural program in the Farm Bill. One of the conclusions of the papers was that although the program was initially set up as a basic safety net for farmers, it has evolved to the point where it mostly benefits insurance companies and large-scale cropping operations. Beginning farmers and farmers who utilize diverse crop and livestock systems are often left out in the cold when it comes to crop insurance. Such revelations have led LSP, along with various other organizations and farm policy experts, to call for major reforms to the crop insurance program. With the assistance of LSP Farm Beginnings Program director Amy Bacigalupo, DeMuth set out to determine what an ideal risk management strategy might look like for beginning and diversified farmers. He recently talked to the *Land Stewardship Letter* about some of the insights that emerged from the interviews, which were conducted with farmers who are involved with everything from mixed organic grains and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetables to dairy and pork production. Here's an excerpt of that conversation.

**LSL:** *One of the questions you asked centered around these farmers' general risk management strategies, some of which go beyond things such as insurance.*

**DeMuth:** What we found with a lot of the farmers is that they weren't enrolled in crop insurance, so they didn't have that as a safety net and they had to have other things to fall back on. For example, CSA farmers saw their marketing model as a safety net. In CSA, a lot of the risk is being taken on by the consumer, and the farmers have to essentially build really great relationships with their customers in order to manage the risk. Farmers also talked about having diverse products on their farm as their risk management strategy. Another risk management strategy was off-farm income, which is the reality for most farmers these days.

A management strategy that at least some of the farmers we interviewed talked about was being an LSP member. They saw that as being part of a larger network that connected them with other farmers in the region. It also connected them with some of the policy work that's going on and feeling like they have a voice. Also, there were a few farmers that we interviewed who had gone through Farm Beginnings or the Journeyperson Course or other farm management courses and saw training and those courses as a risk management strategy in that it helped them with decision-making on their farm.

**LSL:** *It sounds like a lot of these farmers aren't just waiting around for a safety net to be created—they're constructing their own.*

**DeMuth:** The neat thing we got to see is yeah, there isn't a process where they can go into an office and just enroll in a risk

management program, and so a lot of these farmers are putting things together on their own. And they're being pretty innovative.

**LSL:** *Are there any federal programs that could help farmers like these manage risk?*

**DeMuth:** There's one program called Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance, or NAP. It's supposed to provide insurance for

## Risk Management Workshop in September

The Land Stewardship Project will be holding a workshop and webinar on risk management strategies for beginning/diverse farmers in September. Watch for details at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org). More information is also available by contacting LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org).

food crops, livestock feed crops and specialty crops not normally covered by insurance. There were a few changes in the 2014 Farm Bill which essentially reduced the costs for beginning farmers by waving the fees to enroll in NAP. If you're a farmer within your first 10 years of operation you qualify as a beginning farmer under the rules. The 2014 Farm Bill also includes options where if beginning farmers want to buy additional coverage under NAP, half of the premium cost is waved. Also, with farmers who are doing a more diverse or more specialty operation, there are coverage options available through NAP.

Another program is Whole Farm Revenue Protection, where instead of insuring a specific crop, you're insuring the operation's revenue. One thing I really like about this program is that it actually rewards diversification. A farm's diversity seems correlated with how much of a subsidy you get. And they've made some changes so now a certain

percent of your income can come from livestock. So for somebody that's doing grains and livestock, you have this option of insuring your whole farm and then, when prices are high, you can sell the grain. When prices are low, you can feed those grains through livestock. So it's a way of protecting these operations that are innovative and flexible.

We ran the numbers for these farmers through programs like NAP and Whole Farm Revenue Protection, and got mixed results. Both have things that are good, but they could definitely be improved.

**LSL:** *What would be an ideal risk management strategy for these farmers?*

**DeMuth:** I'd say in the majority of interviews, folks talked about matched savings accounts as something they'd like to see. For example, through LSP's Journeyperson Course there is a matched savings program where by going through that course you contribute a certain amount of money that's matched by LSP. And what's been found is that in general when a matched savings account is paired with some sort of financial literacy or education course, there are really beneficial long-term results in terms of people's financial planning and decision making. So it's not just that matched savings, but it's also the education piece.

People we interviewed wanted to see something like a matched savings account that could be used sort of like a health savings account. For someone with a diverse operation, they could then pull out however many dollars they needed as revenue protection. In the long term the money not used is rolled over and used as a retirement account.

One of the things we found was that as part of the 2014 Farm Bill there was something passed about matched savings accounts, but it just wasn't funded. So we're interested in seeing something like this funded and available to beginning farmers. It seems there's overall so many benefits: managing risk better, setting yourself up with some healthy decision making on your farm, setting yourself up long term with retirement. It just seems like there are a lot of different angles where something like this would make a lot of sense. □

## Give it a Listen

On episode 179 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Scott DeMuth talks about risk management, crop insurance and matched savings accounts: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast>.

Paul & Sara Freid

# A Decision-Making Community

Finding the weakest link in a farming operation is often easier said than done. But sometimes a few energetic pigs accomplish the task quite nicely.

"Today, fencing suddenly moved up the list as our weakest link," quips Paul Freid on a brisk day in early May. He and his wife Sara, along with their 11-year-old daughter Clare, had just spent the morning grappling with that laggard link on one corner of their farm near Lake City in southeastern Minnesota. Electrified fencing was supposed to separate two groups of pigs they raise on pasture, but the animals weren't buying into the plan and kept breaking through.

"So we decided to put up a hard fence out there," explains Paul over lunch. "I didn't want to, but Sara and Clare thought it was a good idea and made a good decision. When your 11-year-old has better decision-making skills than you do, it's enlightening."

Such communal decision-making, albeit in this case on a micro-scale, has been a key part of the Freid operation virtually from the time the family purchased 51 ridge-top acres a decade ago. Being able to plan and set goals as a group is particularly important because this operation is set up as a Catholic Worker Farm (<http://lakecitycw.com>), which means it welcomes members of the community to take part in producing fresh, sustainable food and taking care of the land while working for social justice. It's also been important because the Freids' original farming goals have been modified considerably since they first dreamed of making a living on the land.

Today, besides the pastured pork operation, the farm has a vegetable enterprise, which markets products through local farmers' markets, group homes and schools, as well as a small Community Supported Agri-

culture operation that makes fall deliveries. The Freids, working with current community member Jake Olzen, are also setting up a permaculture operation that will eventually consist of fruit and nut trees, as well as berries. Arriving at this mix of enterprises has not been happenstance. It's come about via trial and error and periodically stepping back to assess which enterprises are paying their own way. It has also met tapping the brakes a bit to preserve quality of life for the Freids, who, besides Clare, have two other daughters: Louise, 5, and Millie, 4.

The couple credits their ability to decipher weak links both on a small and large



**"It's great to be able to say these pigs were raised here," says Sara Freid, shown with her husband Paul and daughters Louise, Millie and Clare. "We know what we fed them. We know how we've treated them and handled them. Then we're able to give consumers a product that we're really proud of." (LSP Photo)**

scale with the training they received through the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course (*see page 16*), which they graduated from in 2011. That training, coupled with their experience in LSP's follow-up class, Journeyperson, exposed them to making decisions and setting goals based on not only the land's carrying capacity, but the family's quality of life and where their farm fits in the wider community. Such a manage-

ment strategy can come into play in a range of situations: from figuring out how best to fix fence on a spring day to strategizing a five-year marketing plan.

"That was eye-opening for me," says Sara of the decision-making skills they learned through the courses. "It helps us decide how to change what we're doing to reach our goal as well as provides the reinforcement to say, 'You know what? Nope, that's not working.'"

## Happy Energy

Having such confidence is particularly important when plunging into an unfamiliar way of life. Neither Paul nor Sara, both 39, come from farming backgrounds. What they do have is a love of working outdoors and a surplus of positive energy. Sara recalls being struck by Paul's enthusiasm for tackling challenging tasks from the first day she meant him in a college calculus class.

"It was 8 o'clock in the morning and Paul had lots of energy and I was like, 'Who's this kid in the back who's cracking jokes and is very positive and joyful?'" Sara recalls.

After graduating from college in 1999, they married and Paul taught school for a few years while Sara was with the Catholic Charities Volunteer Corps. In 2003, they moved to a Catholic Worker House in Winona, Minn. While there, the couple had an opportunity to work on a small vineyard across the Mississippi River in Fountain City, Wis., which whet their appetite for working on the land.

When the Freids bought the land near Lake City a few years later, they were determined to establish their own vineyard and winery. For the first few years, they focused on building a house and outbuildings, and getting other infrastructure set up on the site (it had been part of a larger farm and was pretty much open land). Both also work

**Fresh Faces, *see page 19...***



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



off the farm for an educational software company owned by Sara's family in nearby Lake City.

One thing that became clear was that even though Paul and Sara had the land and a good idea of what they wanted to do with it, they lacked a clear plan on how to proceed. Having a strategic, methodical way of setting goals and making decisions is particularly important since the Catholic Worker Farm involves other people living and working there—the Freids have hosted seven community members over the past several years.

So during the winter of 2010-2011 they traveled to River Falls, Wis., a couple of times a month to take Farm Beginnings classes. The classes, which are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals in the community, emphasize developing solid business and marketing plans, as well as identifying what strengths each student brings to a farming enterprise. In addition, the class provides an opportunity to network with established farmers via workshops and on-farm educational events.

The Freids say one of the most invaluable things they got out of the course was an introduction to Holistic Management. Developed by Allan Savory over three decades ago, this is a decision-making framework that has helped farmers, ranchers, entrepreneurs and natural resource managers from around the world achieve a “triple bottom line” of sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits.

Farm Beginnings also opened another critical door for the Freids, giving entry to a different farming future than they had planned. As participants in the course, they had their registration fee covered for the 2011 MOSES Organic Conference in La Crosse, Wis. There, they sat in on a presentation by Mark Shepard, whose New Forest Farm in southwestern Wisconsin has become a model for integrating, or “stacking,” various enterprises utilizing permaculture systems such as fruit and nut trees.

Something about Shepard's presentation clicked with the Freids. They had picked the land near Lake City because its slopes made it perfect for raising wine grapes, but suddenly a vineyard seemed too limited—they could see many more possibilities for those rugged acres. Paul taps into his faith to describe what happened after being introduced to Shepard's ideas.

“We felt the spirit was calling us to broaden our horizons and be a more diversified farm,” he says. “Since then, I think the spirit has called us to grow vegetables, raise hogs, and move toward a permaculture style

farming system.”

Shepard eventually helped the Freids design the undulating terrace-like landscaping needed to establish the kind of permaculture system they wanted. This consists of laying out lines of earthen berms along the contour of the land upon which trees are planted. Between the berms, swales help capture water. Besides making good use of precipitation, such a system allows more production on a relatively small amount of acreage.

## Community Decision-Making

A few years after taking Farm Beginnings, things were starting to click for the Freid operation. They had a vegetable and pasture livestock enterprise established, as well as a more refined idea of where the farm was headed. Just as importantly, Olzen had joined the operation (the Freids own the land, but Olzen is a partner in the farm business). Now that they were making decisions as a community, the Freids and Olzen felt it would be beneficial to brush up on Holistic Management together. So in 2013 all three took LSP's Journeyperson, a course designed to support people who have several years of managing their own farm under their belt, and are working to take the business to the next level. Besides a deeper exposure to Holistic Management, the course consists of advanced farm business planning as well as a matched savings account that allows participants to start putting together capital for investing in their farm.

“We were not stalling necessarily—just getting really bogged down with day-to-day farming life,” recalls Sara. “So that was the perfect time to take Journeyperson because it really focused us on making a five-year plan, a 10-year plan, and start thinking about the steps we needed to take to get there.”

Taking the course also allowed them to team up with a Farm Business Management instructor through Riverland Community College. This relationship has given them solid grounding in accounting, something Paul and Sara had next to no experience in.

## Making it All Fit Together

Whether running enterprises through a holistic decision-making process or doing some good old-fashioned number-crunching, the Freids have learned over the past decade how to determine not only what enterprises fit their life and land, but which do not.

For example, it turns out for now chickens fit into the latter category. They raised broilers for a few years for direct sale to consumers and the end product got rave reviews. But the birds were difficult to sell at the farmers' market and took up a lot of room. In the end, they examined the bottom

line and realized the chickens weren't generating enough cash flow to justify all the trouble and distractions.

“It's a hard decision to make because people tell you it's great chicken,” says Sara. “But it may just be a vocal minority.”

But hogs, somewhat to the surprise of the Freids, pass the financial and agronomic tests with flying colors. Their seven sows are farrowed in February in huts placed inside a high tunnel financed through the Journeyperson matched savings program. During the growing season, the pigs produced in the winter are integrated into the rest of the operation as much as possible. On a recent spring day, the family showed off half-a-dozen young market hogs that were foraging via strip grazing in the permaculture swales. This system consists of moving a portable pen every day so the animals regularly have fresh access to a “pig mix”: kale, millet, turnips and field peas. Come fall, the pigs are used to clean up the vegetable plots. The animals are pulling their weight by fertilizing and tilling the ground while getting rid of rotten, leftover vegetables. Just as importantly, there's a good demand for the naturally raised pork.

The pigs even fit the quality of life criteria that is so important to the farm's holistic goals. “I love watching the pigs out back,” says Paul as he motions toward a couple of sows in a wooded pasture. “I think it's so fun.” But he's quick to add that the hog enterprise wouldn't fit if it didn't dovetail with the vegetable farming. Currently, the hogs are “50 percent” integrated into the rest of the operation. “I think next year we'll be 53 percent there,” Paul adds with a laugh.

In other words, their farming goals are to grow steadily, rather than in a burst. Sara and Paul both still get the bulk of their income from working for the family educational software company, and Olzen works fulltime in construction. Much of the farm is rented out for hay production, and they have been incrementally taking over production of those rented acres as pig pasture, permaculture plots and gardens are added.

“Every new enterprise means you have to be better at five different things,” Paul says. “We're not going to just flip a switch and one day be successful farmers. It's going to be a step-by-step process.” □

## Give it a Listen

On episode 180 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, Sara Freid talks about how Farm Beginnings and Journeyperson have helped her family focus on the farm's most viable enterprises: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast>.

# 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](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and look under the **More Farmers on the Land** section. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Dori Eder at [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org), or by calling her at 612-578-4497. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see <http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse>.

## Farmland Available

◆ Chris and Rebecca Newhouse have for sale a 36-acre farm in **western Wisconsin's Dunn County**, 80 miles east of Minnesota's Twin Cities. The farm is set up for organic produce production, livestock and horse training. It includes a full barn with work-room and walk-in cooler, a Quonset hut, a garage, chicken coop/greenhouse, and two hoop houses. For the past eight years, the Newhouses have been growing produce for restaurants and raising Icelandic sheep and horses, utilizing organic and permaculture practices. There are multiple fruit trees and perennial flower gardens surrounding the home and property, with 10 acres of woods and 20 acres of grazing pasture that was fully fenced in 2014. The land has not been sprayed for several years and an organic certification plan is in place for transition. Equipment and supplies are negotiable. The home is a refurbished three-story house with a finished walkout basement apartment. It is suitable for one or two families. The asking price is \$299,000. Details and photos are at [www.lostviewfarm.com](http://www.lostviewfarm.com). Contact: Chris Newhouse, [chrisnewhouse@gmail.com](mailto:chrisnewhouse@gmail.com).

◆ The Yggdrasil Land Foundation has a turn-key certified organic dairy available for a long-term lease in **southeastern Wisconsin's Walworth County**. The land is owned and protected by the Foundation ([www.yggdrasillandfoundation.org](http://www.yggdrasillandfoundation.org)), a national land trust. The operation consists of 450 acres of productive soils; 240 acres are fenced with improved lanes and a pasture watering system. The pastures are well-managed swards. The highly maintained facilities include a 16-unit swing over parlor and a four-bedroom house with separate studio. An organic milk buyer is ready to pick up. The current tenant is retiring after 25 years on this farm. The Foundation is seeking committed and skilled dairy graziers who will maintain and improve this dairy farm. Consideration will be given to beginning dairy farmers; this farm has been a Master site for the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program ([www.dga-national.org](http://www.dga-national.org)). The terms are triple net lease plus \$75 per tillable acre. The farm would be available fall 2016. Contact: Dorothy, [dghu@charter.net](mailto:dghu@charter.net).

◆ Carolyn Carr has for rent 8 tillable

acres of farmland in **west-central Wisconsin's Pepin County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and in 2014 three acres were used for CSA irrigated vegetable production. It is located on a dead end road and there is a nearby water hydrant; no house is available. The land is available immediately; the price is negotiable. Contact: Carolyn Carr, [carolynecarr@hotmail.com](mailto:carolynecarr@hotmail.com), 612-721-6021.

◆ Steve and Kate Hearth have for sale 77 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Barron County**. The land has not been sprayed since 1972. There are 24 tillable, open pasture acres and a spring-fed pond. There is a 62 x 24 pole shed as well as a house. The land would be available in August or September. Contact: Steve or Kate Hearth, 715-455-1629, 612-240-3464, [kshearth@chibardun.net](mailto:kshearth@chibardun.net).

◆ Sara Gustafson has for sale 1 acre of tillable land in **western Carver County near Minnesota's Twin Cities**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and there is a storage shed and a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house. There is a 125 x 100 plot at the back of the property that's tilled and ready for planting. The property has been annexed into the city of New Germany for sewer and water and is at the end of a dirt road. No livestock is currently allowed by the city, but that may be flexible. The asking price is \$164,900. Contact: Sara Gustafson, 952-836-6097, [saragustafson@kw.com](mailto:saragustafson@kw.com).

◆ Dustin Fingerson has for rent 40 acres (extra acreage possible) of tillable farmland in **southeastern Wisconsin's Juneau County**. The land has never been sprayed and has been used to grow clover and alfalfa (it does need lime). No outbuildings or house are available at this time. A three-to-five-year lease is available at a rate of \$150 per acre. Contact: Dustin Fingerson, 608-485-1575.

◆ Linda Hutchinson has for sale 19.5 acres (12 acres tillable) of farmland in **southeastern Minnesota's Dodge County (near Hayfield)**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and the land has only been used for pasture and making hay for many years. Fencing and water is available. The house and one shed are considered tear-downs. There is a foundation for a garage. It is near Highways 56 and 30, and 29 miles from Rochester and 25 miles from Austin. Call for price and other details. Contact: Linda Hutchinson, [\[son@gmail.com\]\(mailto:son@gmail.com\), 651-214-1853.](mailto:linda48hutchin-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

◆ Kathy Melco has for sale 50 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Bayfield County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes pasture, a 6 x 8 greenhouse, outbuildings and a house. There are 30 open acres of farmland that is currently producing hay and 20 acres of cedar, pine and poplar. There is a large fenced-in garden with perennials, berries, vegetables and herbs. There are also fruit trees on the property. The asking price is \$164,500. Landscape is professionally designed with an emphasis on native plantings. More details are at <http://portwingfarm-4sale.weebly.com>. Contact: Kathy Melco, 715-774-3771, [cedarprairie@gmail.com](mailto:cedarprairie@gmail.com).

◆ Ken Raspotnik has for rent 260 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Bayfield County**. The land includes pasture, pole barns, loafing sheds, a 30 x 60 hoop house and a farmhouse. The land has not been sprayed for several years. Tillage and haying equipment are available. There is also rotational grazing fencing, an automatic watering system and a cattle-working chute. Red Devon cattle, purebred Dales ponies, Friesian stallion and Morgan cross mares are available to manage, if wanted, for reduced rent. The rental rate is negotiable. Contact: Ken Raspotnik, 715-682-9240, [ken@raspotnikfarm.com](mailto:ken@raspotnikfarm.com).

◆ Jason Allsbrook has for rent 10 acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. As much as 13 acres of land could be made available. The land has not been sprayed for several years. There is a solar system pump house hook-up, fencing and good topsoil. No house is available. The rental price is negotiable. Contact: Jason Allsbrook, 320-279-7035, [j.allsbrook69@gmail.com](mailto:j.allsbrook69@gmail.com).

◆ Kristin Washburn has for rent 170 acres of farmland in **southeastern Minnesota's Fillmore County (near Rushford)**. There is no house or outbuildings. The land has been planted to corn for the past four out of five years. Washburn would prefer that the land be planted to perennials such as hay or that organic practices be used. The rental price is \$250 per acre, with a

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Clearinghouse, see page 21...



discount provided for utilizing organic practices or perennials (a three-to-five-year lease is available). Renter would need to sign a "no-spray" lease agreement. The land would be available in 2017. Contact: Kristin Washburn, 612-860-4441.

◆ Knelly Dettinger has for sale a 40-acre certified organic farm in **northeastern Minnesota's Pine County**. There is a barn with equipment storage; farm worker housing and facilities; large, licensed and equipped commercial kitchen; packing shed with wash tables and walk-in refrigeration; three permanent greenhouses; professional deer fencing; and a private well and septic. This farm would be a good set-up for organic vegetables, small ruminants or chickens. Linked to the farm is a successful health food store in town that could potentially be purchased, offering year-round income. The asking price is \$349,900. Contact: Knelly Dettinger, Keller Williams Premier Realty, 507-272-0526, kdettinger@kw.com.

### Seeking Farmland

◆ Wade Anderson is seeking to purchase 100-200 tillable acres of farmland in **west-central Minnesota's Kandiyohi County**. He is seeking to raise alfalfa/haylage on the land; no house is required. Contact: Wade Anderson, 320-266-7525.

◆ Alexandra Rosenberg is seeking to buy 10-40 acres of farmland in **Michigan**. Rosenberg prefers land with pasture, outbuildings and water that has't been sprayed for several years; no house is required. Contact: Alexandra Rosenberg, 248-977-7031, Alexandrarosenberg18@gmail.com.

◆ Paul is seeking to purchase 40-180 acres of farmland in **southwestern Wisconsin**. He would prefer land that has no foreseeable development potential; one building site would be good, but is not required. He can pay cash. Contact: Paul, 608-588-6365, cropground@att.net.

◆ William Brzezinski is seeking to purchase 1-3 acres of farmland in **southeastern Minnesota's Winona County**. He is looking to start an organic vegetable operation and would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has a house. Contact: William Brzezinski, 952-334-5593.

◆ Todd Wolter is seeking to rent 1+ acres of farmland in **western Michigan**. Land with pasture and that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Todd Wolter, 219-561-5336, parasemantics@gmail.com.

◆ Lindsey is seeking to rent a small parcel of farmland in the **Twin Cities region**

(**near Delano**). Land with a barn, garage and house is preferred. Contact: Lindsey, 602-761-1510, lindseyb1314@gmail.com.

◆ Kristin Deutmeyer is seeking to rent 3+ acres of farmland in **east-central Iowa**. Land with pasture, gardening space, outbuildings and a house is preferred. Contact: Kristin Deutmeyer, k2bdeutmeyer@hotmail.com.

◆ Robbie DeLong is seeking to rent 20-100 acres of farmland in **east-central Minnesota's Wright County**. Land with pasture and other livestock-related infrastructure is preferred. A house is also preferred. Contact: Robbie DeLong, 480-646-2137.

◆ Emily W. is seeking to purchase 10-40 acres of farmland in **southeastern Wisconsin's Driftless Region (near Viroqua)**. Land with pasture and rolling hills, and that has not been sprayed for several years, is preferred. No house is required. Contact: Emily W., emily@sundaysenergy.com.

◆ Mark Karpe is seeking to rent farmland in **east-central Minnesota's Isanti County**. Land with a house is preferred. Contact: Mark Karpe, 763-438-7654.

◆ Edward Wolff is seeking to purchase 2-10 acres of farmland for an organic permaculture farm in the **Twin Cities region (Carver, Hennepin, McLeod or Wright County)**. Land with pasture and that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred. A pond, lake or river, along with elevation for swale development, are also preferred; no house is required. Contact: Edward Wolff, 952-210-2540.

◆ Miranda is seeking to purchase 10-25 acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. Land with pasture, a windbreak (if no trees), a barn or lean-to is preferred. A source of water is also preferred; no house is required. Contact: Miranda, 218-513-9608 (call or text).

◆ Yer Moua is seeking to rent 1 acre of tillable farmland in **Anoka County near Minnesota's Twin Cities**. No house is required. Contact: Yer Moua, Yermoua67@gmail.com.

◆ Douglas Black is seeking to rent 10+ acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. Land with pasture and a house and that has not been sprayed for years preferred. Contact: Douglas Black, 651-353-0159, 61ster@gmail.com.

◆ Amy Holmgren is seeking to purchase 20-60 acres of farmland in **northeastern Iowa (Winneshiek or Allamakee County) or southeastern Minnesota (Fillmore or Houston County)**. Land with a mix of pasture, woods and tillable acres, and that has not been sprayed for several years, is preferred. A water source, a house and usable outbuildings are preferred. Contact: Amy Holmgren, 507-402-9507, amy.holmgren@gmail.com.

◆ Gerri Ward is seeking to purchase 10 acres or less of tillable farmland in **Michigan**. Land with fencing, water, a barn and a house is preferred. Contact: Gerri Ward, 313-646-5214,

gerriward@hotmail.com.

◆ Dennis Moua is seeking to rent 2 acres of farmland in **Wisconsin**. He would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has access to water; no house is required. Contact: Dennis Moua, 414-559-2516, Dmuas387@gmail.com.

◆ Avery is seeking to rent 5-10 acres of farmland in the area of **Minnesota's Twin Cities (southeast or northeast of the Metro Area preferred)**. Land with pasture, garden space, fencing, water, outbuildings and a house is preferred. Contact: Avery, Maulventress@gmail.com.

◆ Dan Novotny is seeking to rent 4-12 acres of farmland in **southeastern Wisconsin**. Land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has a hoop house, barn or shed is preferred. A minimum of 50 percent tillable land is preferred. If there is forest, Novotny would prefer that the majority be hardwood. No house is required. Contact: Dan Novotny, 262-894-6626.

◆ Jeff Siemers is seeking to purchase 4-8 acres of farmland in **eastern Wisconsin, near Fond du Lac**. Siemers would prefer that the property have one or more ponds; he wants to have an orchard and raise Muscovy ducks. Land with a house is also preferred. Contact: Jeff Siemers, 920-907-0737.

### Seeking Farmer

◆ Arvid Huth is seeking a farm manager interesting in holistically managing and mob grazing a beef cattle herd in **western Wisconsin's Chippewa County (near Boyd)**. Huth's farm has 900+ fenced acres and 250 Angus cattle, as well as equipment and machinery. He is seeking someone who has a passion for cattle, grazing, soils, grass-finishing, organics and marketing. Huth is open to someone bringing their own cattle (or other livestock) onto the operation. There is a three-bedroom house available. Contact: Arvid Huth, 715-286-4050, arvid@pennymustard.com.

◆ Nancy Lunzer is seeking a farmer to operate a fruit and vegetable operation in **northeastern Minnesota's Kanabec County (near Ogilvie)**. This is not a paid position. This offer is for free land in exchange for two CSA shares of vegetables. Three to 10 acres of land is available, and they have not been exposed to chemicals since 2008. The land has been fallow pasture for 10 years, and part of it has been in alfalfa. There is a well and electricity available; no housing is available. Lunzer would prefer that the land be eventually certified organic but is okay with natural non-chemical methods or working towards organic. Contact: Nancy Lunzer, Bearstreetranch@gmail.com.

## A New Lease on Life

### Conservation Values & Rental Agreements Belong on the Same Page

By Caroline van Schaik

With a single phrase, we can put conservation to work on rented land.

And that would have a major impact from a landscape point of view: more than half the crops in Minnesota and Iowa alone are produced on rented acres, and every one of them could be saving soil, water, habitat and money with some mutually agreed statements set down between landowner and tenant. With a mission of land, farm and community stewardship ever at the front, the Land Stewardship Project is working with this particular subset of people who rent their land, be it as owner or tenant.

This focus is part of the Chippewa 10% Project initiative in western Minnesota, as well as our Women Caring for the Land and Farm Beginnings work. Where I work in southeastern Minnesota's Root River watershed, LSP has created resources for anyone striving to get their conservation priorities reflected in actual practices on the land. Most recently, LSP presented on the topic at the "Land Ethic at Work" workshop in April.

Talk of a lease can raise eyebrows and a wary "oh boy" from landowners and tenants, often because there usually isn't a written lease in place between the two as much as a verbal understanding. Sometimes there is a formal statement but no one has signed it, and often it's hard to tell who's boss. A

common feature of these landowner/tenant relationships is "Yes, but..."

"...the guy plows right through my waterways but he takes good care of my driveway in winter."

"...I don't pay the best but I do keep an eye on their elderly mother."

"...he's been with our family since my husband and I bought this place, but I'd like to help my young neighbor now."

Fair enough. But if there are goals for the land that consist of values (*see sidebar below*) beyond yield, then a rental agreement is a good place to carve out a "Yes, and..." relationship. Conservation practices and neighborly perks can co-exist; a lease by any name ought to reflect what's important about the land and who's to do what about it, snow plowing and all.

Admittedly, fitting conservation language into a rental agreement can be daunting: it requires some knowledge of farm practices and sensitivity to the social ramifications of stepping out beyond the usual terms. Especially in light of the statistical increase in the number of women landowners who do not themselves farm their land (called non-operating landowners), LSP has begun compiling a list of farm management practices and sample phrases to go with them. They have not been vetted for legal strength — rather, they reflect a land ethic at work in straightforward statements meant to be understood by all parties. See the "Talking Conserva-

tion" examples on page 23 for examples of some of these statements.

Sample leases, actual conservation practices, ideas for fair work/rent splits, and reasons to write these down in the first place can be found in one place on LSP's "Conservation in Leases" list (*see the Resources sidebar on page 23*). One key resource is, "Frequently Asked Questions on Sustainable and Long Term Leases in Minnesota," a joint publication of LSP and the Farmers' Legal Action Group.

As innovative landowners and tenants are discovering, there is no single way to share land in an equitable fashion. Clarifying values, finding the words, and getting them written down require that all parties pay attention to each other. Our experience suggests these additional practices to help a conservation lease stick:

- Let your shared values pave the way.
- Sign a lease that is longer than a year so that changes have time to work.
- Share the costs: cover crop seed, fencing, equipment rental, livestock transportation and other material necessities should be everyone's risk.
- Set a rental rate that acknowledges the financial and social risks of new practices.
- Look for cost share programs through the government and private organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation and the Xerces Society.
- Check in: with the work and with each other. □

LSP organizer Caroline van Schaik is based in Lewiston, Minn., and works in the Root River watershed. She can be contacted at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).

## ✓ A Stewardship Values Checklist ✓

Use this list to finish the following statement: What is most important about my land, to me...

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy, biologically active soil | <input type="checkbox"/> Useful for human food production        | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified organic or other sustainable method                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation of soil              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty, aesthetic                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Managed for the long-term   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Year-round vegetative cover       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sets a good example of sustainability   | <input type="checkbox"/> Build biodiversity  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No synthetic fertilizer           | <input type="checkbox"/> Supports birds and other wildlife       | <input type="checkbox"/> People actively living on the farm                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No chemicals                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Something to pass on                    | <input type="checkbox"/> People actively farming the land for clean water and healthy soil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little to no soil loss            | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanently protected natural resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Legacy of stewardship   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean water                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanently protected as a farm         |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastured (grazed) livestock       | <input type="checkbox"/> Source of recreation                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trees                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Public access – open to others          |  |

**NOTE:** Of course, modify these and add others to best express your priorities.



# Talking Conservation

*Examples of practices and the words to describe them that can change the way your land looks and behaves.\**

## → Tillage

- Fields shall be tilled on the contour as agreed by all parties.
- Soybean ground will not be fall tilled.
- No-till will be used on these fields: (list fields).
- Permanent pasture will be tilled only as agreed by all parties.
- The full breadth and length of grassy waterways will be preserved and maintained by (in part) picking up tillage implements when crossing.
- Moldboard plowing is not an option.
- We seek the least soil-disturbing methods of tillage: no-till, reduced chisel, (other).
- Existing terraces/strips will be fully maintained (list fields, exceptions).
- Tillage must not be done when the soil is too wet and risks compaction as a result.

## → Rotations

- Crop rotations will be planted and maintained as follows: (list field and crop).
- X% of all fields will be covered with a living plant or residue at all times of the year: (list field/year, cover crop species, timing, planting method, termination timing and method, and grazing plan if appropriate).
- At least X species of cover crops will be planted per field according to this plan: (list fields, species, timing, planting method, termination timing and method, and grazing plan if appropriate).
- Corn harvested for silage will be followed expeditiously by the following cover crop(s): (list crops)

## → Residue

- All soybean straw shall remain in place in the field.
- Corn stover shall be baled once, with remaining stover left over winter.
- Corn stover will be baled once, followed

by managed grazing. If weather and soil conditions prevent grazing (name options).

## → Chemicals

- Chemicals must be agreed upon before application by all parties.
- The following chemicals are prohibited on all acres, tillable and otherwise: (list).
- In order to protect organic certification, only these fertilizers are permitted: (list).
- Anhydrous ammonia will only be applied in the spring, never in the fall.

## → Sensitive Areas

- A vegetative buffer will be planted and maintained around the following sites: (list field, sink hole location, stream, highly eroded sloped area, etc.).

## → Erosion

- Farm ponds will be ringed by a minimum X-foot-wide buffer of permanent vegetation.
- A 50-foot vegetative buffer will be maintained on both sides of the stream. The buffer will be planted and maintained as follows: (list options).
- Erosion control structures will be fully maintained and improved (list sites, practices).
- The following erosion control structures will be put in place according to this schedule: (list site, practice, when, who will do, who will pay, who will maintain).

## → Miscellaneous

- The following hay field(s) will not be cut until Aug. 1 to allow ground-nesting birds to fledge: (list).
- Hay will be cut high and for maximum quality, not quantity, as best as conditions permit.
- Whether hay ground is cut more than once this season will be determined jointly by X and Y, based on rainfall and forage growth.
- Manure application will follow setback requirements.

- A manure management plan will be actively in place, per county assistance.

- A catch-all statement about cover crops: for example when a field is planted to cover crops, at least X number of species shall be planted together as soon as possible. The (who) shall pay for seed, (who) shall plant. Outline grazing and termination plan for the cover crops.

- Waterways removed or damaged by tillage, chemicals, or other means shall be repaired/replaced at the tenant's expense.

- The following expenses will be covered by X: (list). The following expenses will be covered by Y: (list). This is a good place to share the expenses of practices that are new, might pose a financial or social risk to the tenant, could encourage the tenant to be a better sport about something new, or to stretch everyone's experience (for example, that third cover crop species or poly wire to manage a grazing situation more intensely).

- (Landowner) shall cover the financial difference between the full cost and what Y (tenant) receives through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or other cost share program for putting in the following permanent practices: (list — for example, livestock fencing and watering system, ponds, pollinator strips, buffers, cover crops).

- The windbreak (state location) shall be protected from equipment and chemical damage. Damages shall be at the tenant's expense.

- Manure application, haying and anything else involving vehicles and machinery on fields must not take place if there is risk of soil compaction. □

## Conservation Lease Resources

For fact sheets, guidebooks, internet links and other resources related to developing leases that match your stewardship values, see <http://landstewardshipproject.org/conservationleases>.

Resources are also available from LSP's Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).

\* Adapted in part from the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District's "Sample Checklist of Conservation Practices for Farm Land Rental Agreements" and Iowa State University Extension Ag Decision Maker's "Lease Supplement for Obtaining Conservation Practices and Controlling Soil Loss." Both resources are available on the Land Stewardship Project's Conservation Leases web page (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/conservationleases>), or by contacting Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366, [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org).

## Crunching the Conservation Cropping Numbers

*A new tool helps answer a key question about continuous living cover: what's the financial payoff for the farmer?*

By Rebecca Wasserman-Olin

When thinking about switching to a different crop or farming system, one of the first questions farmers pose is: "How much is this going to cost my bottom line?" These days, versions of that question are being asked a lot in west-central Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed, where the Land Stewardship Project, the Chippewa River Watershed Project and various partners are working to get more of the land growing continuous living cover, whether it be perennial pasture grasses or cover crops.

That's a dramatic departure from the current system of farming that dominates the watershed: 74 percent of the landscape is growing a corn-soybean system that covers the soil a little over three months out of the year and leaves it vulnerable to erosion and runoff the rest of the time. Traditionally, government policy and market signals have supported the growing of such annual row crops and penalized producers for diversifying. So farmers have good reason to question the economic viability of any alternative that steps out of that agronomic norm.

### Cropping Systems Calculator

That's why the Chippewa 10% Project has developed a new resource called the Cropping Systems Calculator. The Calculator is an Excel-based tool that allows the comparison of two crop rotations, each up to six years in length. This exciting resource is the result of input from the field as well as academia. While developing it over the past several months, we worked with an agricultural economics professor at Louisiana State University as well as farmers in the Chippewa River watershed region. The result is a tool that is practical and hands-on, but also based on cutting-edge farm financial research.

The Calculator provides average yearly returns as well as a year-by-year breakdown

for each rotation. It takes into account the crop-specific costs as well as the overhead expenses of the entire farm operation, which align with referenced tax lines. Many com-

The Cropping Systems Calculator is not expected to provide an exact amount of income a farmer can rely on earning the following season, but rather a good estimate of the range of returns possible. This is just one of many tools that can be used to help make an informed decision and to explore options.

### Giving Grazing a Serious Look

Another feature of the Cropping Systems Calculator is that it allows a comparison of various grazing systems on a per-acre basis. Based off the Grass-fed Beef Calculator from the Pasture Project (an initiative of the Wallace Center at Winrock International), it allows a producer to compare types of cattle (cow/calf, stocker, feeder-to-finish, custom grazing) as well as grazing management style (continuous, basic rotational, managed intensive rotational, mob).

Cropping Systems Calculator: Continuous Living Cover									
Number of Acres of Whole Farm				Years in Rotation					
Number of Acres to Change				Original New					
Original Crop Plan					New Crop Plan				
	Crop 1	Crop 2	Crop 3		Crop 1	Crop 2	Crop 3		
Year 1				Year 1					
Year 2				Year 2					
Year 3				Year 3					
Year 4				Year 4					
Year 5				Year 5					
Year 6				Year 6					

Update Viewable Sheets

To Clear All Sheets and Values, Hit Control+K

Average Yearly Costs and Returns from the Two Rotations					
Returns are seen as wages for the farm owner in this tool and aren't factored into labor costs.					
Total Overhead Expenses	Per Acre	Whole Farm			
	Original Crop		New Crop		Percent Difference
	Per Acre	Total	Per Acre	Total	
Total Crop Expenses					
Total Crop Income					
Other Income					
Returns to Management					

-Percent difference shows the percent increase in decrease in the new crop when compared to the old

Here's an example of the Excel spreadsheet the Cropping Systems Calculator utilizes to compare the financial payoffs associated with various rotations.

mon crops have default figures provided in order to make the Calculator easier to use without knowing the exact costs associated with a farmer's specific operation. These default figures are gathered from the University of Minnesota's farm financial and production benchmark database—otherwise known as FINBIN—that covers a 10-county area encompassing the Chippewa River watershed region. These defaults can be easily changed by the users to more accurately reflect the realities of their own enterprises, thus allowing them to customize the Calculator to their situation.

The opportunity to compare row crops to a grazing system on a per-acre basis is one of the unique features of the Calculator and there is a surprising amount of interest in this aspect of the tool, from both farmers and other organizations. Originally the grazing feature of the Calculator was aimed at reassessing practices on marginal fields (too wet, too dry, too hilly, low fertility) that historically have produced poor row crop yields. But the current run of low corn prices is prompting many farmers to look closely

Calculator, see page 25...



at fields that may actually have high yielding soil and wonder if another enterprise such as livestock production may be more lucrative.

## Starting a Conversation

We have spent much of this past winter and spring working with farmers in the watershed to test the Calculator in real-world situations. At my first meeting on a farm that was testing the tool, there was plenty of skepticism about how this differed from the numerous other budget tools already available to farmers. But the husband and wife team agreed to sit with me and enter the information about their operation, comparing the financials of converting a marginal row crop field to perennial pasture. After plugging in the data, I scrolled down to the results section and revealed figures that were somewhat surprising at first. We went back through and double-checked the numbers,

## Give the Calculator a Try

The Cropping Systems Calculator is available at the Land Stewardship Project's newly revamped Chippewa 10% web page: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/chippewa10croppingsystemscalculator>. Take a look and give it a test drive. We welcome any feedback.

and sure enough, grazing a perennial pasture still came out more profitable than was expected. That field hasn't been switched over from row-cropping yet, but the farm couple is giving it serious consideration. That's exactly the goal of the Calculator: giving farmers a way to make informed management decisions that aren't simply based on "doing it the way we've always done it."

As word has spread, we now have other farmers in the Chippewa River watershed approaching us about utilizing the tool. A key component of the Chippewa 10% Project is the development of networks where farmers work with LSP organizers to better understand their landscape while looking at possible strategies to improve on-farm conservation practices.

The Cropping Systems Calculator is the newest addition to the collection of resources available to those networks, and makes a great companion to other tools, such as high-tech mapping of slopes, water flow and historical land use. Such tools assist our field staff as they work with farmers to create grazing plans or help them enroll in USDA programs that support working lands conservation. □

*Rebecca Wasserman-Olin, an economics researcher with the Chippewa 10% Project, can be reached at [rebeccaw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rebeccaw@landstewardshipproject.org) or 612-722-6377.*

# Goals, Realities & Soil Health

## Farmers Talk About the Various Motivations Behind Cover Cropping

By Brian DeVore

It's been said that soil without biology is just geology—an accumulation of lifeless minerals unable to spawn healthy plant growth. And as intense monocropping production practices increasingly remove more life from the ground than they return, it sends that soil closer to fossilization via what conservationist Barry Fisher calls, "the spiral of degradation": eroded, compacted and, eventually, lifeless.

But if a pair of Land Stewardship Project meetings held in southeastern Minnesota this winter are any indication, a number of farmers don't see such a downward plunge as written in stone. Fisher and other soil health experts at these meetings strongly encouraged the standing-room only crowds to return as much biology as possible to the ground beneath our feet. And in most cases, that means making it so living roots are present 365-days-a-year.

"So when in doubt, you plant," said Fisher, who heads up the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Soil Health Division for the central part of the U.S.

Indeed, through presentations, panel discussions and networking, farmers focused on a key soil health improvement strategy that is based on Fisher's advice: cover crops. During the past five years, there's been a lot

of excitement around the growing of these non-cash crops on corn and soybean fields before and after the regular growing season. These crops, which are often small grains such as cereal rye or brassicas such as tillage radish, have proven to be very effective at not only building soil health, but also keeping it from washing and blowing away in the first place. In fact, erosion control is the number one reason farmers begin experimenting with cover crops, according to Sarah Carlson, Midwest Cover Crops Coordinator for Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Fisher, who was long involved with promoting no-till farming in Indiana, said that in recent years farmers have noticed that not even this cutting edge system was enough to keep soil from eroding. No-till protects fields from disturbance, which is important, but it doesn't always provide the biological activity needed to create stability within the profile. And once a soil is eroded, it's difficult to do anything else with it.

"You can't really build soils if there is erosion," said Jay Fuhrer, a Natural Resources Conservation Service soil health expert in North Dakota. "You have to stabilize it first."

That's what southeastern Minnesota corn and soybean farmer Myron Sylling discovered a few years ago. His family transitioned to no-till in the 1990s to save time and soil on the rolling hills they farm near Spring

Grove. It worked—at first. Then he started seeing significant soil loss during intense rainfalls in areas of the fields where there was concentrated flow of water. In the fall of 2012 Sylling borrowed a neighbor's no-till drill and planted winter rye in those concentrated flow areas. The following spring, where Sylling had no-till corn with 100 percent residue cover, there was still erosion; on the cover cropped acres, he lost virtually no soil and weed control was better than before.

"Today we are doing 600 acres of cover crops on our farm operations," Sylling told the meeting participants. "Our erosion issue is basically eliminated."

This is particularly good news given that replicated trials are showing that cover cropping does not lower the yield of cash crops. Carlson shared the results of a seven-year study in Iowa showing that 38 out of 46 times corn and soybean yields were not significantly different when planted after a cereal rye cover crop. A handful of times, the cash crops actually saw an increase, and the yield hits only occurred in the first two years of the study, something Carlson blamed on "lack of experience" with cover crops. Farmers and conservationists are also a fan of cover cropping's ability to soak up excess nutrients such as nitrogen, keeping them from becoming water pollutants while making them available to growing plants later in the season.

If cover cropping does so much for the soil and does not impact yields, then why

**Soil Health, see page 26...**

# Continuous Living Cover

## ...Soil Health, from page 25

are relatively so few farmers across the U.S. using it? Although there has been some recent growth in plantings, one estimate is only around 2 to 3 percent of cropland in states like Minnesota and Iowa are cover cropped on a regular basis, which tracks national statistics.

One issue is economics. Farmers who presented at the LSP meetings cautioned that producers need to budget in the cost of seed, fuel and time when considering cover crops. Jim Purfeerst, who has been using cover

crops on his corn and soybean farm for the past few years, estimated that interseeding into his standing corn, for example, cost around \$39 per acre. When he experimented with applying the seed with a helicopter, the cost went up to \$65 an acre.

"In my mind, that's too much money to have in these cover crops," said Purfeerst, who farms near Faribault, Minn. "It might have been okay with \$7 corn, but now where the commodity prices are at, we've got to get this down to \$20 or \$25 per acre to plant cover crops."

Northern Iowa farmer Jack Boyer said one way to justify the expense of cover crops is to consider their ability to provide low-cost weed control. He estimates that cover cropping saved him \$10 per acre last year in herbicide costs because it suppressed water hemp. A farmer also has to consider the cost of losing chemical inputs that are washed away from soil lacking cover crop protection.

One way to get economic value out of cover crops is through livestock graz-

ing, something farmers in North Dakota's Burleigh County have done quite effectively. Fuhrer, who helped develop a nationally recognized soil health team in the county, said that even crop farmers who don't own livestock have added economic value to cover crops by partnering with their livestock-owning neighbors. The cover crops not only provide cheap feed for the livestock, but the animals build soil health further by depositing urine and feces while stomping biomass into the ground. "The livestock have been just a tremendous tool," said Fuhrer. "I used to think they were important—now I think they're essential."



**Kaleb Anderson described how he is using cover crops to integrate himself into his family's farming operation. Also pictured (left to right) are cover cropping farmers Curt Tvedt, Jeff Gillespie and Jim Purfeerst. (LSP Photo)**

Kaleb Anderson agrees. When he came back to his family's Goodhue, Minn., farm after college, he was looking for a way to get integrated into the existing business. Anderson saw an opportunity to utilize managed rotational grazing as a way to increase beef cattle production on a limited number of acres. He's been experimenting with grazing cow-calf pairs on a multi-species cover crop mix to save haying costs and take pressure off his pasture during the hot part of the summer. Anderson has been happy with the results and wants to try drilling warm season annual cover crops into the farm's pasture, which is dominated by cool season grasses. He's also interested in incorporating cover crops into the corn and soybean rotation.

"Initially, I didn't even look to get into

this from a soil health perspective," said Anderson. "I got into from an attitude of I want to feed less hay, and I want to graze more."

Fisher said farmers need to start looking at the ability of cover crops to build soil health as a way of creating the kind of organic matter that pays dividends into the future. Once that biology is jump-started, soil can start to create its own fertility. It can also begin utilizing moisture in a way that makes it possible to produce decent yields even under harsh weather conditions.

Since they are certified organic, farmers Jeff Gillespie and Rory Beyer have no other choice but to utilize such a natural source of fertility and weed control. "I think cover crops are just a natural fit with an organic system," said Gillespie, who raises crops and livestock near Fountain, Minn. "I don't have the luxury of all these other things I can add to my soil and so I need to have good soil health."

Beyer, who milks cows, says having cover crops has helped him remain certified organic, and now he's interested in building more fence and grazing these plants to take pressure off his pastures. It's just one more way to, "harvest the sun as much as we can," he said.

The bottom line: cover cropping is one of those practices that may be picked up with varying goals in mind. But, said Boyer, because it's a practice that gets at the heart of good farming—soil health—it's inevitable those motivations will evolve and expand.

"For me, the initial goal was to build organic matter, and erosion control and capturing nutrients came later," he said. "As I learned more, they all became equally important." □

## Give it a Listen

On episode 177 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast, researcher Sarah Carlson and farmer Jack Boyer talk about making cover crops pay: <http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/830>.

## LSP & Soil Health

For more information on the Land Stewardship Project's work helping farmers develop profitable farming systems that build soil health, contact Caroline van Schaik or Doug Nopar in our Lewiston, Minn., office (507-523-3366), or Robin Moore in our Montevideo, Minn., location (320-269-2105). More information is also at <http://landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/soilquality>.





# 2014-2015 Financial Update

## Expenses by Operational Area

Policy & Organizing	26%	\$637,612
Food Systems	25%	\$605,670
Farm Beginnings	19%	\$454,467
Farm Legacy Initiative	<1%	\$9,717
Soil Health	<1%	\$16,295
Membership/Outreach	8%	\$204,490
Communications	3%	\$67,940
Other	<1%	\$13,113
Management & General	10%	\$234,475
Fundraising	7%	\$174,363
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$2,418,142</b>

## Temporarily Restricted & Unrestricted Operating Revenues

Religious Grants	2%	\$50,000
Foundations & Corporations, Including Released from Restriction	37%	\$772,873
Government Grants	17%	\$348,278
Membership & Contributions	36%	\$757,813
Fees & Sales	7%	\$144,653
Other	2%	\$36,429
Unrealized Investment Gains (Losses)	-1%	-\$24,717
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$2,085,329</b>

## Statement of Financial Position (As of June 30, 2015)

### Assets

Cash & Investments.....	\$1,154,817
Board Restricted Long-Term Reserve.....	\$478,648
Property & Equipment.....	\$1,133,408
Grants, Contracts & Pledges Receivable.....	\$90,000
Inventory.....	\$1,607
Account Receivable.....	\$287,389
Other.....	\$38,671
<b>Total Assets.....</b>	<b>\$3,184,540</b>

### Liabilities & Net Assets

Total Liabilities.....	\$674,274
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### Net Assets:

Unrestricted.....	\$737,106
Board-Controlled Long-Term & Short-Term Reserves.....	\$478,648
Temporarily Restricted Grants for Future Fiscal Years.....	\$1,294,512

<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets.....</b>	<b>\$3,184,540</b>
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- From audited statements based on generally accepted accounting principles for nonprofits, which book temporarily restricted net assets raised for future use in the year granted.

- Expenses include contracts with collaborating nonprofit, university or government partners for jointly conducted work.

- Reserve Funds under Liabilities and Net Assets include previous gifts of farms donated to the Land Stewardship Project for long-term support and sold to family farmers in a way that protected the land for farming and open space.

- Mahoney, Ulbrich, Christiansen and Russ, P.A. expressed an unqualified opinion on the financial statements of the Land Stewardship Project.



## Resilient Agriculture Cultivating Food Systems for a Changing Climate

By Laura Lengnick  
2015; 357 pages  
New Society Publishers  
www.newsociety.com

*Reviewed by Brian DeVore*

As Laura Lengnick makes clear, “resiliency” is all the rage these days. It seems the term is being tossed around by everyone from Wall Street investment bankers to wildlife biologists. That the term is in such vogue is a good thing. It’s an acknowledgement that whatever system we’re talking about—economic, ecological or sociological—it often lacks the ability to bounce back from the hard knocks life inevitably dishes out. That’s why another term in common use now is “collapse,” as in, “colony collapse disorder is decimating the honeybee industry,” or “the market has experienced a financial collapse.” When something collapses, it’s a very public indicator that the building blocks making up its foundation were not as solid, as “resilient” as we thought. The bird flu epidemic that swept through the Midwestern poultry industry in 2015 highlighted the vulnerability of a system reliant on closed confinement and narrow genetics. When nature threw it a curve ball, it collapsed on a local scale, impacting everyone from farmers to truckers to feed suppliers.

Our highly efficient industrial farming system hums along nicely when the sun is shining and the markets cooperate. But a system is only truly resilient when something wicked this way comes—bad times separate the fair weather thoroughbreds from the mudders, to borrow a horse racing term.

That’s why Lengnick’s book, *Resilient Agriculture: Cultivating Food Systems for a Changing Climate*, is so important. Lengnick is a sustainable agriculture researcher and policy maker who has done extensive work in the area of climate change and agriculture. This puts her in a good position to lay out the argument that an increasingly volatile climate system poses one of the biggest threats to our ability to feed ourselves that we’ve ever faced. After providing a history of production

agriculture, she brings us up to the current situation, where our industrialized, narrowly focused way of cranking out a handful of commodities has greatly reduced farming’s “adaptive capacity”—the ability to adjust to climate effects and even take advantage of opportunities created by these changes.

Lengnick tallies example after example of how modern industrial agriculture lacks the adaptive capacity to roll with the punches of our current climate situation: drought putting Texas cattle producers out of business, weather related plant diseases wiping out crops that had thrived the previous year, swamped fields making a mockery of trying to farm rich bottomland soils.

It could be argued that agriculture has always had to deal with nasty weather events. Drought-induced famine is nothing new and has brought entire civilizations to their knees, for example. But Lengnick argues that this recent wave of climate-caused problems, which seem to be only getting worse, come at a particularly bad time for society. Never have so many people been so dependent on being fed by an agricultural system that is so lacking in adaptive capacity.

But *Resilient Agriculture* also reveals how not every farmer lacks that adaptive capacity—there are those who have integrated ecological principles, innovative marketing and just plain creativity into their operations to make them about as resilient as possible. These farmers may not always be thriving in the face of inclement weather, but they are able to survive and come out at the

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***“If in everything that we do, we can create an environment that is receptive to precipitation, so that whenever it does come we can take advantage of it, we will just be that much more efficient and more effective.”***

— beef producer Mark Frasier

• • •

other end strong enough to take advantage of better times. This brings us to the meat of Lengnick’s book: 25 profiles of farms and ranches from across the U.S. that are developing true resilience. The profiles are categorized by region, as well as enterprise type (vegetables, fruits and nuts, grains and livestock). Lengnick has a formula for each profile: describe what makes each farm or ranch different from its industrial neighbors,

and then let the farmers themselves tell the story of how they are continuing to adapt to a changing climate.

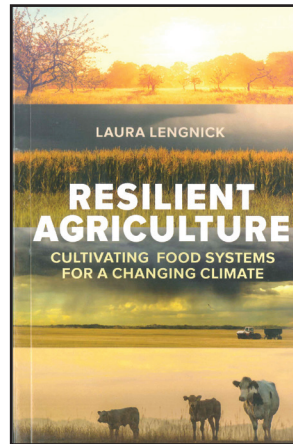
Diverse rotations, use of cover crops, integrating natural habitats with cultivated fields, managed rotational grazing systems—these and other innovative methods are being used by a variety of farmers to deal with climate bugaboos that range from too little water in the West and South to too much at the wrong time in the Midwest and East. Some of the most inspiring profiles feature producers who have been able to survive and thrive in the midst of disaster. For example, Gary and Linda Price of 77 Ranch in Texas not only toughed out the devastating drought that hit the southern Great Plains in 2011 and 2012, they were able to maintain their cowherd without supplemental feed or water, putting them in a situation where they are “pretty upbeat about the future.” This was a time when many ranchers in the region had to call it quits for good. What was the difference? The Prices have taken steps to build the health of their soil and closely manage their water cycle. The basis of their managed rotational grazing system is restored native prairies, which may not produce the most forage per acre,

but because of their adaptability, serve as the most consistent source of cattle feed over the long term. The Prices, along with the other producers profiled in this book, have learned that one of the keys to resilience is not going for the grand slams, but to consistently get the base hits year-end and year-out, no matter what the conditions. That takes patience, monitoring and the willingness to let nature call the shots.

As Colorado beef producer Mark Frasier tells Lengnick: “If in everything that we do, we can create an environment that is receptive to precipitation, so that whenever it does come we can take advantage of it, we will just be that much more efficient and more effective.”

Lengnick knows that in order for real systemic change to occur, we must go beyond lauding the accomplishments of these individual resilient farmers. What lesson can our entire agricultural system take from these examples?

The author tackles that question in the last part of the book. For one thing, she argues, we need policies and educational outreach opportunities that promote a type



**Resilient**, see page 29...



of farming that puts an area of land under direct management of the producer. Monitoring the micro-workings of the land and making adjustments cannot be accomplished by placing our landscape in the hands of large-scale corporate entities. Unfortunately, we have a ways to go in that department. Lengnick documents how federally subsidized crop insurance as well as land grant university research and outreach serve as deterrents, rather than promoters, of resiliency.

Big changes are needed, changes that go beyond protecting the existing food system from disturbance. In the wake of the bird flu epidemic of 2015, the focus has been to develop vaccines and increase biosecurity on factory farms. For the most part, conventional agribusiness has not dealt with the question of whether raising tens of thousands of birds in closed quarters is a good idea in

the first place. In the midst of the outbreak, I mentioned to two agricultural journalists that I had not heard of any bird flu problems on pastured poultry operations. "Just wait," one of them scoffed. I'm still waiting.

People like that are too narrowly focused on the stamping-out-fires approach to dealing with agriculture's problems. Climate change has made such thinking a luxury we can no longer afford.

A new holistic approach is needed. That means putting up with elements of a farming ecosystem that at first glance might not seem to belong in a long-term resilience strategy. Every species in a 12-way cover crop mix may not do well under all weather conditions. But when the rains stop or when they are too plentiful, some species will outshine others, giving that entire field more resiliency over the course of the season, and beyond. The farmers and ranchers Lengnick interviews share a common trait: they have

the kind of long-term intimacy with the land that allows them to observe changes over time. They know that some years certain practices or varieties thrive—other years different ones get a chance to pull their weight. Over the long term, this gives the whole operation the adaptive capacity it needs. Such a management strategy means rethinking our view of "efficiency."

Lengnick writes: "Management strategies that cultivate response diversity do so at the expense of efficiency, because resources are invested in components that do not directly contribute to production under all conditions."

Or, as Aldo Leopold put it so many years ago: "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

## Whispers & Shadows A Naturalist's Memoir

By Jerry Apps  
2015; 128 pages  
Wisconsin Historical Society Press  
www.jerryapps.com

Reviewed by Dale Halder

**W**hispers and Shadows: A Naturalist's Memoir describes one man's lifelong mission to reconnect with the natural world of his farming youth. The man is Jerry Apps, who grew up on a small farm in Wisconsin's central sand region during the Great Depression. From an early age, he attempted to follow his father's advice to "listen for the whispers" and "look in the shadows" to learn nature's deepest lessons. Apps describes the interactions of ecological and human life on his childhood farm, as well as the one he currently owns just two miles from where he grew up.

Apps temporarily shucked his rural background when he went off to college and later the military and learned how to "walk city." But the land called him back, and early on as an adult he began seeking out a way to "... return to a feeling I had when I was a child, a feeling of having room to stretch my arms

without interfering with another person, a feeling of being a small part of something much larger than I was, and I marvel at the idea."

He has a naturalist eye for depicting animal, pond and bird life and how these life forms are an integral part of farm life, ranging from soil health to indicators of seasonal changes that determine the planting of crops. Apps also describes his family life, including hunting and fishing trips with his father and grandfather, camping trips with his children and canoe trips to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

• • •  
***"I continue to listen for the whispers, look in the shadows, and strive to know nature."***

— Jerry Apps  
• • •

In addition to his fascinating description of the natural world of the farm and his own history on the land, Apps is not shy about criticizing threats to this way of life. This includes excesses in modern large-scale agricultural practices, including the impact of big irrigation projects on the water resources of central Wisconsin, something that is an ongoing issue in many parts of farm country. The author has a genuine concern

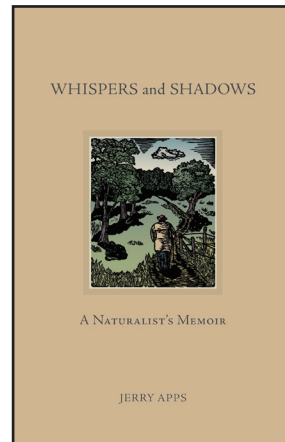
for the land and the long term viability of agriculture. But he is also mindful of the challenges farmers and rural communities

face as they try to balance economic survival and long term protection of the landscape. Having grown up on a farm and maintained connections with farming communities, Apps understands these issues from a personal level. He appreciates how resilient rural people must be, having developed that resilience himself by struggling with childhood polio.

This volume addresses farm life in a simple and concise way that is easily understood while challenging the reader to think about the issues facing agriculture. Apps, ever the teacher, also includes a reading list of resources for those interested in learning more about outdoor, agricultural and environmental issues. One gets a sense that the author himself returns to this list again and again as a guide to his ongoing journey to connect the agricultural and the ecological.

"I continue to listen for the whispers, look in the shadows, and strive to know nature," he writes. "I know much, but I have much more to learn." □

Land Stewardship Project member Dale Hadler lives in southeastern Minnesota.



# LSP's Work on Display

By Karen Benson & Amelia Shoptaugh

A picture is worth a thousand words, goes the old saying. And that is truly the case as you now step into the Land Stewardship Project's offices in Lewiston, Montevideo and Minneapolis. New artwork in each office showcases the many facets of the important work done by Land Stewardship Project members and staff. Photos representing LSP's strong values of stewardship, justice and democracy can be seen in beautiful, custom-framed photos. From farmers presenting at a field day, to members organizing at a rally, to beginning farmers learning new skills, each photo tells a story of its own.

Each office has also received a canvas Land Stewardship Project logo banner to



LSP's new office displays help tell the story of the organization's work and mission. (Photo by Karen Benson)

welcome visitors.

In addition to a few dozen new photos to brighten up conference rooms and hallways, the Minneapolis office is de-cluttering and improving acoustics in the echoey conference rooms. The Minneapolis office design team of George Boody, Amelia Shoptaugh, Megan Smith and Kaitlyn O'Connor has been working hard to continue the ongoing process of turning the former fire station into office and meeting spaces.

We would like to thank LSP staff and members for taking such great photos. Thanks to James Ross, who custom made the frames for the photos. Also, thank you to Eric Struve for making the acoustic panels for the Minneapolis office.

Please stop by your nearest LSP office sometime and take a look at the new improvements! □

*Karen Benson and Amelia Shoptaugh are members of office design teams in, respectively, LSP's southeastern Minnesota office and its Minneapolis office.*



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

## Membership Update

# Many Ways to Volunteer at LSP

By Mark Rusch

During a March meeting in the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office, 20 LSP members came together to discuss our work and learn how they can become more engaged. The meeting, which was facilitated by Mike McMahon, LSP's director of individual giving, and Mark Schultz, the organization's associate director/director of programs, prompted this small group of members to collectively pledge over 200 volunteer hours to LSP over the next four months—that's 200 hours!

As a membership-based organization, it is important to have members not only support LSP's work financially, but also donate their time and engage themselves in our mission.

Volunteering for LSP will make you feel good, of course. But there is more to it than that: volunteers witness LSP's work up close; they meet staff members, fellow LSP members and fellow volunteers; and they

increase their knowledge of our mission.

In fact, I came to work at LSP by first volunteering my time. After a year spent volunteering on an organic farm in Indiana, I moved to Minneapolis and started working at a food co-op. After donating money to LSP through my workplace-giving program, I researched the organization and discovered its mission was one I wanted to support with more than a monetary gift. I no longer did farm work, but I was still committed to the ideals and goals I had valued when on the land in Indiana. So I contacted LSP, asked to volunteer, and hoped they would have me.

They did. I started volunteering at LSP almost immediately. I remember my very first task: creating a Google Map of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms listed in LSP's annual *CSA Directory*. In the eight years since, I have helped do set-up for summer cookouts, transferred signatures from a written petition into a

Membership, see page 31...

## Volunteer for LSP

A big thanks goes out to the volunteers that help the Land Stewardship Project in all aspects of our work. LSP literally could not fulfill its mission without the hard work of our volunteers. Volunteers help us do everything from stuff envelopes and make telephone calls to enter data and set up logistics for meetings. If you'd like to volunteer in one of our offices, contact:

• **Montevideo, Minn.—**

Terry VanDerPol, 320-269-2105,  
tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.

• **Lewiston, Minn. —**

Karen Benson, 507-523-3366,  
karenb@landstewardshipproject.org.

• **Minneapolis, Minn. —**

Amelia Shoptaugh, 612-722-6377,  
amelia@landstewardshipproject.org.



database, staffed a waste station (I told patrons what was and was not compostable), and stuffed more envelopes than I care to remember. Barring the moments spent nursing paper cuts, I have enjoyed every minute.

For certain periods, I volunteered for LSP weekly or biweekly. At other times, I let months (or, once) even a year pass between shifts. LSP has never been less than thrilled to have me back. I was always excited to go in for a volunteer shift. In February of this year, I was volunteering at the office and heard about a job opening. I started working at LSP a few weeks thereafter.

Since that meeting in March, LSP members have advanced LSP's mission in a variety of ways. Volunteers have tabled for LSP and collected signatures at events. Some have helped during telephone banks to spread the word about our work. One volunteer even donated her handwriting skills and hand addressed envelopes.

Interested in finding out about upcoming volunteer opportunities in the Twin Cities area? Contact LSP and let us know when you want to come in. Chances are good that there will be a mailing, telephone bank or special project right around the corner. And I would be remiss not to mention that the Twin Cities Summer Potluck Cookout is coming up July 28. We will need a lot of help setting up and tearing down, staffing sign-in tables, helping guests sort their recycling and compost, and much more.

To learn about volunteering in any of our offices, see the sidebar on page 30. □

*Mark Rusch is an LSP membership assistant in the Individual Giving and Membership Program. He's at 612-722-6377 or [mrusch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mrusch@landstewardshipproject.org).*

## 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](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/signup) for details. □

## Family Farm Breakfast Volunteers

As in past years, volunteers (*right photo*) played a key role in the success of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Land Stewardship Project Family Farm Breakfast and Day at the Capitol (*see page 8*). They helped with registration, served food, washed dishes and cleaned up afterwards. All three of LSP's offices rely on such volunteer help throughout the year. See page 30 for information on how you can lend a hand. (*LSP Photo*) □

## 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 Cloe Klinkner*

◆ Sharon & Erwin Weinkauff

◆ Susan & Kenneth Griebel

◆ Penelope (Penny) Purtzer

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

## Support LSP in Your Workplace

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

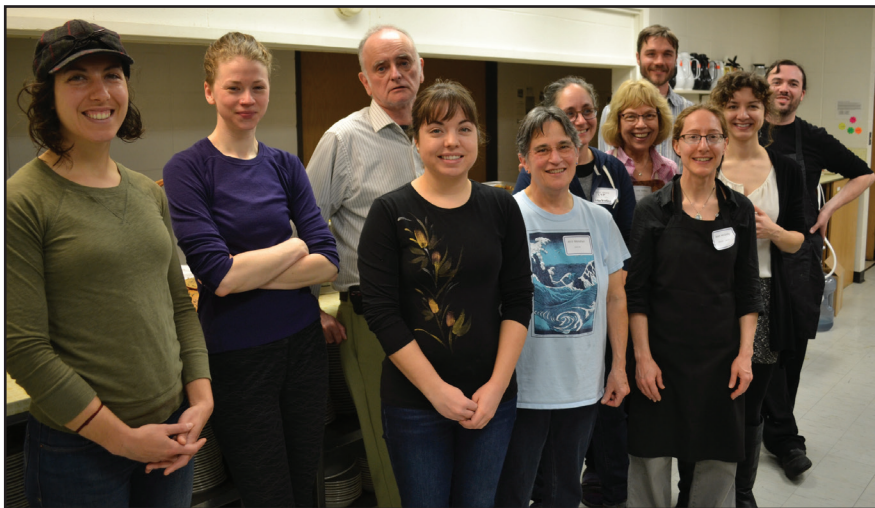
- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



# MINNESOTA Environmental Fund

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project.

If your employer does not provide this opportunity to give through the Minnesota Environmental Fund, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For details, contact LSP's Mike McMahon ([mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org)) or Abby Liesch ([aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org)) at 612-722-6377. □





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## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JUNE—Restaurant Alma month-long benefit for LSP: \$1 donation for each three-course menu purchase.** Restaurant Alma, 528 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, Minn., [www.restaurantalma.com](http://www.restaurantalma.com), 612-379-4909

→ **JUNE 19—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on Harvest & Handling of Small Fruits & Berries**, 1 p.m.-3 p.m., Mary Dirty Face Farm, Menomonie, Wis. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org); 612-578-4497

→ **JUNE 25—LSP Pothole Pedal Pusher Bike Tour & Fundraiser**, Sunburg, Minn. Contact: Robin Moore, LSP, 320-269-2105, [rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org)

→ **JUNE 26—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on Getting Started in Blueberry Production**, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., Little Hill Blueberry Farm, Northfield, Minn. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org), 612-578-4497

→ **JULY 17—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on Vegetable Production: Evolution of Infrastructure from Beginning to Advanced**, Sweet Top & Turnip Rock Farms, Clear Lake, Wis. Contact: Dori Eder, LSP, [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org), 612-578-4497

→ **JULY 19—LSP Field Day on Beef Grazing & Pasture Management Infrastructure**, 3:30 p.m.-8 p.m., Marcum & Jenniges farms, Pope County, Minn. Contact: Andy Marcum, LSP, [andym@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:andym@landstewardshipproject.org), 320-424-3901 or 320-634-5143

→ **JULY 28—LSP Twin Cities Summer Potluck Cookout**, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., LSP Minneapolis office. Contact: Megan Smith, LSP, 612-722-6377, [megans@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:megans@landstewardshipproject.org)

→ **JULY 31—LSP Farm Dreams Class**, 1

## LSP's Farm Beginnings Course Accepting Applications for 2016-2017

The Land Stewardship Project is now accepting applications for its 2016-2017 Farm Beginnings course. The early bird discount deadline is Aug. 1; Sept. 1 is the final deadline. Separate classes will convene in Northfield, which is near Minnesota's Twin Cities, and Glenwood in west-central Minnesota. See page 16 for details.

## Come Celebrate with LSP July 28

The 2016 Land Stewardship Project Twin Cities Summer Potluck Cookout will be Thursday, July 28, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at our office in Minneapolis (821 E. 35<sup>th</sup> Street). There will be food, music, kids games, a silent action and more. For details, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) or call 612-722-6377.



p.m.-5 p.m., LSP Minneapolis office. Contact: Dori Eder, [dori@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:dori@landstewardshipproject.org), 612-578-4497 (page 16)

→ **AUG. 1—Early Bird Application Deadline for 2016-2017 LSP Farm Beginnings Course** (page 16)

→ **SEPTEMBER—LSP Workshop on Risk Management Strategies for Beginning/**

**Diversified Farmers** (page 17)  
→ **SEPT. 1—Final Application Deadline for 2016-2017 LSP Farm Beginnings Course** (page 16)

Check Upcoming Events at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) for the latest workshops, classes, field days and deadlines.