

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

32 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

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Farm Beginnings grads join forces to get access to markets (page 20).

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Farmers Can't Do It Alone

Reforming Our Food & Agriculture System is a Community Effort

By Patty Wright

You may have seen a recent opinion piece in the *New York Times* titled, "Don't Let Your Children Grow Up to Be Farmers." The essay (<http://nyti.ms/1IKACaf>) has been the topic of many a conversation around our farming community. Written by Bren Smith, a shellfish and seaweed farmer on New York's Long Island Sound, the commentary begins with this statement: "The dirty secret of the food movement is that the much-celebrated small-scale farmer isn't making a living."

Smith outlines a number of issues facing small farms, some I think are legitimate, some are simply distractions. He points out rightly that land prices are a major barrier for new farmers as are the investments it takes to get started. Smith describes a situation where farmers often work second or third jobs to keep their operations afloat and basic necessities like health care are out of reach.

He's right—farmers often do work off-farm jobs, particularly in the beginning years as they make major investments in their enterprise. It's common, in the case of a farm couple, for one of the pair to work an outside job to provide the family with health care coverage, for example. Those first years are often difficult ones.

Community Supported Agriculture, as we understood it and as we've experienced it, was meant to address some of these very issues. This model, also called CSA, is a community based approach to farming. Believing that sustainable food production and care for the land is something we all have an investment in, this model seeks to connect community members with farmers. Members of a CSA invest in a farm before the growing season begins and, in most cases, receive a weekly share of the farm's harvest in return. The idea is that this connection to and investment from the community will bring stability to the farm family, allowing them to make choices that serve the land and the community. My husband, Michael Racette, and I were inspired by that

vision more than two decades ago and, with support from friends and family, these ideas became the beginnings of Spring Hill Community Farm.

In our case, we credit our core group and the Spring Hill membership at large for cre-



CSA members work together on a hoop house at Spring Hill Community Farm during a fall work day. The CSA model seeks to connect community members with farmers. But how do we make those connections on a widespread basis? (LSP Photo)

ating and continuing to hold this vision for Spring Hill. The core group is a committee made up of members that meets regularly to discuss big picture issues such as challenges the farm is facing and the long-term future of the operation. We also get into the nitty-gritty details, hammering out yearly budgets and debating what prices we should charge for shares, for example. We are constantly reminded that the sustainability of a farm requires more than keeping the soil healthy. We also need to make a living.

And we are making a living. It has required hard work and passion and a community of folks who have been willing to push the vision forward and support us in good years, as well as the lean ones.

This is just one example among many of farms that have found ways to connect people with the source of their food in a meaningful and sustainable way. The question becomes then, how can we carry this beyond Spring Hill and the many other models and examples to make the widespread changes needed to reform our food

and farming system?

Bren Smith's solution is for farmers to "start our own organizations — as in generations past — and shape a vision of a new food economy that ensures that growing food also means making a good living." He cites the widespread agricultural movements of the 1880s, 1930s and 1970s as examples of when highly organized farmers' organizations went "toe to toe with Big Ag" and had real impacts in the political and economic arenas. What the current local foods movement lacks, Smith argues, is a widespread push on the part of farmers to shape our own agenda.

"We need to take the lead in shaping a new food economy by building our own production hubs and distribution systems," writes Smith. "And we need to support workers up and down the supply chain who are fighting for better wages so that their families can afford to buy the food we grow."

Smith is right about what changes are needed, but I don't think relying on a new "farmers' movement" to bring them about is the answer. We farmers are currently less than 1 percent of the U.S. population. Our average age in the 2007 U. S. Agriculture Census was 57 and trending upwards. If there is to be change in agriculture, it's going to take a broader community, a community that respects the farmer voice enough to listen to it, a community that respects the work enough to compensate it and a community that loves the land enough to ensure it's tended for generations to come.

I think that's work *all* of us ought to do together. □

Patty Wright and Michael Racette's Spring Hill Community Farm is near Prairie Farm, Wis. Wright is a former member of the Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Committee.

What's on Your Mind?

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

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

Poisons, Potatoes & People

Must Those McDonald's French Fries Come at the Expense of a Community?

By Carol Ashley

When I moved to the northeastern Minnesota community of Park Rapids in 1974, the area south of town was filled with small farms, each with their own woodlots and many with small wetlands. After a potato farm moved in, these small farms, woodlots and sloughs disappeared. There have also been many reports of bees and certain birds disappearing, dead birds between fields and frogs vanishing after spraying starts. Nitrate levels in our groundwater started to rise.

This potato farm is known as RDO, which stands for Ronald D. Offutt. These fields are in a three-year rotation, alternating with corn and soybeans. During the growing season, the potatoes are sprayed about every five days with a fungicide, chlorothalonil. This pesticide also volatilizes, or gasses off, and can stay in the air for days and travel for miles.

Chlorothalonil is a probable carcinogen and a known respiratory and skin irritant. When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first approved its use, it did it on the basis of ingestion studies and did not consider effects from inhalation. Because chlorothalonil contains a contaminant, hexachlorobenzene, it can also cause neurological problems.

It wasn't long before people started complaining. Many called the local sheriff. Most eventually gave up. When some people tried calling the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, they were often dismissed and told that an odor wouldn't hurt them. One township tried to ban aerial spraying. Eventually a couple of citizen groups formed to try to address the issue. These groups started air monitoring with Pesticide Action Network's drift catchers. The groups testified at several legislative hearings, talked to the Minnesota

Department of Health, called the EPA and met with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's assistant commissioner.

Two local residents, Don and Norma Smith, had a sheep farm. The year a potato field was established across from their pasture, the sheep failed to conceive and later started dying. The couple switched to cattle but even the cattle had difficulty conceiv-



During the growing season, potatoes are sprayed about every five days with a fungicide called chlorothalonil. (Photo by Noel Allard)

ing. Don and Norma now have neurological problems in their arms and legs. Don has noted that his thyroid problems are difficult to manage in the years the field near them is in potatoes.

The Pine Point School on the White Earth reservation did drift catching on the air intake of the school building. They had done this openly with RDO. They found 12 of their 23 samples contained chlorothalonil.

I could tell many more stories, but will tell you mine because it is typical in showing the far-reaching effects of this spraying on people's lives. After 16 years of yearning to live on land my parents owned, I was successful in establishing my dream home there. Then potato fields moved in. I tried to protect myself by waking at 5 a.m. and listening for the helicopters. Then I would close my windows, get my dogs in and stay in until mid-afternoon. But about once a year, either the soybean/corn farmer or the potato farmers would spray in the evening.

I would not hear them coming since I was relaxing with a fan on, pulling cool air in.

One day in 2010 a neighbor was out in her garden and a mutual friend was driving past when spraying took place. We all experienced shortness of breath, eye and skin irritation, and a metallic taste in our mouths that lasted for three days and slurred speech.

My neighbor moved the next spring. Our friend stopped driving on back roads, even though that was a means to get extra income to supplement his disability check. I looked to move, insisting that any potential buyers of my home know why I was selling. In the spring of 2013, I was finally able to sell my home. Since I had to move further away from my parents, who are in their 90s, it meant more work (and greater expense)

for other members of my family since I had been my parents' major caretaker. I lost income from my own business raising and selling perennial flowers and lost equity in the move.

Many other chemicals are also used on these fields. An agricultural researcher once said that he would never live near a potato field.

Take Action

The two citizen groups that formed to battle this spraying recently came together to form the Toxic Taters Coalition. One member had called McDonald's,

which is a major buyer of RDO French fries. McDonald's told us to meet with RDO. We did. Now we are going back to the fast food giant to ask them to put pressure on their suppliers to grow potatoes in a sustainable manner.

You can find more information and sign our petition at www.toxictaters.org and www.panna.org. You can call McDonald's at 1-800-244-6227 and ask them to make sure their fries are not harming the communities in which they are grown. ☐

Land Stewardship Project member Carol Ashley lives in Park Rapids, Minn., and is active with the Toxic Taters Coalition. LSP is supporting the Toxic Taters Coalition and its campaign to hold RDO accountable to Minnesotans' rights to safe air and water. For details, see www.toxictaters.org or contact LSP's Sarah Claassen at 612-722-6377, sarahc@landstewardshipproject.org.

Myth Buster Box

An Ongoing Series on Ag Myths & Ways of Deflating Them

→ **Myth: Free Trade is a Windfall for U.S. Ag**

→ **Fact:**

To hear agribusiness firms, commodity groups and their allies in Washington, D.C., tell it, we are constantly just one “free trade” agreement away from making rural America awash in riches. By cutting tariffs and loosening other restrictions on the free flow of agricultural products such as meat and grain, these agreements will open the door to markets U.S. farmers never dreamed of, goes this argument. In the larger landscape, trade produces jobs, cheaper goods and in general more economic activity, say its boosters.

Trade across international borders is an important part of our economy, particularly when agriculture is looking for a way to market surplus production. And for many of us, waking up in the morning would be virtually impossible without the knowledge that coffee imported from South America or Africa is close at hand.

But there’s a big difference between unfettered “free trade” and “fair trade” that benefits everyone equally. Large trade agreements involving numerous countries tend to be hammered out by a select group of corporations and their allies in government. That means they are set up to favor multinational firms that owe no allegiance to any country, state or community. Their goal is to get goods and services as cheaply as possible, with as few restrictions as possible. In such an environment, countries that are willing to use any means necessary to produce the cheapest product—sweat shop conditions, environmentally harmful practices and in general unsustainable production systems—have the upper hand. It truly is a race to the bottom.

The result is that major trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have been a boon to major corporations and a bust for farmers and others who are not part of the negotiating process. Among other things, NAFTA has resulted in the collapse of farming economies in Mexico and other countries, resulting in economic refugees seeking any work (at any price) they can get north of the border. And on the other side of the fence, NAFTA has made it easier to base meatpacking and

other agricultural processing south of the Rio Grande, taking advantage of cheap labor and lax regulations.

The supporters of free trade at any cost are at it again. This fall, firms like Cargill are pushing for the approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a 12-nation trade agreement that’s been in the making since 2009. If approved, the TPP will cover 40 percent of the global economy, making it the world’s largest free trade agreement.

But as the article on page 11 makes clear, the TPP, as well as the push to approve it using “fast track” authority, is full of major risks for rural communities and even urban consumers seeking a safe, accountable source of food.

Backers of TPP and fast track maintain that some of the downsides to unfettered free trade are worth it because of all the increased economic activity it will generate in this country. They also claim that modifications will be made to future trade agreements to avoid the job losses that NAFTA resulted in. Ironically, they are presenting as a model for the TPP the Korea Free Trade Agreement, which went into effect in 2011.

As with the TPP, backers of the Korea Free Trade Agreement ballyhooed it as a win-win for American business, particularly the livestock production sector. But as a recent analysis of U.S. International Trade Commission statistics shows, this agreement has been a disaster for farmers. The analysis, which was conducted by Public Citizen, found that in the approximately two years since the Korea Free Trade Agreement went into effect, U.S. exports to Korea are down 11 percent and imports from Korea are up, expanding our trade deficit with that country to 47 percent. This has cost the U.S. \$9.2 billion in lost export income.

Agriculture has been hit particularly hard. Since the agreement went into effect, average monthly exports of U.S. farm products to Korea have fallen 41 percent—a decline of \$125 million per month. If you’re a livestock producer, this trade agreement has left a particularly bitter taste in your mouth:

- U.S. average monthly exports of pork to Korea have fallen 34 percent below the pre-trade agreement monthly average.
- U.S. beef exports have fallen 6 percent since the trade deal went into effect.

- America is selling 39 percent less poultry per month to Korea compared to what we marketed there before the trade agreement.

Groups such as the U.S. Meat Export Federation have tried to dismiss such statistics by saying, for example, a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Korea during early 2011 has skewed the numbers. But long-term export data shows Korea was a good customer for U.S. agriculture products during the past decade or more. In fact, since the trade agreement went into effect, U.S. pork exports to Korea have fallen 24 percent short of what pre-trade agreement analyses showed they should have been by this point. An even harder fact to swallow is that Korean per-capita consumption of chicken rose in 2012 and again in 2013, according to the USDA. People in Korea are in the market for food, just not ours. Meanwhile, our borders are becoming even more vulnerable to an increasingly one-way passage of cheap products, no matter what the hidden costs.

In the recent book, *Factory Man*, a Taiwanese businessman talks about Americans’ attitude toward global trade this way: “If the price is right, you will do anything. We have never seen people who are this greedy—or this naïve.”

→ **More Information**

- The Public Citizen report, “Korea FTA Outcomes on the Pact’s Second Anniversary,” is at www.citizen.org/documents/Korea-FTA-outcomes.pdf.

- Details on LSP’s work related to the TPP, fast track and other trade issues are at www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/tpp.

→ **More Myth Busters**

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



LAND
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LSP News

LSP Summer Celebrations Bring Together Members & Friends

The Land Stewardship Project's summer celebrations on the Mark and Kathy Brosig farm in southeastern Minnesota (*this page*) and the grounds surrounding the organization's Twin Cities office (*page 7*) featured food, music, games, a pie raffle, a silent auction and presentations on everything from trade policy and beginning farmer issues to solar energy on the farm. (LSP photos)







LAND
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LSP News

Land Stewardship Project Staff News

Joe Riemann has left the Land Stewardship Project to become the director of cooperative development and lending at Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund (www.ncdf.coop).

Riemann served a communications internship with LSP in 2005-2006 and in 2010 joined the organization's staff as the Twin Cities office manager/administrative and accounting assistant. In 2012, he became the organization's manager of administration and finance. During his tenure at LSP, Riemann significantly improved and streamlined LSP's financial management system and supervised the organization's administration team. He also was the lead staffer on upgrading the organization's computer and telephone systems, and served on a committee that undertook a major re-vamping of LSP's website in 2012.

Adam Warthesen has left LSP to become the government relations coordinator at Organic Valley Cooperative in La Farge, Wis. Warthesen joined LSP's Policy and Organizing Program staff in 2002 and over the years has worked on numerous initiatives, including the campaign to end the mandatory pork check-off. He organized against what was at the time the largest proposed factory dairy operation in Minnesota, building strong local citizen participation in the legislative battle to uphold local democracy in Minnesota, and recruited numerous long-time LSP members. In 2007,



Joe Riemann



Adam Warthesen

Warthesen began to focus on federal policy, and working with LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee, he helped develop positive initiatives in two Farm Bills, in particular leading the national field campaign to win funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and the ongoing effort to expand and improve the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Warthesen also worked on LSP's nationally recognized initiative to reform federally subsidized crop insurance and most recently participated in a national effort to stop the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement and its approval through "fast track" authority (*see page 11*).

Megan Buckingham has left LSP to pursue becoming a social studies teacher. Since joining the staff in 2011, Buckingham has worked as an organizer for LSP's Policy and Organizing Program. She had focused on issues related to corporate control and LSP's Affordable Healthcare for All initiative, which recently helped bring about significant reforms in Minnesota.

David Rosmann this summer completed a stint with the Land Stewardship Project's initiative to increase plant cover and perennials in the Root River watershed in southeastern Minnesota. While with LSP, Rosmann did outreach to farmers and other landowners and helped organize field days on cover cropping and managed rotational grazing, among other things.

Timothy Kenney has joined LSP as its new director of finance and operations. He has a bachelor's degree in business from Bethel University and for the past nine years has worked as the tax services director for AccountAbility Minnesota, which provides



Megan Buckingham



David Rosmann

free tax preparation and financial services to individuals and families. He has also worked as an account specialist for U.S. Bank and volunteers for Scholars of Minnesota.

Kenney can be reached at 612-722-6377 or tkenney@landstewardshipproject.org.

Stephanie Porter has joined LSP's staff as an organizer for the Policy and Organizing Program. Porter graduated from Grinnell College in May with a degree in anthropology and Russian. Porter has worked as an organizer for the Coalition of Environmental Activists, an English teacher in Russia and a prison teacher/tutor. She has also worked on various farms in the region. Porter's position is being made possible through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps.

For LSP, Porter will be organizing on various issues, including corporate control, organizing around frac sand mining and federal agriculture policy.

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

Carolyn Bussey recently completed a short-term project helping LSP's Twin Cities office organize its annual Cookout and Silent Auction (*see page 7*). Bussey has a bachelor's degree in linguistics with an art minor from the University of Minnesota. She has worked as a graphic designer, case clerk, martial arts instructor and farm volunteer. Bussey currently owns and operates Etsy, a handicrafts business. □



Timothy Kenney



Stephanie Porter



Carolyn Bussey

Get Current With LSP's

LIVE  WIRE

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

Lisa Coons Joins LSP Board

Lisa Coons is the newest member of the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors.

Coons is the co-director and coordinator of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (www.ssnd.org/center-for-earth-spirituality). The Center, based at Our Lady of Good Counsel Campus in Mankato, Minn., promotes and fosters awareness and ways of living that recognize and support the interconnection and interdependence of all life.



Lisa Coons

The Center strives toward earth justice and sustainability through education, spirituality, sustainable agriculture, rural ministry, and political advocacy. One of the purposes of the Center is to model environmental stewardship on the Our Lady of Good Counsel Campus through ecological awareness, ecosystem restoration, support

of local food production and environmentally sensitive maintenance practices.

In addition to an environmental education and resource center, the Center hosts a two-acre organic community garden that is tended by sisters and staff, as well as immigrants and low- to moderate-income people from the area. □

Farm Art Bowl Nov. 16 in Minneapolis

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Art Bowl will be Sunday, Nov. 16 at Bryant Lake Bowl in Minneapolis (810 W. Lake Street). The event, which runs from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., is a fundraiser for the Farm Beginnings Program (*see page 16*) and will feature music, a silent auction and, of course, bowling.

LSP is seeking donations of pieces of artwork ranging in value from \$10 to \$100 for the silent auction. Donations of hand-made, functional artwork are encouraged.

Contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo (320-269-2105, amyb@landstewardshipproject.org) or Dori Eder (612-578-4497, dori@landstewardshipproject.org) if you have items to donate. □

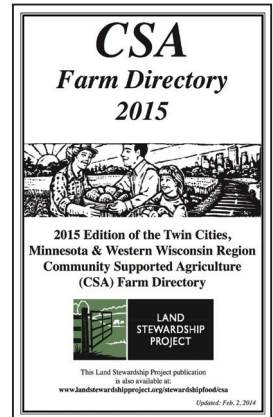
Farmers: Time to Sign-up for the 2015 CSA Directory

If you are a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer operating in Minnesota or western Wisconsin, the Land Stewardship Project invites you to be listed in the 2015 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.

The deadline for submitting listings is Monday, Jan. 12. The listing fee is \$22 for LSP members and \$37 for non-members. There is a 250-word limit for listings.

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



Wear Your Land Stewardship Pride

Show your support for the Land Stewardship Project with an official LSP t-shirt and cap. LSP's baseball-style cap is union made in the U.S. of high quality 100-percent cotton. It comes in black with LSP's green and white embroidered logo featured on the front. A fabric strap and brass clip on the back make this a one-size-fits-all cap. The price is \$15.

LSP's limited edition black t-shirts have our logo on the front and the words "Land Stewardship Project" on the back. They are also union made in the U.S., are 100 percent preshrunk cotton, and are available in adult sizes: small, medium, large and extra large. The price is \$15.

T-shirts and caps are available in LSP's offices in Minneapolis (612-722-6377), Lewiston (507-523-3366) or Montevideo (320-269-2105). You can also order them online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/store.



LSP Farmer-Members Named White House Champions of Change

Southwestern Minnesota beginning farmers Ryan and Tiffany Batalden were honored as “Champions of Change” during a White House ceremony in July. The Bataldens are Land Stewardship Project members and fifth generation beginning farmers in Lamberton. They grow certified organic corn, soybeans, oilseeds and small grains on 380 acres, raise livestock, and have a direct-market popcorn business called Patriot Pops. The Bataldens have three young children: Finn, Lilly and Stella.

“It’s an honor for us to be selected White House Future of American Agriculture Champions of Change,” says Ryan, who served on LSP’s Land Access Committee, which investigated the obstacles beginning farmers face when trying to get agricultural operations established. “It’s particularly appropriate that the White House is recognizing people out in the countryside who are thinking long and hard about the future of American agriculture. There are many of us who see great opportunities in agriculture, but also recognize some of the significant barriers beginning farmers face if they are to get established successfully on the land.”

The Champions of Change program was created by the Obama Administration as an opportunity to feature individuals, businesses and organizations doing “extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities,” according to White House officials.

Through LSP, the Bataldens have informed the wider community about the challenges beginning farmers face when trying to get access to land. They have also made extensive use of federal initiatives such as the Conservation Stewardship Program to establish and maintain farming systems that protect and improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

“Ryan and Tiffany have used innovative arrangements with landlords to develop a farming operation that is successful and based on high standards of conservation,” says Adam Warthesen, who until recently was an LSP organizer working on federal policy. “But they’ve also challenged us in the agricultural sector to think more broadly

about how we can support the next generation of farmers in a way that produces vital communities.”

The Bataldens, who were nominated for the award by LSP, were among 15 “Champions” honored by the White House and the USDA in July. The ceremony featured USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden,

who discussed efforts to ensure that beginning farmers and the growing ranks of people interested in agriculture—women, young people, immigrants, socially disadvantaged producers, returning veterans and retirees—have access to the programs and support they need. The event also included a panel discussion about how to continue growing and supporting the next generation of America’s farmers and ranchers.

“Groups like the Land Stewardship Project are proving there are opportunities for beginning farmers in our rural communities,” says Ryan. “Now we need to take steps on the local, state and national level to provide people like me a chance to take advantage of those opportunities.” □



Ryan and Tiffany Batalden at the White House, where they were recognized as Champions of Change in July. “There are many of us who see great opportunities in agriculture, but also recognize some of the significant barriers beginning farmers face if they are to get established successfully on the land,” says Ryan. (Photo by Juli Obudzinski, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition)

A Public Voice on Beginning Farmer Issues

Ryan and Tiffany Batalden have been featured in various media talking about the opportunities and challenges involved in launching a farming enterprise these days:

- They were profiled as part of the *Farm Transitions Toolkit* LSP helped produce last year: www.landstewardshipproject.org/farmtransitionsryanbataldenprofile.
- Ryan talked about the impact high land prices have had on beginning farmers such as himself in a story broadcast by *Minnesota Public Radio*: www.mprnews.org/story/2014/07/27/young-farmers.
- Read the Bataldens’ White House Champions of Change blog: www.whitehouse.gov/champions/blog.
- The Agrarian Trust recently profiled the Bataldens: www.agrariantrust.org/land%20access/farm-profile-batalden-farms-lamberton-mn.

Fair Trade Fight Heats Up this Fall

Congress & President Pushing for TPP-Fast Track Passage this Year

By Mark Schultz

The Land Stewardship Project and other members of the Food and Ag Justice Collaborative met with members of Congress this summer to express their opposition to the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement and efforts to use fast track authority to try and expedite its passage.

The Food and Ag Justice Collaborative (FAJC) consists of rural membership organizations representing Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon. It's an action-oriented collaborative that works to advance public policy that supports family farms and ranches, the stewardship of the land, and prosperous communities, as well as to stop government and corporate policies and practices that are detrimental to America's family farmers and our rural communities. In July, 20 FAJC members and staff met with the Congressional delegations representing their respective states.

The TPP, a top priority for many multinational corporations, encompasses 12 countries located around the Pacific Rim: the United States, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Japan and Brunei.

Although the TPP is being presented as a way to increase exports by eliminating trade barriers, the reality is that this trade agreement goes far beyond mere "trade" by granting unwarranted privileges to huge corporations, undermining local democracy and threatening our food system.

The TPP is considered the largest proposed trade agreement in history, and there are aggressive efforts to complete it before the end of 2014. In addition, the Obama Administration is seeking so-called "fast track" authority in an effort to enact the TPP by virtually eliminating public information and scrutiny, limiting Congressional debate on the issue, and prohibiting any Congressional amendments to these corporate-backed policies if and when they are voted on for final approval.

Family farm and environmental groups have voiced major concerns with the process under which these trade negotiations are tak-

ing place, and outlined serious objections to trade agreement proposals that could harm agriculture and important citizen safeguards. Highlighted concerns include:

- The inability of the public and lawmakers to access text of the trade agreements.
- The strong preference given to corporate "trade advisers" in providing input on these agreements
- If approved, how these deals would pose

Make Your Voice Heard on TPP & Fast Track

There is a hard push to get Congress to pass fast track this year, and then to finalize and pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Fleets of lobbyists from large corporations and trade associations are applying lobbying pressure and spinning out opinion pieces as to why this bad trade deal is a must. But we also have members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, opposing fast track authority and raising major concerns about the TPP. Members of Congress need to hear from their constituents on this issue today.

For more information on how to make your voice heard on this issue, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/organizingforchange/tpp. There, you'll find fact sheets, commentaries and action alerts related to the TPP and fast track. More information is also available by contacting LSP's Mark Schultz at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.

a serious threat to local control and to environmental and food safety protections in farming states like Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and South Dakota.

The secrecy surrounding TPP negotiations has been particularly troubling. None of the text has been made publicly available on a voluntary basis. In fact, what little we know about the negotiations has been revealed via WikiLeaks. Taking part in the negotiations are government trade officials and some 600 mostly corporate "advisers" representing multinational firms such as Cargill. These advisers are required to sign a confidentially agreement to not share information, and even Congress and law experts have been shut out of the discussions.

What has been revealed about the proposed agreement is extremely problematic. For example, there is a clause called the "investor state dispute resolution." Through this clause, corporations could be granted standing, just like a country, to file a lawsuit or challenge other countries' governing bodies if they felt local laws impeded "expected future profits." This clause undermines our local democracy, threatens local ordinances (for example, against frac sand mining or

for local foods procurement for schools) and gives multi-national corporations increased power over the rights of citizens.

Under an agreement like the TPP, foreign corporations or governments could challenge, for example, Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for meat products sold in the U.S. — something passed by Congress 12 years ago and supported by the majority of farmers and consumers. It could also mean corporations could challenge quality standards for U.S. meat inspection and safeguards for tracking disease and herd health because they might believe it impedes their access to U.S. markets. Especially concerning is that challenges/grievances would be heard by international tribunals — not Congress, not the U.S. judicial system, but world trade courts powerfully influenced by larger corporations.

What was made clear to LSP and other members of the Food and Ag Justice Collaborative during our July fly-in is that even with heavy pressure from corporations like Cargill and Monsanto, as well as from President Barack Obama and Speaker of the House John Boehner, a majority of the members of the U.S. House and Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, are not supporting this trade deal, or the fast track process—at least right now.

But increased pressure to advance fast track and the TPP, fueled by corporate bank accounts, will come between now and the end of 2014. We need more members of Congress hearing from citizens concerned about the fast track process and this secretly developed trade agreement. □

Mark Schultz is LSP's Policy Program director, associate director and director of programs. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.



Map by Steve Ewest, LSP

LSP Talks Conservation with Rep. Peterson

The Land Stewardship Project, along with farmer-leaders Jess and Tammy Berge, hosted Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson, ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, in August. Over 20 farmers and rural residents gathered at the Berge farm in west-central Minnesota for a meeting and tour to discuss livestock production and farmland conservation, including the use of cover crops for building soil health and grazing practices for grassland management.

Peterson's farm visit provided an opportunity to showcase on-the-ground conservation techniques that are both profitable for farmers and good for the land. The Berges, along with other attendees, are working with LSP and the Chippewa River Watershed Project on the Chippewa 10% Project. This initiative is a collaboration of farmers, landowners and public land managers in the Chippewa River watershed, which extends from Alexandria, Minn., to Montevideo, Minn. See pages 24-25 for more on LSP's work in the watershed.



Rep. Collin Peterson (third from the right) discussed conservation policy with LSP members gathered at the Jess and Tammy Berge farm in west-central Minnesota's Chippewa River watershed. (Photo by Kaitlyn O'Connor)

LSP Applauds MPCA Citizens' Board Ordering of EIS on Massive Dairy

Historical Move Puts Mega-Operation Under the Microscope

By Paul Sobocinski

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Citizens' Board ruled in August that Riverview LLP's proposed 8,850-cow dairy operation in Stevens County must undergo an in-depth Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This appears to be the first time that the Citizens' Board has ordered an EIS for a factory farm.

The Land Stewardship Project applauds this historic decision. An EIS will allow the proposal's negative impacts on water quality and quantity, local roads and existing independent family dairy farms to be fully analyzed before the project is allowed to seek a permit.

The proposed operation in Baker Township would house 8,850 cows and 500 heifers, making it among the largest operations of its kind in the state. Riverview LLP is already the largest dairy-producing firm in Minnesota, owning several other massive operations throughout this state, as well as South Dakota. In total, Riverview LLP owns over 45,000 cows, according to a 2013 article in *Beef Magazine*.

Fortunately, the MPCA Citizens' Board

took a careful look at concerns raised by neighbors and voted 6-1 for an EIS on Aug. 26. Water quantity and quality were chief among neighbors' concerns. Many streams in the Pomme de Terre watershed, where the factory farm is proposed, are already polluted. Another concern was that the cumulative impacts of already existing large feedlots, especially Riverview LLP-owned operations, needs to be assessed, including the impacts on water availability. Riverview LLP has four large operations in Stevens County, each with over 5,000 cows. One has over 6,000 cows and is within six miles of the proposed operation. If approved, the Baker Township dairy alone would use almost 100 million gallons of water annually.

Neighbors to the proposed dairy are concerned about hydrogen sulfide and its health effects. Hydrogen sulfide is a gas given off by liquid manure lagoons, and exposure to low levels over time can cause respiratory problems, headaches, eye irritation, insomnia, nausea and dizziness. Chronic exposure can impact neurological functioning and cause serious lung problems.

Modeling studies for the proposed Riverview LLP operation indicate that the levels of hydrogen sulfide produced will be near

the public health threshold. A MPCA Citizens' Board member raised concerns that, if the Riverview LLP operation is approved, on-going monitoring for hydrogen sulfide must be required, and that this health concern should not be simply addressed through computer modeling.

Just as importantly, an EIS of the Riverview proposal will address socio-economic impacts. For example, many moderately-sized and beginning farmers in the area are concerned that Riverview's operations push land prices to unaffordable levels. This concerns LSP, which works to ensure that we have more farmers raising livestock on the land.

Factory farms like Riverview's displace family farms and generate many millions of gallons of raw liquid manure—a waste product that is inevitably over-applied on neighboring fields. The MPCA Citizens' Board decision was the right one for family farmers, the land and rural Minnesota. □

Land Stewardship Project organizer Paul Sobocinski raises crops and livestock in southwestern Minnesota's Redwood County. He can be reached at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@redred.com.

MPCA: Proposed Frac Sand Shipping Expansion Requires Environmental Review

In Recent Actions, MPCA & DNR Indicate Resolve to Enforce Frac Sand Protections

By Bobby King

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) ruled Aug. 22 that the CD Corporation's proposal to expand its frac sand shipping facility at the Winona Port in southeastern Minnesota cannot proceed until an environmental review is completed. State law passed in 2013 requires new or expanding frac sand facilities that handle over 200,000 tons of frac sand per year to undergo environmental review. The CD Corporation handled 232,000 tons of frac sand in 2013. The city of Winona was moving forward with permitting the expansion until the Land Stewardship Project and citizens brought the issue to the attention of the MPCA.

The 2013 law was part of a slate of provisions passed by the Minnesota Legislature to protect the state from the frac sand industry. Citizens facing frac sand proposals throughout the southeastern region of Minnesota flooded the state capitol that year demanding strong state-level regulations. Until then, the industry was largely unregulated at the state level. The CD Corporation case is the first application of the strengthened environmental review provisions in the law.

"I want to know what the impacts on my health and my neighbors' health are of having over 200,000 tons of frac sand traveling through our community every year," says Steve Schild, a LSP member and Winona

resident. "Environmental review is the only way we are going to get answers to this and other questions to determine if it is safe to have this proposal here at all."

The environmental review will be conducted by the MPCA. The agency must include an air quality impact assessment of the potential effects from airborne particulates and dust, a traffic impact analysis, and an assessment of the project's compatibility with other existing uses.

LSP Letter to MPCA

Read the Aug. 4 letter sent by LSP to MPCA Commissioner John Linc Stine calling for an environmental review of the CD Corporation's proposed expansion: www.landstewardshipproject.org/repository/1/1316/lsp_letter_cd.pdf.

2013 Trout Stream Law Enforced

This is the second case of tough enforcement of the 2013 laws by Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton's administration. The 2013 legislative package included a provision requiring all silica sand mines in southeastern Minnesota that are within a mile of a trout stream to apply for a Silica Sand Mining Trout Stream Setback Permit from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In July, even after DNR warnings, a Houston County, Minn., silica sand mine located within a mile of a trout stream began

operating without such a permit. The DNR took immediate action to shut down the operation, called the Erickson sand mine. The controversial Erickson silica sand mine was at one time part of a proposed 11-mine frac sand operation that would have spanned three counties.

"Having the law on the books doesn't mean anything if there is no enforcement," says LSP member and Houston County resident Joan Redig. "The DNR did the right thing by being strong in this first test case and making it clear that following the law isn't optional."

The 2013 legislative package also directed the MPCA to create air quality regulations for the frac sand industry, the DNR to establish frac sand mine reclamation standards, and the Environmental Quality Board to strengthen environmental review requirements for the industry. These regulations are in the process of being established. LSP has called on the Dayton administration (*see action alert below*) to create tough regulations that protect the air and the land, as well as put the health and well-being of rural communities before profits for investors in the frac sand industry. □

Bobby King, a Land Stewardship Project state policy organizer, can be contacted at 612-722-6377 bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Contact Dayton & Demand That he be 'All In' on Frac Sand Mining Restrictions

Earlier this year, over 6,200 Minnesotans signed a Land Stewardship Project petition to Governor Mark Dayton calling on him to take strong action to protect Minnesota from the frac sand industry.

Our petition calls on the Governor to use the Critical Areas Act to keep frac sand mining out of the unique karst area of southeastern Minnesota. The petition also calls on the Governor to ensure that tough statewide standards to regulate the frac sand industry are established.

Despite state legislation being passed in May 2013 directing state agencies to create air quality standards and improve environmental review for frac sand facilities, the regulations are yet to be established. And we do not have a clear commitment from

Governor Dayton that these rules will be tough and put health, safety and rural communities before frac sand mining interests.

This is a critical time to ramp up our efforts to fight back and demand Gov. Dayton uses his authority to fight with us. It is critical that citizens contact Gov. Dayton today at 651-201-3400 or 800-657-3717 and deliver this message:

"Governor Dayton, we need you *all in* when it comes to protecting Minnesota from the frac sand industry. I was glad to see that the Department of Natural Resources shut down a mine illegally operating near a trout stream and that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency required environmental review of a frac sand shipping facility

in Winona (*see story above*). Now we need the air quality and environmental review standards being created by your administration for frac sand operations to be tough and to put the health of our community before profits for frac sand companies. I would like you to be public about supporting these actions. As Governor, we need to hear your voice on this issue."

For more information, see LSP's **Frac Sand Organizing** web page at www.landstewardshipproject.org, or contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Breaking Down Transition Barriers

EDITOR'S NOTE: Duncan Ashby recently had the opportunity of a lifetime: with the help of a Churchill Fellowship he was able to tour farms and other agriculture-related businesses and organizations in the United Kingdom, Canada and the U.S. Ashby works with farm businesses in southeastern Australia's state of Victoria, focusing on financial management and succession planning. Over the years, Ashby, who is also a guest lecturer in rural business law and farm leasing at Marcus Oldham College, has grown concerned about the number of unprofitable farms in his home country, the aging farm population and the inability of beginning farmers to get access to land. He sees agricultural leasing as a way for a new generation to get access to farmland without taking on crushing debt. He used his Churchill Fellowship to research agricultural leasing practices in other countries and hopes to use the information to promote it in Australia, where only 7 percent of land is leased (in the U.S., as much as 40 percent of farmland is rented; in the U.K., around 30 percent). During his visit to the U.S., Ashby stopped in Minnesota to talk to Land Stewardship Project staff about farmland transition issues in the region. While here, he sat down with the *Land Stewardship Letter* for an interview about the benefits of leasing and innovative approaches to transitioning farmland onto the next generation. Below and on page 15 are excerpts of Ashby's comments.

Why Leasing Could be Good for Beginning Farmers

I think one big issue for any beginning farmer is getting the capital to buy land, and basically in Australia it's very difficult if you don't inherit the family farm. I think that's the case everywhere. But I think leasing's a good option for young farmers. And I've seen some good examples in the U.K. where young farmers have been able to build up a farm business by having solely leased land, and then all of their funds can go into the working capital of their businesses to buy machinery and livestock. Of course, hanging over it is the fact that you need some sort of longer-term lease to allow you to develop your business. In the U.K., they do have longer-term leases, and that's been successful. I think that would be challenging here in the U.S. with the predominance of one-year leases.

Opportunities in Agriculture

I think it's always been tough to get into farming. In years where land prices seemed very cheap it was probably because it was an unprofitable period, and if you were a young farmer, it was probably still a tough time to get into farming—maybe interest rates were high or commodity prices were very low. So there are always some factors that make it very difficult. But the more I look at it the more I think there are some good opportunities for farmers in the future—with this aging farm population and this transition occurring.

I was expecting there to be one great idea about the future of agriculture coming out of this trip. But farming really seems to be split into two areas. You have broad-acre agriculture—basically anything where you're producing a mass-market commodity and you're a price-taker. On the other hand, you have very intensive entrepreneurial agriculture where you've got a product you pay a premium for, whether it's organic or some other factor.

Some of the more successful businesses I saw are more intensive, so that is why I'm interested in what's happening here with the Land Stewardship Project. You're looking at products that are generally more intensive or marketed because of their quality, such as organic.

Older Farmers' Resistance to Transitioning

It's been tempting during my trip to focus on the younger farmers because they're often passionate, and they've got good ideas and they're very keen and it's exciting. But the issue in Australia and elsewhere is land access and that's where the older farmers come into the picture. So in my project I'm focusing on succession and older farmers as well. And in a way, that's the bottleneck. Convincing them is more important than finding the younger farmers. The younger farmers are there, there's people supporting

them, the good ones are having good ideas and they're identifying the markets they're focused on. But getting the older farmers across the line to pass on this land is the key issue. They want to continue farming often because they haven't built up profitability or built up off-farm assets that support them. They also have that connection to the land—they don't want to leave that land they've farmed all their life. The model where the older farmer farms for many years and then suddenly stops is a bit sudden, and that's part of the resistance from the older farmer.

A Win-Win Transition Process

I think one option is if we look at share-farming agreements where the older farmer can keep involved and maybe the beginning farmer starts as an employee with a bonus above a certain level of production. The younger farmer can then utilize the experience of the older farmer while working their way into their own business. Ultimately, you could move to a lease when the older farmer doesn't want the risk of share-farming and he can then take a cash rent payment. For the older farmer, it's a transition out of the

business and it allows them to reduce their production risk as they move out of being active in agriculture.

That transition process is important to getting the older farmer interested and to support the arrangement. I think we can make leasing or share-farming more attractive to more farmers if we highlight to them how that lease can help them continue their farming or the legacy that they've built up. Some of the things I've been interested in that

I've seen are lease conditions around the land management policies, around environmental conditions on how that land should be farmed, whether that is a share-farm arrangement or lease.

And when you look, there are many variations in farmland and what it takes to make an operation successful. So the new farmer or the young farmer coming in will be crazy not to take advice from the older farmer. I think a lot of it's around getting the message to the older farmer that there are options, and it's not just a cash rental arrangement—a here's your money, take the top dollar and walk away from it kind of situation. You can continue your involvement and give the benefit of your experience to the new farmer and allow him to continue some practices that you've developed. I guess they have to



Duncan Ashby

Transition, see page 15...

be receptive as well to the young farmer's entrepreneurial ideas and some new ideas. So both parties I hope can learn from each other.

The Time for Planning is Now

I've been struck by the fact that here in the U.S. there's not a lot of succession planning and there is resistance to the whole idea. It's a fair part of what I do in my work, and I work with my father who's been in our business for 30 years. He always said that if you don't get a farmer before he's 60, it's too late, because he's too set in his ways. And now my father's 65, and he's moved that goalpost out to 70. The point is if you don't start the conversation early enough, there's the resistance just based on the aging process and you're not as prepared to look at new things.

We always say the initial meeting in succession planning just has to be a discussion that starts the process. It's a difficult one, particularly if it's a younger family member raising the topic, because it may look like

they're making a grab for the asset. But really they just want some certainty about their own future, don't they? It has to be a long-term process, and we emphasize in succession planning the idea of giving everyone certainty, whereas estate planning is what you do when someone's died. □

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

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

The *Toolkit* contains resources, links to services and practical calculation tables to help landowners establish a commonsense plan. It also features user-friendly resources on the economic, legal, governmental, agronomic, ecological and even social issues that must be considered in order to ensure a successful farm transition. It is rounded out with profiles of farmers who are in various stages of transitioning their enterprises to the next generation. For more on the *Toolkit*, see the No. 4, 2013, edition of the *Land Stewardship Letter*.

An online version of the *Toolkit* is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/farmtransitionstoolkit; paper versions can be purchased by calling 800-909-MISA (6472).

Give it a Listen

Episode 158 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast features a discussion with Duncan Ashby: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/648.

Women Caring for the Land Looks at 'Perennial Opportunities'

A Women Caring for the Land gathering took place at the Seppanen Farm near Alexandria, Minn., in August. Fourteen people attended the potluck and workshop, which was sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and hosted by Irene Seppanen, shown pointing in the top photo at right.

The meeting featured Lansing Shepard and Paula Westmoreland from the Perennial Lands Project (www.thisperennialland.com) talking about the geological and agricultural history of the Chippewa River watershed. They explained how the unique features of this glaciated region provide many areas for perennial "third crops" on lands that are marginal for row crops due to steep slopes, poor drainage and gravelly soils. In addition, they created "opportunity maps" of two area farms, showing where perennial crops might be integrated into the landscape to add diversity and address "problem spots."

Seppanen showed participants (*bottom photo*) the soil organisms at work under the straw mulch in her market garden, and how they break down organic matter to help feed the plants.

LSP's Women Caring for the Land gatherings bring together women who own land and rent it out for agricultural production, and who are interested in learning more about conservation on that land. This initiative is based on a model developed by the Iowa-based Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN). For information on future Women Caring for the Land gatherings in western Minnesota, contact LSP's Rebecca White at 320-305-9685 or rwhite@landstewardshipproject.org. Details on Women Caring for the Land events in southeastern Minnesota are available from LSP's Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. (*Photos by Rebecca White*)



Farm Beginnings

LSP's Farm Beginnings Course Accepting Applications for 2014-2015

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course still has a few spots remaining for the 2014-2015 class session. There will be three classes—one in Watertown (central Minnesota), one in La Crosse, Wis. (southwestern Wisconsin-southeastern Minnesota), and one in Ashland, Wis. (Lake Superior region).

In 2014, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 17th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is designed for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

This 12-month training course provides

training and hands-on learning opportunities in the form of classroom sessions, farm tours, field days, workshops and access to an extensive farmer network.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice-a-month beginning in the fall, run until March 2015, followed by an on-farm education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

Over the years, more than 650 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. Graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Beginnings classes have been held over the years in Illinois, Nebraska and North Da-

kota. Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, New York and Maine.

The Farm Beginnings class fee is \$1,500, which covers one "farm unit"—either one farmer or two farming partners who are on the same farm. A \$200 deposit is required with an application, and will be put towards the final fee. Payment plans are available, as well as a limited number of scholarships.

For application materials or more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org. Details about the Watertown and La Crosse classes are available by contacting Nick Olson at 320-269-2105 or nicko@landstewardshipproject.org. For the Lake Superior class, contact Cree Bradley at 218-834-0846 or creeb@landstewardshipproject.org. □

2015-2016 Farm Beginnings Course Deadline Sept. 1

LSP is already starting to plan its 2015-2016 Farm Beginnings course offerings. The deadline will be Sept. 1 and course locations will be announced in 2015. For more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org or watch future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*.

Pasture Production 101



Dennis (holding bucket) and Colleen Compton hosted a Farm Beginnings field day in August on the basics of starting up a smaller scale grass-fed beef farm. The Comptons' beef cattle graze on permanent pastures that have been established on land formerly planted to crops and hay or enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. They have a small cow-calf operation in central Minnesota that utilizes a mix of breeds from which they raise calves for beef. During the field day, Dennis discussed the methods used to convert lands to permanent pastures and the grazing management they use to maintain the health of the pastures and the production of the cattle. Farm Beginnings course participants have numerous opportunities to participate in such on-farm education events. (LSP Photo)

Vegetables from the Ground Up



Adam Ellefson described how he and Lupita Marchan have built up a diversified vegetable operation from scratch during a September Farm Beginnings field day in Saint Peter, Minn. Ellefson and Marchan's Living Land Farm is a Community Supported Agriculture operation. (Photo by Nick Olson)

Is Farming in Your Future? Let Farm Dreams Help You Find Out

Farm Dreams is an entry level, four-hour, exploratory Land Stewardship Project workshop designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether sustainable farming is the next step for them. This is a great workshop to attend if you are in the exploratory stages of getting started farming. Farm Dreams is a good prerequisite for LSP's Farm Beginnings course.

LSP holds Farm Dreams workshops at various locations throughout the Minnesota-Wisconsin region during the year. For more information or to register, see www.farmbeginnings.org. Details are also available by calling LSP's Nick Olson at 320-269-2105 or e-mailing nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

Give a Gift LSP Membership

Know someone who would enjoy becoming a member of the Land Stewardship Project? Contact us and we will send a special card describing the gift, along with a "new member" packet of materials. For details, call 612-722-6377 or see [www](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate).

[landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/home/donate). □

Beginning Farmer *Ear to the Ground* Podcasts Available

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast (www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast) frequently features conversations with Farm Beginnings graduates, instructors and others who are involved with various aspects of getting the next generation of farmers established on the land. Here's a summary of recent beginning farmer-related podcasts featured on *Ear to the Ground*:

- **Episode 155**—Farm Beginnings farmer-presenter Chris Duke talks about the importance of relationships in direct-marketing.
- **Episode 152**—People share their connections to the land and community at a special LSP storytelling event.
- **Episode 149**—Farm Beginnings grads talk about being in the "experimental/making mistakes" stage of their enterprise.
- **Episode 141**—A beginning farmer incubator is helping revitalize food and farming in the Lake Superior region.

• **Episode 140**—New farmers talk about how Farm Beginnings helps them balance demand for their products with keeping their businesses, and lives, sustainable.

• **Episode 138**—A brother-sister team uses Farm Beginnings and Journeyperson to help transition from being landowners to active farmers.

• **Episode 134**—Farm Beginnings applies the brakes to a young couple's farming plans—in a good way.

• **Episode 129**—LSP Farm Beginnings participants talk about "unfair advantages" as they launch an enterprise focusing on mushrooms and CSA vegetables.

• **Episode 126**—A beginning farmer talks about how it can be difficult to get access to land—even in the middle of farm country.

• **Episode 125**—BFRDP: A discussion about a precedent-setting federal program for beginning farmers and ranchers.

• **Episode 124**—Farm Beginnings grads John and Heidi Wise climb out of the "pit of despair."

• **Episode 122**—A key relationship developed through LSP's Farmer Network helps a beginning farmer launch his operation with the help of mentors.

• **Episode 118**—A retiring farmer and beginning farmers share their transition stories.

• **Episode 117**—Dave and Deb Welsch pass their crop operation on to beginning farmers who are not family members.

• **Episode 116**—A young couple emerges from the wilderness to join a farming community.

• **Episode 114**—A pioneering CSA farm transitions to the next generation.

• **Episode 113**—A young couple steps back from near burn-out to reconsider their farm's future.

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland in the Midwest? Or are you an established farmer/landowner in the Midwest who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse*. To fill out an online form and for more information, see www.landstewardshipproject.org. You can also obtain forms by e-mailing LSP's Dori Eder at dori@landstewardshipproject.org, or by calling her at 612-578-4497. Below are excerpts of recent listings. For the full listings, see www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Seeking Farmland

◆ Darin Colville is seeking to purchase up to 640 acres of farmland in **Iowa, Minnesota or Wisconsin**. Land that has not been sprayed for several years and has forested acres and a house is preferred. Contact: Darin Colville, 660-853-8343.

◆ Grant Beckler is seeking to purchase up to 1,500 acres of farmland in **southeastern Nebraska's York or Seward County**. Land with pasture is preferred; outbuildings and a house are not required, but are a plus. Contact: Grant Beckler at 402-641-0532.

◆ Sara Gustafson is seeking to buy 5-15 acres of farmland **west of Minnesota's Twin Cities (Carver, McLeod, Wright or Sibley County)**. She prefers land that has pasture and has not been sprayed for several years; no house is required. She is looking for land where to expand an existing livestock operation. Contact: Sara Gustafson, 952-836-6097, saraderhaag@gmail.com.

◆ Andrew Pierre and Margaret Hanson are seeking to rent at least 2 acres of tillable farmland within **90 minutes of Minnesota's Twin Cities**. They would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and has a water source and a house. They are looking to start a diversified vegetable enterprise focusing on CSA and wholesale accounts. Having an on-site mentorship experience would be a plus. Contact: Andrew Pierre, pierre.ajfm@gmail.com.

◆ Melissa Rackham is seeking to rent approximately 5 acres of farmland near the **southern Michigan** town of Adrian. Land with pasture and a house is preferred. Contact: Melissa Rackham, melissa@buyahouseinmichigan.com.

◆ Victoria Austin is seeking to rent farmland in **Missouri**. Land with pasture and a house is preferred. Contact: Victoria Austin, 816-462-7971.

◆ Victoria Ranua is seeking to rent farmland for 20 to 30 honeybee hives in the **Twin Cities, Minn., area**. Ranua is looking for fallow land or pasture; no house or other buildings required. Ranua would be ready to move hives in April 2015. Contact: Victoria Ranua, 952-233-3479.

◆ Angela and Eric Mueller are seeking to buy 1-5 acres of farmland **within one hour of the western Twin Cities**. They would like to raise vegetables and small livestock. No

house or outbuildings are required. They are open to rent, rent-to-own or straight purchase of property. Contact: Angela Mueller, 763-350-0102, or Eric Mueller, 763-350-0104.

◆ Micah Rupp is seeking to buy 20+ acres of farmland in **southwestern Minnesota's Cottonwood County**. Pasture and outbuildings are preferred; no house is required. Contact: Micah Rupp, 507-227-9679, mmrupp4320@gmail.com.

◆ Michelle Ridlon is seeking to rent 5+ acres of certified organic tillable farmland in **Illinois, Wisconsin or Michigan (Great Lakes area)**. A barn, greenhouse and house are preferred. Contact: Michelle Ridlon, mishiridlon007@aol.com.

◆ Nina Hardin is seeking to buy a small farm in **southwestern Minnesota**. Land with outbuildings and a house is preferred. Contact: Nina Hardin, 320-226-6053.

◆ James is seeking to rent 10 acres of farmland in **southwestern Wisconsin, near La Crosse or Cashton**. He prefers land that has not been sprayed for several years and that has pasture and a house. Contact: 773-655-7270, jbthornburg@gmail.com.

◆ Patricia Millard is seeking to buy approximately 10-15 acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. She would prefer land that has not been sprayed for several years and that includes fenced pasture, a barn or pole shed and a house. Contact: Patricia Millard, 612-296-6930, lunamom5@msn.com.

◆ Philip David is seeking to rent 2-3 acres of tillable farmland in **Minnesota's Twin Cities region**. No house is required. Contact: Philip David, 612-644-9522, momanyi58@gmail.com.

◆ Travis Meier is seeking to buy 40+ acres of farmland in **southwestern Michigan's Allegan or Van Buren County**. Land that has pasture and that has not been sprayed for several years is preferred; no house is required. Contact: Travis Meier, t3meier@gmail.com.

◆ Roxanne is seeking to rent farmland in **Wisconsin**. Land with pasture and a house is preferred. Contact: Roxanne, Roxy010_010@hotmail.com.

◆ Larry Taylor is seeking to rent 5 or more acres of farmland near the **southwestern Iowa community of Glenwood**. He would prefer that the land have pasture, a barn, a stable and a house. Contact: Larry Taylor, 712-520-7036, mstorer2007@yahoo.com.

◆ Janice Poma is seeking to buy 2-5 acres of tillable land near Macomb, in **southeastern Michigan**. Poma is seeking land that has not been sprayed for several years; a pole barn is preferred but no house is required. Contact: Janice Poma, 586-604-8012.

◆ Jared and Meagan Culp are seeking to buy 50 to 150 acres of farmland in **Chisago or Washington County, near the Twin Cities**. They would prefer land with pasture and an ideal situation would be a beef or dairy operation with room for gardens. At least one outbuilding and a house are preferred. A rent-to-own farm/transition-of-farm situation would be ideal. Contact: Jared Culp, 651-808-1617.

◆ David Dudley is seeking to buy 25+ acres of farmland in **Minnesota**. Land with pasture, outbuildings and a house is preferred. Contact: David Dudley, davidrdudley@yahoo.com.

◆ Daniel Gloege is seeking to rent farmland in **Minnesota**. He would prefer land with pasture and that has not been sprayed for several years. Outbuildings and a house are preferred. Contact: Daniel Gloege, danielgloege@mac.com.

◆ David Hall is seeking to rent tillable farmland in **Nebraska**. Outbuildings are preferred but lack of them is not a deal breaker. No house is required. Contact: David Hall, 308-340-2136, davidhall@huskers.UNL.edu.

◆ Martin Lucas is seeking to rent 80-100 acres of tillable farmland in **southeastern Iowa's Keokuk County**. No house is required. Contact: Martin Lucas, 515-210-9250, marty@walnutcreekcsa.com.

◆ Zachary Lee is seeking to rent 80 to 500 acres of farmland in **Iowa**. He would prefer land with pasture; no house is required. Contact: 641-660-9821, leefamilyfarms5@gmail.com.

Farmland Available

◆ Juliet Tomkins has for rent 107 acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Pierce County, near River Falls**. The land has not been sprayed for several years. For 20 years the family has raised grass-fed beef

Clearinghouse, see page 19...

...Clearinghouse, from page 18

and direct-marketed the meat locally and in the Twin Cities, 45 minutes to the west. In the past four years they have rented the pastureland to a local organic dairy farmer, who had the fields certified organic. The 60 acres of the farm which would be suitable for vegetable growing or grazing livestock have water access. Tomkins is very interested in supporting other farmers as they get started. Because of this, she is willing to rent out a couple of acres or all 60 acres. Her family lives on the farm but there is a downstairs apartment that may be available for rent. Contact: Juliet Tomkins, 715-821-2323, juliet@dishup.us.

◆ Margaret Maloney has for sale 140 acres of farmland in **southwestern South Dakota's Fall River County**. The land has pasture, rural water to all pastures, perimeter fencing and it has been cross-fenced (some sheep wire) into four to five separate pieces. Each pasture has a water tank and hydrants. There is a 20 x 96 Field Pro High Tunnel for gardening or hay storage. There is also a spring-fed, year-round pond. There is a 12 x 80 three-sided steel building with eight 10 x 12 stalls and water hydrants in each stall. There is also a 24 x 24 steel pole building with steel roof, wood floor, water and partial electric. There is also a house. The asking price is \$300,000. Contact: Margaret Maloney, 605-535-2158.

◆ Peter Henry has for sale a 40-acre certified organic farm in **Polk County, Wis., 60 miles east of Minnesota's Twin Cities**. There are 20 acres tillable, 15 acres pasture. There are outbuildings and a house. There is also an 8.14 kW solar array (16 Sun Power panels), 10,000-gallon ferro-cement tank, ponds, 30-foot planted buffer strip and perimeter animal fencing. The farm is near a thriving local foods market in Amery, Wis. The asking price is \$250,000. Contact: pfhenry@resilientnorthernhabitats.com.

◆ Monae Verbeke has for sale 10+ acres of farmland in **northwestern Illinois, near the Quad Cities**. There is pasture and a house. Contact: Monae Verbeke, mcverbeke@gmail.com.

◆ Julie Dial has for sale 16.21 acres of certified organic farmland in **south-central Minnesota's McLeod County**. The land includes pasture; there are no outbuildings or a house. The asking price is \$95,000. Contact: Linda Margl, 952-470-1758.

◆ Jeanine has for rent approximately 70 acres of certified organic farmland in **western Wisconsin's Polk County**. There are approximately 12 tillable acres; one field is deer-fenced and there is a partially-

fenced pasture. There is a small barn, garage and house. She is willing to rent the land with the house or without the house; rental price is based on months used and whether the house is included. Contact: Jeanine, 651-968-7777, Jeanine@keyot.com.

◆ Katie Felland has for sale 10 acres of farmland in **southern Minnesota's Steele County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it is less than an hour from Rochester, Minn., and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. There is a barn, large pole shed, granary, tool shed, machine shed, chicken coop and well house. There is a four-bedroom home. The asking price is \$459,000. Contact: www.suzanneterry.edinarealty.com.

◆ Richard and Wendy Anderson have for sale 27 acres of tillable farmland in **western Wisconsin's southern Polk County**, 45 minutes from downtown Saint Paul, Minn. There is a small orchard with apple and plum trees. The property comes with two tractors, three hay wagons, an apple press, disk, drag and bush cutter. A portion of the property (3-5 acres) has not been sprayed for over 10 years. There is a house, mobile home, five pole buildings/barns and a boarding kennel with a complete kitchen (easily converted to a commercial kitchen). The asking price is \$350,000. Contact: Richard and Wendy Anderson, 651-491-7798, andersonw@bluebirdtrailfarm.com.

◆ Daz Jonsen has for sale a 130-acre farm in **northern Minnesota's Crow Wing County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years. It has established conifer plantations and the property adjoins a state forest. The owner is a member of the American Tree Farm System with an active Forest Stewardship Plan in place. There are seven outbuildings, a two-story guest cabin, irrigation well, fenced gardens and a house. The asking price is \$1,000 per acre plus. The owner is willing to do a barter/trade situation to keep the land natural via various organic practices; willing to sell, rent or rent-to-own. Contact: Daz Jonsen, sylvapond@gmail.com.

◆ Judith Driscoll has for sale 30 acres of farmland in **northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County**. It has not been sprayed for several years and it has ponds (one spring-fed), pasture and woods. The asking price is \$79,500. Contact: Jim Johnson, Caldwell Banker Burnet, 612-723-7252, jfjohnson@cbburnet.com.

◆ Dianne R. Mitchell has 80 acres of farmland for sale in **northern Minnesota's Itasca County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it has deteriorating fencing. It was last used by Horse Rescue; formerly beef cattle/hay ground and originally a dairy operation. There is a barn, old single garage/workshop, L-shape style farmhouse

with handicap access bedroom/bath added on. The asking price is \$150,000, and the house may be rented. Contact: Dianne R. Mitchell, 907-617-6483, heartsoverflowing@gmail.com.

◆ Dan Winge has for sale 74 acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Pierce County**. Forty-one acres are tillable with a mix of woods and apple trees. There are outbuildings. The asking price is \$450,000. Contact: Dan Winge, Caldwell Banker Burnet, 651-270-7689, dwinge@cbburnet.com.

◆ Ted Blodgett has 66 acres of tillable certified organic farmland for sale in **east-central Indiana**. No house is available. Contact: Ted Blodgett, 765-760-2500, theoblodgett@gmail.com.

◆ Yvonne Massey has for sale 40 tillable acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Polk County**. There is a barn, pole shed, three 24 x 72 high tunnels/hoop houses and a three-bedroom house. Also available is a tractor, along with miscellaneous growing and gardening equipment. The asking price is \$265,000. Contact: Yvonne Massey, 715-222-1576, massey.yvonne@yahoo.com.

◆ Lucinda Marvin has for sale 21 acres of farmland in **western Wisconsin's Saint Croix County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and it includes a house with a one-car garage. The asking price is \$135,000 (\$75,000 for 16 acres recreational). Contact: Lucinda Marvin, 651-334-2699.

◆ Paul Goodman has for rent a 40-acre certified organic farming operation in **southwestern Wisconsin, near Mineral Point**. There is an organic certified packing/cooling shed with associated equipment (e.g. conveyors, compressors, washing tanks), an equipment shed, two greenhouses (with Gothic Rollups) with full utility service (water, electric, propane), a house and living quarters for seasonal employees/interns. Also available are various pieces of farming equipment and a delivery van. This operation comes with rights to a 350-member CSA serving mainly Madison, Wis., and Chicago, Ill., as well as rights to a website (www.kingshillfarm.com). Contact: Paul Goodman, 312-777-0038, pgoodman@kggp.com.

◆ Cynthia Laen has for sale a 120-acre farm in **western Wisconsin's Pepin County**. The land has not been sprayed for several years and a 40-person CSA has been in operation on the land. Of the 120 acres, 60 are forested and 30 are in CRP. There are 5-10 acres tillable at this time. There is a pole shed, tool and woodshed and a house. The asking price depends on the sale arrangement. Contact: Cynthia Laen, cynlane@live.com.

Farm Beginnings

The Return of the Middleman

Farm Beginnings Grads Join Forces on the Marketing Front

Even a brief conversation with Tom Cogger makes it clear what he enjoys doing: producing food. And that's what he's done on his Maple Hill Farm near Washburn in northwestern Wisconsin for almost two decades. In the early years, Cogger concentrated mostly on produce, but since his son Matthew joined the operation in 2009, pork has become a bigger part of their business. No matter what the Coggers have produced, they've found the demand for local, sustainably-produced food strong in the region. But whether it's through a farmers' market, over the telephone or via the Internet, marketing is marketing, and it requires time and resources that sometimes could be better spent back on the farm.

"I've never enjoyed marketing, to tell the truth," says Cogger. "Very few farmers do, in reality."

That's why these days the Coggers are more than happy to utilize a cooperatively owned "middleman" to promote, aggregate and deliver their products to eaters. They and other farmers in the Lake Superior region of northwestern Wisconsin make up a unique initiative called the Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative (FPC). Launched in 2009 with the help of local University of Wisconsin Extension educator Jason Fischbach and a grant from the

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture's Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program, the cooperative has grown from a handful of area farmers to almost two-dozen producers located in the area. The cooperative services around 100 families in the region who have signed up for weekly deliveries of a wide selection of produce, meats and other items. It also does wholesale deliveries to as far away as Duluth, Minn., and sells to local food co-ops, restaurants and educational institutions like Northland College.

The cooperative uses a hybrid of the popular Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model to get food to consumers. One option for customers is a "full-diet share," which provides a standard box full of a variety of food delivered once a week after being aggregated at a small warehouse on the grounds of the nonprofit Agriculture and Energy Resource Center west of Ashland. Customers are also offered an option of ordering food à la carte. And the choices are numerous—items available include everything from the Coggers' pork to locally raised beef, poultry, lamb, cheese, fish, fruits, vegetables, baked goods, ciders, fermented vegetables, wines and cheeses.

Farmers banding together to collectively get their product to market is nothing new. But in a few short years, FPC has become a model for striking that fine balance of taking advantage of efficiencies of scale while capitalizing on individual strengths, all the while avoiding the problems that pop up when farmers are competing for a limited market share.

"I feel that working together helps open up the markets in the area for everyone," says Tom Cogger. "Marketing together adds value to everybody's product."



Chris Duke (left) and John Adams pack boxes at the FPC warehouse in Ashland, Wis. (LSP Photo)

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming



The success of FPC is particularly exciting for Cree Bradley, who coordinates the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program in the region. Around half of the members of the cooperative are closely associated—either as graduates or presenters—with Farm Beginnings, an intensive training initiative that was launched 17 years ago in southeastern Minnesota and which has been offered in the



Kelsey Rothe is one of several Farm Beginnings graduates involved with the cooperative. (LSP Photo)

Lake Superior area in recent years. In fact, Jason Fischbach, the Extension educator who helped launch the cooperative, is also a Farm Beginnings graduate. Through classes, workshops and on-farm training opportunities, farmers and other agricultural professionals from the community teach students about innovative business planning, goal setting and marketing (see page 16 for more on upcoming classes, including a course being offering in Ashland).

One of the major lessons passed on in Farm Beginnings classes is that finding consistent, profitable markets is just as important as knowing how to grow a field of greens or a herd of cattle.

"Growing things and knowing that they're sold ahead of time, that's pretty key for any business," says farmer Chis Duke, a founding member of the cooperative who regularly does presentations on marketing for Farm Beginnings classes. "You can be the best farmer in the world, but if you don't

Fresh Faces, see page 21...

have a good market for it, it isn't going to matter."

That's why FPC is a good model for beginning farmers who are looking for ways to get their product to market in an efficient and profitable manner but don't have the resources (or inclination) to do the marketing and distribution on their own, says Bradley.

The cooperative members not only share warehouse space, but a walk-in cooler, a delivery van and a website (www.bayfieldfoodproducers.org) that provides information on what's available as well as a handy way to place orders.

Different Farms, Different Needs

One of the cooperative's goals is to serve the disparate needs of operators who are at various points in their farming careers—from full-time, established farmers to newer producers just getting started on a few acres. To accommodate this, membership is broken up into two groups: "producer members" and "supporting members." The first group of farmers pays \$200 to join the cooperative. Supporting members (defined as making less than \$10,000 in annual gross farm sales) pay \$50 to join and are generally farmers who are just getting started or who otherwise don't have a large volume of product to move. All producers have to belong to a committee, but only producer members are allowed to vote on the adoption of new policies and other management matters.

The farmers "sell" their production to the cooperative and then the final price charged customers is marked-up a certain percentage to cover overhead costs: fuel and electricity to run the van and cooler, insurance, wages for part-time employees, etc.

Members of the co-op say they have to keep close tabs on quantity—making sure they don't have too many producers bringing vegetables or meat to the warehouse, for example—and quality. That's why they use the "supporting member" category as a way to not only ease new farmers in, but to make sure they are able to produce high quality food on a consistent basis. That's particularly important since FPC customers are paying a premium for food that's raised using environmentally sound methods.

"It gives us a chance to check them out to see if they're going to work or not, and

they can check us out and see if they want to work with us or not," says Tom Cogger of the supporting members.

Supporting member John Adams joined the cooperative in 2013. Adams, whose Yeoman Farm produces vegetables on a few



John Adams, who has a small vegetable operation, joined the marketing cooperative last year as a "supporting member." (LSP Photo)

acres of Agriculture and Energy Resource Center land, says being able to utilize FPC's infrastructure has helped him concentrate on perfecting his production techniques as he searches for a permanent location to farm.

"There are definitely benefits to having a middleman for some of those relationships you need to have with consumers when you direct-market," says Adams, who graduated from Farm Beginnings in 2011. "The co-op lets us relieve some of the sales pressure that direct farmers have."

Many farmers get into direct-marketing as a way to weed out the middleman, capturing more of the profits between field and fork themselves. But FPC farmers see this collective arrangement as a way to reintroduce such a link in the food chain on their own terms.

Bradley says many Farm Beginnings

Farm Beginnings Profiles

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

graduates are drawn to niche marketing, but often find out they don't have the skill set or personality to consistently deal directly with customers. FPC's democratic structure allows members to find a middle ground between having full control of their product from field to fork, and allowing someone else to do the day-to-day chores of actually getting it to eaters.

"I do think that there's room for a middleman in a way that's still empowering the farmers," says Bradley. "Through the co-op, the farmers are the ones making the decisions about that middleman or the organizational structure needed to facilitate that work. It's not somebody

else's decision placing prices and ceilings and quantity demands on them."

Chris Duke, who raises produce and live-

Fresh Faces, see page 22...



Matthew (left) and Tom Cogger say although demand for locally produced food has been strong in their community, they'd rather focus on farming and leave the marketing to the Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative. (LSP Photo)

stock on Great Oak Farm near Mason, Wis., says the cooperative has been able to open up more markets in the region by taking advantage of efficiencies of scale.

"You can really branch out from, 'Well, I really only grow enough to cover this little coffee house for their salad.' But if there's five of us growing lettuce, well by golly we can plan it out and we can grow a lot of lettuce and we can cover this coffee shop and 10 more," he says. "And they're all right here in our region."

The Bottom Line

So far, the cooperative members say they have been able to avoid competing with each other for customers, thanks in part to the fact that demand for local food in the region remains strong. In fact, as the Coggers and Bradley talked about the state of the local foods market in an Ashland coffee shop on a recent afternoon, a space next door was being remodeled to accommodate a major expansion of the Chequamegon Food Co-op, a key customer for FPC. The farmers' marketing initiative has been methodical about creating bylaws that address everything from how to grow FPC's production to what happens when a producer wants to leave the group to how to make major decisions such as buying equipment or hiring consultants.

"When I was on the board we were constantly referring to the bylaws. It's got to be set up as a sound business," says Tom Cogger. "With friends, that can be even scarier because it can go bad quickly if it's all about money. You just have to be careful."

The Coggers know well the importance of balancing financial realities with the more emotional side of farming. Founding members of FPC, they took Farm Beginnings in 2010-2011 as they were seeking ways to transition Matthew into the operation in a way that was economically viable.

"I think the main thing I got out of the

class is you have to make money doing it," says Matthew. "There's plenty of ideas out there, but when it comes to farming, you've got to pay your bills."

Looking Forward

As the cooperative looks to the future, one goal is to rely less on the farmer-members to handle the day-to-day operations of keeping track of orders, coordinating deliveries and managing the finances. Currently, FPC pays for four part-time positions—an accountant, delivery driver, a CSA manager and a meat coordinator. The overall operation is primarily run by volunteer committees made up of the producers. The cooperative is getting to a size and complexity where a fulltime paid managerial position may become a necessity in the near future, but for now it's playing a balancing act familiar to many young enterprises that are experiencing growth: too big to rely on voluntary help to run it, but not big enough yet to pay full-time salaries.

On a day in late May, Chris Duke takes a break from preparing some of his vegetable plots for planting to reflect on how many

Farm Beginnings Profiles

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

different ways he's tried to market his products over the years. To him, the relatively fast growth of FPC shows that both farmers and eaters in the region were looking for a way to more efficiently get local food onto local plates. Whatever the future holds for the cooperative, Duke is confident that their decisions will be guided by an overall goal shared by all the members.

"We all are trying to meet the same end of feeding people good, local food," he says. "To meet that goal, it makes a lot more sense to have one walk-in cooler and one van, rather than having eight people buying delivery vans, eight people buying walk-ins, and so forth. We've seemed to find a way we can still have some individual control while meeting a pretty big overall goal. That's been the beauty of it—it's been really cool to see it come together." □



A hoop house full of tomato plants at Chris Duke's farm. "You can be the best farmer in the world, but if you don't have a good market for it, it isn't going to matter," says Duke. (LSP Photo)

Give it a Listen

Episode 160 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast features interviews with members of the Bayfield Regional Food Producers Cooperative: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/651.

Episode 155 features co-op member and Farm Beginnings presenter Chris Duke talking about the importance of relationships in direct-marketing: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/620.

The Next Step: LSP's Journey person Course

The Land Stewardship Project's Journey person Course provides 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.

Participants work with both a farmer-mentor and a financial adviser on their individual farm planning. Each farm in the course also takes part in a matched savings

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.

To apply to participate in the next Journey person session, contact LSP's Richard Ness at rness@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105. Details are also at www.farmbeginnings.org. □

Community Farmers-Community Bankers

Looking for Land also Means Looking for a Good Source of Financing

By Sarah Claassen & Paula Foreman

Many beginning farmers struggle to find the capital they need to get started. Buying a piece of land, fencing supplies, a packing shed, tractor, young fruit trees—these can add up to an overwhelming initial investment. And these farmers often have a hard time finding the financing that fits their operations.

Dean Harrington is a recently retired banker and longtime family farm advocate from Plainview in southeastern Minnesota. Harrington was recently featured at a Land Stewardship Project “Looking for Land” meeting in Stillwater, Minn., to share his advice with beginning farmers on applying for loans and finding a banker who will be a strong ally.

Harrington was a farm loan supervisor at Foresight Bank for over 40 years and since retiring has been working with local businesses to create a supportive environment for new farmers, entrepreneurs and artists. Foresight Bank continues to find new ways to support family farms and businesses and strengthen the Plainview community. Throughout his career, Harrington has seen parallels in consolidation of farms and banks and believes in the importance of independent, diverse farms and banks.

Role of Community-Minded Bankers

From the perspective of a banker, it can be hard to give out smaller loans to operations with lower cash flow, which can mean credit is not accessible to many small family farms. Banking regulations require a high level of analysis for all loans, regardless of the amount, so it is tempting for a bank to steer away from all but the highest dollar

loans given the work involved.

“Bankers are like water—we always look for the easiest path,” Harrington joked.

But he stressed that it is possible for banks—especially those rooted in rural communities—to find creative ways to serve more diverse operations. Doing so benefits those banks because there is a strong business case for those farms, and they benefit from having clients that produce high value crops, respond nimbly to market conditions,

demonstrate thrift and financial responsibility, and are good members of the community.

Beginning farmers should seek out references from their peers and meet with several bankers to find a good

fit. Harrington urged members of the Looking for Land group to view applying for a loan as a way to seek someone who will be a part of their farm team.

He suggested starting the conversation with the banker something like this: “I’ve heard that this is a good bank, and I’m looking for someone to work with. I’d like to see if this is a good fit.”

Making the Business Case

When meeting with a loan officer, farmers should be confident about their enterprise and make the case for their business from the beginning. Too often, beginning farmers come into a bank “hat in hand” and don’t expect things to work out. Many bankers are interested in working with a more diverse operation but aren’t familiar with how it works. Farmers can offer good background information about the viability of small, diverse farms, and help the banker figure out how to best serve their operation.

“Bankers love numbers,” Harrington emphasized.

While many farmers are practiced at communicating the ethics and stewardship values that guide their farm, they are less comfortable talking about their economic strengths. When farmers share their marketing plans and balance sheets, as well as details on their high value products, loan officers begin to see that their enterprise is set up for success. Three years of income tax returns and business projections are also good documents to bring along for that initial meeting.

During the Stillwater Looking for Land meeting, several beginning farmers shared frustrating attempts to get loans. Loan officers dismissed their budgets, saying that they had not penciled out enough for living expenses. This response was maddening, because these people have worked hard to keep their expenses down in order to save and invest in the operation, and that strength was now being viewed as a weakness.

Harrington advised these farmers to keep that conversation going and show how they have been making it work with personal budgets and savings records. Speaking up about the value of thrift and talking about the role financial responsibility plays in strengthening the farming enterprise may help educate that loan officer on the viability of the operation.

Financing for independent family farms is still a struggle. But by building a good relationship with a loan officer and making a strong business case, financing from a local bank can be a valuable element of a beginning farm. □

Sarah Claassen is an LSP Farm Beginnings organizer working on land access issues. Paula Foreman is a Farm Beginnings graduate and the owner-operator of Encore Farm.

LSP ‘Looking for Land’ Meetings in Nov. & Dec.

The Land Stewardship Project is sponsoring “Looking for Land” meetings in the Saint Croix River Valley area near Minnesota’s Twin Cities Nov. 2 and Dec. 7. All beginning and aspiring farmers who are searching for land are welcome to participate.

These meetings address the following topics:

- Unconventional farm ownership, including cooperative and intergenerational farming.
- Crafting your own farm checklist.
- How to be your own best advocate—legal considerations for farm purchase.

For details, check LSP’s *LIVE-WIRE* e-letter, watch the **Upcoming Events** calendar at www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact Paula Foreman at encore-foreman@gmail.com.

Give it a Listen

Episode 111 of the Land Stewardship Project’s *Ear to the Ground* podcast features Dean Harrington talking about the role sustainable farms can play in a community’s economy: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/46.

Census Takers on the Prairie

It's Not Just Wild Members of a Community That Benefit from a BioBlitz

By Brian DeVore

With knowledge comes power—as well as responsibility. On an overcast Saturday in mid-July several dozen people were gaining more of the former with each step they took through rolling grassland in west-central Minnesota. And as they referred to field guides and smart phone nature apps while tallying a growing list of plant and animal names, they were also getting a sense of the role human-based land use practices play in determining which species are present, and which aren't.

"The more you know the plants and birds and species around you, the more ready you are to take care of them," said Robin Moore, a Land Stewardship Project staffer and the coordinator of the event, called the Simon Lake BioBlitz.

A "BioBlitz" consists of volunteers working with naturalists to record as many living plant and animal species as possible within a designated area and time—usually limited to a day or 24 hours. It's a bit of a biological scavenger hunt. Such surveys, which are done across the country by community groups in various natural areas, provide a rough snapshot of the number and types of species residing in an area, and serve as baselines for future monitoring.

In the case of the Simon Lake BioBlitz, farmers and other local residents spent a day hiking with scientists and natural resource professionals across a hilly natural area

owned by the Nature Conservancy called Sheepberry Fen. Sheepberry Fen includes a mix of dry upland prairie and oak savanna and a large groundwater-fed wetland complex called a calcareous fen.

Sheepberry Fen is special, but it's just one parcel of land in an area of the state where several remnants of highly threatened native tallgrass prairie grow. These prairie areas are controlled by a hodgepodge of

ernment agencies, nonprofit groups and farmers in the area to develop a cooperative landscape management system that will help control invasives across public and private boundaries while providing healthy grass habitat for wildlife and livestock.

The Simon Lake area is in the eastern branch of the Chippewa River watershed, where LSP and the Chippewa River Watershed Project are working together to encourage profitable farming systems that are more reliant on grasslands and other perennial plant systems.

It's emerged in recent years that one way to make grasslands profitable is by raising cattle and other livestock utilizing managed rotational grazing. Also called conservation grazing, this technique can help mimic the periodic, beneficial disturbance that bison



LSP staff member Amy Bacigalupo (second from right) works with volunteers to identify plants during the Simon Lake BioBlitz. (Photo by Ben DeVore)



Purple coneflowers were among the prairie plants identified by participants in the day-long event. (Photo by John White)

landowners in an area called Simon Lake. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources manage some of these natural lands, while the Nature Conservancy owns areas like Sheepberry Fen. Other private parties have bought real estate in the area to utilize it for hunting and various recreational purposes. Finally, several farmers are producing cattle and other livestock, as well as hay, on grasslands they own and rent in the area.

That's a diverse group of landowners with an equally diverse set of goals. But one thing many of them agree on is that grasslands in this region are threatened by invasive species such as sumac, cedar and Siberian elm. For the past few years, LSP has been working with landowners, gov-

once provided in the prairie ecosystem. Use of conservation grazing on wildlife refuges and other natural areas in western Minnesota has already shown promise for controlling invasives and reviving natural grasslands while providing farmers a way to give their own pastures a rest.

Moore and Andy Marcum, who is doing landowner outreach in the Simon Lake area for LSP, have been recently working with a dozen landowners in the area on removing invasive species. Now they are in the midst of helping set up long-term management plans that involve conservation grazing, among other things. It's hoped these management systems will bring back the

BioBlitz, see page 25...

...BioBlitz, from page 24

grasslands, and all that depend on them. But it's a long-term process, one that requires long-term monitoring.

"A lot of farmers in the area, they're looking at getting as much profit as they can immediately," said Marcum during a lunch break at the BioBlitz. "With this plan, and with this approach, it's going to be 10-15 years before we start seeing some huge changes, before the grass is really producing and being profitable the way that the landowners and the farmers want to see it." (For more on LSP's work in the Simon Lake

animal unless you have a name for it," he said between BioBlitz monitoring hikes. "And so in part that's what people are allowed to do — they can walk through here, see this flower or that plant or this distinctive leaf and start putting in there minds, 'What is this plant out there?' So you can in your mind form an image and put a name with that image."

And BioBlitz participants, representing a range of ages, backgrounds and ecological knowledge, were starting to make those connections on this July day. A group of 14 looking for plants started out in a "green desert" of smooth brome grass near a dead-



The Nature Conservancy's Steve Chaplin attempts to identify a bird through a spotting scope during the BioBlitz. "You to have scientific surveys of the area so you know what's there so you can manage it properly," Chaplin says of the BioBlitz concept. "But this is also about community education, to allow people to come out and start putting names on particular plants and animals they see out there. You can't appreciate a prairie plant or animal unless you have a name for it." (Photo by Ben DeVore)

area, see the No. 2, 2014, issue of the Land Stewardship Letter, page 26.)

That's where something like a BioBlitz comes into play as a way to get a baseline of what's present, providing a gauge for how practices such as conservation grazing influence the health of these plants and animals in the long term. Steve Chaplin, prairie conservation coordinator with the Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota chapters of the Nature Conservancy, said such events also have a goal of connecting communities: human as well as natural.

Building community is critical because it will take private and public landowners working together to bring about an overall healthier landscape, said Chaplin. But before people can care, they need to know what they're caring about.

"You can't appreciate a prairie plant or

end gravel road. Brome grass has been called one of the biggest invasives in the area because of its monocultural propensity for crowding out other species. But as they made their way up a draw toward a ridge made up of gravelly soil—the "glacial till" that dominates this part of the state—the landscape became more diverse and the BioBlitz list became longer: dog bane, wild rose, milkweed, sedge, yarrow, pasque flowers, prairie smoke, yellow aster, wild grape, box elder, buckthorn, sumac, lead plant, purple coneflower. An occasional cow pie or charred piece of wood served as reminders that this was no untouched wilderness—its habitat was being managed with the help of cattle and fire.

On the other side of the road closer to the area's namesake fen, another group searching for animals tallied cedar waxwings,

Give it a Listen

Episode 156 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast describes how LSP is working with conservationists, farmers and other landowners in the Simon Lake area to revamp grassland habitats using tools such as managed rotational grazing: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/629.

goldfinches, woodpeckers, a northern rough-winged swallow, white monarch butterflies, three swallows, a wolf spider, a queen bee residing in a den in the middle of an ant mound, a red-tailed hawk sitting on a tree, a grasshopper sparrow, killdeer, longhorn beetles, a wire tension setter on a far off fenceline mistaken for a bird, a 13-lined ground squirrel and finally, a prairie skink lurking in the crack of an "erratic"—a boulder deposited here after a glacier picked it up hundreds of miles north during a different geological era.

Names were being connected to plants and animals. But even more importantly, connections were being made between the health of these natural residents, and the overall quality of the environment.

Peg Furshong, director of operations and constituent relations for the local environmental group Clean Up the River Environment, made it clear during the BioBlitz that even connections that aren't immediately evident are just as critical.

"We know if the soil is healthy, the water will be cleaner," she said. □

For more information on how to set up a BioBlitz event in your community, see www.nationalgeographic.com and search the keyword "BioBlitz."

LSP & Perennial Landscapes

The Land Stewardship Project is working in western Minnesota to promote diversified farming systems that build soil health, are economically viable and improve the environment. This work is centered around the Chippewa 10% Project, a partnership of LSP and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. The Simon Lake initiative is one aspect of this work.

For details, see the **Chippewa 10%** page at www.landstewardshipproject.org. More information is also available by contacting Robin Moore at 320-269-2105 (rmoore@landstewardshipproject.org) or Andy Marcum at 320-634-5327 (andym@landstewardshipproject.org).

Community Based Food Systems

Urban Ag, Racial Equity & Our Parks

When Residents Felt They Weren't Heard, They Spoke Louder

EDITOR'S NOTE: Earlier this year, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board passed an "Urban Agriculture Activity Plan," which will govern how parkland and facilities are used to promote a local food economy in the city. The Land Stewardship Project, working with Hope Community in the Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis, has supported the development of the activity plan, seeing it as a way to advance urban farming and a healthy food system in the city. However, when the initial plan was released to the public, it contained no reference to racial equity, although members of the community had called for a "racial justice framework" at numerous listening sessions throughout the city during the comment period. After Hope Community and LSP raised concerns about this issue being ignored, the Park and Recreation Board agreed to include racial equity and race conscious evaluation measures to help MPRB staff and community members measure the benefit of the plan for communities of color. LSP organizer Dylan Bradford Kesti recently talked to the *Land Stewardship Letter* about LSP's work with Hope and why it's so important for a city's park system to recognize racial equity when developing plans for utilizing space for urban agriculture, among other things.

LSL: Why is LSP working with Hope?

Bradford Kesti: Hope Community is near downtown Minneapolis, in one of the most economically challenged and diverse neighborhoods in the Twin Cities. Our food system doesn't operate in a way that is fair, just and healthy for all people. From seed

to waste stream, there are folks who are exploited by the system of oppression in our society. And so looking at our smaller food system, our foodshed of Minneapolis, we know low income families and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by this unjust and unhealthy food system.

They lack access to healthy food options and access to land to grow it on. We have a system that pushes unhealthy fast food into these communities that do not have the same amenities as many of the neighborhoods in Minneapolis that are more white or more affluent and have many healthy food options.

The Land Stewardship Project has had a five-year partnership with Hope Community to build urban-rural connections between our LSP farmer-members and our Hope growers. And in that work, we ask: "How does this food create more justice and equity in our society?" From a Land Stewardship Project perspective, we believe there is no sustainability without racial equity. And so our work leads with that in the metro region as we work for a more sustainable and just food system with an ethic for the land.

LSL: How does the Minneapolis park system fit into this?

Bradford Kesti: It came up this year that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, after doing research and after doing listening sessions throughout the community, had drafted a Minneapolis Park Board Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. And this would be the plan that guides the work of the Minneapolis Park Board around using parkland to grow food for education and to have spaces

Racial Equity, see page 27...



Land Stewardship Project members and staff teamed up with members of the Hope Community to call for a racial justice framework in the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. Pictured are members of a group of racial equity supporters outside the Board's headquarters. (Photo by Bruce Silcox, www.brucesilcoxphotography.com)

to talk about native species of plants and edibles. From a food sovereignty or food democracy perspective, giving people access to land to grow their own food is a big first step if they are to have control of their own food system.

So we believe the Park Board's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan should recognize that this is public land we are talking about, and all people using that space should have equal access to it, and equal benefits from it, especially those who have been pushed out of the system.

And we were excited about growing food on public land, but we were really disappointed to see the complete lack of a racial equity lens in the plan. It came up at multiple listening sessions around the city that folks wanted to have racial equity in the plan explicitly. We know from the past, and we know from the society we live in, that if we do not explicitly address racial equity, then it's not part of public plans.

So we organized three dozen or so people to attend the May 21st hearing. And of the 30 who spoke that night, 25 explicitly talked about including racial equity in the plan. We had a large group of community members, and we had three very clear requests: include racial equity in the plan, define it in the

Give it a Listen

Dylan Bradford Kesti talks about racial equity, public lands and working with Hope Community on episode 159 of the Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast: www.landstewardshipproject.org/posts/650.

ally manifest itself in our parks?

Bradford Kesti: We're not talking about tearing up a soccer field or baseball field and planting an urban garden. It's more about using other land that exists already that's not being used for another activity and doing demonstration and educational activities

related to food production on that land. So when you sign up for a summer class or your children are at the park, they might take a football class, but they could also take a class in urban gardening and do salsa or jam or jelly production classes for a value-added product. We're not talking about creating an urban farm that's massive. It's just one step on a journey of redefining our food system.

LSL: *What is the next step?*

Bradford Kesti: I think the next step from LSP's perspective is continuing to support Hope Community and pushing the Park Board on racial equity in general. We want to continue to push them forward.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation system was voted one of the best park systems in the nation. So why don't we be the best park system in the nation that's also leading on racial equity? This is an opportunity for policy makers to be leaders; it's an opportunity for policy makers to be innovators nationwide and to really work for a park system that is equitable and just for everybody. □



ShaVunda Horsley, a "garden leader" at Hope Community, testified in favor of including racial equity initiatives in the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan during a meeting of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. (Photo by Bruce Silcox, www.brucesilcoxphotography.com)

LSL: *So how did you get the message across that not having a racial equity component in the final plan wasn't acceptable?*

Bradford Kesti: Back in May LSP and Hope Community received an e-mail from the Park Board saying that there was going to be a hearing in the next nine days. The implication was this plan was good to go and it was ready to pass.

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From a Land Stewardship Project perspective, we believe there is no sustainability without racial equity. And so our work leads with that in the metro region as we work for a more sustainable and just food system with an ethic for the land.

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definition in the Urban Agricultural Glossary of Terms, and include a racial equity assessment in the evaluation measures. Our message was clear: it is time for you to be on the cutting edge when it comes to this issue.

The plan was sent back to the Park Board staff to be revised and to follow up on our three requests. Later that summer the Park Board worked directly with Hope Community and the Land Stewardship Project and, as a result, the final Urban Agriculture Activity Plan contained what we had asked for.

In the end, officials listened to community members. It was worth showing up and speaking and it was worth taking the time to do that plan right.

LSL: *How could this Urban Agriculture Activity Plan actu-*

LSP & Hope

For more information on LSP's work with the Hope Community and urban agriculture, see **Just Food for All** at www.landstewardshipproject.org or contact Dylan Bradford Kesti at 612-722-6377, dylank@landstewardshipproject.org.



The Soil Will Save Us

How Scientists, Farms, and Foodies are Healing the Soil to Save the Planet

By Kristin Ohlson

2014; 242 pages

Rodale Books

www.rodalebooks.com

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Grass, Soil, Hope

A Journey Through Carbon Country

By Courtney White

Foreword by Michael Pollan

2014; 244 pages

Chelsea Green Publishing

www.chelseagreen.com

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

At a time when there's a lot of bad news when it comes to the state of our land, spending a bit of time in the company of optimists can be good for the soul. And there's no doubt Kristin Ohlson and Courtney White have a positive message to relay in their new books about the benefits to be had from building healthy soil. The titles alone—*The Soil Will Save Us* (Ohlson) and *Grass, Soil, Hope* (White)—tip off the reader that these works are not dwelling on how our monocultural, industrialized farming system has all but decimated the very soil that supports us. Their books are rooted in showcasing remedies.

White and Ohlson approach the subject matter in different ways, but their overall premise is the same: we have the ability here and now to rebuild the life in the soil, recapturing its ability to do everything from generate its own natural fertility to sequester greenhouse gases. These books are no pie-in-the-sky fantasies. Both writers combine the latest in soil science with practical examples of farmers and others who are on-the-ground proving that yes, we can rebuild our underworld to the point where it becomes a positive force on the surface.

White, a former archeologist and Sierra Club activist, abandoned what he calls the "conflict industry" to co-found the Quivira Coalition, a New Mexico-based nonprofit group that is attempting to bring ranchers,

conservationists, public land managers, scientists and others together around issues of land health. Such an area of agreement White calls the "radical center." It's clear from the stories he relates in *Grass, Soil, Hope* that White sees soil as the perfect medium for that "center" to germinate in.

While working with innovative livestock producers out West, he has seen firsthand how systems like managed rotational grazing can not only heal the land, but also improve it significantly. In a kind of travelogue type format, he provides some inspiring, firsthand accounts of rangelands that had been all but destroyed by overgrazing—or just as badly, were suffering from benign neglect—and have been reclaimed by a careful use of animal impact, grassland reclamation, an avoidance of tillage and, in some cases, use of compost. The results have been healthier livestock, less erosion, more wildlife and cleaner water, among other things. It was while visiting one of these innovative operations in 2010—the Nicasio Native Grass Ranch in California—that White had his eyes opened to another major benefit to building the soil: it can take a lot of carbon out of the atmosphere and lock it up, thus helping reverse the greenhouse gas effect that is dramatically changing our climate. One estimate is that poor farming, ranching and other land practices have caused 80 billion tons of carbon to be released from our soil into the atmosphere.

It was announced in September that during 2013 alone, the burning of coal, oil and gas caused a record amount of carbon dioxide to be pumped into the environment. The result? World carbon dioxide levels are at 400 parts per million, 50 parts per million beyond the level that many experts think can keep the climate stable for human life.

Scientists working with the owners of Nicasio have found that farming practices that build soil biology can make our land a significant carbon "sink," which makes terra firma a potentially huge weapon in the battle against climate change. White's experience with Nicasio launches a journey that takes him from the West to the Great Plains to the East Coast—even as far away as Australia—in search of other examples of "carbon ranching." What he finds are people who are using the sequestration of carbon as a brass ring to grab onto in their efforts to improve the land's health. Despite the title,

White doesn't limit his examples to graziers. The potential of everything from cover cropping and conservation tillage to wetlands and beaver dams also gets covered.

It's all very exciting, but at times the Optimism Express goes into overdrive. "It's about the things that nurture life—love, kindness, care, affection, experience, knowledge, laughter, liberty, family, food, and the pursuit of happiness," White writes in one overly-enthusiastic passage.

But perhaps one can be forgiven for going overboard at times, given some of the impressive transformations witnessed.

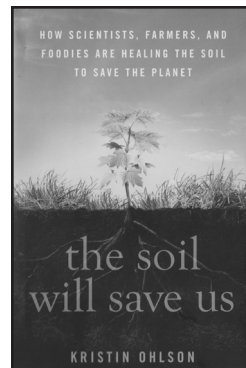
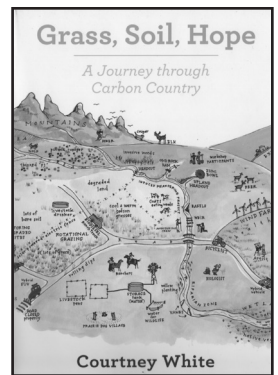
The Big Dance

Kristin Ohlson is also quite optimistic (she calls the ability of soil to heal the planet "our great green hope"), and *The Soil Will Save Us* is also full of firsthand accounts of the real-life wonders produced by healthier soil. But Ohlson, a veteran science writer, brings a journalist's sharp eye to some of the claims soil health boosters make, and weighs the pros and cons. She quotes one leading scientist on his estimate that three billion tons of carbon can be sequestered annually in the world's soils, reducing the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by three parts per million per year. "The carbon in the soil is like a cup of water," says the scientist, Rattan Lal of Ohio State University. "We have drunk more than half of it, but we can put more water back in the cup. With good soil practices, we could reverse global warming."

That's impressive, and as Ohlson points out, the "further from academia" one gets, the more optimistic the statistics become. We should take some of this with a grain of salt, but what Ohlson discovers is that soil health claims made outside of the research station or laboratory aren't necessarily without foundation. In fact, in many cases, farmers and ranchers are *ahead* of the science.

Perhaps the biggest contribution Ohlson makes to the soil health discussion is that she doesn't shy away from two tricky questions: how will we make building soil health pay, and are promises that soil can sequester all this carbon distracting us from preventing the release of more greenhouse gases?

Offset markets and outright subsidies are



Soil, see page 29...

being considered as ways to give farmers the economic incentive to transition into soil-friendly practices. It all sounds good, but the amount of carbon stored has to be measurable in order to fit into a consistent accounting system. And the practice being paid for shouldn't cause "leakage." In other words, if a farmer builds soil in a way that is less "productive" commodity-wise, the overall benefits are lost if other farmers make up for that shortfall by using even more industrialized practices. And what happens when land that's managed well changes hands and the new owner plows up all that stored carbon?

The second contentious issue, that sequestration will be a distraction or will serve

as a green cover for polluting industries, needs to be addressed if the environmental community is to be brought on board the soil health movement. As the Environmental Defense Fund's Robert Parkhurst tells Ohlson when talking about soil's ability to sequester carbon, "It's not going to work everywhere for everyone, but...the sources of climate change are many, and so the solutions have to be just as many."

The bottom line is that if the soil health movement is to succeed, it won't be because of the science, agronomics or markets—although all of those play important roles. It will be because of the people and the relationships they build with the land and in their communities. What these groups of farmers, scientists, conservationists and just

plain consumers need to recognize is that sometimes the best thing to do is to allow those countless soil microbes to do what they do best: cook up their own sustainability in what Ohlson calls a "wondrous dance."

"We can't keep being the oaf that breaks into the dance, bumping one partner or the other out of the way, thinking we can improve upon their step and sway," she writes. "We suffer for this clumsiness. We need to stand back, pay close attention to the ways in which these partners need help, and offer it with the greatest respect." □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter and the author of the LSL series, "Soil Health, Profits & Resiliency."

Creating Dairyland

How Caring for Cows Saved Our Soil, Created Our Landscape, Brought Prosperity to Our State, and Still Shapes Our Way of Life in Wisconsin

By Edward Janus

2011; 209 pages

Wisconsin Historical Society Press

www.wisconsinhistory.org/whspress

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

Creating *Dairyland* is a fascinating account of how the dairy industry transformed Wisconsin's historical, political and economic development.

Author Edward Janus makes a good case for his claim that the "cow created Wisconsin."

The book begins by describing how Wisconsin's original agricultural anchor, wheat, was a crop that depleted the soil and was economically unstable, making it difficult for farmers and the land to remain viable and productive. Janus, a journalist, oral historian and former dairy farmer, explains how a series of market and transportation forces thrust Wisconsin into the position of being not only the dairyland of the Midwest but the top cheese producing state in the country. He also explains in detail how this transition from wheat to dairy farming produced a form of agriculture that was not only more economically viable but placed nutrients in the soil rather than depleting them, creating some of the richest farmland in the world.

However, the author also makes it clear that even as milk production created a more economically stable and environmentally viable farm economy in Wisconsin, the state's

dairy industry has faced and continues to face many challenges, including keeping young people interested in farming as rural life competes with the conveniences and cultural attractions of city life, especially difficult considering the nearness of large urban centers such as Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee and the Twin Cities.

In addition to describing the history and challenges of the dairy industry, the book also shows the way the industry has responded to these challenges. For example, there were farmer trainings offered by agencies like the University of Wisconsin Extension Service and the development of modern farm machinery such as tractors and automated milking systems. Innovations increased efficiency and allowed farm families to pursue recreational and cultural interests, which in turn allowed rural quality of life to be more competitive with urban life.

Creating Dairyland describes many of these innovations through the written accounts of various farmers such as the Craves family of Waterloo, Wis., who discovered that in order to compete in the modern dairy world they would have to be more innovative. The family initially considered becoming organic, but with the three-year time frame required for certification and the then limited size of the market, they decided to go in the direction of what could be described as a self-contained dairy system with a feedlot and a cheese factory on site. The author then describes how the Craves captured most of the manure, converting the methane gas into power and selling it on the

grid to provide electricity to homes in the area, thus eliminating the smell of the feedlot and the potential water contamination issues common with large confinements.

Even though the Craves' operation was innovative in handling the environmental problems of manure in confinement systems, and addressed transportation by having

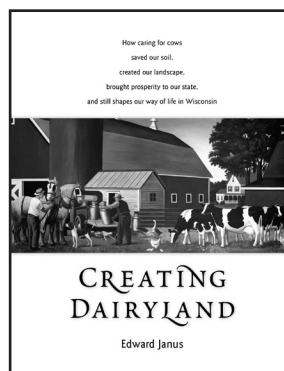
the cheese factory on site, Janus does not discuss how issues of hormones, antibiotics and animal stress were handled in this system.

Other examples of innovative dairying include Sam and Sid Cook, the backbone of Wisconsin's famous Carr Valley Cheese, the epitome of the cheesemaker's craft. Or Laura Daniels and her Iowa County operation, as well as Hannah Iverson's Guernsey dairy. These latter examples highlight the emerging role of woman in agriculture.

The author describes how dairy practices in the Driftless Region of western Wisconsin can allow for pasturing of dairy cattle while protecting the land and ecology of this unique region. One of the farms Janus describes was using methods so environmentally-friendly that it received an award from Trout Unlimited.

The combination of history, politics, agriculture, economics and environmental issues described in this book, as well as its extensive bibliography of resources, make it a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the agricultural development of a Midwestern farming state. □

Frequent Land Stewardship Project volunteer Dale Hadler lives in southeastern Minnesota.



Our Home Bases

By Amelia Shoptaugh

The work of the Land Stewardship Project happens on the ground—in homes, legislative offices, farm fields and classrooms. But everyone needs a base to work from, someplace to provide the infrastructure necessary to support the work being done. That's where the LSP offices come in. LSP has three offices, two of which we own. One of the main responsibilities the administrative staff has is to manage and maintain our offices, especially the ones LSP owns. As operations manager I oversee the building and office management of all of our offices, and I manage the day-to-day operations of our Minneapolis location.

Our Minneapolis office is located in an old firehouse in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood of South Minneapolis. LSP purchased the building a few years ago, and we remodeled the first floor to include two office spaces and two meeting rooms. The meeting rooms have proven very beneficial to our work, and are also used at times by our tenants, as well as other outside groups. The two office spaces are currently leased to the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association and Full Cycle, a nonprofit bike shop that works with homeless youth. The LSP offices are located on the second floor. We have a staff of 15 working out of this office, including staff from every program as well as all of our communications, financial and individual giving staff.

Our southeastern Minnesota office is located in downtown Lewiston and is home to a staff of seven. The rented, small-town store turned LSP office was purchased in the



LSP's office in Montevideo, Minn. (Photo by Robin Moore)

late 1990s and remodeled by members, staff and a few contracted professionals.

The roomy, front meeting space offers opportunities for in-house meetings and events while individual workspaces give way to grant writing, program and administrative work. Additional storage in the back affords an opportunity to house tables and chairs for group meetings and on-farm events.

Members are welcome to “walk in” to seek information, to share concerns or to participate in one of LSP's projects. We even have the occasional “off I-90” traveler stop by to ask where the nearest gas station is.

“We do have a bit of building excitement from time to time, ranging from a tornado roaring down Main Street several years ago to an occasional furnace or plumbing emergency,” says part-time southeastern Minnesota office manager Karen Benson.

Our western Minnesota office is located in Montevideo, in an old train depot. We

rent space in the building from the Milwaukee Road Heritage Center, which uses the rest of the building as a railroad museum. This office is home to six program staff. We don't currently have any operational staff in this office, as LSP is not responsible for maintenance of the space, but I am available to them to provide any operational and program support they require. The staff of this office also works together to manage the office.

Managing these offices requires a good operational support structure. Communication, flexibility, problem solving skills and a sense of humor are a must. Together the operations team keeps things running to support the good work of LSP. □

LSP operations manager Amelia Shoptaugh can be reached at amelias@landstewardshipproject.org or 612-722-6377.



LSP's office in Lewiston, Minn. (Photo by Caroline van Schaik)



LSP's office in Minneapolis, Minn. (LSP Photo)



Why I am a Sustaining Member of LSP

By *Connie Bowen*

My connection with the Land Stewardship Project came about by word-of-mouth during my first winter after moving to Minnesota two years ago, with personal recommendations from both old friends and new.

A colleague from my hometown of Rochester N. Y., wrote and said how much she admired Mark Schultz. Schultz, who is LSP's associate director, director of programs and director of the organization's Policy and Organizing Program, had done community-organizing training with the leadership of the Northeast Organic Farming Association. Soon afterwards, Karla Pankow of Bossy Acres Farm connected me with Farm Beginnings organizers Sarah Claassen and Nick Olson after she learned of my passion for finding creative ways to get more young farmers on the land. In fact, I had previously worked with the Genesee Land Trust and with Peacework Organic CSA. I was immediately drawn to the mission of LSP and became a member and an active volunteer—tabling and serving at breakfasts, working telephone banks to help with membership recruitment and renewals, and being involved in the daily work in the LSP office.

During our first year here, my husband Kevin and I spent a great deal of time exploring our newly-adopted and beloved state of Minnesota. I became deeply-connected to the beauty of this land, and my feelings about good stewardship became even more personal. One weekend, we traveled to the

Eagle Center in Wabasha, Minn., by driving on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River. We saw a breathtaking view of Lake Pepin, the incredible beauty of the bluffs and the lovely and varied countryside of south-eastern Minnesota as we returned home. Coincidentally, two days later, I found myself working on an LSP telephone bank as we called people to ask for support in opposing frac sand mining. When I described the threats to the beautiful bluffs I had just seen, and the preciousness of our land and water, I spoke with genuine emotion in my voice. The conversations I had with LSP members that night helped to build the power to pass state laws last year that put strict regulations on the frac sand industry. It's great to see these laws enforced by the recent action of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, which shut down an illegally operating silica mine, thus requiring it to apply for a Trout Stream Setback Permit (*see story on page 13*).

Last summer, I volunteered to pick up donations from local businesses for the Twin Cities Cookout and Silent Auction. I enjoyed that task a great deal. I was able to learn my way around the Twin Cities, and I felt as if there were a halo effect because so often when I arrived at a site, I was welcomed with, "Oh! You're with the Land Stewardship Project? What a *great* organization!" Their enthusiasm warmed the heart of this newcomer to town. When I went to the East-side Co-op to pick up their donation, Luna McIntyre created a generous gift basket and, as I took pictures of it, she said how much she enjoyed being part of the Land Steward-

ship Project, and that she was "a sustaining member of LSP." That was the first time I had heard the phrase "sustaining member," but immediately it sounded like the right "fit" to me. I thought, "I want to be part of that, too." Kevin and I became sustaining members last summer because we wanted to make that kind of ongoing commitment through a monthly pledge to LSP.

Please consider taking your membership to the next level and becoming a sustaining member of LSP to support the worthwhile work of advancing family farms, helping new farmers get started and organizing for positive change for people and the land.

I remember a call I made one evening last fall from the Minneapolis office, when we were telephoning prospective members. One gentleman said, "So, you're in the office now, eh? What's it like there?" As I sat in Adam Warthesen's chair, I pictured all the work that happens in LSP's Lewiston, Montevideo and Minneapolis offices and I thought about how, during the workday, Mark, Michael, Abby, Megan, Kaitlyn and Bobby typically sat in the other desks, sharing the space in a convivial circle in just one room of the brick-walled, former fire station. I smiled when I answered, "It's well, sort of low-key, basic and no-frills, to say the least. You can feel confident that your contribution will be put to good use on just the necessities for this work." □

Monthly, sustaining pledges to the Land Stewardship Project can be set up online at www.landstewardshipproject.org or by contacting Abby Liesch, LSP's membership and outreach associate, at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org.

Membership Questions?

Contact the Land Stewardship Project's Membership Program at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@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 details, contact LSP's Mike McMahon (mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) or Abby Liesch (aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org) at 612-722-6377.





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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **OCT. 31—Wisconsin Soils Summit**, Osseo, Wis. Contact: www.RiverCountryRCD.org, 715-579-2206

→ **NOV. 2—LSP Looking for Land Meeting**, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., St. Croix River Valley area. Contact: Paula Foreman, encoreforeman@gmail.com (see page 23)

→ **NOV. 5—LSP Benefit Shopping Night at Ten Thousand Villages**, 5 p.m.-8 p.m., 867 Grand Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. Contact: 651-225-1043, www.tenthousandvillages.com/stpaul

→ **NOV. 6—Minnesota Food Licensing Video Conference Workshop**, Bemidji, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Mankato, Marshall, Rochester, St. Cloud & St. Paul. Contact: info@mfma.org, 320-250-5087

→ **NOV. 7-9—15th Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Ag**, Whalan, Minn. Contact: JoAnn Pipkorn, 414-801-6214, jmmpipkorn@gmail.com

→ **NOV. 7-9—Urban & Small Farms Conf.: "Building a Fair Food Economy to Grow Healthy People,"** Milwaukee, Wis. Contact: www.growingpower.org/events.htm, 414-527-1546

→ **NOV. 13—Will Allen Lyceum Lecture**, 7 p.m., Winona State University, Winona, Minn. Contact: Gretchen Michlitsch, gmichlitsch@winona.edu

→ **NOV. 14-15—5th National Conf. for Women in Sustainable Ag**, Fairfield, Iowa. Contact: www.wfan.org, 515-460-2477

→ **NOV. 16—2014 Farm Art Bowl (fundraiser for LSP's Farm Beginnings Program)**, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Bryant Lake Bowl, Minneapolis (see page 9)

→ **NOV. 16-17—Iowa Organic Conf.**, Iowa City, Iowa. Contact: Kathleen Delate, 515-294-7069, www.sustainability.uiowa.edu/2014-iowa-organic-conference

→ **NOV. 22-23—Fall Retreat for LSP's Journey person Course** (see page 22)

→ **DEC. 7—LSP Looking for Land Meeting**, 2 p.m.-4 p.m., Saint Croix River Valley area. Contact: Paula Foreman, encoreforeman@gmail.com (see page 23)

→ **JAN. 6—2015 session of the Minn. Legislature begins**. Contact Bobby King, LSP, 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 9-10—Minnesota Organic Conf.**, St. Cloud, Minn. Contact: Meg Moynihan, 651-201-6616, www.mda.state.mn.us/organic

→ **JAN. 12—Deadline for submitting descriptions for the 2015 Land Stewardship Project CSA Farm Directory for the Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin Region** (see page 9)

→ **JAN. 15-16—Upper Midwest Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference**, Saint Cloud, Minn. Contact: www.mfvga.org, 763-434-0400

→ **JAN. 15-17—GrassWorks Grazing Conf.**, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. Contact: Heather Flashinski, 715-289-4896, www.grassworks.org

→ **JAN. 22-25—Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Winter Conference**, Aberdeen, S. Dak. Contact: www.npsas.org, 701-883-4304

→ **JAN. 23—MDA Minn. Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grants Application Deadline**. Contact: Jeanne Ciborowski, 651-201-6217, www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri.aspx

→ **JAN. 23-24—Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conf.**, Ames, Iowa. Contact: 515-232-5661, www.practicalfarmers.org

→ **JAN. 31—SFA Deep Winter Production**

of Greens & Livestock Fodder Utilizing Passive Solar Energy, Ashby, Minn. Contact: www.sfa-mn.org, 763-260-0209

→ **FEB. 7-8—10th Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference**, University of Minnesota, St. Paul. Contact: www.mnfoodassociation.org, 651-433-3676

→ **FEB. 14—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conf.**, Saint Joseph, Minn. Contact: 763-260-0209, www.sfa-mn.org

→ **FEB. 14—Minnesota Organic Transition Cost Share Program Application Deadline**. Contact: Meg Moynihan, 651-201-6616, www.mda.state.mn.us/en/food/organic/transitioncostshare.aspx

→ **FEB. 15—Spring Retreat for LSP's Journey person Course** (see page 22)

→ **FEB. 18-19—Midwest Soil Health Summit**, Alexandria, Minn. Contact: Kent Solberg, 218-445-7580, www.sfa-mn.org

→ **FEB. 26-28—26th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conf.** Contact: www.mosesorganic.org, 715-778-5775

→ **WINTER—Land Stewardship Project's 10th Annual Family Farm Breakfast & Day at the Capitol**, Saint Paul, Minn. (date to be determined) Contact: 612-722-6377

→ **MARCH 6—MDA Minnesota Value Added Grants Deadline**. Contact: David Weinand, 651-201-6646, www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri.aspx

→ **SEPT. 1—Deadline for LSP's Farm Beginnings Course** (see page 16)

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