

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

31 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

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Farm Beginnings in the Lake Superior region (see page 14).

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Report from the Field

One Woman's Land Story

You Can Leave the Farm, but it Never Leaves You

By Robin Moore

Judy Rose of Miltna, Minn., owns two quarter sections in North Dakota's Nelson County—320 acres of prairie pothole habitat. She is a participant in the Land Stewardship Project's Women Caring for the Land group of non-operating women landowners in the Pope County region of western Minnesota. Women Caring for the Land works to help women landowners and managers talk about their land stewardship goals, learn about soil and water quality, access professional resources, and feel empowered in the management of their land.

Judy's farm is located on the Pembina Ridge just before the drop into the Red River Valley. She has preserved several wetlands on the property through her lease agreement and has watched the wetlands grow over the past 15 years due to increased rainfall in the region. She has all the deed history and knows who originally homesteaded the land.

That's how Judy knows that the property has a tree claim planted under the Timber Culture Act, which Congress enacted in 1873 to follow the Homestead Act, allowing homesteaders up to another 160 acres if they planted trees on one-fourth of the land. Timber on the vast prairie was a scarce resource, and the Act helped keep people in place since it required at least five years to harvest any wood. "The notion of the day was also that timber would bring rain as similar to the belief that 'rain follows the plow,'" says Judy.

On her farm, 20 acres were planted into trees, but fewer trees remain today and "they look downright anorexic"—a testament to their place in the grasslands.

Judy's father obtained this property after renting and farming there for several years. In the early 1960s, he put it into the USDA Soil Bank program and rented other land for farming; that's how her father was able to pay for the farm. The USDA started the Soil Bank program in the mid-1950s to deal with the problems of commodity surpluses. Farmers would voluntarily retire cropland and receive acreage rental payments from the government, which encouraged conservation, reduced surpluses and maintained

basic farm income.

Judy grew up on that farm in the 1870s farmhouse, which was wired for electricity in 1950. Now she rents it to a man she baby-sat when she was a teenager. When her father and mother passed away, she bought out her siblings, who she feels never held any interest in the farm. Her sister was terrified of chicken feathers and her brother, who later went on to become an accountant, preferred machinery to working with animals and plants.

• • •

"Connection to the land is innate — it can be learned, but I was born to it."

— Judy Rose

• • •

Judy feels that her "connection to the land is innate — it can be learned, but I was born to it." She said she was always happy to be on the farm and spent most her time outside with her father. "I actually enjoyed shoveling out the barn," she recalls. One of her favorite farm memories centered on a huge blizzard that struck the night of her birthday one December. She loved North Dakota winter storms. "The drama, the fact that it brought everything to a halt," Judy says. The plowmen ran into the ditch right by their farm and were forced to spend the night, and "that was the party!"

Eventually, Judy went on to college and earned a history degree. She moved to Michigan with her husband, where she kept a big garden in her backyard, worked as a trail guide at the Chippewa Nature Center,

and began her continuing involvement with the League of Women Voters. After retirement, Judy and her husband moved back to Minnesota to be closer to her land and their family. She feels that her relationship with her renter is a strong one; he has maintained the wetlands and her farm remains drain tile-free. She hopes to talk to him about cover crops with the goal of building soil health.

Judy visits her land three or four times a year. No one lives on the farm anymore; the buildings were razed due to severe maintenance problems. When visiting, she and her husband stay in the area with friends or in hotels and surrounding small towns. During their visit they always walk the perimeters, see how the crops look, often plant trees in the tree claim, and check on the trees they planted before.

They keep track of birds and wildlife that they see on the farm. Recently, Judy spotted a short-eared owl, an evening feeder that lives on grasslands all over North America and looks remarkably like a small hawk. She is proud of the numerous varieties of ducks she sees in the wetlands. She hopes that someday, because of their location on the ridge, wind turbines will fund the retirement of the rest of the cropland back into prairie.

This is one of many stories from the women who are coming to Women Caring for the Land meetings the Land Stewardship Project is sponsoring on an ongoing basis. Women come to the meetings for different reasons, such as education, community and/or support. Judy says, "I have come to the Women Caring for the Land sessions for probably the same kinds of reasons that I go to church. It is a spiritual connection." □

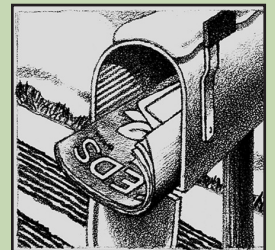
Robin Moore is an LSP organizer who coordinates the Chippewa 10% Project in western Minnesota. She can be reached at 320-269-2105 or rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org. For more on LSP's Women Caring for the Land work, see page 21 or contact LSP's Rebecca Terk at 320-305-9685 or rebeccat@landstewardshipproject.org.

What's on Your Mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms?

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

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



What Makes a Land Steward?

It Requires Openness, Humility & Awareness of Ripple Effects Near & Far

By Julia Ahlers Ness

From my father, who at age 78 is still actively farming in northwest Iowa and has been since the age of 16, I learned firsthand about concern for the soil and proper care of animals. I've learned about stewardship of the land by paying attention to the way he farms and the way he cares for livestock, and from hearing him express dismay when he sees his fellow farmers so obviously ignoring basic conservation and stewardship practices.

Just this past year, dad was approached by the woman who owns a quarter section of land that he has rented and cared for since the early 1970s and which is directly across the road from land owned by my extended family since the 1920s. This landowner wanted to know if the grassed waterway on her quarter could be tiled and this land farmed. This waterway, which in some ways resembles a slough, constitutes about four to five acres total. It's generally wet most years and has been in grass for as long as dad can remember. It's not like that land is sitting idle—all but the wettest parts are usually hayed in August, and that hay then gets donated for his church's fund-raising auction.

In response to this question, dad told this woman that there was no way that tiling and farming that extra four or five acres would work or even be a good idea. He said the amount of resulting soil erosion would be tremendous, especially with a big rain event, because quite a bit of the surrounding landscape drains through that waterway. His response to her made me very proud of him.

And yet, I know that it troubled him that she would even ask such a question. Neither I nor my brothers were surprised, however. To us it was just a sign of the times and indicative of the pressures and temptations that come with high commodity prices, unheard of land prices, irrational rental rates and heavily subsidized federal crop insurance that encourages farming practices otherwise too risky to engage in.

For me, the fact that this landowner would raise such a question—or the fact

that the indicators of poor stewardship are increasing across the agricultural landscape rather than decreasing—also point to a clear erosion within society and within rural agricultural communities of the principles and teachings that form and inform an ethic of stewardship of the land and of the Earth in the first place.

So what are some of the characteristics of a good steward of the land and what might some of those outwardly visible practices of good stewardship be?

Stewardship, Not Ownership

First, a good steward knows that they are ultimately a steward and not an owner of that land. They have no right, God-given or otherwise, to simply use it for personal gain and without regard for the impacts and ripple effects both for their neighbors or community in the present and for future generations.

Good land stewards carry within themselves an attitude of humility and a sense of the magnitude of the responsibility given to them by the sheer fact that they are either an owner and/or a manager of land. This humility and sense of responsibility fosters a recognition that there is always room for improvement. There is no resting on one's laurels nor any legitimate satisfaction to be taken from just doing

the minimum needed to satisfy personal self-interest or to comply with conservation program requirements. And being a good steward means being open and willing to learn and understand as much as possible about the biological and ecological processes that sustain the *integrity* of the collective community that is the land.

That means knowing how soils function, knowing that they are alive, knowing what is needed to help restore, build and sustain healthy soils so that they can sustain us and the planet as a whole. It means understanding the symbiotic and relational dynamics of the plant and animal communities on this planet and the benefits and necessities of maintaining as much biological and ecological diversity and complexity as possible.

From what I've seen over the past 30-

plus years, the best of the best land stewards are those farmers, ranchers, land owners and land managers who strive to be just as *biologically and ecologically literate* as they are technologically literate, if not more so. Not only do these biologically and ecologically literate landowners and managers seek to educate themselves about the ecosystem processes that sustain all human goals and activities, they learn how to monitor the impacts their decisions and actions have on those ecosystem processes.

Even more, these biologically and ecologically literate stewards monitor and pay attention to the impacts of management decisions, practices and tools on the quality of life of their families, their communities and society at large. And stewardship inherently includes a concern for creating and sustaining financial well-being for themselves and for the larger community. Yet, a hallmark of a stewardship-minded consciousness is that it extends value to people, the land and to communities and ecological activities beyond their simple economic contributions. *Good* stewardship never settles for either/or choices, where one concern must be sacrificed for the sake of another. Instead, good stewards make the most of the tool of human creativity and seek to find win-win options that are good for both the land and for people.

Furthermore, a good steward of the land recognizes that the community and society at large have a profound and broad stake in good stewardship of the land. Therefore they rightly have a say in what they expect from those within the community who are directly responsible for managing land and the natural resources and systems that are part of it.

Conversely, communities and society at large have a duty to support and promote good stewardship of the land and our natural resources and the use of appropriate technologies and practices that enhance the integrity of creation and the dignity of persons.

Stewardship *starts* with simply caring about the land and your fellow human beings. Each and every one of us, whether we own or directly manage land or not, are called to be stewards of the Earth. Let us strive to learn and grow into deserving this title, this honor. □

Julia Ahlers Ness recently served as the coordinator of the Chippewa 10% Project, a joint initiative of the Land Stewardship Project and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. This essay is excerpted from an opening address she gave in March at the Farm and Garden Conference sponsored by the Citizen Climate Lobby of the 7th District of Minnesota.

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*The best land stewards
are just as biologically
and ecologically
literate as they are
technologically literate.*
• • •

Myth Buster Box

An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

→ Myth: Genetic Engineering Can Replace Diversity

→ Fact:

One argument in favor of genetically engineered crops is that they can replace “old fashioned” agronomic practices that rely on planting a diversity of crops in rotation. That claim is quickly going south these days as the basic rules of evolutionary biology begin to take charge out in farm fields. A simplified version of this rule is that if you use huge amounts of one single chemical or technology to kill pests, it’s inevitable that some of those pests will survive, reproducing offspring that resist being killed by subsequent sprayings.

In the 1990s, soon after Monsanto started marketing seeds that produced crops genetically engineered to tolerate the herbicide glyphosate (marketed under the brand name Roundup), farmers adapted the technology in droves. The advantages for farmers were evident early on: they could plant their crop and then spray it once it had started growing, reducing the expensive, and erosive, mechanical weed control methods of the past. And since they were spraying the crop rather than saturating the soil at planting, less of it was required. Finally, glyphosate is known as a less toxic chemical than older herbicides, and supposedly does not hang around as long in the environment to cause problems.

Today herbicide tolerant crops account for 93 percent of the soybeans and 85 percent of the corn grown in the U.S., according to the USDA. This technology is ubiquitous in Farm Country, and it’s made many, many fortunes for its creator, Monsanto.

But time is running out for this cash cow. Acreage with weeds that resist being killed by glyphosate almost doubled from 32.6 million in 2010 to 61.2 million in 2012, according to a 31-state survey conducted by Stratus Agri-Marketing. Nearly half of all U.S. farmers Stratus surveyed said they had glyphosate resistant weeds on their farm in 2012, up from 34 percent of farmers in 2011.

And now another high-flying genetically engineered agricultural product—corn plants modified to resist being killed by insects—is succumbing to the cold hard facts of basic biology. In late August there were reports out of Illinois that the western corn rootworm,

a devastating pest, was showing serious signs of being resistant to “Bt corn”—corn genetically engineered to fend off these insects (76 percent of U.S. corn is of the Bt variety). More reports emerged over the summer from across the Midwest, prompting Environmental Protection Agency officials to visit problem fields themselves.

“Instead of making things easier, we’ve just made corn rootworm management harder and a heck of a lot more expensive,” said University of Minnesota entomologist and pest management specialist Bruce Potter on *Minnesota Public Radio*.

By mid-September farmers were reporting that the stalks of genetically engineered corn were being pushed over by winds — a sign that ravenous rootworms were taking their toll in areas they weren’t supposed to. To make things worse, the insect damages the plant’s ability to absorb water — a particularly thorny problem

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“Instead of making things easier, we’ve just made corn rootworm management harder and a heck of a lot more expensive.”

— entomologist Bruce Potter

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as parts of the Corn Belt suffered through another year of major drought.

Bugs and weeds that are finding ways to fool Bt and Roundup technology are bad news for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is that it means farmers are being forced to return to using the same nasty chemicals GMOs were supposed to make irrelevant. The irony is that one way Monsanto, the USDA and other backers of GMOs sold the public on the safety of this technology in the early days was to argue that it would mean fewer pesticides would be used, and the ones that were used would be less of an environmental and human health threat.

There are now entire field days dedicated to how to deal with superweeds. Agronomists, many of whom work for seed and chemical companies, are recommending “diversifying” the chemical toolbox by returning to some old favorites like atrazine.

In a 2009 analysis of USDA statistics, researcher Charles Benbrook found that ge-

netically modified crops have actually increased pesticide use by 318 million pounds since 1996, compared to what would have probably been used in the absence of GMO varieties. Herbicide use on crops genetically engineered to resist weed killers rose over 31 percent from 2007 to 2008 alone. That makes the overall chemical footprint of GMO crops “decidedly negative,” concluded Benbrook.

In an extensive 2010 report on GMO crop technology, the National Research Council warned that although products like Roundup Ready seeds provide some benefits to farmers, superpests threaten to make such advantages moot.

One positive development has emerged from all this talk of superweeds and superbugs: university crop experts are getting desperate enough to recommend that farmers utilize diverse crop rotations and cover crops to disrupt pest cycles. Researchers in South Dakota found that planting a cover crop in the autumn significantly reduced rootworm damage in a corn crop planted the following spring. Such sustainable methods are not only good for the environment, but Monsanto hasn’t figured out how to patent them yet.

→ More Information

- A University of Illinois report on Bt corn-resistant rootworms is at <http://bulletin.ipm.illinois.edu/?p=1629>.

- Stratus Agri-Marketing’s report on herbicide-resistant weeds is at www.stratusresearch.com/blog07.htm.

- The effects of cover cropping on western corn rootworm is described in a 2010 paper published in the journal *Environmental Entomology* (December, pages 1816 to 1828): www.entsoc.org/Pubs/Periodicals/EE.

→ More Myth Busters

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

Steve O'Neil: 1950-2013

By Doug Nopar

Land Stewardship Project staff and members lost a treasured friend and mentor when Steve O'Neil succumbed to cancer in July at the age of 63. Steve was LSP's first rural community organizer, hired shortly after Ron Kroese and Victor Ray founded LSP in 1982. While Steve only officially worked for LSP for four years, he went on to serve as a mentor and adviser to the organization for most of its history.

O'Neil's first job for LSP was to organize public education meetings in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa counties that had extremely high soil erosion levels. He organized our first farmer-led steering committee to guide the group's work in Winona County in 1984 and opened LSP's first field office in Lewiston, Minn., in 1985. A man of deep religious conviction, O'Neil excelled at getting pastors and people of faith involved in LSP's efforts.

Steve set the tone for how LSP conducts its "education to action" meetings by bringing people together to discuss problems and create strategies for working together to solve them. He was instrumental in developing the Farmland Investor Accountability Project, which made national headlines in the 1980s for holding insurance companies accountable for destroying conservation practices on land they had taken over through farm foreclosure.

"Steve taught me, and made me see clearly, the importance of grassroots organizing, and how critical it was to do it," recalls Kroese, LSP's first executive director. "He was educated in organizing and extremely skilled in it. He was one of the great ones. If it hadn't been for Steve, there's a question about whether LSP would have been able to get on a solid enough footing to really keep going as an organization. With the emphasis on organizing, he built a true grassroots base, where farmers learned about what we were doing and wanted to be a part of it. We weren't just talking as policy analysts about changes that needed to be made in our nation's agriculture—we had real farmers involved. That really distinguished LSP."

When O'Neil came to LSP, he was already a seasoned rural organizer. For eight years, he'd led much of the organizing work

of Minnesota Citizens Organizations Acting Together (COACT), and he directly supervised that group's rural southern Minnesota organizing happening around Mankato, Northfield and Winona.

Mark Schultz, LSP's associate director, director of programs and Policy Program director, worked closely with O'Neil and maintained a strong friendship long after he left LSP, all the way through O'Neil's passing in July. "For Steve, it was about stewardship and it was about justice," says Schultz. "He paired justice with the idea of sustainability, and he brought that perspective to LSP. Most importantly, Steve rooted rural organizing in LSP. He stood up for family farmers and the rural poor."

O'Neil organized LSP's first successful anti-corporate campaign with citizens of Wabasha County outraged by the actions of the John Hancock Life Insurance Company. In 1984, Hancock foreclosed on the Hauck farm, an award-winning conservation farm near Millville, Minn., and oversaw the removal of long established soil conservation practices, including contour strip cropping, grassed waterways, crop rotations and terraces. A two-year grassroots campaign led by the local citizens and O'Neil resulted in conservation practices being restored on that farm and the farm being sold back to a family farmer in the area.

Marge Warthesen, farmer and LSP member, was one of the Wabasha County citizens at the center of the John Hancock campaign.

"What struck me about Steve was his ability to listen and understand our concerns, and then work with us to figure out what to do," she recalls. "He would ask us what we wanted to see happen — there was a family farm that had been foreclosed on that we wanted to see be a family farm again. He always made us feel like we were part of the process of figuring out what to do. He wasn't one that would come in and tell us what we were supposed to do."

Farmer and LSP member Bill McMillin



Steve O'Neil

was also one of those involved with LSP and O'Neil in Wabasha County in the mid-1980s. He remembers O'Neil as one who listened to the locals and who was fearless. But he most remembers O'Neil as a great organizing strategist.

"Steve was good at anticipating the moves of the opposition," says McMillin. "When we were planning our next organizing move, he'd have some additional moves in mind based on how he thought the opposition might react. I thought it was interesting that Steve also didn't run the opposition down. He always treated them with respect."

Steve eventually moved to Duluth, Minn., where he did community organizing around homeless issues as well as public health. In 1989 he and his wife Angie Miller started the Loaves and Fishes Catholic Worker Community, a combination of in-home hospitality, community activism and religious faith that became a voice for the homeless in Duluth. At the time of his death, Steve was serving his third term on the Saint Louis County Board of Supervisors, where he continued to advocate for the homeless and others in the community.

For his work over the years, Steve was recognized with a McKnight Foundation Virginia McKnight Binger Award for Human Services and the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Bruce Vento Distinguished Service Award.

Much of LSP's public policy and community organizing work today continues O'Neil's early legacy of exposing multinational corporations' lack of concern for everyday rural people and the health of the land. Our work to challenge agribusiness giants and reform federal farm policy, fight corporate backed factory farms and go toe-to-toe with the health insurance industry and HMOs can be traced to O'Neil's early work with LSP.

He is being remembered by LSP staff and members as someone who used a combination of courage, passion and grit to fight for social justice. And he did all of this with a great sense of humor—who can forget that infectious smile?

Steve O'Neil selflessly helped innumerable people, communities and organizations over the years. The Land Stewardship Project was extremely fortunate to have been one of the early beneficiaries of his skills, passion and humanity. □

Doug Nopar is an LSP Policy Program organizer based in southeast Minnesota. He worked with Steve O'Neil and remained close friends with him over the years.

Dan Specht: 1950-2013

Dan Specht, a long-time leader in sustainable agriculture and at the Land Stewardship Project, was killed in a farm accident in July. He was 63.

Dan, who farmed above the banks of the Mississippi River near McGregor, in north-east Iowa, had been a pioneer in innovative, sustainable farming methods for several decades. He had done nationally-recognized on-farm research related to rotational grazing, cover crops, water quality and blending working farmland with wildlife habitat restoration. Dan was also a national leader in work to develop public policy that benefited sustainable agriculture and the environment, as well as provided family farmers fair access to markets.

Dan's education began in a one-room school house, and he eventually obtained a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Northern Iowa.

LSP benefited in innumerable ways from Dan's long-time, active membership, and since 2010 he had served on our board of directors. He was also a long-time and influential member of LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee, and in this capacity he testified before Congressional committees, authored commentaries and helped develop innovative public policy such as the groundbreaking Conservation Security Program, now known as the Conservation Stewardship Program (see page 12).

Dan also served on the board of Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Award Committee for the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education program. He was also very active in the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and was recognized as a national expert on such issues as agriculture's role in causing the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone. This latter issue was particularly important to Dan, given his passion for the Mississippi River and fishing. Dan was frequently quoted in the media and penned numerous commentaries over the years. His farm was featured prominently in the 2002 book, *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*.

Whether on his farm hosting field days, testifying before lawmakers, participating in organizing meetings or giving interviews to the media, Dan was known for his passion for the land and social justice, as well as his desire to create a food and farm system

that was based on sustainability and fairness. Dan was also well known for his quiet wisdom and in-depth, nuanced knowledge of not only farming, but ways it interacted with the ecosystem and the wider community.



Dan Specht

Tex Hawkins, who served on the LSP board with Dan, recalls riding with him to a board meeting and being impressed with how excited he got over things like seeing a pileated woodpecker on the wing. "I'm not a very religious person, but I do know that everything connects on some level, and I'm pretty sure

that in spirit, Dan will still be with us every step of the way," says Hawkins.

Theresa Podoll, who works with the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Breeding Club, says Dan's on-farm re-

"My wish for all my younger farmer friends is that you read this, and get some idea of the boots you must fill. Intimidating it is, but so necessary."

— farmer Jim VanDerPol

"Dan touched many lives, and nurtured a spot on earth to full sustainability."

— ag policy expert
Loni Kemp

search into making agriculture more resilient extended to growing open-pollinated corn to increase its nutritional value for livestock.

"Dan was a farmer-breeder who understood the farmer's role in stewarding the great circle of life under our care, including the seed," she says.

Dan Looker, the business editor for *Successful Farming* magazine, had interviewed Dan and appreciated his insights into what was wrong with conventional agriculture.

"He was an intelligent critic of modern agriculture's shortcomings and an inspiring example of true stewardship," says Looker.

Dan was known among conservationists for the extra care he took to provide wildlife habitat on his farm. He was particularly fond of birds, says Dan Arnosti, policy director for Audubon Minnesota.

"I was privileged to know Dan just two short years," he says. "In that time, he taught me and other Audubon folks a lot about farming for the birds. Dan's spread was bobolink central, with grassland birds thriving in the pastures where he raised his cattle. [He knew] that raising bobolinks, protecting our water and raising healthy, humane food are all one. Dan, our bobolink farmer, is gone, but never will be forgotten." □

See page 27 for the lyrics of a song written and performed by Kayla Koether in honor of Dan Specht.

Art Redig: 1918-2013

Art Redig, who was present almost from the very beginnings of the Land Stewardship Project, passed away in August at the age of 95.

Redig was born in rural Winona County in southeast Minnesota, and with the exception of the time he spend in the U.S. Army during World War II, farmed and lived in the area his entire life. He and his wife Lorraine assisted LSP co-founder Ron Kroese in getting the organization's office started in southeast Minnesota and were extremely active over the years in LSP's work.

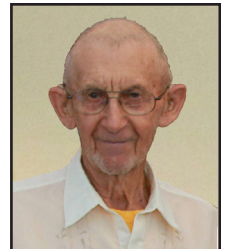
"I think Art and Lorraine attended just about every meeting we organized," recalls LSP organizer Doug Nopar.

They raised 11 of their own children and were foster parents to over 20 others. One

of their children, June Redig, was an LSP organizer until her untimely death in 1994.

Besides LSP, Redig was active with the Soil Conservation Project, Winona County American Dairy Association, Catholic Rural Life Committee and the Southeast Minnesota Rural Education and Resource Center,

among other groups. In 1986, Art and Lorraine were funded to go to the Philippines on a fact-finding tour to explore connections between the U.S. farm crisis and hunger in the Third World. □



Art Redig



LAND
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LSP News

LSP Celebrates Food & Farms this Summer

Land Stewardship Project members got together to celebrate food, farms and friends during a pair of celebrations this summer. On June 21 (*top photo*), DreamAcres Farm (www.dreamacresfarm.org) hosted a wood-fired pizza picnic supper and solstice barn dance near the southeast Minnesota community of Wykoff. DreamAcres is home to a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise, as well as Dreamery Rural Arts Initiative and Flourish Summer Camp. The farm also hosts weekly pizza nights and films and facilitates custom-planned workshops in appropriate and alternative technologies.

On July 25 (*bottom photo*), LSP members and friends gathered in the side yard of LSP's office in South Minneapolis for a potluck cookout. Evening activities included music by the Brass Messengers (www.brassmessenger.com), games for kids, a silent auction and a short program about LSP's current work. □



DreamAcres Farm, which is located near a branch of southeast Minnesota's Root River, hosted LSP's "Driftless Area" summer celebration. (*LSP photo*)

Get Current With

LIVE WIRE

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

Listen in on the Voices of the Land

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

We now have 140 episodes online and are adding more each month. To listen in, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast. □



The Brass Messengers played a concert in the yard of LSP's Twin Cities office during its summer celebration. (*LSP photo*)

Farmers: Time to Sign-up for LSP's 2014 CSA Directory

If you are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer operating in Minnesota or western Wisconsin, the Land Stewardship Project would like to invite you to be listed in the 2014 edition of LSP's *Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region CSA Farm Directory*.

The *Directory* will be published in February and is distributed to eaters throughout the region, as well as posted at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/findingjustfood/csa.

For information on getting listed, contact LSP's Brian DeVore by Jan. 13 at bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377. □

Wika Joins LSP Board

Sue Wika has joined the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors. Wika farms near Ashby, in northwest Minnesota, and is a sociologist and instructor at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls.

She earned her master's degree in tropical agricultural development from the University of Reading in England and her doctorate in sociology from South Dakota State University.

Wika joined the staff at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in 1994 and helped develop the Sustainable Food Production program, which is seen as a national model for a practical, one-year sustainable farming diploma program. She is certified in permaculture design and is completing coursework and research to become a certified educator in Holistic Management. □



Sue Wika

Bradley, Moore Join LSP Staff

Cree Bradley and **Robin Moore** have joined the Land Stewardship Project's staff.

Bradley has a bachelor's degree in anthropology and environmental studies from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and is a certified Holistic Management instructor. During the past several years Bradley has coordinated Farm Beginnings classes in the Lake Superior region in collaboration with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Bradley most recently worked as a disaster case

manager for farmers in north-east Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin who were impacted by the 2013 floods, and she currently is an agronomist with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's gypsy moth program. Bradley and her husband Jason own and operate Chelsea Morning Farm (www.chelseamorningfarm.weebly.com), a Community Supported Agriculture operation near Two Harbors in northeast Minnesota. The Bradleys also have a commercial fishing enterprise.

At LSP, she is facilitating the LSP Farm Beginnings course in the Lake Superior region (see page 14). Bradley can be contacted at creeb@landstewardshipproject.org



Cree Bradley



Robin Moore

SE Minnesota Steering Committee



The Land Stewardship Project has numerous committees of members that guide the organization's work in community organizing, public policy, local foods and beginning farmer training/land access. Members of the Winona County Organizing Committee have guided the organization's work in that part of southeast Minnesota for the past six years.

Backed by 200 LSP member-households in the county, the organizing committee has successfully fought for protections against factory farms, as well as bluffland protection, and has been fully engaged in efforts to challenge frac sand mining and processing (see page 10). They've devoted countless hours to meetings, phone banking and lobbying public officials. Steering committee members have also built alliances with immigrant farmworkers and have helped promote beginning farmers, local foods and the importance of a stewardship land ethic in the county.

Pictured with LSP organizers Doug Nopar and Johanna Rupprecht (front, left) are steering committee members Kaye Huelskamp (front, far right), Barb Nelson (back, left to right), Joe Morse, Darline Freeman and Phyllis Frisch. Not pictured are steering committee members Frank Kreidermacher and Arlene Nelson. (Photo by Parker Forsell)

landstewardshipproject.org or 218-834-0846.

Moore has a bachelor's degree in French literature from Macalester College and is a 2001 graduate of LSP's Farm Beginnings program. She has a cut flower business, and has worked as coordinator of the Milan Village Arts School, a vineyard manager and a farm laborer. She is a partner in Kalliroe Farm, in Montevideo, Minn. At LSP, Moore is coordinating the Chippewa 10% Project (www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/foodsystemslandstewardship/chippewa10). Moore can be contacted at rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105. □

Hyden Serving LSP Internship

Mika Hyden is serving an internship with the Land Stewardship Project. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree

at Macalester College in geography with a concentration in community and global health. Hyden recently attended the School for International Training in New Delhi, India, where she conducted an independent study project mapping sanitation. Hyden has also worked on a project mapping food accessibility in urban and rural Nepal, and has worked as a teacher's assistant and laboratory assistant.

While at LSP, she is doing work for the Chippewa 10% Project (www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/foodsystemslandstewardship/chippewa10). □



Mika Hyden

Policy & Organizing

Citizens Demand Thorough GEIS on Frac Sand

By Johanna Rupprecht

An upcoming environmental review of the biggest frac sand mining project ever proposed in southeast Minnesota must not only examine impacts on air, water and economics, but should also require full disclosure of the proposers' business ties and track record, concludes *The People's EIS Scoping Report*, which was released in September by the Land Stewardship Project. Such a review must also be conducted by independent experts with no ties to the proposers or the frac sand industry in general, says the report. This report was compiled by LSP from the comments of the 100 participants in the People's EIS Kickoff Meeting held in Rushford, Minn., in July.

"Southeast Minnesotans understand that the frac sand industry ultimately benefits oil and gas corporations, not our local communities," says Bonita Underbakke, an LSP member who lives in rural Fillmore County near Lanesboro. "We're concerned about the impacts on our existing economic drivers like agriculture and tourism."

11 Mines Proposed

The report addresses the necessary scope and depth of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) soon to be underway on the frac sand mining project proposed by Minnesota Sands, LLC. This proposal calls for the development of 11 mine sites in Fillmore, Houston and Winona counties. Under Minnesota law, an EIS must consider not only the environmental impacts of a project, but also its economic, employment and sociological effects. This level of review is mandatory for the Minnesota Sands project, since it includes the proposed mining of 615.31 total acres, well

over the threshold of 160 acres for which an EIS is required. The EIS must be completed before any unit of government makes a decision on whether to issue a permit for any part of the proposed project.

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) is the state agency responsible for carrying out the EIS on the Minnesota Sands project. The EQB is made up of the commissioners of nine state departments or agencies (from Administration to Transportation) along with five citizen members. The EQB has not yet released a draft scoping document detailing the particular impacts it proposes to study within the EIS.

The citizens' report released in September serves as the people's scoping document, describing the specific impacts of the proposed project which must, at minimum, be studied if the EIS is to serve the public interest. Its categories include impacts on air, water, land, transportation, economics and quality of life. In the *People's EIS Scoping Report*, southeast Minnesotans also call for Minnesota Sands to fully disclose information about its identity and track record, and for the EIS to be rigorously carried out by experts with no industry ties.

The report expresses local people's deep concerns about the impacts of the proposed frac sand mining project on their lives, homes and communities. Area citizens recognize that the damage to land, air and water

threatened by frac sand mining would also severely undermine existing local economies and the fabric of communities.

"I worry about my health, my family's welfare, the health of my animals, our food supply," says LSP member Vince Ready, who lives on a small farm in Winona County's Saratoga Township, a few miles away from the proposed mine sites.

On Sept. 18, LSP members from southeast Minnesota presented copies of the *People's EIS Scoping Report* to the members and staff of the EQB at its monthly meeting in St. Paul. Copies were also given to Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton as well as other state and local officials. □

Johanna Rupprecht, an LSP organizer based in southeast Minnesota, authored the People's EIS Scoping Report. It is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/repository/11959/the_people_s_eis_scoping.pdf. A limited number of paper copies are available by contacting Rupprecht at 507-523-3366 or jrupprecht@landstewardshipproject.org.

Frac Sand Mining Update

During his first full week on the job in October, Will Seuffert, the new director of the Environmental Quality Board (EQB), spent a day touring communities in southeast Minnesota affected by frac sand mining and processing and talking to Land Stewardship Project members and others. He heard firsthand about the local organizing going on at the township and county level and visited the homes of those impacted by existing and proposed frac sand mines. Seuffert committed to working with LSP as the EQB's frac sand mining work goes forward.

The EQB was charged by the Minnesota Legislature with creating "model standards and criteria for mining, processing and transporting silica sand." At the EQB's Sept. 18 meeting, the Board reviewed a draft prepared by staff that was shockingly weak. For example, for frac sand operations the setback was only 500 feet from dwellings and 100 feet from property lines.

The meeting was packed with citizens from southeast Minnesota and 20 testers made an effective case for why this draft needed to be scrapped and a process created to include citizen input. The Board agreed, dropped the draft and directed staff to hold citizen input meetings, which were conducted Oct. 29 in the communities of Saint Charles and Wabasha.



Land Stewardship Project members and others gathered in Rushford, Minn., to discuss what should go into an upcoming frac sand mining Environmental Impact Statement. (Photo by Johanna Rupprecht)

LSP Holds Meetings on ‘People-Centered’ Healthcare

By Megan Buckingham & Paul Sobocinski

For the past few years, the Land Stewardship Project has been working with allies to make sure Minnesota puts people before insurance company profits when it comes to implementing healthcare reform in our state. That’s because access to affordable care for everyone—including farmers, rural and urban people—is critical to stewardship of the land and thriving rural communities.

In October, Minnesota rolled out the new healthcare exchange called “MNsure.” During the fall, LSP held a series of meetings around the state to talk about the options and opportunities available to individuals, families and small businesses for getting better, more affordable health insurance. Here in Minnesota we helped create one of the most people-centered exchanges in the country. Now it is up to all of us to make the best use of our new public programs so we can keep building towards healthcare that’s controlled

by and for people.

For information on upcoming LSP healthcare meetings or details on the organization’s work related to this issue, contact Megan Buckingham at 507-523-3366, meganb@landstewardshipproject.org, or Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323, sobopaul@redred.com. □

Megan Buckingham and Paul Sobocinski are Land Stewardship Project organizers working on the Affordable Healthcare for All Campaign. More details are at www.landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP Participates in ‘Day of Dignity & Respect’ & Calls for Immigration Reform

By Doug Nopar

Land Stewardship Project members and staff joined allies from across Minnesota on Oct. 5 for the National Day of Dignity and Respect march and rally.

During the day thousands of people called on Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. In Minnesota, LSP joined with members of the state’s faith, business, labor, law enforcement and immigrant communities in calling for comprehensive immigration reform. After gathering at the Basilica of Saint Mary in downtown Minneapolis, participants marched to the Hennepin County Government Center for a rally.

Legislation that shows promise for reforming immigration laws has been proposed in Congress, but is currently stalled.

LSP sees immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship as being central to building a healthy farm and food system in our nation. We can’t have a truly sustainable agriculture without providing fair and just opportunities for all.

The legalization of undocumented farmworkers will play a key role in ending the

wage theft and violations of worker rights that have occurred on industrial farming operations in Minnesota.

Many immigrants come from farming backgrounds and some are interested in farming in the U.S. LSP believes immigration reform can provide the security needed for immigrant farmers to invest the time, energy and finances needed to successfully launch agricultural enterprises.

For more information on LSP’s work on this issue, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/racialjustice or contact me at 507-523-3366, dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Doug Nopar is a Land Stewardship Project organizer based in Lewiston in southeast Minnesota.



LSP Analysis: Minnesota a Top User of CSP

By Adam Warthesen

Minnesota farmers have consistently been the biggest users of one of America's most significant farm conservation programs, according to a new analysis released in August by the Land Stewardship Project. The analysis concludes that since 2009 the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) has helped farmers produce real environmental benefits on working farms, but those benefits are in danger of being lost because of proposed Congressional cuts to conservation.

"This report further shows what we've known for awhile—Minnesota farmers are using CSP to do more conservation on the land," says Don Baloun, Minnesota State Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS administers the Conservation Stewardship Program through USDA service centers spread across the state.

"Conservation on working land is an area we really need to focus on in agriculture, and the strong demand we are seeing for CSP is good for the land and our rural communities and verifies that Minnesota farmers recognize there is room for NRCS conservation programs on their farms," adds Baloun.

CSP was created by drafters of the 2008 Farm Bill and has been available to farmers

since 2009. It represents a major departure from traditional federal farm programs, which pay farmers to raise a handful of commodity crops while penalizing diverse farming systems that are good for the environment. CSP rewards farmers for current conservation practices on working farmland, as well as additional stewardship measures they agree to adopt.

Since 2009, CSP has become the nation's largest farm conservation program, with

CSP Analysis

A copy of *The Conservation Program in Minnesota: A Land Stewardship Project Analysis* is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/federalpolicy/conservation-stewardshipprogram.

over 50 million acres enrolled in contracts. That's equivalent to the size of the entire state of Nebraska.

LSP's examination of CSP contract data shows that Minnesota farmers have been the biggest users of the program both in terms of number of active contracts—3,200—and dollars obligated to farmers who hold those contracts—\$282 million. In terms of number of active CSP contracts, the next closest state is Missouri, with 3,084.

Interviews with Minnesota farmers show

Top 10 states in Amount of CSP Funding Obligated: 2009-2012 (in million \$)

Minnesota	\$282.80
North Dakota	\$240.50
Nebraska	\$210.40
Kansas	\$206.20
Arkansas	\$188.70
Iowa	\$187.40
Oklahoma	\$179.90
South Dakota	\$179.20
Montana	\$144.60
Georgia	\$135.50

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

that they are using their CSP contracts to protect water, soil and wildlife habitat. They employ everything from diverse crop rotations and rotational grazing to wildlife-friendly implements and more targeted use of chemicals.

However, the LSP analysis found that use of CSP varies widely from county-to-county. The state's top CSP county, Morrison (*see page 13*), has over 200 active CSP contracts, while other agricultural counties have none.

LSP's analysis makes several recommendations for maintaining and strengthening CSP, including making sure that a new Farm Bill allocates enough resources to enroll 12.8 million acres of CSP contracts for the five-year life of the law, encouraging NRCS and other federal and local government agencies to work together to maximize CSP use in every county, and clarifying the sign-up and scoring system that determines who gets contracts. The development of the next five-year Farm Bill is currently stalled in Congress.

CSP has emerged as a critical program for putting real conservation and real dollars on Minnesota's working farms. The drafters of a new Farm Bill have a prime opportunity to not only maintain this exciting program, but make it stronger and more effective than ever. □

Adam Warthesen is a Land Stewardship Project organizer who works on federal farm policy. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.

Top 10 states in # of CSP Contracts

	2009-2010	2011	2012	Total
Minnesota	1,543	764	893	3,200
Missouri	1,939	711	434	3,084
Iowa	1,480	713	552	2,745
Nebraska	1,106	569	463	2,138
Oklahoma	918	590	583	2,091
Wisconsin	968	587	476	2,031
Kansas	872	458	451	1,781
Arkansas	620	453	572	1,645
Texas	989	206	435	1,630
North Dakota	627	336	519	1,482

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Minnesota's Top CSP County

Walking into the USDA Service Center in Little Falls, Minn., one gets a sense of why Morrison County has far and away more Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts than any other county in the state, according to the Land Stewardship Project's recent analysis of the program (*see page 12*). "CSP Sign-Up" reads a yellow placard taped to the main service counter. And USDA staff strive to follow-up that welcome sign with service that will help farmers figure out if CSP is right for them, and if so, how to simplify the sign-up process.

"I've been blessed with an office that is very farmer-friendly," says Joshua Hanson, District Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Morrison County. "Here when they have a gully erosion problem they come into the office and see what they can do. They aren't afraid to come to us to fix the problem."

Through a combination of aggressive public outreach (they have a good relationship with local radio stations and newspapers), teamwork involving other USDA staff as well as private crop consultants, and a willingness to adopt the program to each farmer's situation, Hanson and his staff have developed 205 CSP contracts since 2010. That's 55 more contracts than the next closest county, and double or even triple the majority of counties in the state.

Part of the reason CSP enrollment has taken off in the county is that all of the USDA staff in the service center, not just NRCS personnel, keep an eye out for farmers who might be a good fit for the program.



Joshua Hanson and Terry Zapzalka in the NRCS office in Minnesota's Morrison County. "Here when [farmers] have a gully erosion problem they come into the office and see what they can do. They aren't afraid to come to us to fix the problem," says Hanson. (*LSP photo*)

Hanson and Terry Zapzalka, the NRCS soil conservationist for the county, make sure other staff in the USDA Service Center are up on the basics of CSP, so that even when NRCS staffers aren't around, the farmer doesn't go away empty handed.

"There's a lot of back and forth between the Farm Service Agency office and here," says Darrell Larsen, executive director of the Morrison County Farm Service Agency, which is located across the hall from the NRCS offices. Larsen, who used to farm himself, says it's important to explain the difference between the various federal programs to producers.

"I have a great appreciation for what a farmer goes through," he says. "Walking through that front door, it can be hard to differentiate between the various agencies in the building."

Zapzalka says sign-up for CSP tends to build on itself—the more farmers who get contracts, the more their neighbors show interest.

"I think farmers talk amongst each other, and if one of them says, 'Hey, I'm getting a certain payment for doing conservation on the farm—it's something you should look into,' they will listen," says Zapzalka.

The per-acre annual CSP payment rates in the county are attractive—averaging \$30 to \$40 for cropland and \$15 to \$20 for pasture. And since so many of the farms in the county have livestock (Morrison is a top milk producer in the state), farmers often rate highly already because of the presence of hay ground in the rotation.

Hanson and Zapzalka say since these CSP contracts were put in place, they are noticing more soil-saving residue on the ground and better nutrient management. Soil organic matter also seems to be increasing, which increases the soil's ability to retain moisture and make use of precipitation rather than sending it running off full of contaminants.

Working Relationship

Dave Lanners farms 800 acres in Morrison County, including corn, soy-

beans, sunflowers and hogs.

"Whenever I buy a piece of land, I like to do things to keep soil in place," he says. "That's my number one priority: to keep the soil where it's at. I hate to see wash-outs. We haven't moldboard plowed in 20 years."

Lanners enrolled in CSP four years ago and is being paid for several existing practices, including conservation tillage, spraying chemicals with air injection nozzles and planting deep-rooted crops like sunflowers as well as some alfalfa. His enhancements include leaving more residue on the ground and planting deep-rooted crops like tillage radishes.

His per-acre payment on the five-year contract is \$30 to \$31. "I think it's fair," he says. "Maybe there's some more things I could have done, but I just wanted to get a feel for it."

Lanners says he didn't know a lot about CSP at first, but working with Hanson and Zapzalka made the half-day of paper work he needed to do go a lot smoother.

"That's really important to a farmer to have someone to with work with in the NRCS office," says Lanners. "After that, I stay pretty close in touch with Josh, so he knows I'm doing what I said I'd do." □

Give it a Listen

Joshua Hanson and Terry Zapzalka talk about implementing the Conservation Stewardship Program on episode 139 of LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

Top Minnesota CSP Counties in Terms of No. of Contracts

Morrison	205
Otter Tail	150
Murray	148
Yellow Medicine	132
Stearns	111
Lyon	104
Roseau	104
Grant	91
Goodhue	84
Pennington	83

Source: Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service

Farm Beginnings

Dealing with Demand in the North Woods

Lake Superior FB Grads Learn to Balance Growth & Quality of Life

Five years into her farming career, Janna Goerdts has learned a lot about how to use sweat equity to coax the most production out of the soils of Fat Chicken Farm near Embarrass, Minn. But the 40-year-old former journalist has



Farm Beginnings graduate Janna Goerdts has reclaimed a run-down former dairy farm and made it into a vegetable operation. (LSP photo)

also gotten savvy about how to set some sustainable limits on both her farm and herself.

"The thing I've realized is your enthusiasm can only take you so far," says Goerdts one recent morning while taking a break from harvesting vegetables on the former dairy operation. "You have to be realistic about what you can do and what you can keep up doing."

For Goerdts and other area graduates of the Farm Beginnings course, such smart planning is second nature. That's because a key component of Farm Beginnings is to teach students how to not only develop a business plan and market their products, but how to balance growth of a new operation with the financial, physical and technical resources available to the farmer, according to Cree Bradley, coordinator of the course in the Lake Superior region.

In 2013, the Farm Beginnings program is marking its 16th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is tailor-made 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.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area and Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, crops and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

A partnership between the Land Stewardship Project and the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association is making the Farm Beginnings course available in the northeastern Minnesota community of Esko, beginning in November. This is the fifth year the class has been offered in the Lake Superior area, and Bradley says the strategic planning portion of the course is particularly important in a region where new farmers often find a huge demand for the local produce, meat and



Todd and Kelsey Rothe, shown with their son Hans, say they could cultivate more acres, given the demand, but Farm Beginnings taught them to set sustainable long-term goals and stick to them. "We want to grow smart, instead of exploding," says Kelsey. (LSP photo)

other products they raise.

"A big issue for beginning farmers is the idea of dealing with demand," says Bradley, who operates Chelsea Morning Farm CSA near Two Harbors (see page 9). "We talk in Farm Beginnings about building slow. We talk about a strategic business plan."

Smart Growth

Farm Beginnings graduates Todd and Kelsey Rothe agree that strategic planning is critical. They raise vegetables on River Road Farm near Marengo, Wis., for the wholesale market as well as a CSA collective. Todd, 38, recently re-entered farming after taking six years off. He says when he was farming before, he knew how to produce a lot of vegetables, but didn't "handle

Lake Superior Farm Beginnings

For more information on the Lake Superior Farm Beginnings course, see www.farmbeginnings.org or contact Cree Bradley at 218-834-0846, creeb@landstewardshipproject.org.

the numbers" so well and became burned out by the workload. This is the second year the Rothes have raised produce in their current location; they are cultivating around one-and-a-half acres of vegetables on the 30-acre farm, with plans to grow.

"It's like a lion on a leash," says Todd. "We could definitely plant every available acre and it would still be sold. But we have to keep that holistic goal in mind of balancing growth with quality of life and developing a sustainable business."

Kelsey, 29, says Farm Beginnings didn't so much teach them how to farm as how to manage their enterprise in a way that they could figure out if day-to-day decisions were fitting their overall goals of making a comfortable living while being an asset to the community.

"We want to grow smart, instead of exploding," she says after showing off the couple's collection of hoop houses and moveable greenhouses recently. "You need to have a plan and get it on paper."

Another Farm Beginnings graduate from the Duluth, Minn., area credits the course's reliance on established farmers as instructors as the key to providing the kind of grounding needed to develop realistic expectations of a new business. Lori Anderson, 46, raises vegetables for local markets on "Growing Farms," an incubator for new producers up the road from the University of Minnesota-

Lake Superior, see page 15...

Duluth's Research and Field Studies Center. She grew up on a farm near Kelsey, Minn., and would like to eventually reclaim that now overgrown land for food production. For the past several years, Anderson has been involved in her family's polar fleece accessory business.

"Since I'm in business, I know that end of it, but when it comes to weather and plants, nothing ever goes by the book — you need to talk to someone who has the experience," says Anderson while taking a break at Growing Farms with two other Farm Beginnings graduates, Michael Latsch and Jason Aronson. "The farmers are so willing to share information in Farm Beginnings." □

Farm Beginnings graduates (left to right) Michael Latsch, Lori Anderson and Jason Aronson are getting real-world vegetable production experience on "Growing Farms," an incubator for new producers near Duluth, Minn. Anderson says she knows how to run a business, "but when it comes to weather and plants, nothing ever goes by the book — you need to talk to someone who has the experience." (LSP photo)



Seeking Farmers Clearinghouse

Are you an established farmer/landowner in the Upper Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling him at 507-523-3366. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse. To see recent listings related to people looking for farmland and landowners who have farmland available for rent or to sell, see pages 18-19.

◆ Susan Gilman is seeking a farmer to join her operation in **southwest Wisconsin's Richland County**, near Cazenovia. The 22+ acre operation has Community Supported Agriculture and bakery enterprises. There are also dairy cows, beef cattle, poultry, pigs, sheep and goats on the land, which has not been sprayed for over 40 years. Housing is available. Contact: Susan Gilman, 608-727-2907; or Lyndell, 608-985-7961.

◆ Grass Run Farms seeks a farm operations manager for the coordination and execution of its grass-fed beef finishing and custom grazing operations, to be based in/near the **northeast Iowa community of Dorchester**. This position is an opportunity to manage and build many enterprises within a grass-fed beef production company. Grass Run is looking for someone with foundational expertise in cattle production and a desire to be accountable for the growth of a business. Contact: www.grassrunfarms.com/jobs.

◆ Lucy Novak is seeking a long-term tenant to co-manage a 10-acre farming enterprise near **Cresco, in northeast Iowa**. She is looking for a farmer to work with an absentee landowner on installing and maintaining a vineyard. Experienced farmers are preferred. The landowners are willing to assist with some of the labor and will consider a crop-share agreement. At

this time, the grapes would be grown for the wholesale market. No housing is available. Contact: Lucy Novak, 210-324-7734, l_novak@hotmail.com.

◆ Kolb Homestead is seeking an experienced farmer/farm family/couple to live on and run a 58-acre farm near **Princeton, in southern Indiana**. Kolb Homestead is a start-up sustainable farm. The farmer position includes a small base salary and housing. Crop share contract to be negotiated. More information is at www.kolbhomestead.com. Contact: David Orr, 713-256-4895, farming@kolbhomestead.com.

◆ Heidi Morlock and her family are looking for someone to stay on their diversified, 67-acre farm (certified organic pasture, wetlands, young hardwoods) during the summer of 2014. The farm is located in Belle Plaine Township, **Scott County, 40 miles southwest of Minneapolis**. This would minimally involve rotationally grazing animals (cattle, sheep, chickens) and harvesting garlic, and the situation could involve access to land to market produce (or bees or broilers, etc.). This farm experience could be for July only (they will be out of the country) or for the entire growing season as they have extra garden space and a guest room (new house built in 2010). Pay is negotiable. Contact: Heidi Morlock, sevenstoryfarm@gmail.com, 952-492-5314.

◆ Daniel Halsey is seeking a farmer to work with him on his organic permaculture farm near Prior Lake, in Minnesota's **Twin Cities region**. The operation has 10 acres that will be put into silvopasturing goats. All facilities are up and Halsey needs someone to manage the animals, small orchard and gardens on a seasonal, part-time basis. Housing is available and pay is negotiable with a housing allowance. Contact: Dan Halsey, dhalsey@integra.net, 612-720-5001.

◆ Tricia Stapleton is seeking a farmer to share, rent and/or lease 7 acres of farmland in **Costa Rica**. The land is in the highlands and includes vegetable plots, perennial gardens are up and fenced pastures. It is located within a one-and-a-half hour drive of a major city. Housing is available. Contact: Tricia Stapleton, southcrhomestead@gmail.com.

◆ Milo and Karen Buchholz are seeking a farmer to take over their certified organic grain operation in southeast **North Dakota's Barnes County**, near Fingal. The farm, which used to be a dairy operation, consists of 294 tillable acres and has not been sprayed in 25 years. They are interested in offering a no-interest contract for deed to help ensure the land stays certified organic. Contact: Milo and Karen Buchholz, 701-924-8693.

Farm Beginnings

Amy Haben & Tom Moore

Making a Farm a Working Asset

Amy Haben and Tom Moore ride a golf cart over a rickety wooden bridge spanning Otter Creek and follow a path to a lush pasture where a couple dozen head of Scottish Highland cattle graze, their shaggy coats luminescent in the late afternoon sun of a June day.

"Before they grazed the edge of the woods, it looked like what's next to the house," Haben says, glancing back at a thick mix of buckthorn and other invasive species of brush.

These cattle represent more than a way to clean up some messy back corners on this former dairy farm near the small community of Silver Lake in west-central Minnesota. They are keys to one family's transition from mere owners of 100 acres to active operators of an enterprise they hope will not only keep them on the land, but help them connect others to its pastures and woods.

"We were so focused on finding a way to buy the farm and keep it in the family that we didn't really think about it as a business," says Haben, 45, of their mind-set when she and Moore, who is her brother, purchased the land in 1995. "But then we realized there's a lot of responsibility and to really make this work long-term we had to be thoughtful and deliberate about the choices we were making as they related to the farm. We started in on this process of determining what does it mean to farm and what does it mean to steward this?"

As part of that process, they enrolled in the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course, and during the winter of 2010-2011, traveled twice a month to Saint Joseph, Minn., to participate in sessions on business planning, goal-setting and marketing. The Farm Beginnings course, which LSP has been offering since 1997, has become a national model for providing potential farmers with training. Farm Beginnings is also known for its use of established farmers and other agricultural professionals as class instructors. While the

classes were led by farming veterans, Haben and Moore said they felt comfortable asking questions about the basics of turning a hobby into a full-grown business.

"It's always nice to know that somebody is in the same boat and you're able to learn from them and hopefully they're able to learn from us," says Moore, 43.

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



Putting the Farm to Work

What the brother-sister team learned was that there was a way to combine their passion for land that has been in their family since 1876 with economic viability. Timber, a stream, pastures and wildlife habitat make up the scenic parcel, which they named Butternut Woods Farm after butternut trees that have long stood on the property. After Moore and Haben, along with Haben's husband John, purchased the farm from

their grandmother, they realized they wanted to take a more active role in managing the farm (no one had lived on the former dairy farm for almost 20 years).

One avenue for making it a working farm was the Scottish Highland cattle, which had started out as a hobby—two brood cows and calves—and a way to clear brush on a few acres that weren't

accessible with field equipment. With their shaggy coats, thick hides and efficient way of grazing grass and browsing woody vegetation, these cattle are known for their ability to do well in Minnesota's harsh climate while producing a lean meat sought after by consumers.

Through the Farm Beginnings class, Haben and Moore were exposed to farmers

who talked about how grass-based livestock production could be a way to derive income off of a farm, given the growing demand for meat that's healthy and comes from animals that are being treated well. Haben and Moore also sat in on business planning sessions where they learned how to create long-range strategies for building an economically viable operation.

"It really got us thinking about the numbers behind it," Moore says, adding that he's gotten to the point where he now sees the cattle as just as much a part of the farm as the birds and other wildlife.

Expanding the Network

Networking with other beginning and established farmers through Farm Beginnings was key, say Haben and Moore. And the value of getting input from others has stuck with them after graduation: in 2012 they expanded their network to include other farmers through their participation in the Journeyperson Course. Journeyperson was developed by LSP to fill the continuing educational gap between farm start-up and farm establishment. The course provides hands-on mentoring, technical assistance and training for beginning farmers with one to six years of farming experience who want to further develop their skills (*see sidebar, page 17*).

Haben and Moore are now working with an established grazer, Richard Handeen of Moonstone Farm in Montevideo, Minn., as well as two other recent Farm Beginnings graduates. They visit each other's farms and share information and insights. They are also using the Journeyperson matched savings program to set aside money for the farm's growth.

"We liked the idea of Journeyperson because it was going to be a bunch of people who were actively farming and fairly new at it," says Moore. "And even though they're not your neighbors, they're your farm neighbors. Some of them may be 50 to 100 miles from us, but they're working through the same start-up challenges we are and are a phone call or e-mail away, which is great."

Plans for Growing

Having such a network is going to become more important than ever as Haben and Moore look to grow Butternut Woods Farm's beef production in upcoming years.

"Now that we have some real life experience under our belt, what is the best way for us to grow?" Haben asks. Any future plans need to reflect that neither Moore nor Haben are full-time farmers.

Moore works in sales for a fireplace busi-

"Even though they're not your neighbors, they're your farm neighbors. Some of them may be 50 to 100 miles from us, but they're working through the same start-up challenges we are and are a phone call or e-mail away, which is great."

— Tom Moore on their Journeyperson networking group

ness in the area. Haben, a former business consultant in the healthcare industry, lives with her family in the Twin Cities. They now have 23 brood cows and recently started some low-key direct marketing of beef to family and friends. This year they will sell four cattle; their short-term goal is to expand their production capability each year. Haben says they envision a day not too far off when their enterprise will be direct-marketing 15 head a year.



Amy Haben and Tom Moore with their Scottish Highland beef cattle. “I think in many ways Farm Beginnings was the place where we first articulated that vision, which is we think what we have here is special and there’s an opportunity to share that and build our family and community around this,” says Haben. (LSP photo)

Producing that many animals for sale presents its own challenges, but marketing all of them is a whole new ballgame.

“At the scale we’re at, our customers have found us,” says Haben. “As we produce more beef, we need to make sure we have the market for it by growing our customer base.”

They are also working with a Farm Business Management Instructor at Ridgewater College. Haben and Moore meet with the instructor about once a month to improve the data they have available about their farming

Give it a Listen

Amy Haben and Tom Moore talk about making their family land into a working farm on episode 138 of LSP’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast.

enterprise so they can make better informed financial, production and marketing choices as they move ahead.

As they check out their pastures on a recent summer evening, the brother and sister are happy with what they see. The shaggy beasts seem to be thriving on pastures that were once a combination of cropland and wooded acres overgrown with weeds and brush. After a lot of planning, seeding and grazing, they are seeing the quality of the pastures improve each year.

“Everything seemed to be a battle for awhile,” says Moore. “You’re battling to get grass to grow, battling brush, battling mud.”

A Shared Vision

One other “battle” can also be figuring out family dynamics, especially one with an extra wrinkle: Moore lives on the farm fulltime with his wife Lori, and Haben and her family, along with their mother, Sue, are only on it during weekends. So communication and planning are key.

Through Farm Beginnings and Journeyperson, Haben and Moore learned the importance of creating a common vision for the operation. As a result, they undertook a family discussion about the future of Butternut Woods involving their mother and Haben’s two children, Jack, 15, and Will 12. Working together on an overall vision has helped them avoid the major misunderstandings that can trip up extended family-based systems.

“If you have a big picture view you share, it helps you get over those day-to-day irrita-

LSP’s Journeyperson Course

This winter marks the second time the Land Stewardship Project has offered the Journeyperson Farm Training Course. Journeyperson provides new farmers who are in their first few years of launching their operations assistance through mentorship, financial planning assistance, whole Farm planning and peer-to-peer learning. The focus of this initiative is to pair up newer farmers with veteran mentor farmers.

Participants work with both a farmer mentor and a financial adviser on their individual farm planning. Each farm in the course is also a part of a new matched savings account program, where on a monthly basis participants will deposit up to \$100 in a savings account. After two years their money will be matched and they will be able to use it toward a capital improvement on the farm.

LSP will begin taking applications next spring for the 2015 Journeyperson Course. If you are interested in applying, contact Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, 507-523-3366, or Richard Ness at rness@landstewardshipproject.org, 320-269-2105. More information is also available at www.farmbeginnings.org.

tions,” says Moore.

That big picture includes not only a farm that earns its own way, but does it in a way that ensures the operation is environmentally sustainable for the next generation.

“I think in many ways Farm Beginnings was the place where we first articulated that vision, which is we think what we have here is special and there’s an opportunity to share that and build our family and community around this,” says Haben. “

There are signs that others are starting to appreciate what Butternut Woods Farm has to offer beyond just good beef. Haben recalls how one of their customers visited the farm and later when asked how she liked the beef she had bought, actually hesitated a bit before answering.

“She said, ‘I honestly didn’t realize it was going to taste *that* good, but what I cannot separate is, is it that good or is it that good because being on your farm makes me appreciate and think about the source of my food differently?’ ” □

Farm Beginnings Profiles

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

LSP Farmland Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Upper Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the Upper Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to sell or rent to? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Farmland Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling him at 507-523-3366. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/lspfarmernetwork/seekingfarmersseekinglandclearinghouse. For listings of established farmers seeking beginning farmers for employee/partnership situations, see page 15.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Joe Pisciotto is seeking to rent 3-plus acres of tillable farmland in **northern Illinois or southern Wisconsin**. Contact: Joe Pisciotto, threeplaid@gmail.com.

◆ Victoria Yang is seeking to buy 10 acres of tillable farmland in the **Twin Cities region**. Contact: Victoria Yang, yangvic12@gmail.com.

◆ Meghan Forrest is seeking to buy 2-5 acres of farmland in the **Twin Cities or Duluth area**. She wants a place where honeybees would be permitted. Contact: Meghan Forrest, 503-421-8841.

◆ Jeff Fischer is seeking to rent 40-240-plus acres of tillable farmland in **southern Minnesota's Watonwan, Brown or Cottonwood County**. Contact: Jeff Fischer, 507-380-6412, johndeere4640@hotmail.com.

◆ Clark Patrick is seeking to buy 80-plus acres of farmland in **northwest Wisconsin's Bayfield County**. He would prefer pasture and land that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Clark Patrick, 763-439-8922.

◆ Jay Meerman is seeking to purchase 200-plus acres of farmland in the **U.S.** He is looking for pasture to start a beef operation (looking to rent first). Contact: Jay Meerman, 616-617-8990, jaymeerman@gmail.com.

◆ Nick Schmitz is seeking to rent 40-200 acres of tillable farmland in **northeast Iowa's Black Hawk or Buchanan County**. Contact: Nick Schmitz, 319-939-1068.

◆ Trent Eriksen is seeking to rent 1,000 acres of farmland in **eastern Nebraska's Howard, Hall or Sherman County**. Pastured land is preferred. Contact: 402-613-3181, teriksenjd@gmail.com.

◆ Evan Kotzin is seeking to rent 20 acres of farmland near the **eastern Michigan community of Port Huron**. Contact: Evan Kotzin, 716-628-0909.

◆ Michelle and Ryan Mahosky are seeking to rent 10 or more acres of farmland somewhere in the **U.S.** for a community farm/educational center. Pasture, barns, water for irrigation and a house are preferred. Contact: Ryan Mahosky, 970-819-5533, echovalley-familyfarms@yahoo.com.

◆ Angela Dean is seeking to rent tillable farmland in **Iowa, Illinois or Wisconsin**. She would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and for the property to have a house. Contact: Angela Dean, angeladean05@hotmail.com.

◆ Jackie Cosner is seeking to purchase 5-plus acres of farmland in **Michigan**. She would prefer pasture, a pole barn, work-shed and house. Contact: Jackie Cosner, 517-488-7144, zumo.llc@gmail.com.

◆ Kristina Hymes is seeking to rent 10 acres of farmland in southeast **Iowa's Lee County**. She would prefer pasture, a barn and a house, as well as fencing. Contact: Kristina Hymes, 319-473-0252.

◆ Kalen Manthei is seeking to rent tillable farmland in southwest **North Dakota's Adams County**. No house is required. Contact: Kalen Manthei, 507-430-3275.

◆ James Klosterbuer is seeking to buy 40-160 acres of farmland in **southwest Minnesota—Rock, Pipestone or Nobles County**. No house is required. Contact: James Klosterbuer, 605-759-0351, jtklosterbuer@yahoo.com.

◆ Justin Boike is seeking to rent 40-plus acres of tillable land in **southwest Minnesota's Kandiyohi, Swift or Chippewa County**. Contact: Justin Boike, 320-894-2095.

◆ Jay Drechsel is seeking to buy 40-80 acres of farmland in northwest **Minnesota's Ottertail County**. Contact: Jay Drechsel, jd-minsco@yahoo.com.

◆ Beginning farmer Connor Hotovy is seeking to rent tillable farmland in **southeast Nebraska**. Contact: Connor Hotovy, 402-926-8543, hotovyc01@midlandu.edu.

◆ Jenny Zimmerman is seeking to buy 10-plus acres in **northeast Minnesota**. Zimmerman would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Jenny Zimmerman, 320-288-8829.

◆ Tay Vang is seeking to rent 2-4 acres of tillable farmland in **Minnesota's Twin Cities region**. Vang would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Tay Vang, 651-206-2966—texting is okay.

◆ Dave Dossett is seeking to rent 40 acres of farmland in **Illinois or Missouri**. He would prefer pastureland that has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Dave Dossett, woodland11@netzero.net.

◆ Jo Roy is seeking to rent 5-20 acres of farmland in **Illinois, Indiana or southern Ohio**. Contact: Jo Roy, borderwindsfarm@aol.com, 585-369-7073.

◆ Ruth Elliott is seeking to buy 10-plus acres of farmland in **northern Michigan, near Traverse City**. Contact: Ruth Elliott, 231-499-9369, ruth@highergroundstrading.com.

◆ Craig Leininger is seeking to buy 3 to 5 acres of tillable farmland in **northern Illinois**, near the community of Huntley. Contact: Craig Leininger, starfieldmedia@gmail.com, 847-431-514.

◆ Dayna Burtness of Laughing Loon Farm is seeking to rent 6-plus acres of tillable farmland in **southeast Minnesota's Dakota or Rice counties**. Contact: Dayna Burtness, dayna@laughingloonfarm.com, 612-812-1923 (texts and calls okay).

◆ Lucas Tetrick is seeking to rent farmland in **southwest Minnesota's Yellow Medicine, Lincoln, Lyon, Kandiyohi, Nobles or Murray County**. Contact: Lucas Tetrick, 507-351-6134, lucastetrick@gmail.com.

Clearinghouse, see page 19...

◆ Jeremy McAdams is seeking to rent 1 acre of farmland within a **20-minute drive of central Minneapolis, Minn.** No house is required; he prefers land that is agriculturally or industrially zoned. McAdams would like to rent it for at least two years. Contact: Jeremy McAdams, 612-205-8599, cherry-treehousemushrooms@gmail.com.

◆ Rodney Mayes is seeking to buy farmland with fenced pasture in the **U.S.** Contact: Rodney Mayes, 304-812-3619, rdm7278@hotmail.com.

◆ Allan and Erika Van Ryzin are seeking to buy 7-50 acres of farmland in **central Wisconsin.** Contact: Allan or Erika Van Ryzin, 920-993-8692, vanamish@gmail.com, 217 N. Locust St., Appleton, WI 54014.

◆ Scott Geshrick is seeking to buy 5-10 acres of land in **eastern Wisconsin.** Contact: Scott Geshrick, 414-550-9418, srgeshrick@yahoo.com.

◆ Adam and Megan Greeson are seeking to buy 40 acres in **western Wisconsin's Saint Croix, Dunn, Pierce or Polk County.** Contact: Adam or Megan Greeson, 507-923-6251, sweettopfarm@gmail.com.

◆ Beginning farmer Connor Hotovy is seeking to rent tillable farmland in **southeast Nebraska.** Contact: Connor Hotovy, 402-926-8543, hotovyc01@midlandu.edu.

◆ Michael Csiti and Lucinda Vannuys want to purchase 10-plus acres of farmland in **western Minnesota's Stevens or Traverse County.** Contact: Michael Csiti or Lucinda Vannuys, 269-841-0624, mcsiti1976@gmail.com; vannuyslucinda@gmail.com.

◆ Brant Smothers seeks to rent 400 acres of farmland in the **U.S.** Contact: Brant Smothers, 641-891-8238, smo3_0@msn.com.

◆ Travis Stewart is seeking to rent 80-plus acres of farmland in **southeast South Dakota or southwest/south-central Minnesota.** Contact: Travis Stewart, 507-382-3684, t_stewart2004@hotmail.com.

◆ Matthew Connell is seeking to rent tillable farmland in **southeast Nebraska's Lancaster, Saline or Seward County.** Contact: Matthew Connell, 706-580-0574.

◆ Josh Wilson is seeking to buy farmland in **northwest Indiana,** near Monticello. Con-

tact: Josh Wilson, 812-236-4139.

◆ Mike Hang is seeking to rent certified organic farmland in **Minnesota.** Contact Mike Hang, mhang84@gmail.com.

Farmland Available

◆ Mairi Doerr has for rent a 20-acre pasture farm in **southeast Minnesota's Goodhue County.** The land has not been sprayed for several years and 5 acres of New Zealand style 7-wire electric fence with interior 3-wire G-spring electric and Premier "electronet" creates a 30 paddock rotation with water lines. There are outbuildings and a house. Rent is negotiable. Contact: Mairi Doerr, 507-250-2144.

◆ Mary Ellen Frame has for sale 30 to 45 acres of farmland in the **Northfield area, near Minnesota's Twin Cities.** There is pasture; no outbuildings or house are available. It would be available in 2014. Contact: Mary Ellen Frame, meframe@me.com.

◆ Tim Kern has 310 acres of farmland for rent in **west-central Minnesota's Pope County,** near Starbuck. Contact: Tim Kern, 602-920-5441, tkern4824@gmail.com.

◆ Katie Sherman has for sale 22 acres of farmland in **southwest Wisconsin's Richland County.** The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes pasture. The asking price is \$58,000. Contact: Katie Sherman, 612-824-1140, katie.sherman@gmail.com.

◆ Tom and Chick Gaffy have for sale 12 acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Saint Croix County.** Property was previously certified by MOSA, but not at this time. The owners continue to farm organically following NOP, using OMRI materials to supply farmers' markets. Contact: Chick Gaffy, 651-270-2384 gardenfarm@baldwin-telecom.net.

◆ Gary Raatz has for sale 80 acres of farmland in **northwest Wisconsin's Polk County.** The property includes pasture, apple trees, a large garden with raised beds, mature trees, various outbuildings and a house. Contact: Abbie Redalen, abbieredalen@yahoo.com.

◆ Judith Driscoll has for sale 30 acres of land in **northwest Wisconsin's Polk County.** It has not been sprayed for several years. The price is \$100,000. Contact: Mark Carlson, 715-986-4141, cbjmark@hotmail.com.

◆ Judith Driscoll has 40 acres of farmland for rent on a long-term basis in **northwest Wisconsin's Polk County.** It has not been sprayed for several years. Contact: Judith Driscoll,

612-961-2199, judithadriscoll@gmail.com.

◆ Amy Field has for sale 29 acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Pierce County.** It has not been sprayed for several years. The price is \$368,000. Contact: Amy Field, 715-425-6036.

◆ Marty Hochstetler has for sale 21.31 acres of farmland in southeast Minnesota's **Fillmore County.** The land has not been sprayed in eight years. The asking price is \$190,000. Contact: Suzanne Hansen, ssavanick@comcast.net or 612-716-7636.

◆ Rob and Terri Stellrecht have for sale 40 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin,** near Grantsburg. The property is fenced into four pasture sections and includes two automatic waterers and hydrants. There is a goat barn, granary, chicken coop, calf shed, pump house, three-car garage and a four-bedroom house. The asking price is \$142,500. Contact: Rob and Terri Stellrecht, robter@grantsburgtelcom.net.

◆ Daniel Heublein has up to 140 acres of tillable farmland for rent near Altura, in **southeast Minnesota.** Land is in transition and has not been sprayed for one year. Renter must run the land organically and within guidelines specified by owner. Heublein is open to renting out any size of acreage up to approximately 140 acres. Long term contract and additional acreage available. Contact: Daniel Heublein, dheublein@gmail.com.

◆ Denise Zabinski has for rent 6 acres of grassland near Barrett, in **western Minnesota.** The land has not been sprayed for several years and it consists of timothy and brome grass. Zabinski is interested in making it available to an organic farmer. Contact: Denise Zabinski, 320-528-2682, dzabinski@hotmail.com.

◆ Steve Larson has for sale a homestead near Ely at the edge of the **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota.** It includes 200 feet of raised beds, drip irrigation, 10 x 22 greenhouse, chicken coop with 12-bird capacity and a woodshed. The price is \$57,500. Contact: Steve Larson, 360-918-8397 or 320-734-4597.

◆ Daniel Washburn has for sale a 20-acre farm in **northeast Kansas,** near Lawrence. The land has not been sprayed for several years and includes six rain gardens, pasture, domestic and wild fruits, and an unfinished post-and-beam house. The asking price is \$142,000. Contact: Glen Sohl Hedges Realty, 785-766-7653.

Community Based Food Systems

A Food Co-op Rises from the Rubble

The Granary was Just Coming into its Own When Storm Clouds Descended

By Rebecca Terk

Back in the fall of 2010, things didn't look so hot for the Granary Food Co-op, which since 1979 has served the western Minnesota community of Ortonville (pop. 1,900). Some days, the door remained locked during store hours because there was no volunteer to open it. The place hadn't had a makeover since the 1980s, and the blue-and-pink sponge paint was faded and dreary. While the bulk foods



A summer storm all but destroyed the headquarters of the Granary Co-op. (Photo by Rebecca Terk)

section was diverse, packaged grocery items fit on a single shelf; farm fresh egg sales were good, but the produce department was non-existent. Governance was also lacking: not one volunteer self-identified as being a director; most didn't know there was supposed to be a board.

But the Granary Food Co-op had been identified by a local group organized by the Land Stewardship Project through a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota contract as a promising "keystone" to building a fresh and healthy local food system in Big Stone County. As an organizer hired to work with community members to build this system, I'll admit I had my doubts when I first walked in the door.

But, more in-depth conversations with members of the all volunteer-run co-op (many of whom had been volunteering since before there was a storefront), caused the doubts to dissipate. Certainly there was some burnout and resignation among a few of the volunteers, but there were also strong dreams and a vision of what could be "if only...."

That first fall and winter we started small. A well-advertised holiday open house with new products on hand resulted in two of the best sales days anyone could remember. And the blue and pink sponge paint that covered the co-op's walls? Several members expressed the desire to give the place a "spruce-up," and in the first few days of 2011, volunteers closed up shop, papered over the windows, and brought the color scheme up to date with the times. The artist who'd done the sponge painting regaled volunteers with tales of trying to keep her toddler (now graduated from college) out of the paint cans the last time she'd helped re-vamp the co-op's interior.

By spring 2011, the co-op once again had an active and identifiable seven-member board of directors elected by a small, but dedicated, membership. Revenues from increased sales were rolled back into new product lines (including local produce and grass-fed meats), increased advertising and a more substantial savings account. Ordering responsibilities were divided up, relieving the burden that had, up until then, fallen on one volunteer, and the co-op's main distributor delivered every week instead of every other. By the summer of 2012, the Granary board's work with Cooperative Development Services Consulting Co-op resulted in a new mission statement and better understanding of co-op governance and operations systems. Membership and volunteer numbers increased, and the board began looking at expanding store hours.

Reports at the spring 2013 annual meeting were nothing but positive. Directors' reports of continued increases in memberships and sales were welcomed by those gathered at the meeting. For the first time, there was discussion of incorporating a point-of-sale system and hiring a general manager to assist with store operations and volunteer coordination, and solid numbers to show that with good budgeting, the possibility of doing so was real. But it turned out the

co-op's challenges were not over.

Weather Woes

By the summer solstice of 2013, we'd had a few summer storms blow through and another was lighting up radar screens as it tracked across eastern South Dakota. When I stopped by the co-op to do some shopping that day, the place was packed, and volunteers who'd also stopped to shop ended up pitching in to help locate product and answer questions. There was a convivial line at the checkout and customers throughout the store were chatting, sharing recipes and tips as well as laughing. It felt more like a "real" grocery store than it ever had before, but with the community engagement and vitality of a well-established farmers' market.

At about 4:30 that afternoon, the wind started to howl across Big Stone Lake. The backside of the historic brick building that housed the co-op and several other businesses (including a small office leased by LSP) bore the brunt of 80-mile-per-hour-plus straight winds, but when the third-floor windows gave way, the powerful gale began to agitate the roof from inside—pushing upward and causing ceiling joists to come loose from their moorings.

One co-op shopper, her van parked across the street, realized she'd forgotten an item and went back into the co-op for it. She was still inside the store when the roof detached entirely, and a large portion of it crushed her vehicle. Alongside the building, a cascade of century-old brick rained down in the street as the third story's outer walls collapsed. Behind the wind came the downpour, and water made its way through the second floor and began seeping through light fixtures and ceiling tiles into the co-op store.

The next morning, co-op board members met in emergency session and surveyed the damage while heavy equipment removed what was left of the roof from the street. The building was no longer habitable, but some inventory was salvageable. Insurance would cover some of the loss. Nevertheless, it seemed that all our big plans and bigger hopes were dashed. People meeting us on the street gave condolences, assuming the co-op was dead. That's the sort of thing that happens in a small town.

But even before the initial shock wore off, board members and volunteers were making calls, salvaging merchandise, and inventorying available retail space to fit the co-op's needs. Members walking by saw others in "their" store and came in off the street to pitch in. An unexpected e-mail from a local appliance dealer offered the possibil-

...Granary, see page 21

ity of a storefront not previously on the radar—a space the owners were willing to remodel to meet Minnesota Department of Agriculture licensing requirements. The account representative from the co-op's main distributor reached out to other co-ops on the Granary's behalf, and support came from across the state via offers of free or reduced price shelving, bulk bins and other fixtures. Pomme de Terre Co-op in Morris, Minn., extended their own member discounts to Granary Co-op members for the interim.

The more spacious and well-stocked co-op store was opened Sept. 5, ahead of the busy holiday baking season. We have hired a general manager, which is the first paid staffer in the history of the co-op. In addition, research on the right point-of-sale system is underway.

The people and the vision behind this community-centric business have enabled The Granary Co-op to weather the storm, and the dreams of what could be, “if only,” are coming to fruition—although in quite a different way than expected. ☐

Rebecca Terk is an organizer for LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program in western Minnesota. She can be contacted at 320-305-9685 or rebeccat@landstewardshipproject.org.



After the storm, the owners of this storefront offered to remodel it so it could meet government regulations for housing a food co-op. (Photo by Rebecca Terk)

Women, Stewardship & Important Conversations

By Terry VanDerPol

Although actual numbers are hard to find, by any estimation women own a significant portion of the 26.9 million acres of farmland in Minnesota. The USDA's Census of Agriculture does not collect information on non-operating landowners, but according to the 2012 Farmland Ownership and Tenure in Iowa Survey, women over the age of 65 own more than one-fourth of that state's farmland. This percentage will only increase as baby boomers age.

While the term “absentee landlord” conjures images of wealthy, greedy people only interested in the highest rents possible from their tenant farmers, the reality is more complicated than that. Women non-operating landowners often come to own their land through their husbands or parents. Many still reside near or on the land and have deep roots in their communities and the landscape they have grown to love. The Women, Food and Agricultural Network (WFAN; www.wfan.org), a pioneer in working with “widowed landowners” in Iowa, has found older women have a strong stewardship ethic that includes the natural environment and the

local community.

Many local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Natural Resources Conservation Service offices are now staffed by women and they regularly reach out to women landowners with “conservation day” activities. But for women who have the day-by-day experience of living in rural Minnesota for the past 65+ years, local agricultural government offices are often viewed as men's territory. Although values for good stewardship are strong, older women sometimes lack the confidence in identifying and implementing those values. Many need information and a support structure to help them have the confidence to require renters to put in place higher levels of conservation and soil building activities on their land.

The Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food Systems Program is borrowing from WFAN's model to develop “Women Caring for the Land” networks. During 2013, we have been developing these networks through community meetings in western and southeastern Minnesota. Identifying stewardship values as well as learning about ways of implementing those values through conservation leases, new enterprises like managed grazing or government programs in a “safe” women-only



An LSP “Women Caring for the Land” meeting in southeast Minnesota in August focused on strategies for combating invasive plants on farms. In addition, a nongame wildlife specialist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources discussed practices that can be incorporated into a rental agreement that benefit erosion control, water quality and wildlife habitat. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)

Women & Land, see page 22...

Community Based Food Systems

...Women & Land, from page 21

group empowers participants to act. A significant portion of the first meeting and each subsequent meeting that includes new participants is a round-robin of women talking about their land, how they acquired it, what it means to them, their families and community and their vision for the landscape (see “One Woman’s Land Story,” page 3).

The impression that our fast-paced, market-centered culture does not afford many opportunities for this type of reflection about stewardship values and connection is borne out by the intensity that builds through these conversations. These women’s connections to the land and to the community are deep and strong, as is their desire to build their farmland as an asset and part of a healthy functioning landscape.

It’s astonishing to realize that simple, one-year verbal lease agreements are the primary tool in farmland rental in Minnesota, an activity that generates conservatively well over a billion dollars in economic activity annually. But without becoming overly complicated, a fairly straightforward lease can be made to require enhanced conservation practices on all or part of a farm. Leases can be designed with simple provisions to en-

courage sustainable practices. Flexible cash/crop share leases can take some risk out of new practices and enterprises. Information about longer term, flexible payment structure and conservation leases developed by Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) is an important tool for non-operating landowners who want to enhance land stewardship and provide beginning farmers opportunities.

Even with those tools in hand and a confidence in moving forward with their vision of how they want their land managed, decisions about changing relationships with renters are not easy. The same values that kindle the desire for better stewardship of the land and community can complicate things. When do you “pull the plug” on a reluctant tenant and find someone else to farm your land? How much reduction in rental rate or number of acres should accompany newly required conservation practices? Often, especially for landowners living on or close to their land where they have lived and farmed all their lives, these are not simple matters. Often as not they are renting to the grown children of former neighbors, their own family members, or someone who sits next to them in church every Sunday morning.

Close connections to community complicate the question of how many new demands

to put on existing tenant relationships. “It’s all very personal, it was my father’s [land]. I was my renter’s baby sitter,” said one member of our Pope County Caring for the Land group.

In our last meeting, one of the women quipped in her description of the landscape she loved as a little girl, “You have to have at least 30 acres of barley to be happy,” and another observed in reflecting on the complexity of relationships with tenant farmers, “It isn’t just how much you want to get for the land, it’s how much neighborliness you want.”

The values in place for many non-operating women landowners are a rich resource. Their personal experience supports the notion that we are stronger and more powerful together. We believe women non-operating landowners have strong potential for increasing conservation on the land, advancing the ethic of stewardship in their communities and giving opportunities for beginning and innovative farmers. □

Terry VanDerPol directs LSP’s Community Based Food Systems Program. She can be reached at 320-269-2105 or tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org. For information on upcoming “Women Caring for the Land” meetings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org or watch future issues of LSP’s LIVE-WIRE e-letter.

Profits from Perennials

Cattle, Creeks & Changed Minds

Riparian Grazing is Being Noticed by Members of the Conservation & Outdoor Sports Communities—They Like What They’re Seeing

On a sunny day in early July around two-dozen farmers, conservation professionals and outdoor buffs take a stroll along a scenic stretch of Trout Run Creek in southeast Minnesota. The waterway is living up to its name: a gentle slope makes its way down to the stream bank on one side, and on the opposite shore there is a sharp, 30-foot rise, making for a nice contrast. Water flows clean and fast, and fairly sparkles in the sun. At one point a small brown trout leaps out of the water while a bluebird swoops down from a tree perch; both are after insects.

It’s an L.L. Bean catalog cover come to life, and part of the reason is that this 3,000-foot stretch of Trout Run has been the focus of an intense rehabilitation effort led

by Trout Unlimited with the help of various agencies and groups, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Invasive trees and brush were removed, banks were gentled and special trout shelters installed.

But the tour participants begin noticing several sets of water-filled hoof prints in the soft ground near the stream. Cattle have been here recently. Jeff Hastings a project manager for Trout Unlimited, looks at the bovine sign, and makes it clear mixing cattle and creeks is not only okay, but in this case it’s the primary reason Trout Run looks so vibrant and healthy on this particular day.

“It’s a great relationship—livestock and streams,” he tells the crowd. “If we had our way, we would have grazing on every proj-

ect we work on.”

Such a statement might come as a bit of a shock to most people who care about healthy rivers, streams and lakes. In the environmental community, the conventional wisdom is that livestock and streams do not mix. There’s good reason for this belief. Many people have heard about or seen firsthand what happens when cattle and other farm animals are allowed continuous, open access to waterways: stream banks become steep and eroded, manure and urine contaminate the water and the stream itself evolves into a chocolate-colored ribbon of murk.

But on this particular day, a Land Stewardship Project field day is showing a different picture: one in which livestock can be managed in such a way that they not only don’t harm riparian areas, but actually improve them. Farmers are putting cattle on stream banks for short, controlled, intense periods — often just a day or two — and then pulling them off. This method, called flash grazing, helps control box elder trees and other invasive species, creates gentle

Riparian Grazing, see page 23...

stream bank slopes, and helps develop the kind of healthy grass habitat that stabilizes a riparian corridor while keeping sediment and other contaminants out of the water.

Flash grazing of streams works nicely with managed rotational grazing systems, which use portable electric fencing to move animals frequently through a series of paddocks, thus preventing overgrazing while building soil and pasture health.

This is not a new idea. Ralph Lentz was proving water and cattle can mix back in the 1990s on his farm near the southeast Minnesota community of Lake City. Working with Larry Gates, who was then a watershed coordinator with the DNR, Lentz changed the mind of many a conservation expert by showing how the grazed portions of a stream on his farm were ecological gems compared to the scruffy ungrazed sections. This influential effort was one of the many positive outcomes of the Monitoring Team, an innovative partnership of farmers, scientists and natural resource professionals that LSP coordinated almost two decades ago. As part of the collaboration, University of Minnesota researchers quantified the positive impacts rotational grazing can have in riparian areas, showing, among other things, that water quality can actually improve after it's flowed through a farm that is using such a system.

Like much of what came out of the Monitoring Team's work, the idea that livestock can be a positive force for good water quality has proven resilient, if not exactly mainstream. But as the recent field day in southeast Minnesota showed, it's now gaining some important supporters within the environmental and outdoor community.

This stretch of the stream runs through farmland owned by Earl and Judy Prigge near Chatfield. When the Priggess bought the land a decade ago, it was, frankly, a mess, say the couple. The stream banks were sharp, steep and eroded, and even moderate rains sent floodwaters raging. The Priggess spent those first few years dragging gas tanks and other garbage out of the creek.

Three years ago, Trout Unlimited led a \$133,000 effort to refurbish the stretch of stream that runs through the Prigge land. The effort showed results almost immedi-

ately as fish habitat flourished.

But the natural resource managers knew that all that work and expense would be wasted if the area was not maintained and managed on an ongoing basis. Unmanaged streams in southeast Minnesota can become overgrown with brush, leaving no room for soil-binding sod and creating muddy, highly erosive banks.

"It's a real concern," says Hastings. "In the Driftless area there's about 400 miles that have been restored for trout habitat. But in places where they're not actively



"Flash grazing" of this stretch of Trout Run Creek has proven to be a key tool for preserving the impacts of a major stream restoration project. (LSP photo)

managed and so-called left alone, the box elders and invasives come in and it shortens the lifespan of that practice. So ideally if we could work with the landowner through managed grazing, that would definitely lengthen the lifespan of our projects."

For the past few years, the Priggess have been flash grazing the stream banks using their cow-calf beef herd. Hastings and the other resource professionals believe so fully in the benefits of riparian grazing that they established specially engineered "pads" of fabric and gravel where the Prigge cattle can drink from the stream and cross it without destabilizing the riparian area.

Hastings says this waterway is now home to the kinds of insects that are so important to brown trout and numerous other species. He predicts fish numbers will eventually triple here—monitoring on other stream stretches managed in a similar way show fish populations on a per-mile basis exploding. Hastings and others use the term "win-win" to describe the use of cattle to manage riparian areas, and in this case that's not hyperbole. Earl Prigge says that before

Give it a Listen

Earl Prigge, Jeff Hastings and Land Stewardship Project staff member Caroline van Schaik talk about grazing riparian areas on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/blog/478.

he started flash grazing Trout Run Creek, he had never utilized managed rotational grazing. He's impressed with how the method

has increased his productivity. The farmer has been able to increase his carrying capacity by about a third and pink eye and pneumonia problems have dissipated.

"So that tells me something—I'm going to have to do some changes in the way I handle cattle on my home farm," says Prigge.

But Hastings says a livestock-based riparian grazing system will fail without a key ingredient: livestock.

"We're seeing more and more row crops, less and less family farms, less and less livestock," he says while standing next to a babbling Trout Run. "And when we lose the livestock we lose those opportunities for managed grazing and we also lose the hay in the rotations, the

contour strips on the upland watersheds. So any chance we have to promote grazing riparian areas, we will." □

Watersheds & Perennials

For more information on the Land Stewardship Project's work in southeast Minnesota to promote diversified farming systems that are economically viable and improve water quality, see www.landstewardshipproject.org and follow the links under **Root River: Promise of Pasture**. More information is also available by contacting Caroline van Schaik (caroline@landstewardshipproject.org) or David Rosmann (davidr@landstewardshipproject.org) at 507-523-3366.

To read more about the Monitoring Team's experience with riparian grazing back in the 1990s, see the "Stream Team" *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer* article at www.landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/foodsystemslandstewardship/rootriverwatershed.

The Next Step for Prairie Strips

Once an agricultural conservation technique proves itself, how do we get it established where it matters—on farms?

By Brian DeVore

Gary Van Ryswyk's concern for how his farming methods impact the landscape is obvious. A veteran practitioner of a no-till system that avoids plowing and otherwise disturbing the field's surface, the crop and livestock producer is particularly concerned about keeping soil in its place.

"None of us who farm want the soil to move—we care," Van Ryswyk says one July afternoon while standing in a central Iowa soybean field he has no-tilled for several years.

That's why he is particularly troubled by the amount of eroded soil that's piled up next to a special collection device at the bottom of this field. As an exclamation point, a spade is sticking out of the pile, a reminder that even a cutting edge cropping system can't always prevent land from slipping away.

"I was one of these guys who didn't think we were losing that much soil," says Van Ryswyk. "I was shocked at how much soil was being lost."

And the researchers Van Ryswyk works with have been somewhat surprised at the lack of eroded soil being collected by a testing flume just a few hundred feet away. The soybeans above that particular collection point are also being grown in a no-till system and the slope of the field is the same—6 percent to 10 percent. But planted in strategic spots on the second field plot are patches of native prairie. Van Ryswyk is raising crops on the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City, east of Des Moines. The prairie plantings are part of an ongoing research study coordinated by Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Called STRIPs (Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairie), the study has produced some impressive results: planting just 10 percent to 20 percent of a crop field to native prairie "strips" (some of the plantings look more like a slice of pie) consistently cuts soil erosion by an astounding 95 percent. The plantings, which have been in place since 2007, also reduce runoff of phosphorus and nitrogen fertilizer by roughly 90 percent.

"It's hard to improve on 95 percent," says Matt Helmers, an ISU agricultural engineer and one of the coordinators of the STRIPs project. The prairie plantings have proven so effective mostly because they have the thick stems and diversity of species that slow down water so effectively. Some have compared it to a pinball machine, with water runoff expending energy with each zig and zag. Researchers say this makes the prairie far superior to, for example, grassed wa-



Even though less soil leaves a field planted to prairie strips, in-field soil losses can still occur. "We really need a systems approach and think about how we protect that land all the way from the top of that slope to the bottom," says researcher Matt Helmers. "Prairie strips are a polisher." (LSP photo)

terways planted to a monoculture of brome grass, which tends to lay down during heavy rains.

And it's the ability of the prairie plantings to slow runoff during extreme precipitation events that has researchers most excited. During 2008, 2010 and 2013, the Refuge was pummeled by rains that dumped four inches or more in less than 24 hours. Even no-tilled fields produced significant ephemeral erosion—small channels caused by concentrated flow—under these conditions.

"When you get a four inch rain, nobody's happy," says Van Ryswyk. "Not even no-tillers."

Helmers notes that conservation techniques that can weather increasingly extreme meteorological events are becoming even more key as traditional techniques like no-till and grassed waterways show their limits.

"These practices perform on average but we see a lot of our soil losses from these extreme events, so we need to kind of design and be prepared for these bigger events," he says.

Pauline Drobney, a prairie biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who is working on the STRIPs project, says while patches of native grasses and forbs interspersed with corn or soybeans are not as optimal as having vast tracts of grasslands extending to the horizon, she's excited about the potential for prairie patches to provide ecosystem services. For example, numerous pollinators use the strips, including over 30 native bee species. They have also proven to be important habitat for birds, including several grassland species that have experienced extreme population declines as row crops gobble up pastures, meadows and grassy corners on farms.

"Imagine a landscape where you have prairie plantings like this interspersed," says Drobney as dickcissels sing from grassy perches a few yards away. "It won't be all of the solution—we still need big blocks of grassland landscape. But these diverse prairies in these strips can provide some of the birds places to fledge; it can be a place for a whole host of invertebrates and other things we know that we depend on."

STRIPs researchers are quick to point out that this is not a silver bullet. For one thing, the prairie patches are effective at keeping soil from leaving a field and making its way into local waterways, but in-field erosion still occurs.

"We really need a systems approach and think about how we protect that land all the way from the top of that slope to the bottom," says Helmers, adding that a systems approach could include cover cropping and no-till production, with the prairie strips serving as a "polisher."

Getting onto Working Farms

That's an important message to convey as the STRIPs team takes the next step: trying to get farmers beyond the wildlife refuge to establish prairie plantings on their crop fields. The research team is looking to set up prairie strip demonstrations on farms in various parts of Iowa to get a feel for how they perform in different geographical locations

Prairie Strips, see page 25...

under various weather and soil conditions. In June, a farmer in southwest Iowa established strips on eight acres of a 50-acre field. Once that prairie is established, he hopes to add his own twist to the technique: grazing cattle on the strips.

Use of the prairie strips on working farms in different areas will help answer many of the questions producers are asking Helmers and his colleagues. How should planting and design be undertaken? What are the maintenance requirements? And perhaps most importantly, what is the cost?

The answer to that last question became a bit clearer in September when the STRIPs

team released a study showing establishment of prairie strips in row-cropped fields was very cost-effective when compared to other conservation practices. The average cost of using the technique to treat runoff from an acre of corn or soybeans is \$24 to \$35 annually, according to the analysis. That makes it less expensive in some cases than planting cover crops and much cheaper than establishing a terrace.

The analysis found that the cost of establishing and maintaining a prairie strip is minimal—it's the annual lost rent or crop value revenue that planting

represents which makes up 90 percent of the expense. This could be a major "hang-up" for farmers, says report author John Tyndall, an ISU economist.

Gary Van Ryswyk, the central Iowa farmer, agrees. He says farming the 200-foot patches (approximately two sprayer widths) of crop ground between the strips is a little more of a hassle than just farming a whole field, but well worth it when he looks at the end results in the collection flues. However, recent sky-high prices for commodities and farmland make every last acre valuable.

"There are a few farmers I know who might want to try it, but with land prices so high and cash rents so high, it's hard to take even 5 or 10 percent of your farm ground



Prairie biologist Pauline Drobney and farmer Gary Van Ryswyk discuss the benefits and challenges of growing prairie strips in crop fields. Drobney says while patches of native grasses and forbs interspersed with corn or soybeans are not as optimal as having vast tracts of grasslands, she's excited about their potential for providing ecosystem services. (LSP photo)

out of production," he says.

As with many farm conservation systems, the prairie strips have the potential to produce many more benefits off the farm

LSP & Prairie Strips

The Land Stewardship Project is working in Minnesota's Chippewa and Root River watersheds to determine if prairie strips are a viable option for balancing water quality protection with profitable farming. For details, see www.landstewardshipproject.org and follow the links under the **Stewardship & Food** section.

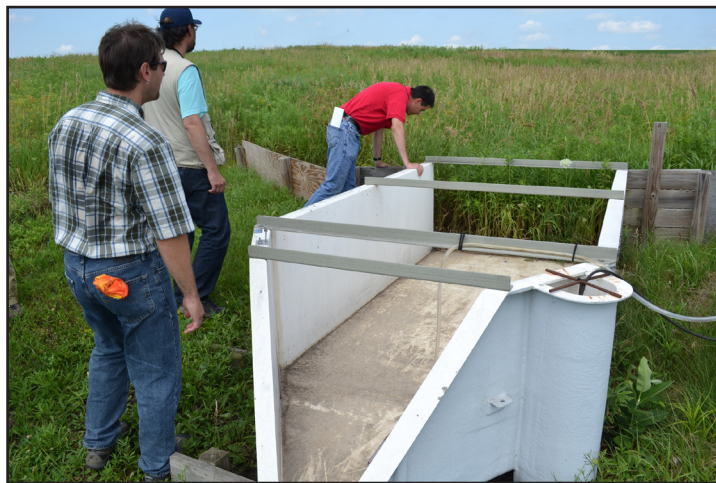
Give it a Listen

Matt Helmers, Gary Van Ryswyk, and Pauline Drobney talk about the next steps in getting more prairie strips established in farm country on LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/485.

than on. Even though they cut erosion by 95 percent, Van Ryswyk's example shows that even the most conscientious farmer isn't likely to notice the difference on their own land, given that soil erosion can often slip by unnoticed. The STRIPs economic analysis concluded that federal conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program or even the Conservation Reserve Program could help provide economic incentives for establishing and maintaining strips. This could be particularly attractive at a time when cost-conscious conservation experts are looking for techniques that deliver real results.

Van Ryswyk thinks paying for such a public good is a good idea, but it also wouldn't hurt if more farmers were made aware of just how much runoff occurs in even the most well-managed fields.

"One of the big barriers is, like me, most farmers truly believe they aren't losing as much soil as they really area." □



Eroded soil frequently needs to be cleaned out of the testing flue in the left photo, even though the cropped acres above it are in a no-till system. The flue in the right photo, which sits at the base of a field plot's native prairie strips, is virtually free of eroded soil. "I was shocked at how much soil was being lost," says farmer Gary Van Ryswyk of the field plot without prairie. (LSP photos)



Mountain Justice

Homegrown Resistance to Mountaintop Removal, for the Future of Us All

By Tricia Shapiro
2010; 377 pages
AK Press
www.akpress.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

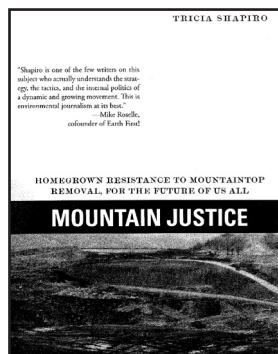
Mountain Justice: Homegrown Resistance to Mountaintop Removal, for the Future of Us All is an account of a people's struggle against the environmentally destructive coal mining practice known as mountaintop removal. The author Tricia Shapiro is a descendant of Pennsylvania coal miners and a current resident of North Carolina's mountain community, so she is familiar with the culture of Appalachia's coal country. The main focus of this book is the 2005 Mountain Justice Summer—a series of events designed to bring attention to the destruction caused by mountaintop removal, not only to the land but the people and culture of Appalachia, which has a long history of being exploited and even destroyed for the profit of those living outside the region. Even though mountaintop removal is used in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia, and Mountain Justice Summer events occurred in all four of these states, the primary focus of these events was West Virginia.

Shapiro discusses the challenges of building a broad-based environmental movement

such as Mountain Justice Summer, a movement that included socially conservative local evangelical Christian environmentalists and environmental anarchists. Some of these anarchists were local, some were from outside the area and were not at all socially conservative but shared a common goal with their evangelical counterparts: protect the mountains and the Earth. The author describes the battle over encouraging the anarchists to be more sensitive when it came to the feelings of the more conservative local people, a struggle that involved the use of a "cuss jar" at an activist training as a method to encourage the anarchists to be aware of language that might offend local sensibilities. Over a period of time the anarchists and the evangelical Christians acknowledged a common spiritual appreciation of the mountains, an agreement that allowed people from wildly divergent backgrounds and world views to work together toward a common goal.

Shapiro writes that the opposition to mountaintop removal was part of a larger movement challenging the use of fossil fuels and combating climate change, in a sense bringing mountaintop removal out of the realm of a local issue. This is one more example of how many environmental issues are not only local but have broad geographic, oftentimes global significance. These "local" issues can often benefit from the involvement of groups with a regional, national or even an international emphasis.

Shapiro describes the many approaches used to oppose an environmentally destructive practice. They can range from meetings



• • •
The anarchists and the evangelical Christians acknowledged a common spiritual appreciation of the mountains, an agreement that allowed people from wildly divergent backgrounds and world views to work together for a common goal.
• • •

with public and corporate officials to civil disobedience. She also describes the wide range of ways that government officials and law enforcement personnel may choose to respond to these actions—useful information for anyone involved in an environmental movement.

Overall, this is an interesting and useful book for anyone involved in the planning and execution of an action in response to an environmental issue. I found it particularly relevant given the current battle brewing close to home over the strip mining of frac sand in southeast Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Mountain Justice describes how people from diverse backgrounds and ideologies can work together in pursuit of a common goal and how this ability to work together can be a powerful force when confronting governments or corporations that are either creating the environmental problem or choosing to be unresponsive to possible solutions. □

Land Stewardship Project member Dale Hadler has long been involved in causes related to the environment, family farming and sustainable agriculture. He is currently volunteering on the frac sand mining issue in southeast Minnesota.

Apocalyptic Planet

A Field Guide to the Future of the Earth

By Craig Childs
2012; 343 pages
Vintage Books
www.craigchilds.org

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

Craig Childs is drawn to the extremes our planet can offer up. Driest. Wettest. Hottest. Coldest. Lowest. Highest. You name it, and this environmental writer has been there.

Childs isn't necessarily a sadist—he's just fascinated with those places on Earth that offer a glimpse at what an "apocalyptic planet" might look like. What happens when all the glaciers melt or when drought becomes the norm? In his book, *Apocalyptic Planet: Field Guide to the Future of the Earth*, Childs spends time in places like the Atacama Desert, the Bering Sea, Patagonia and Greenland, recording in minute detail all those extremes and how humans adapt—or don't.

So what are we to make of the fact that one of those extreme corners of the planet he chooses to spend time in is north-central Iowa's Grundy County? It's no barren ice sheet or parched desert, but the writer makes a somewhat convincing argument that in

many ways it has become almost as inhospitable to life—human and otherwise—as our more well known "wastelands."

"Iowa represents the epitome of human impact, the world completely changed on a landscape scale, whole biotic geographies erased to feed our growth," writes Childs.

While on a two-day "backpacking" trip through a 600-acre corn field, Childs muses about what used to be present on ground like this: three hundred species of tall grass prairie plants, 60 different kinds of mammals, 300 bird species.

"In this cornfield, I had come to a different kind of planetary evolution. I listened and heard nothing, no bird, no click of

Planet, see page 27...

insect,” Childs writes of the early part of his maize hike.

Eventually he does stumble upon a handful of bugs, even a few deer and toads. But his point is made: grain factories don’t leave much room for nature.

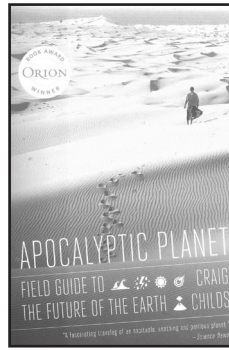
Childs also tries to make the argument that this industrialized system of crop production is quite inhospitable to human beings. He does this mostly by giving us a blow-by-blow of how sweaty, gritty and just plain miserable it is to spend any length of time in a cornfield during a muggy Iowa summer. I’m not sure how effective this part of the book is, but maybe it’s because I’ve spent so much time pulling morning glory vines out of southwest Iowa cornfields in near tropical conditions. It was a nasty experience, but I always knew I didn’t have to sleep, eat or play in that cornfield—it was just a place to work.

The writer’s cornfield camping gimmick makes for some interesting “adventure travel” reading, but loses its effectiveness after a few pages. It should also be mentioned that Childs, who is usually a meticulous journalist, gets a few facts wrong when it comes to Midwestern crop farming—it’s

clear he doesn’t know the difference between sweet corn and field corn, and at one point he states that combines are used to plant seed. While such miscues don’t take away from his overall point, they do distract.

But in an effective storytelling technique he uses throughout the book, Childs intercuts his ground-level, intimate contact with an Iowa cornfield with a wider view of what’s going on by sharing insights from scientists.

At one point, he interviews Edward O. Wilson, the famed biologist and expert on biodiversity. Wilson argues that while mass apocalyptic extinctions have always been a part of Earth’s history, human-caused destruction of plants and animals is much more final, since we tend not to leave behind enough habitat or individual species to allow new generations, or versions of those generations, to take hold and evolve. As Aldo Leopold once wrote, “To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.” We aren’t doing that so well



these days.

Human-caused destruction of biodiversity also tends to have an incredibly quick domino effect: monocultures of corn in the Midwest result in fertilizer runoff in the Gulf of Mexico, producing a hypoxic Dead Zone that in turn creates an ecosystem with a limited number of plant and animal species.

Childs is even more effective when he emerges from the cornfield and notes the impact such lack of biodiversity on the land is having on the human community at large: bulldozed farmhouses, abandoned towns, farmers who feel trapped by a system that’s spun out of control.

It would be a complete downer, except for a scene in an earlier chapter where the author reflects on a hike through an area of Patagonia where glaciers are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. After watching a fellow hiker successfully kayak through a terrifying mountain gorge, Childs reflects, “I sometimes find myself clapping for my own species. What we are capable of is astonishing, like circus performers on the face of this planet. What else, I wonder, can we do beautifully, can we do right?” □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

Dan’s Song

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following song was written and performed this summer by Kayla Koether for Dan Specht’s memorial service. Specht, a Land Stewardship Project board member who also belonged to LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Committee, died in a farm accident in July (*see page 7*).

The land you love
The life you lead
The lives you touch
You plant a seed

The seasons come
The grasses grow
You learn the song
The ebb and flow

May you find firm footing in fertile soil
May you lay you down with the earth awhile
Let her hold you close, whisper all she knows
as the grasses grow

You may never see
your work’s end come
at the end of day
the setting sun

Though you know it well
Your heart’s glad toil

You may be surprised
At what springs from your soil

As we lay you down
Here with the earth to rest
We look upon ourselves
As by your life’s work blessed

For though you had to go
Back from whence life starts
All those seeds you sowed
They bloomed in our hearts, our hearts
And we’ll find firm footing in your
fertile soil
and we will lay you down with the
earth awhile
those seeds you sowed,
we’ll help them bloom and grow,
for that is how
you would want it now

The land you love
The life you lead
The lives you touch
You plant a seed
You plant a seed

— Kayla Koether



Continuing the Legacy

*There are Many Ways LSP Members Can Support Our Work—
Here are Just a Few Examples of Generosity & Foresight*

By George Boody & Mike McMahon

The Land Stewardship Project's power comes from our members. Read through this issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* and you'll see that LSP members are advancing sustainable agriculture practices and knowledge right on their farms. Members serve on steering committees that guide such LSP work as taking on corporate power in the frac sand and healthcare industries or helping the next generation get started on the land. They are spokespeople, innovators, grassroots leaders and entrepreneurs. Members also build LSP's power to create transformational change by making financial contributions to pay for the work we are doing right now and will continue to do for years to come.

Like other nonprofits, the Land Stewardship Project is reliant on grant funding from foundations and other sources. Grants serve an important role in our work, but are largely directed to specific projects. General support contributions from our members, on the other hand, give LSP the ability to respond to unexpected challenges and opportunities. Such donations also serve to underwrite new LSP initiatives until they are off the ground. LSP's Farm Beginnings Program, which is now a national model for training the next generation of farmers, was launched 16 years ago, thanks to members who saw the potential of this exciting initiative when it was barely an idea. In 2012, when the Catholic Campaign for Human Development unjustly and abruptly withdrew its funding for LSP's organizing in southeastern Minnesota, members stepped up to replace that lost funding and more, ensuring that our work for stewardship and justice would go forward. In other words, member donations allow LSP to do the kind of work required to revolutionize our food and farming system from the ground up.

LSP has benefited greatly from members who have gone beyond their regular support to provide us with major "legacy gifts" that represent their desire to significantly invest in LSP's work promoting and supporting sustainable family farming and a fair and just food system. Here are four stories of

members who have provided such legacy gifts to LSP.

A Living Gift

Several years ago "Lois" (she wishes to remain anonymous) attended an LSP meeting in Saint Paul where she learned about the negative impacts factory hog operations owned by mega-producer Premium Standard Farms were having on rural communities. She also became interested in the local foods movement and Community Supported Agriculture. Lois joined LSP because she liked how the organization was making connections between the negative impacts of industrialized agriculture, and the positive solutions offered by a more community-



Dennis and Carole Johnson gifted their farm to LSP because, "LSP connected to our understanding of stewardship, local food and helping young people get land to farm." (Photo by George Boody)

based, sustainable food and farming system. This led her to tirelessly advocate for more local foods in a grocery store in her community and beyond.

After serving on LSP's board of directors for several years, Lois learned of LSP's plans to develop a long-term strategy for strengthening the organization and our program work. In 2006, she and her husband decided to explore a legacy gift during their lifetime so they could see the impact.

"There were two basic principles fueling our gift. First, we share the values of LSP. If it is something you believe in strongly—for

us care of the land, local food and family farmers—those values are threatened and if you have money, you want to be helpful when the need is great and you can make a difference," says Lois. "Why wait until after death before it may be too late? Secondly, we agreed that our inheritance to the children would be what we felt was appropriate and generous, but not everything we have. There are needs for the world in which they will live that we wanted to support. Our planning included setting aside funds for our needs, including long-term care insurance. You can't always foresee what your own needs may be, but we planned as best we could and decided to take a risk to support what we valued."

Her intentions were to invest in LSP's future and stimulate increased giving, not to replace already budgeted giving from individuals or granting agencies. After the donor let LSP know of her and her husband's interest, she sat down for several conversations with us to discuss organizational needs that were consistent with their intentions.

This special gift of appreciated stocks helped LSP meet vital needs and provided a strong incentive to encourage other members to donate more than they had in the past. It was a formative and visionary gift made during the donor's life, just when LSP needed it.

Farm Bequest Through Estate

Heidi and Don Anderson were LSP members who farmed in Minnesota's Renville County, which was the epicenter of the factory hog farm "revolution" in the 1990s. Many farmers and other rural residents opposed the attempts by corporate agriculture to force factory farms into their community. People opposed the mega-livestock operations, with their massive lagoons of liquid manure, because of the environmental, economic and human health problems they created. Citizen testing showed unsafe hydrogen sulfide levels downwind from the operations and liquid manure spills became common.

The Andersons, who have since passed away, and other LSP members were on the leading edge of the fight to stop the spread of factory farms and hold them accountable for the problems they created. Working with LSP, they and other citizens organized and attended meetings, gathered documentation and even testified at the Minnesota state capitol.

"They were very instrumental in dealing with the whole factory farm issue in Renville County," says Paul Sobocinski,

Continuing the Legacy, see page 29...

an LSP organizer and southwest Minnesota farmer who worked with the Andersons and others in Renville County. "They were strong believers in standing together with their neighbors for stewardship."

Sobocinski says it was because of the work of people like Don and Heidi that Minnesota has a ban on construction of new earthen manure lagoons for hogs. Their work also set the stage for a nationally recognized hydrogen sulfide standard for factory farms.

In 2003, LSP was notified that the Heidi and Don Anderson estate had willed four farm parcels to the organization. Two of these parcels included a 122-acre farmstead Don had spent his entire life on, as well as a nearby farm field. LSP's staff and members of our board were deeply honored by this generous gift. That the Andersons would donate a farm they worked so hard to steward and protect over the years was a testament to the values and work they shared with LSP. This donation not only represents what LSP's work means in many rural communities, but it has served as a great motivator for continuing LSP's work for sustainable family farms long into the future.

Initially this gift provided income from renting to a nearby neighboring farm family, close friends of the Andersons, as was provided for in the will. This income helped LSP begin efforts to address land access for beginning farmers. In 2010, LSP's efforts to use that donation for supporting future work took a significant step forward when the organization sold the Anderson land to a local farmer and friend of the Andersons who had rented some of the crop acres in the past. An easement was placed on the property that will keep it in farming in perpetuity, disallowing such practices as gravel mining or more houses.

A Family's Gift of Land

Dennis and Carole Johnson first became aware of LSP because of the organization's work to promote more sustainable approaches to dairying, such as managed rotational grazing. Dennis, who recently retired as a University of Minnesota dairy scientist, is an astute observer of how confined animal feeding systems have caused the loss of diversified small- and medium-sized farmers. He wanted to explore options and through LSP met farmers adopting rotational grazing systems. Dennis participated in LSP classes on holistic decision-making as well as other topics, and in 2005 he joined LSP's board of directors.

The Johnsons had a farm they had

purchased with the intent of developing a state-of-the-art dairy. But life became busy with work, family and community activities. The farm was rented out, but otherwise not further developed. The Johnsons decided to donate it to LSP and Luther College because of our support for sustainably-raised local food and beginning farmers.

"LSP connected to our understanding of stewardship, local food and helping young people get land to farm," wrote Dennis and Carole recently. "We concluded it would be better stewardship of this land to give it to LSP and Luther College than for us to continue to hold it. Our kids were not planning to farm, and we felt we didn't have to give them everything. It was not something they felt they deserved just because their parents owned this land, and they agreed that what we were thinking of doing was great."

After several conversations with LSP, the Johnsons chose to make a generous legacy gift of one-half interest in the 224-acre farm (Luther College was the recipient of the other half). The gift was accepted and then jointly sold with Luther College to the tenant who rented the farm at the time.

This wonderful gift, along with the sale of the Anderson farm, was instrumental in creating an endowment fund for LSP invested through the Central Minnesota Community Foundation. We have already put some of this funding to work. For example, the value of the assets in the long-term fund, together with other funds, enabled LSP to qualify for a loan from the Nonprofits Assistance Fund to purchase and rehabilitate a building that now serves as our Twin Cities office.

Legacy Bequest

Jim Koplin first became involved with LSP in the 1990s after he moved to Minneapolis. He volunteered frequently for the Policy and Organizing Program because he shared LSP's belief that corporate power needs to be reined in. Jim, an avid reader who thought deeply about the issues of the day, often shared ideas and insights with LSP staff members.

Jim was also very interested in the local Powderhorn Park Neighborhood and was highly skilled at advancing solutions at the community level through, among other things, co-ownership in the May Day Café. In all that he did, Jim shared generously of his time and talent, and LSP benefited greatly from his long association with us, as well as his friendship.

Upon Jim's death in late 2012, his estate provided a significant legacy gift of appreciated stock assets to LSP to use as needed. This gift, coupled with other member donations, has allowed LSP to launch our frac sand mining campaign, build a partner-

ship with Hope Community in the Phillips Neighborhood around food justice and participate in the Farmworker Justice Campaign. This donation will also be invested in the endowment and in growing our membership to enhance LSP's power to make a difference in the world which Jim cared so deeply about.

Making the Difference

The stories we have presented here are about people who feel strongly about making this a better world and were in a position to help LSP work toward such a goal. If your financial circumstances permit it and you are interested in making a gift to invest in work that aligns with your values, please consider a legacy gift to LSP. It can be a way to support your values, while supporting our work. □

George Boody (gboody@landstewardshipproject.org) is LSP's executive director and Mike McMahon (mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) is the organization's director of individual giving. They can be reached at 612-722-6377.

How to Make a Legacy Gift

Ways to provide a legacy gift to the Land Stewardship Project include:

→ Bequests

A bequest is one of the easiest ways you can make a gift that will have a lasting impact on LSP's work. With the help of an adviser, you can include language in your will or trust specifying a gift to be made to family, friends or a charity as part of your estate plan. Call 612-722-6377 or send an e-mail to plannedgiving@landstewardshipproject.org for more information.

→ Gifts of Land

LSP is able to accept gifts of farmland or other real estate from members or other friends of our organization. The **Land & Stewardship Legacies Initiative** accepts gifts of farmland that could be leased to beginning farmers while they grow assets. The farm could eventually be sold, preferably to promising graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings program.

For more information about gifts of land, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/legacygiving/landstewardshiplegacies or contact George Boody or Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377.



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Land Stewardship Project 2011-2012 Financial Update

Expenses by Operational Area

Organizing/Policy	19%	\$398,412
Food Systems	28%	\$576,636
Farm Beginnings	25%	\$518,836
Membership/Outreach	8%	\$173,067
Communications	4%	\$79,832
Other	1%	\$16,152
Management & General	10%	\$206,076
Fundraising	5%	\$107,702
Total	100%	\$2,092,077

Unrestricted Operating Revenue

Religious Grants	3%	\$62,500
Foundations & Corporations, Including Released from Restriction	40%	\$826,075
Government Grants	26%	\$527,999
Membership & Contributions	17%	\$342,051
Contract revenue	7%	\$148,610
Fees, Contracts & Sales	4%	\$90,458
Other	2%	\$37,470
Unrealized Investment Gains (Losses)	1%	\$21,265
Total	100%	\$2,056,428

Statement of Financial Position (As of June 30, 2012)

Assets

Cash & Investments.....	\$746,379
Board Restricted Long-Term Reserve.....	\$429,711
Property & Equipment.....	\$535,509
Grants, Contracts & Pledges Receivable.....	\$461,461
Other.....	\$59,113
Total Assets.....	\$2,232,173

Liabilities & Net Assets

Total Liabilities.....	\$655,560
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Net Assets:

Board-Controlled Long-Term & Short-Term Reserves...	\$906,808
Temporarily Restricted Grants for Future Fiscal Years...	\$669,805

Total Liabilities & Net Assets.....	\$2,232,173
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- From audited statements based on generally accepted accounting principles for non-profits, 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 LSP 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.

In Memory & in Honor...

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

In honor of Gardens of Eagan

◆ Libby Wyrum

In Memory & Honor of Eugene P. Miller

◆ Margaret & Gene Gregor
Family & Friends

In honor of Erwin H. Schultz

◆ Amy Bartucci

In honor of Phyllis Pladsen

◆ Karen Bartig

In memory of Dan Specht

◆ Jen & Aaron Cantine
◆ Staff at Practical Farmers of Iowa

In memory of Art Redig

◆ Joyce Ford & Jim Riddle
◆ Cherie Hales
◆ Lynn Nankivil & Ken McCullough
◆ Robert & Kathy Redig
◆ Logistics Health
◆ Martin & Barb Nelson
◆ Steven & Jeanne Tanamachi
◆ Jane Redig & John Williams
◆ Joan Redig & Wayne Purtzer
◆ Renata Risløw
◆ Richard & Doris Laska
◆ Michael & Jennifer Rupprecht
◆ Sharon Ormsby
◆ Shelia Cunningham
◆ Karrol Gielow
◆ Esther Pittelko
◆ Alyce Jo McGrath
◆ Delores Rakstad
◆ Richard & Carol Laska
◆ Rebecca & William Mitchener

In memory of Steve O'Neil

◆ Jane Redig

In memory of Robert Sheue

◆ Mary Elise Miller & Dick Conner

In memory of Mary Catherin Sexton Miller

◆ Margaret (Miller)/Gene Gregor
Family & Friends

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

Want to Volunteer for LSP?

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

Volunteers help us do everything from stuff envelopes and make telephone calls to enter data and set up logistics for meetings. If you'd like to volunteer in one of our offices, contact:

- **Montevideo, Minn.**— Terry VanDerPol, 320-269-2105, tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.
- **Lewiston, Minn.** — Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, lpse@landstewardshipproject.org.
- **Minneapolis** — Megan Smith, 612-722-6377, megans@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Support LSP in Your Workplace

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

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

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund.

Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Family Farm Summer Fun Art




In the last issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we asked kids to send us their artwork illustrating their favorite things about summer on the farm. Zadié Heitzeg sent this drawing of her family's farm in Minnesota. Zadié wrote that her favorite things about summer on the farm are "baby animals and corn-on-the-cob." Zadié's parents are Gwen Pappas and Steve Heitzeg.



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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **NOV. 17-18—Iowa Organic Conference**, Iowa City; Contact: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag/organicconference2013.html>

→ **NOV. 20-21—Green Lands Blue Waters Conference**; Contact: www.greenlands-bluewaters.net/resources2/2013-conference, Richard Warner, 612-625-3709

→ **DEC. 4-6—2013 Young Farmers Conference**, Pocantico Hills, New York; Contact: www.stonebarnscenter.org, 914-366-6200

→ **DEC. 5—Minnesota Grazing & Soil Quality Videoconference**, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., various Minnesota locations; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org, Wayne Monsen, wmonsen@gmail.com

→ **WINTER—LSP Soil Health Workshop, southwest Minnesota** (details to be announced); Contact: Richard Ness, LSP, 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardship-project.org

→ **DEC. 6-7—Fearless Farm Finances Workshop**, East Troy, Wis.; Contact: 715-778-5775, www.mosesorganic.org/farmfinances.html

→ **JAN. 4—Crow River SFA Chapter Annual Meeting**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org, 763-244-6659

→ **JAN. 10—Fearless Farm Finances Workshop Wrap-up Program**, Prairie du Sac, Wis.; Contact: 715-778-5775, www.mosesorganic.org/farmfinances.html

→ **JAN. 10-11—Minnesota Organic Conference**, Saint Cloud, Minn.; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic.aspx 651-201-6012

→ **JAN. 13—Deadline for submitting descriptions for the 2014 LSP CSA Farm Directory for the Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region** (see page 8)

→ **JAN. 23—Burleigh County Soil Health Workshop**, Bismarck, N. Dak; Contact: www.bcsd.com, 701-250-4518, Ext. 3

→ **JAN. 23-24—Midwest Value Added Conference**, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.; Contact: www.rivercountryred.org/valad.html, 715-579-5229

→ **JAN. 23-25—Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org, 515-232-5661

→ **JAN. 24-25—Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference**, Aberdeen, S. Dak.; Contact: www.npsas.org, 701-883-4304

→ **JAN. 29—Application deadline for the 2013 Minnesota Department of Ag Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grant Program**; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us, Jean Ciborowski, MDA, 651-201-6217, jeanne.ciborowski@state.mn.us

→ **FEB. 1-2—9th Immigrant & Minority Farmer Conference**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: Minnesota Food Association, www.mnfoodassociation.org, 651-433-3676

→ **FEB. 6-8—Missouri Organic Association Annual Conference**, Springfield, Mo.; Contact: www.missouriorganic.org,

→ **FEB. 8—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conference**, College of Saint Benedict, Saint Joseph, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org/conference, Jason Walker, 612-605-9269

→ **FEB. 14—Minnesota Organic Transition Cost Share Program**; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us, Meg Moynihan, MDA, 651-201-6616, Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us

→ **FEB. 19-20—Midwest Soil Health Summit**, Alexandria, Minn.; Contact: Jason

Walker, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, jason@sfa-mn.org

→ **FEB. 25—2014 session of the Minnesota Legislature begins** (contact Land Stewardship Project organizer Bobby King at 507-523-3366 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org or see www.landstewardshipproject.org for details on LSP's priorities for this session)

→ **FEB. 27—MOSES Organic University**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org, 715-778-5775

→ **FEB. 27-MARCH 1—MOSES Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org, 715-778-5775

→ **MARCH—9th Annual LSP Family Farm Breakfast & Day at the Capitol** (date to be announced); Contact: Bobby King, LSP, 507-523-3366, bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MARCH 1—Minn. Value Added Grant Program application deadline**; Contact: www.mda.state.mn.us, Emily Murphy, MDA, 651-201-6648, Emily.Murphy@state.mn.us

→ **MARCH 8—Last 2013-2014 class session for St. Cloud Farm Beginnings** (see pages 14-17)

→ **MARCH 15—Last 2013-2014 class session for Winona Farm Beginnings** (see pages 14-17)

→ **APRIL 5—Last 2013-2014 class session for Esko Farm Beginnings** (see pages 14-17)

→ **AUG. 1—Deadline for LSP's 2013-2014 Farm Beginnings course** (see pages 14-17)

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