

The Land Stewardship

Keeping the Land and People Together

Letter



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20 Years of Telling the Land's Story



By far the most popular event at the Land Stewardship Project's 20th Anniversary Celebration in August was the storytelling tent.

Old time LSP members joined with brand new ones to share their memories of the organization, why they joined and what it means to them. Dwight Ault, who farms with his wife Becky and son Grant near the southern Minnesota community of Austin, set the tone for the event when he showed those gathered a manuscript his daughter, Melissa MacKimm, had developed based on tape recordings of Dwight.



"All I'm going to say is each one of us needs to consider a proposition I'm going to throw at ya," Ault told those gathered at the tent. "If you don't have your stories written on paper or taped for your grandchildren, then you've not done your job. My daughter asked me to use the tape recorder about two years ago so I sat down for half a day and told stories. You know, 50 years ago we had an excuse because we didn't have tape recorders. But we don't have an excuse anymore. The least you can do is to sit down with a tape recorder and forget that maybe you're being a little egotistical by telling these stories. They'll never get it if you don't write it down. So please do that after this. I think stories are the only way we carry traditions. And my goodness we need traditions in the United States."



As LSP concludes its 20th anniversary year, we would like to think that we are part of an important American tradition—one steeped in good land stewardship, vital rural communities and a just society. This issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* is devoted to that tradition. Using the 20th Anniversary storytelling as launching pad, we are featuring remembrances from our members (see page 14). You won't find these stories recorded in books or on television documentaries, but that does not take away from their importance. These memories aren't just about LSP; they are about what roles people have played in carrying the ethic of stewardship forward into the 21st Century.

But this stewardship history has not taken place in some sort of vacuum. The period 1982 to 2002 was a tumultuous time for agriculture, rural communities and the environment. Turn to page 6 and follow the "2 Decades, 2 Histories" timeline.

While developing this timeline, we were struck at how our work at times seemed to be in direct response to the problems in the larger agricultural world, while at others LSP's efforts were actually ahead of the curve.

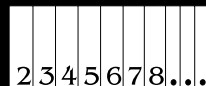
This *LSL* is not an exhaustive history of our organization or the issues we've been involved in over the years. Rather, it's an attempt to dig into the subsoil of LSP's origins.

Dwight Ault is right: if we don't all record our history in some little way, then we haven't done our job. We look forward to the next 20 years, and are already excited about what kind of stories will be told in 2020.



— Brian DeVore

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The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published five times a year by the Land Stewardship Project, a private, nonprofit organization. The mission of the Land Stewardship Project is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities. Members of the Land Stewardship Project receive this newsletter as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

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Commentary !?!?!?

Paul Wellstone: 1944-2002

On Oct. 25, U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, his wife Sheila, daughter Marcia, three campaign staff members and two pilots died when their airplane crashed in northern Minnesota. For the members and staff of the Land Stewardship Project, this tragedy hit particularly close to home. Not only had the state of Minnesota lost a representative in our nation's capitol, but farmers, rural residents and anyone interested in creating a just, sustainable food and farming system had lost a true friend and ally. For much of LSP's 20 year-history, Paul Wellstone had been there, marching, organizing and speaking truth to power.

Although it was as a Senator that Wellstone gained national prominence, his commitment to rural justice issues predates his time in Congress. Wabasso hog farmer Paul Sobocinski remembers meeting Wellstone for the first time in 1983, at a farm foreclosure sale being held on the Lincoln County Courthouse steps. Such forced sales were taking place at a record pace across the Midwest as lenders called in loans. Sobocinski and other farmers were protesting these sales, calling for a moratorium on foreclosures. Soon, the feisty college professor and wrestling coach from Northfield, Minn., became a regular at such protests, even going to jail once after an action.

Sobocinski, who now works as an LSP Policy Program organizer, says Wellstone was very skillful at keeping people's spirits up by encouraging them to stay in the fight. He also served as an important bridge between various groups working for justice. For example, Wellstone would tell farmers about the struggles of members of the striking P-9 meatpackers union at the Hormel plant in Austin,

Minn. Some activists didn't think family farmers should get involved with issues like the P-9 strike.

"But Wellstone said no, you have to stand with others," says Sobocinski. "He was right, because the packers broke the backs of unions across the country. Then what? Now they have turned around and

are focused on breaking farmers. I think what Paul brought to the farm movement was that we have to understand what others are going through, because if we don't all work to stop abuses in the system, you will be next."

Doug Nopar, who worked with Wellstone on a rural voter registration drive in 1984, also remembers his ability to network people who normally might not have anything to do with each other.

"He was an organizer in the best sense of the word in that he could inspire people and then hook people up who had similar interests and goals but didn't know each other," says Nopar, who worked as an LSP organizer for 13 years.

LSP member Lorraine Redig remembers first hearing Wellstone speak during a farm crisis rally in the early 1980s. Lorraine, along with her husband Art, was farming in Winona County at the time. They were fighting the Farm Credit System, which wanted to force a foreclosure on their farm. They eventually got to know Wellstone personally. He and a fellow Carleton College professor came down to the Redig farm, and out of that visit came an article that appeared in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* newspaper. The



In this 1988 photo, Paul Wellstone is shown participating in an LSP Farmland Stewardship Committee meeting in Rice County, Minn.

Wellstone, see page 3...

article used the Redigs as an example of how farmers work hard and the Farm Credit System was created to help them survive and thrive, not put them out of business. The publicity led Farm Credit officials to allow the Redigs to have their own farm auction. In turn, they were able to keep the value of what they sold, allowing them to use the money to begin paying off the debt. The Redigs eventually got a private company to back their loan and they started an aerial photography business. They skimmed and saved enough to pay off all their farm debt—on their own terms.

The committee member

In the late 1980s, Wellstone served on LSP's Farmland Stewardship Committee in Minnesota's Rice County. The Committee was formed to hold insurance companies accountable when it came to stewardship of farmland they owned (see page 16). All of the committee's meetings were either at churches or at the home of Paul and Sheila Wellstone, recalls Mark Schultz, the LSP staff member who coordinated that committee. Wellstone helped LSP organize a 1988 meeting that made the phrase "keep the land and people together" part of the stewardship lexicon. Despite his reputation for fiery rhetoric and attracting the spotlight, Schultz says Wellstone was good at working within a small, local committee.

"He was not a grandstander. He was one of the best members of a committee I ever had."

The activist Senator

When he was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1990, Wellstone continued to fight for rural communities and sustainable agriculture. He listened to farmers, small business owners, rural residents, immigrants, veterans, Native Americans, unions, human rights advocates and others who felt their voices were being drowned out by large corporate interests. The Senator often made it clear that large corporations had their own representation at the capitol, so they didn't need him.

"It was like the people had a seat in the Senate," says Schultz, who is now LSP's Policy Program Director.

And Wellstone never lost his ability to inspire people. Schultz recalls in particular a trip he and several LSP farmer-members made to Washington in February 1999. The farmers wanted to meet with various decision makers to drive

home the point that farm policy was unfair to family farmers, and major changes were needed.

Wellstone met with Schultz and Lynn Hayes, who at the time was an attorney with Farmers' Legal Action Group, as well as northeast Iowa farmer Greg Koether and southeast Minnesota farmer Dwight Ault. As the farmers explained how corporate concentration in agriculture was driving them out of business and ruining the land, Wellstone studiously took notes for about 40 minutes, Schultz recalls. The Senator was inspiring these two farmers by quietly listening to their concerns and asking the kinds of questions that showed he truly wanted to help change things. Ault and Koether were visibly moved after the meeting.

"My experience with Senator Wellstone was the highlight of the trip for me," recalls Koether. "I had lost all hope that there was anyone in Washington that cared so deeply for farmers like me, and was committed to work for change."

Wellstone was working for family farms and the environment right up to the end. After LSP and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms—Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Missouri Rural Crisis Center—met with Wellstone, he agreed to push for a ban on ownership of livestock by corporate meatpackers.

Two and a half months later, it was Wellstone who introduced the packer ban in the Senate Agriculture Committee. Although it was defeated in the committee, the grassroots pressure organized by the Campaign for Family Farms grew, and so did the number of Senators supporting the bill. The meatpacking industry launched an unprecedented lobbying campaign, but in an historic bipartisan vote, the Senate eventually voted to ban packer ownership. The House killed the measure, but an important message had been sent to corporate agriculture: the voices of family farmers were being heard.

"Paul had made it clear that he was ready to take up the packer ownership issue again if he was returned to the Senate," says Schultz (see Schultz's tribute to Wellstone on page 4).

The other major initiative Wellstone fought hard for—the Conservation Security Program—made it into law earlier this year. This program, which promises to reward farmers for being good stewards of the land, was guided through the Senate by Iowa Senator Tom Harkin. Wellstone, as a key member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, helped

make it a reality. When LSP member-farmers testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee on the need for policy reforms, it was clear that Wellstone was there as an ally, says Schultz.

On Jan. 9, Wellstone spoke at an LSP meeting in New Ulm, Minn. The meeting was called to celebrate recent victories in Congress and to regroup for future initiatives. The Senator was obviously buoyed by recent wins: "My gosh, when these conglomerates... want to expand with corporate welfare, we say no way. It's an assault on the rural environment. I'd rather put the money towards a decent price for farmers, renewable energy, environmental protection, rural economic development and education. And we're going to win! Thank you. I'm proud to work with you, Land Stewardship Project. Keep up the good work!"

Continuing the legacy

Sobocinski says LSP will continue Wellstone's legacy by pushing for the ban on ownership of livestock by corporate packers, as well as work with lawmakers to make sure one of his last initiatives—a funding package for sustainable swine research—becomes a reality. The package would provide \$275,000 through the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bill to the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minn.

Wellstone's personal legacy of being a caring human being will also stay with all the people he touched over the years. His ability to remember faces and names was legendary, but it went beyond being a handy campaign tool. Art and Lorraine Redig ran into the Senator and his family periodically over the years, and they were always treated as the dear friends the Wellstones considered them to be.

Lorraine says one of her favorite memories was four years ago, when they and a granddaughter met the Senator at the Minnesota State Fair. Wellstone told the granddaughter, who was 10 at the time, that, "If you grow up using your grandparents as a role model, you're going to be a good person."

There was no doubt that such a statement was as genuine and straight-from-the-heart as everything else the man said and did, says Lorraine.

"He talked the talk, and he walked the walk. He lived the dream. How can you argue with that?" □

To view tributes to Paul Wellstone from LSP and the Campaign for Family Farms, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Paul Wellstone—organizing's ally

By Mark Schultz

Stewardship. Family Farms. Social and economic justice. A strong and good America. Democracy.

Over LSP's 20 years, our organization has stood for these values. LSP members have educated ourselves and others, spoken out, worked on committees, changed our farming practices and our eating and buying habits, taken part in rallies and actions, developed and advanced public policy, asked others to join LSP and take action with us, and pushed ourselves and others to make changes in our agriculture and food system. Above all, we have *organized*—built power for ordinary citizens to get things done that improve our lives and the lives of future generations and the land.

Our power comes from people working together to make a positive impact. In general, we don't have powerful allies on the inside. Our best allies tend to be groups like us—honest, hard-working, grassroots organizations run by ordinary people. Our effectiveness comes from building our strength step-by-step, outside of party politics and corporate pressure. As one lobbyist told me last year, "You guys have always got something you're pulling together, taking action with people."

"Pulling together" is a good description of what it was like working with Paul Wellstone. As described on pages 2 and 3 of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, LSP members and staff worked with Wellstone before he became a Senator, and after.

To me, what was unique about Wellstone as a U.S. Senator is that he truly wanted people to have power. I believe his strongest conviction was that grassroots Americans, if they took leadership and organized, would come up with the best answers to the issues that affected their lives—not the transnational corporations or the rich who were already well-positioned and all too ready to tell the rest of us what was best "for us." By organizing, Wellstone believed, people become fully participant members in a democratic society and gain the power to make real and long-lasting change. He realized that, given the current concentra-

tion of wealth and power in American society, organizing is sometimes confrontational or controversial, and, more importantly, that it is necessary for democracy to function and for grassroots people to win.

In contrast, the last thing most corporate executives and higher-level politicians want is for ordinary citizens to have real power. They want to move you and shake you and get you to buy what they are selling—not listen to you and respond with action that supports your goals.

Of course, we had our battles with

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"To me, what was unique about Wellstone as a U.S. Senator is that he truly wanted people to have power."

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Wellstone, too. I can remember the first time LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee laid out to the Senator the policy approach that became the Conservation Security Program. We were meeting in his St. Paul office, and it got pretty heated when Wellstone realized we did not support increased subsidies for corn, soybeans and other overproduced commodity crops. "People need a price," he said. "That's true, but we won't get it with subsidies," LSP farmers replied. "We need to diversify, change the landscape." Two years (and many meetings with strong LSP turnout) later, Wellstone was Senator Tom Harkin's strongest supporter for the Conservation Security Act. That's because he listened to the people.

In addition to his advocacy for the Conservation Security Program, Wellstone carried the ball for LSP and our allies within the Campaign for Family Farms on the packer ownership of livestock ban. He introduced it in the Senate Agriculture Committee and in November 2001 forced a vote when no one else would.

Wellstone backed us in our efforts to end the pork checkoff (see page 5) from the very beginning, calling for an Office

of the Inspector General investigation of the use of checkoff funds in March 1997. Wellstone also advocated constantly on our behalf to Secretary of Ag Dan Glickman to validate the hog farmer signatures and hold a nationwide referendum as established by law. He strongly criticizing the Bush Administration for arrogantly rejecting the democratic vote of hog farmers to terminate the checkoff. Recently, the Senator backed Federal support for sustainable swine research and demonstration, making sure that then-Senate Ag Appropriations chair Herb Kohl of Wisconsin included funding in the Senate bill in July.

So, we thank Paul Wellstone for his service to family farmers and the environment, and to people from so many walks of life working to improve their lives and the life of their communities.

And, with sadness, but also with enduring vision, we move on. LSP's job remains the same—to organize, to educate, to push for change on behalf of the land and the people. Let us take this lesson from Wellstone's life—that democracy can work, through hard work and commitment from each one of us. We can win, but we must build more power with more people, and, in the midst of them, find and encourage new leaders who will carry on the work for stewardship and justice, as Paul Wellstone did. □

Mark Schultz is LSP's Policy Program Director. He first worked with Paul Wellstone during a farmland investor accountability campaign in the late 1980s (see page 3). Schultz can be reached at 612-722-6377 or marks@landstewardshipproject.org.

What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments?



Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays and poems on issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Contact: Brian DeVore,

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Mandatory pork checkoff ruled unconstitutional

USDA granted temporary permission to continue tax

Hog farmers are applauding a ruling by a Federal Judge in Michigan that the mandatory pork checkoff program is unconstitutional and should be terminated. This ruling, which was made Oct. 25 by the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, is in response to a lawsuit filed by the Campaign for Family Farms (CFF) claiming that the checkoff was unconstitutional. The Land Stewardship Project is a founding member of the Campaign for Family Farms. Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) is representing CFF in its case against the checkoff.

In the ruling, Judge Richard A. Enslen wrote: "In days of low returns on agriculture, the decision of an individual farmer to devote funds to uses other than generic

advertising are very important. Indeed, the frustrations of some farmers are likely to only mount when those funds are used to pay for competitors' advertising, thereby depriving the farmer of the ability to pay for either niche advertising or non-advertising essentials (such as feed for livestock). This is true regardless of whether objecting farmers are correct in their economic analysis that the assessments and speech do not sufficiently further their own particular interests...whether this speech is considered on either philosophical, political or commercial grounds, it involves a kind of outrage which [Thomas] Jefferson loathed. The government has been made tyrannical by forcing men and women to pay for messages they detest. Such a system is at the bottom unconstitutional and rotten."

Judge Enslen agreed with the Campaign for Family Farms' arguments that the mandatory pork checkoff violates the U.S. Constitution and infringes on hog producers' right to free speech by forcing them to pay into a program that supports factory-style

production and corporate control of the industry, and is detrimental to their interests.

Both USDA and the National Pork Producers Council have appealed Judge Enslen's decision. In a related move, on Nov. 13, the USDA filed an emergency motion asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit to block implementation of Enslen's order, which would have taken effect Nov. 24. On Nov. 15, that request was granted. That means, at least until the Circuit Court rules on the appeal, a checkoff fee will be collected on every hog sold in the country. The court

did agree to expedite the briefing and the submission of this appeal.

USDA claims the termination of the program would result

in loss of jobs for the National Pork Board, which collects the checkoff fee. But Monica Kahout, an Olivia, Minn., hog farmer and LSP Board Member, says hog producers have no guarantee they will be in business a year or even a month from now.

"Why should National Pork Board employees have guaranteed employment at the expense of hog farmers?"

CFF has requested that the Sixth Circuit place any checkoff funds collected after Nov. 24 into an interest-bearing escrow account, so it can be returned to hog farmers at the conclusion of appeals.

The pork checkoff program was started in 1986 after Congress passed a law mandating that hog farmers pay into the fund. It generates about \$45-\$50 million annually. Money collected under the program goes to the National Pork Board. Until 2001, nearly all of that money ended up in the coffers of the National Pork Producers Council, or its state affiliates.

The mandatory pork checkoff has been

controversial among hog farmers for many years. In 1998, the Campaign for Family Farms initiated a national petition drive calling for a hog farmer referendum to decide if the program should be ended. That led to a vote conducted by the USDA in August and September 2000 in which over 30,000 U.S. hog producers voted 53 percent to 47 percent to terminate the pork checkoff. Following the announcement of the vote results in January 2001, then-U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman ordered the termination of the program.

However, in a move that shocked hog farmers and various members of Congress, President Bush's newly appointed Ag Secretary Ann Veneman cut a

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"Why should National Pork Board employees have guaranteed employment at the expense of hog farmers?"

—Monica Kahout

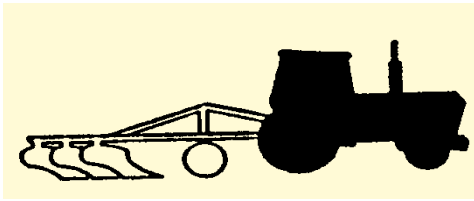
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 backroom deal with the National Pork Producers Council in February 2001 to throw out the results of the democratic vote and force hog farmers to keep paying the checkoff. This action led to the Campaign's lawsuit against USDA, which includes a specific claim that the mandatory pork checkoff violates hog producers' constitutional rights by infringing on the First Amendment.

LSP member and southwest Minnesota hog farmer Jim Joens, who is an individual plaintiff in the legal case, says despite the temporary stay granted to the USDA, Judge Enslen's decision is a sign that organizing by LSP and the Campaign for Family Farms is making headway at opposing corporate concentration and factory farms.

"Yeah, ending the checkoff will save me some money," Joens says. "But the bigger picture is we're trying to put control of the market in the hands of the independent farmer."

The Campaign for Family Farms is a coalition of farm and rural groups. This coalition is leading the fight against the corporate takeover of the hog industry and working for policies that support independent family farmers. Besides LSP, CFF member groups include Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, and Illinois Stewardship Alliance. □

Judge Richard A. Enslen's ruling can be viewed at www.miwd.uscourts.gov/profile/Pork.judgment.pdf.



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Decades, 2 Histories

The period 1982 to 2002 doesn't just mark the Land Stewardship Project's first 20 years of existence; it also was a time of tumultuous changes within agriculture, the environment and our rural communities.



■ Several years of “fencerow to fencerow” plantings of crops for the export market has taken its toll on the land and people. The nation is losing soil at the average annual rate of eight tons per acre, according to the USDA. Under the best of circumstances, soil can replenish itself at an annual rate of about half a ton per acre, say some scientists.

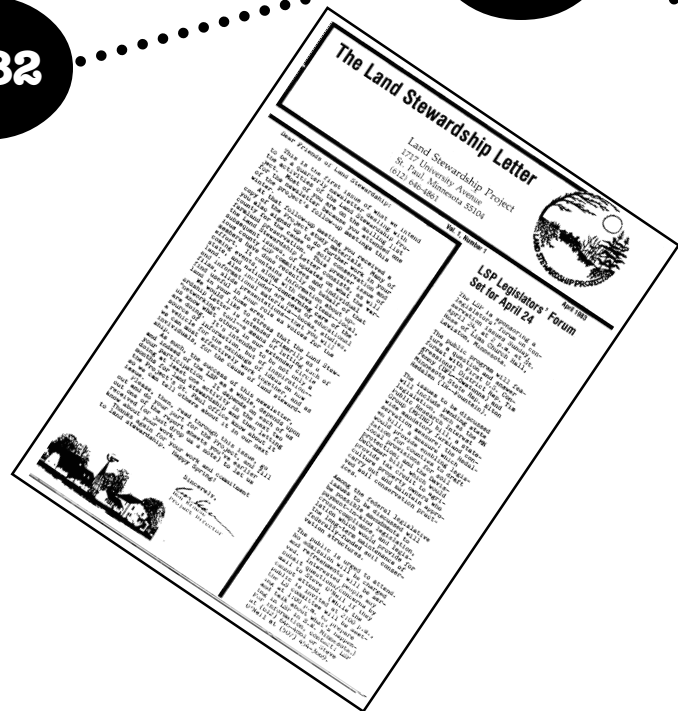
■ First genetically engineered crop plant (tomato) developed.

■ Rural America is experiencing a full-blown economic crisis not seen since the Great Depression. Farmland value, inflated by boom export markets during the 1970s, drops 60 percent in some areas between 1981 and 1985. Many farmers find it impossible to retire debts as fast as their assets declined. The typical farmer's profits dropped 36 percent between 1980 and 1986. Lenders panic and start calling in loans, prompting a record spate of foreclosures and sheriff's sales.

■ Iowa farmers are committing suicide at the rate of 46 per 100,000. The national rate for adult men is roughly 29 per 100,000.

1982

1983



● Alarmed by reports that in some cases every bushel of corn costs us two bushels of topsoil, Ron Kroese and Victor Ray launch LSP with initial grants from the Youth Project and the Joyce foundation.

● LSP opens office at Minnesota Farmers Union in St. Paul.

● Soil Stewardship Ethics public meetings begin in Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas.

● LSP is incorporated.

● The first *Land Stewardship Letter* is published.

● LSP sponsors a legislators' forum on conservation issues.

● LSP completes initial public meetings and follow-up workshops in 29 counties—14 in Minnesota and 15 in Iowa.

● LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese leads a workshop at the “Creating a Sustainable Food System: Local and Regional Action” conference in Kansas.

■ First genetically engineered farm animals born (sheep and pigs).

■ *National Geographic* magazine publishes a special issue on soil erosion. "Do We Treat Our Soil Like Dirt?" is the title of the magazine's story package.

■ Sustainable agriculture pioneers Dick and Sharon Thompson hold their first field day near Boone, Iowa. More than 500 farmers from nine Midwestern states attend.

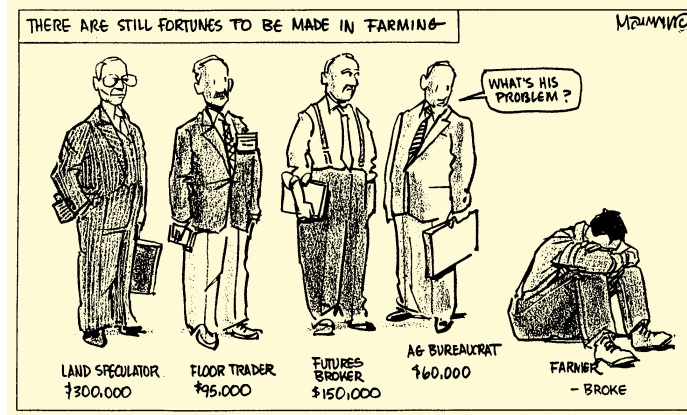
■ More than 14,000 farmers attend a National Crisis Action Rally in Ames, Iowa.

■ More than 15,000 farmers march on the state capital in St. Paul, Minn., calling for a moratorium on farm foreclosures.

■ Willie Nelson organizes the first Farm Aid concert in Champaign, Ill.

■ There are 346,090 hog farms in the U.S., according to the USDA.

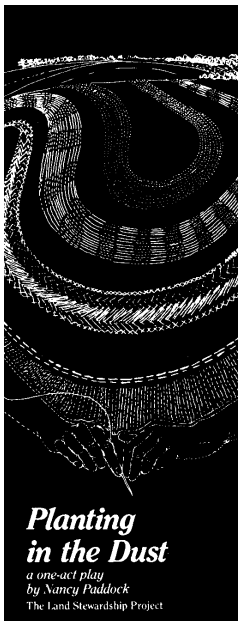
■ Only 58 percent of farmland sold in 1986 was bought by farmers. Farm management companies that hire farmers to work their land increased their control over agricultural land by 36 percent between 1980 and 1986, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.



1984

1985

1986



● Laura Clark premieres an LSP-sponsored play, *Planting in the Dust*, written by Nancy Paddock.

● LSP debuts "From Harvest to Harmony" slide/tape presentation at the National Association of Conservation Districts convention.

● LSP's Stewardship Ethics meetings expand to Nebraska.

● LSP's Winona County Project begins.

● LSP opens a field office in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston.

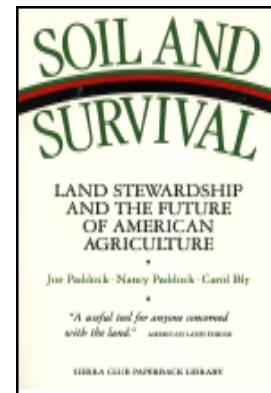
● The Stewardship Farming Program starts in southeast Minnesota.

● First LSP-sponsored tree planting event takes place in Winona County.

● LSP staffer Chuck Thesing takes an aerial photo of a Wabasha County farm that shows how 27 years of conservation measures had been ripped out in a few days following the operation's takeover by John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company. When compared to an aerial photo taken just one year before, the differences are startling. The "Before" and "After" photos are eventually distributed nationally (see page 16).

● First meeting held in Boston between Hancock and LSP to negotiate conservation policies on company-owned farms.

● LSP forms partnership with Wilder Forest to manage Wilder Farm near Marine on St. Croix, Minn.



● On-farm research begins in southeastern Minnesota.

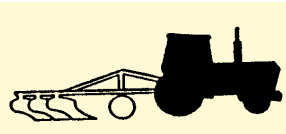
● LSP helps organize Lac qui Parle Lake Association in western Minnesota.

● *Soil and Survival*, by LSP consultants Joe Paddock, Nancy Paddock and Carol Bly, is published. The book describes how stewardship of our farmland is linked to the future of our society.

● Farmer-author Wendell Berry speaks at Hamline University in St. Paul with LSP sponsorship.

● *Planting in the Dust* performances expand to Iowa with actress Jody Hovland; more than 150 performances held in Iowa and Minnesota.

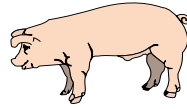
● LSP moves Twin Cities office to Stillwater, Minn.



■ The nation is losing soil at the average annual rate of 5.2 tons per acre, according to the USDA. That's down from eight tons per acre in 1982, but still far above the soil's ability to replenish itself (see 1982).

■ The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is created at Iowa State University as part of the 1987 Iowa Groundwater Protection Act.

■ First patent for a genetically engineered animal issued.



■ The Midwest and parts of the Northern Plains experience the worst drought since 1936, according to the American Meteorological Society.

■ The 1980s draws to a close, and studies show just how devastating the farm crisis was. Rates of rural depression and suicide are at all time highs. The media stops giving the crisis major coverage, but it continues quietly throughout the 1990s.

■ The National Academy of Sciences publishes *Alternative Agriculture*, a 448-page report that concludes, among other things, that "Farmers who adopt alternative farming systems often have productive and profitable operations, even though these farms usually function with relatively little help from commodity income and price support programs or extension."



1987

1988

1989



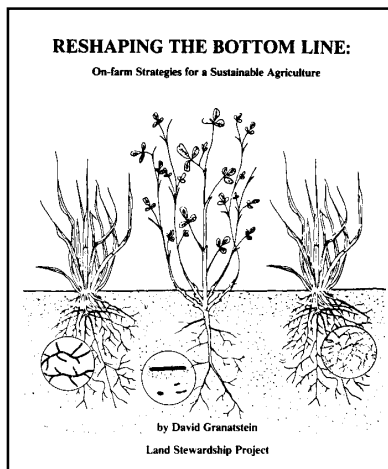
● LSP's Farmland Investor Accountability Program (FIAP) sets up Farmland Protection Hotline for farmers involved in problems with insurance companies.

● Extensive national press coverage draws attention to conservation abuses on farms foreclosed upon by insurance companies.

● The National Arbor Day Foundation gives its "Project Award" to LSP's southeast Minnesota office. Members Leo and Mary Rowekamp accept the award in Nebraska City, Neb.

● U.S. Senate holds hearings in Washington, D.C., on absentee ownership of farmland. LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese testifies.

● *Planting in the Dust* expands to Nebraska with actress Peg Sheldrick and to South Dakota with Phyllis Schrag.



● LSP publishes *Reshaping the Bottom Line: On-farm Strategies for a Sustainable Agriculture*, by agronomist David Granatstein.

● LSP organizes Sustainable Farming Association chapters in southeastern and western Minnesota.

● LSP helps launch the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) to work on Federal agriculture policy.

● Twin Cities office moves to Wilder Forest near Marine on St. Croix, Minn.

● Shareholder pressure causes Travelers to agree to lower its \$1 million minimum loan size to \$100,000 for sale of inventory farms.

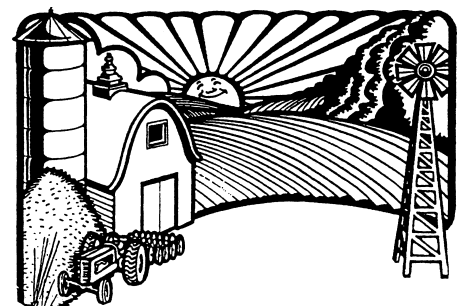
● LSP initiates Public Policy Project.

● *A Song for the Earth* puppet show debuts as cultural program, written by Nancy Paddock and presented by actress Joan Lisa.

● Public Policy Project's Action Alert Network is formed.

● *Music of the Land* is launched as LSP cultural program. It's a sing-along and slide show created and performed by Bret Hesla.

● Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota is incorporated as a nonprofit organization.



■ *Broken Heartland: The Rise of America's Rural Ghetto*, by Osha Gray Davidson, is published. This book graphically describes how the farm crisis has become an economic, social and environmental tragedy.



■ The USDA's 1991 *Year Book of Agriculture* publishes a chart showing agriculture as the major source of nonpoint river pollution.

■ The City of Des Moines, Iowa, completes construction of the largest nitrate removal facility in the world. Originally intended to operate no more than 40 days a year, the facility was needed 109 days, at a daily cost of \$3,000, in 2000 alone. The reason? The watershed that feeds the waterworks is dominated by corn, soybeans and livestock, all sources of the excess nutrient.

1990

1991

1992

● U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone helps LSP celebrate its 10th anniversary. For the LSP vision to become a reality, he says, "We will have to be willing to take on political and economic power in this country."

● The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is created at the University of Minnesota by LSP and other members of the Sustainers' Coalition.

● LSP launches Clean Up our River Environment (CURE) to address pollution problems on the Minnesota River.

● Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota holds first statewide meeting.

● A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) fair is sponsored by LSP and the Minnesota Food Association at St. Paul's Hamline University.

● The Minnesota Land Trust is formed. It uses conservation easements to protect the natural and rural nature of land. Its roots are in the Washington County Land Trust (see 1991).

● LSP's Stewardship Farming Program wins Renew America National Environmental Award.

● Grass-based farming field days featuring Allan Nation attract more than 400 farmers.

● CURE and local National Guard units remove 15 flatbed trailer loads of scrap metal from illegal dumps along the Minnesota River.

TURN HERE
SWEET CORN



● First LSP urban sprawl meeting is held, featuring the showing of the *Turn Here, Sweet Corn* video essay by Helen DeMichiel; LSP launches Metro Farm Program.

● More than 55 performances of LSP cultural programs presented nationwide in April alone.

● Fourth LSP office opens in Faribault, Minn., to serve Cannon River Watershed.

● "Farmer-to-Farmer" video series and "Farming for the Future" education booklets are released by LSP.

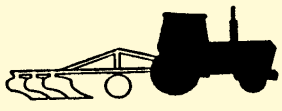
● LSP offers fee-based Holistic Resource Management and controlled grazing workshops and consulting services.

● LSP helps create the Minnesota Environmental Fund.

● LSP helps draft and get passed Minnesota's first city ordinance (Inver Grove Heights) to protect farmland from development pressures.

● LSP launches Minnesota's first land trust dedicated to preserving farmland, the Washington County Land Trust.





■ Scientists are alarmed that a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico appears to be growing. Research traces the source to excessive nutrients washing off of Midwestern crop fields.

■ Record floods inundate the mid-section of the U.S.

■ A front page article in the *Wall Street Journal* describes how companies like Premium Standard Farms are taking pork production away from family farmers and making into an industrialized enterprise attractive to major investors.

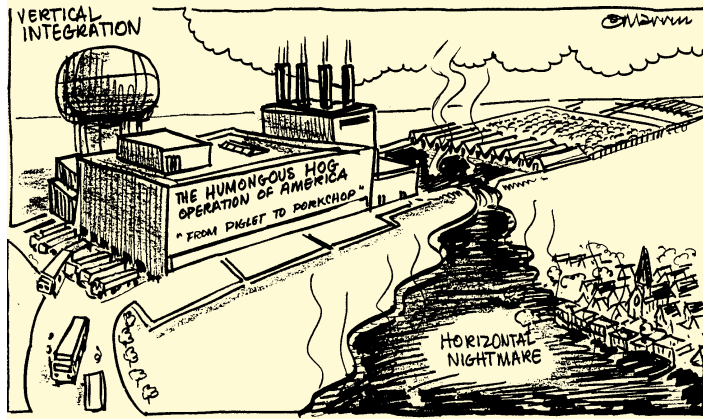
■ Genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH) becomes commercially available.

■ Twenty-two million gallons of manure spills into a North Carolina river when a hog lagoon breaches. That’s twice the amount of oil spilled during the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska.

■ Dennis Avery publishes *Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plastic*, a book-length argument against sustainable agriculture and for all-out factory farming.

■ A series of articles in the *Raleigh News & Observer* shows that the North Carolina factory farm model of producing hogs poses significant risks to human health and the environment.

■ The Rodale Institute stops publication of *The New Farm*, a popular, award-winning magazine that had served as a practical alternative to the mainstream agricultural press.



1993

1994

1995



● LSP Executive Director Ron Kroese leaves to become president of the National Center for Appropriate Technology. George Boody eventually succeeds Kroese.

● An award-winning Blue Moon Productions video on urban sprawl, *Houses in the Fields*, is released by LSP.

● The Monitoring Project is launched by LSP, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

● LSP publishes a directory of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

● LSP and other members of the Factory Farm Awareness Campaign defeat efforts to weaken Minnesota’s Corporate Farming Law.

● LSP helps strengthen the Metro Ag Preserves Program.



● LSP co-sponsors the Upper Midwest Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Conference in River Falls, Wis.

● LSP publishes *An Agriculture That Makes Sense: Profitability of Four Sustainable Farms in Minnesota*.

● LSP becomes a membership organization.

● LSP sponsors the National Growth Management Leadership Conference.

● The Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership is formed in western Minnesota with LSP’s help.

● LSP helps launch the Campaign for Family Farms at a rally in Lincoln Township, Mo., featuring musician Willie Nelson.

● In a victory for CURE, the Minnesota Court of Appeals upholds a judge’s decision to prevent the construction of a \$400,000 flood control project on the Lac qui Parle River in western Minnesota. The precedent-setting decision helps set the stage for re-evaluating several other environmentally and economically questionable projects.

● *To Till and Keep It: New Models for Congregational Involvement with the Land* is co-published by LSP and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

● LSP concludes 5-year project in the Cannon River Watershed and closes its Faribault office.

● LSP and American Farmland Trust publish *Farmland and the Tax Bill: The Cost of Community Services in Three Minnesota Cities*. The report shows that sprawling residential development that destroys farmland imposes a net financial loss on the coffers of local communities, inhibiting their ability to, among other things, fund quality school systems.

■ Congress passes the 1996 Farm Bill, dubbed “Freedom to Farm.” Its authors tout it as a tool for weaning farmers off government subsidies, but the initiative proves to be one of the most expensive farm programs in history.

■ A USDA study finds that three firms control 81 percent of the cattle slaughtered in the U.S.

■ A University of Minnesota medical school study is published that shows the children of licensed pesticide applicators in the western part of the state are more likely to develop birth defects.

■ The first major commercial planting of soybeans that resist being killed by herbicides such as Monsanto’s Roundup takes place on American farms.

1996

● LSP’s Livestock Concentration Committee works to successfully defeat efforts to weaken Minnesota’s corporate farm law.

● LSP co-sponsors the Center for Holistic Management’s International Annual Gathering.

● The 1996 Farm Bill is passed and it contains several key sustainable agriculture provisions that LSP helped develop.

● LSP members hold an anti-factory farm rally at the Minnesota state capital.

● Members of LSP conduct monitoring of hydrogen sulfide emissions from factory farms in Renville County, Minn. Results eventually lead to the nation’s first hydrogen sulfide regulations related to large-scale livestock operations.

● LSP publishes *Monitoring Sustainable Agriculture with Conventional Financial Data*, by ag economist Dick Levins.

● *An Agriculture That Makes Sense: Making Money on Hogs* is published by LSP.

● After meeting with LSP members and staff, Hudson, Wis.-based Erickson’s Diversified agrees to stop carrying Premium Standard Farms pork in its grocery stores (see 1994 and 1999).

■ Sixty-one percent of U.S. farmers are 55 or older. In 1954, 37 percent of farmers fit that age category. Between 1954 and 1997, the percentage of farmers younger than 35 dropped by almost half, to 8 percent.

■ Two acres of U.S. farmland is being lost to sprawling development every day, according to the American Farmland Trust. Between 1992 and 1997, the U.S. paved over more than six million acres of farmland, an area about equal to the size of Maryland. During that same period, the U.S. population grew by 17 percent, while urbanized land grew by 47 percent.

■ Between 1984 and 1997, the price of a market basket of food (adjusted for inflation) rose 2.8 percent, according to agricultural economist C. Robert Taylor. During that same period, the amount of money a farmer received for that food dropped 35.7 percent.

1997

● *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development* is published by LSP.

● A journalist reveals that the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) spent \$51,000 in farmer checkoff funds to investigate LSP and five other family farm and sustainable agriculture groups. LSP and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms rally at the Council’s national headquarters in Des Moines, Iowa, and the Federal Office of Inspector General launches an investigation of the checkoff program.

● LSP experiences unprecedented success at the Minnesota Legislature on issues related to factory farming, agricultural research and urban sprawl.

● “Anatomy of a Manure Spill” is published in the *Land Stewardship Letter*. It is a groundbreaking investigative report on the failure of officials to regulate livestock factories and the ability of organized rural citizens to have a positive impact in their community.

■ The USDA is flooded with more than 200,000 cards, letters and e-mails after it announces that it may allow food produced with genetic engineering, sewage sludge and irradiation to be certified organic. This unprecedented outpouring of rage against such allowances prompts USDA officials to rewrite their certification rules.

■ The U.S. is losing dairy farms at a rate of 34 per day, according to the USDA.

■ Hog farmers are receiving the lowest prices since 1972. Adjusted for inflation, the prices are the lowest of the century, according to the Congressional Research Service.

1998

● The first Farm Beginnings classes begin meeting in southeast Minnesota.

● The Minnesota Legislature establishes an alternative swine research facility and faculty position at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minn. LSP members, staff and others play key roles in garnering the funding.

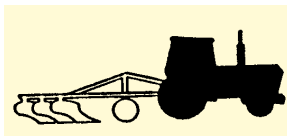
● LSP’s western Minnesota office helps put on “Rediscovering Our Rural Landscape,” a televised town meeting originating from Appleton, Minn.

● A mandatory pork checkoff recall referendum is launched by LSP and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms.

● 1000 Friends of Minnesota, LSP’s urban sprawl program, is spun off as a separate nonprofit organization.

● *The Monitoring Tool Box*, a product of the Monitoring Team, is produced. Eventually, more than 600 are sold around the world.

● A meeting involving farmers, ecologists, university researchers, writers and journalists is sponsored by LSP at the Aldo Leopold Shack in south-central Wisconsin. That meeting serves as the inspiration for the writing of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems* (see 2002).



■ Premium Standard Farms pays \$25 million to settle a lawsuit accusing it of violating the Clear Water Act (see 1994 and 1996).

■ “There is an inverse relationship between the acres planted to corn and soybeans in a given county and recent population changes in that county,” concludes University of Minnesota agronomist Paul Porter after conducting a study of cropping and population trends in the 12-state Corn Belt region.

■ Despite significant declines in soil erosion rates between 1982 and 1995, since then erosion has remained at around 5.5 tons per acre annually, far above the soil’s ability to replenish itself, according to the USDA (see 1982).

■ There are 98,460 hog farms in the U.S., which means 247,630 hog farms have been lost in 13 years (see 1986).

■ Retail store surveys and USDA figures show that:

- ✓ For a \$3.71 box of cereal, farmers receive 4.6 cents.
- ✓ For a \$1.39 loaf of bread, farmers get 5 cents.
- ✓ For a \$4.39 sirloin steak, farmers garner 68 cents.
- ✓ For a \$5.91 chunk of cheddar cheese, farmers get \$1.05.
- ✓ For a \$1.99 bag of potato chips, farmers receive 3.3 cents.
- ✓ For a \$1.29 head of lettuce, farmers are paid 9 cents.

■ Ten percent of the nation’s biggest farms participating in the government commodity program gobbled up two-thirds of all crop subsidies paid out between 1996 and 2000, according to an Environmental Working Group analysis.



1999

2000



● LSP’s Federal Farm Policy Committee develops a national proposal for rewarding stewardship farmers and presents it to lawmakers and USDA officials in Washington, D.C. That proposal later serves as the basis for the Conservation Security Program in the 2002 Farm Bill.

● *Killing Competition With Captive Supplies*, a special report on how meatpackers are using exclusive contracts to close pork markets, is published by LSP. It reports that between 64 percent and 70 percent of all hogs slaughtered are no longer part of the open market, and almost 60 percent of the pork slaughter is controlled by four firms.

● Nearly 800 farmers from 13 states join LSP and other organizations in South St. Paul, Minn., to call for immediate enforcement of agricultural antitrust laws.

● LSP and the Campaign for Family farms collect petition signatures from 16,500 farmers, sending the mandatory pork checkoff to a referendum vote.

- The first LSP *Stewardship Food Network* is published.
- LSP begins holding banquets that feature locally produced foods.
- The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Analysis Project is launched.



● The Midwest Food Alliance sustainable seal of approval is launched in Minnesota grocery stores. This is a joint initiative of LSP and Cooperative Development Services.



- Hog farmers begin voting on the future of the mandatory pork checkoff.
- Farm Beginnings expands into western Minnesota.
- The Conservation Security Act is introduced in Congress
- Using the Minnesota Data Practices Act, LSP obtains a memo showing that state Health Department staffers were pressured by officials and lawmakers into withdrawing their opposition to a factory dairy farm in Fillmore County.
- LSP spins off CURE (see 1992) as a separate nonprofit organization.

■ Soil scientist Gyles Randall shocks his colleagues when he writes that “Present-day corn and soybean production in southern Minnesota does not appear to be sustainable from economic, environmental, ecological and sociological perspectives.” He is quoted in *Successful Farming* magazine as saying, “Our rich, black, deep and uniform soils will only be a memory of the past if this rampant erosion is not controlled.”



■ Hog operations with more than 5,000 breeding animals account for 75 percent of the nation’s pig production, according to the USDA. In 1994, operations of that size controlled 27 percent of pig production.

■ Almost 83 percent of all hogs slaughtered are no longer part of the open market, according to the University of Missouri (see 1999).

■ George McGovern and Rudy Boschwitz, former members of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, write a newspaper editorial claiming there is no soil erosion problem in this country because soil just gets “moved around” instead of lost. The editorial is widely derided by soil scientists and farmers.

■ National organic standards for food are enacted.

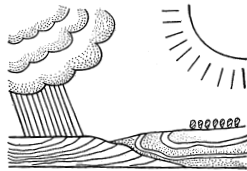
■ The Gulf dead zone (see 1993) is now about the size of Massachusetts, the biggest it’s ever been.

■ The Iowa Legislature cuts the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture’s primary source of funding (see 1987).

2001

● Hog farmers across the country vote to end the mandatory pork checkoff. USDA and NPPC later strike a deal to continue the checkoff tax. Hog farm-members of LSP and the Campaign sue USDA over the decision.

● The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project, which is directed by LSP, releases a study showing a diversified agricultural system can provide many public “goods” for society and that taxpayers are willing to pay for those benefits.



● A Minnesota District Court Judge rules for LSP members when he says a proposed factory dairy should have been ordered to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement. This ruling proves to be the first in a series of Minnesota court decisions calling for more oversight of factory farms.

● At various times throughout the year, LSP farmer-members testify before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee on the need for policy that supports family farmers using sustainable methods.

● The Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative is launched by LSP’s western Minnesota office.

● Working at the Minnesota Legislature, LSP members and staff successfully fight to retain state funding for sustainable agriculture.

2002

● *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*, a book edited and written by LSP staff and members, is published by Island Press. Wendell Berry calls it “...the most necessary book I’ve read in a long time.” The journal *Science* writes that the book “provides excellent food for thought...”

● A Federal judge orders the termination of the mandatory pork checkoff, calling the system “tyrannical” and “rotten.”

● The 2002 Federal Farm Bill is signed into law. It’s highly flawed, but does include the groundbreaking Conservation Security Program.

● LSP’s Farm Beginnings Program starts its sixth year of classes. Of the 76 families who have graduated, 60 percent are involved in farming.

● LSP helps develop an “intergenerational dialogue” in Milan, Minn., to discuss the future of rural communities and agriculture.

● Pride of the Prairie sponsors several local foods meals in the Upper Minnesota River Valley.

● The farm of LSP members Tom and Irene Frantzen is featured in the Sept. 30 issue of *Newsweek*.



Eyewitnesses to history

LSP members tell a few tales gleaned from 20 years of keeping the land & people together

American Farm Project

Before there was LSP, there was the American Farm Project. This was a leadership development program funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and coordinated by the National Farmers Union during the mid- and late-1970s. **Victor Ray**, a farm boy from the boot-heel of Missouri, headed up the program, which consisted of taking 20 to 25 farm couples from around the country, exposing them to the “culture” of agriculture and teaching them how to communicate. Toward the end of the program’s run, Ray hired Ron Kroese. When funding ran out, Ray and Kroese decided to start a nonprofit organization that would utilize some of the elements of the American Farm Project.



LSP staffers held stewardship meetings throughout the Midwest during the early days of the group. Here, Ron Kroese listens while a Dell Rapids, S. Dak., farmer addresses a question during a 1984 meeting.

◆ **Victor Ray:** *With the American Farm Project we focused on communication. We felt the essence of leadership was communication, not just learning to talk, but to communicate. Like how to develop a slide-tape show. We also looked at the humanities. At the time, everyone looked at agriculture from the economist’s view. We wanted people to understand the literature and the history of it. We looked at not just the ledger, the bookkeeping aspects of it, but how they regarded the land, and how they regarded their urban cousins, and how they were considered by their urban cousins.*

We developed workbooks that included

excerpts of novels, history books and essays. The quality of individual that we got from the project was extraordinary. They were bright, idealistic couples, and some cry when they recall the richness of their experience

We thought their regard, their emotional attachment, to the land turned them on the most. That’s why Ron and I chose the Land Stewardship Project as the successor to that program. We talked about it, and we thought stewardship best described what these people wanted to do. It was the natural word to express what these couples had in mind.

A place to stay

LSP shared its first office with the Minnesota Farmers Union in St. Paul.

Soon, it moved to Washington County north of the Twin Cities, and eventually opened branches in southeast Minnesota and western Minnesota. LSP now has a Policy Program office in South Minneapolis as well. Winona County farmer **Lorraine Redig** recalls how LSP got its start in southeast Minnesota.

◆ **Lorraine Redig:** *In the spring of 1982, at about 9:30 at night, this phone call came. This guy said he was calling from the Farmers Union office and his name was Ron Kroese and he was kind of looking for a place in*

southeast Minnesota that would give a home to this Land Stewardship Project or whatever they were going to name it. We were so busy that I didn’t feel we needed to be involved in any more activities but he kept telling me about it. And so I said it really sounds good, so send me some information. And so he did, and we liked it so we decided if we couldn’t handle what we have maybe we’ll have to let something else go. And so he came down and he stayed in our motor home, which was in the yard because he didn’t have any money for a hotel. Art introduced him to different people and that’s how we got LSP’s southeast Minnesota office going.

Stewardship Farming Program

The Land Stewardship Project’s southeast Minnesota office launched the Stewardship Farming Program in 1987 as a way to promote on-farm research and farmer-to-farmer education as it relates to alternative methods. Modeled after a similar program developed in



Nebraska by the Center for Rural Affairs, this three-year program involved 25 farm families who were looking for information on sustainable alternatives. **Everett Koenig** of Plainview, Minn., participated in the program.

◆ **Everett Koenig:** *I started farming in 1961 and had quit chemicals in 1972 and everyone thought I was crazy. And I guess I was at the time because I kind of quit cold turkey, which was a mistake. But with chemicals the soil structure was just so bad. When I plowed the hills they were just yellow. That’s a sign of poor soil, no life in them. But now you can’t find yellow soil because my soil quality has improved that much.*

I thought by 1986 that I knew how to farm without chemicals. But then I got into the Stewardship Farming Program and found out I knew nothing. Through the program I met other farmers and exchanged ideas. It was mostly a way to get together with other people to exchange ideas.

I hosted a couple of farm tours and I remember one in 1988 where it was originally supposed to be 40 or 50 people. LSP kept calling back and saying, ‘A few more are coming, just a few more.’ And the day came and it was tour buses and cars and other vehicles pulling into our driveway. In the end, more than 200 people showed up for that field day.

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

In February 1988, LSP organized a meeting at the Lewiston Church of the Brethren to discuss the formation of a new sustainable farming association. Around 100 people packed into the

Eyewitness, see page 15...

meeting. First came a farmer panel, which proved to be an inspiring testament to what innovative practices producers were already undertaking in the area. The room was charged with excitement. The next speaker was an official from the Minnesota Extension Service, who was to speak on what the University of Minnesota could offer in terms of sustainable agriculture research. To put it diplomatically, the Extension Service speaker didn't play too well, as he made it clear his program had little to offer farmers who were looking for alternatives. "The contrast was so clear where people could get useable information," recalls Doug Nopar, who was working as an LSP organizer at the time.

But the Extension Service official's uninspiring talk had a surprising effect on the farmers gathered: it fired them up. Twenty-one people signed up on the spot, paying dues to a group that didn't even exist yet. That group eventually became the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) of Minnesota, and over the years it has developed local chapters across the state. **Carol Thornton**, a Lake City, Minn., farmer, was involved early on with the southeast Minnesota and Hiawatha chapters of the SFA.

◆ **Carol Thornton:** *The farmers that were getting involved had a broader vision of looking at things in a whole piece rather than just the land as one piece, the family as another piece and the cattle and animals as another place. I never went to one of those meetings that I didn't come home feeling better about farming. And they always wanted to leave plenty of time to interact over lunch. That connecting was always so important.*

The thing that impressed me was the enthusiasm the farmers had for farming when they had been to one of these meetings. Once we met with legislators here in Wabasha County and one of them got up and said she said she had never been with a group of farmers that had such a positive attitude.

Craig Murphy, a farmer from Morris, in western Minnesota, helped develop an SFA chapter in his area in 1989.

◆ **Craig Murphy:** *I started converting my first field to organic in 1980. So I had been doing alternative*

methods when we started the SFA chapter. Before that I got most of my information from other organic growers in North or South Dakota. Most of my mentors were from the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. The SFA was a more local, regional connection.

I liked the mind-set of the SFA growers being sustainable or alternative. We felt we could connect farmer-to-farmer, neighbor-to-neighbor. We needed local information and we shared it through field days, house meetings and workshops.

Even though I and some other SFA members are organic, that's not the only definition of sustainable we used. There were so many definitions of sustainable—from banding herbicides versus broadcasting, from ridge tillage to organic; a real variety. And then moving to management intensive rotational grazing versus confinement; pasture farrowing versus the crates.

I think SFA members accepted that sustainable agriculture was diverse. They were able to keep it diverse rather than say there's only one way to do things.

Farmland investor accountability

In 1985, John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company foreclosed on a farm in southeast Minnesota's Wabasha County. The farm, which had been owned by the Hauck family, had won awards for the conservation techniques that had been established there. The insurance company



Over the years, LSP has held many meetings to introduce alternative farming methods to farmers. Here, *Stockman Grass Farmer* editor Allan Nation speaks during a 1992 meeting at the Bruce and Marie McNamara farm near Goodhue, Minn.



Field days have been a cornerstone of LSP's work to spread the word about stewardship farming.

rented it out to a large crop farmer from the next county, and within a matter of days 27 years of model conservation practices—terraces, grass contour strips and waterways—were ripped out to make way for corn and soybeans. The well-kept farmstead was abandoned and allowed to become an eyesore. The conservation measures put in place by the Hauck family kept annual soil erosion rates at around three tons per acre. After the farm was transformed by Hancock's renter, soil conservation experts estimated that the farm's per-acre erosion rate would go as high as 40 tons annually. LSP learned that other insurance companies were having similar negative impacts on the environment through their foreclosures. In 1985, then-LSP staffer Chuck Thesing took a ride in a friend's airplane and snapped aerial photos of the Hauck farm on one of the first days that the renter was destroying the conservation measures. That photo was then compared to one taken just a year prior. The difference was staggering. LSP made a flier of the

"Before" and "After" photos, and 30,000 copies of it were distributed around the country. This launched the Farmland Investor Accountability Program (FIAP) and focused national publicity on the issue of absentee land ownership and conservation.

Marge Warthesen is an LSP member who belonged to the "Wabasha County Give A Damns," a group of farmers and other rural residents who wanted to hold Hancock accountable.

Eyewitness, see page 16...

◆ **Marge Warthesen:** *What we wanted was for John Hancock to get rid of that farm and sell it to a farm family. And they finally did do that, but it didn't happen the first year. They came up with another plan, which was a corn-bean rotation or corn on corn rotation—still losing tons of topsoil.*

Before Hancock took it over, that farm was a model farm because it not only had the contour strips but it had terraces. It was an organic farm for 27 years, a dairy farm with 10 kids, so it was really a wonderful working farm. And they took those terraces out and planted through



BEFORE: The soil on the Hauck farm was protected by terraces, hay strips, waterways and contours between 1958 and 1984.

those ponds. I mean they did the whole thing. You couldn't help but be moved or motivated or want to bring about some change, it was such a drastic thing.

Steve O'Neil was an LSP organizer who worked with the Wabasha County citizens. In 1985, Hancock officials agreed to meet with LSP representatives at the company's corporate headquarters in Boston. O'Neil, Warthesen and farmer Bill McMillin attended that meeting.

◆ **Steve O'Neil:** *First the Hancock folks take us up to the roof and they're showing us all of Boston from the 50th floor of the John Hancock Building. And then they bring us down to the 38th floor to this cherry-paneled board meeting room and there's waitresses running in and out of these hidden doors and we're having lunch with them and Marge brings this jar of wild grape jelly. And she said, 'You know, if you keep farming the way you're farming in southeast Minnesota, there aren't going to be any wild grapes. And this jelly is like no other jelly.'* And



these guys were nervous. She passed it around and none of them wanted to take it. They're all nervous. Finally the jar gets to Bill McMillin and he says, 'You guys don't know what you're missing.' And he takes some and puts a bunch of it on his bread and takes a bite, and then they realized well maybe it isn't poison.

Bill brought a big plastic bag, which he had brought in his suitcase, which had leaked in his suitcase, of topsoil from his farm. And he lays this bag out and he opens it up and he takes a handful of this soil and he says, 'You know this is what we're talking about.' So Marge and Bill so impressed on these people that what we're talking about is the land and the people on this land and you're destroying both of them. And if you keep farming, if you keep lending the way you are, these things aren't going to be anymore. It took another



AFTER: John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company foreclosed on the Hauck farm in 1985, and rented it to a farmer who tore up 27 years of conservation work.

year—another year and a half—but eventually not only did the farm get sold back to a family, but Hancock changed its national policies. And we went on to direct attention at other insurance companies—Mutual Benefit, Metropoli-

tan Life, etc. So this campaign that started with a handful of people sitting around a dining room table in Millville, Minnesota, concerned about this family farm and what happened there, really took off into a great campaign that went around the country.

Farm Beginnings

In 1993, a group of Wabasha County farmers, many of whom had been in the original LSP Stewardship Farming Group, decided that something needed to be done about the graying of agriculture in their community and the lack of new farmers coming onto the land. Thus was planted the seed of the Farm Beginnings program. Dairy farmer **Bill McMillin** was on the original LSP Farm Beginnings steering committee.

◆ **Bill McMillin:** *A neighbor said there won't be any farmers left if we don't find a way to get young people established, so we talked about a matchmaker program where retiring farmers would be matched up with new farmers. But then Wabasha County Extension Educator Chuck Schwartz had gone to New Zealand and seen how dairy farmers there were passing operations down to the next generation through a mentorship type arrangement called share-milking. So we decided it would be a mentorship program that included a classroom curriculum. It was mostly focused on grazing the first few years, but by the*

third year we didn't have a big sign-up and so we opened it up a little more to people interested in other kinds of farming.

I thought it would basically be made up of farmers from a five-county area and they'd be raising beef and dairy. But now it's a real mix with people from all over and with diverse backgrounds. In agriculture, I don't think the big picture looks so good.

But with Farm Beginnings I see some bright spots with the beginning farmers and the enthusiasm they have.

Eyewitness, see page 17...

CURE

In 1992, Clean Up our River Environment (CURE) was launched by LSP's western Minnesota office. This watershed group was developed in response to water quality issues in the Upper Minnesota River basin. **Del Wehrspann**, a Montevideo-area cattle buyer and bait dealer, saw the need for such a group while he was fighting a drainage ditch proposal in the 1970s.

◆ **Del Wehrspann:** *In 1978, I was involved in a controversial drainage project where Montevideo proposed to drain one of the last privately held wetlands in Chippewa County. It was called ditch 69A. What it was to do was to drain through my property into the Minnesota River. I tried lots of things to stop it, including getting 500 names on a petition and filing a lawsuit.*

The ditch was not stopped. I was given monetary settlement for damages to my property but that's not what I was after. I wanted it stopped because of the damage it would do to the environment.

Later I was on a steering committee with LSP out here and I kept bringing up the point time after time how we needed to get involved with water issues. We talk about land stewardship and normally people think good soils, and pull all the weeds, that's land stewardship. But I think it goes further—as far as the water and its quality when it leaves your place. I kept saying we should talk about something we feel an ownership in—the river. How's it being affected? We were using it as a sewer. We should all be angry about that.

I was in the Land Stewardship office one day and I asked Audrey Arner how do we start an organization on the river? Well, Audrey called the library and got a meeting room and got people there by word of mouth. LSP's Pat Moore chaired the first meeting. I knew a lot of people, and I knew a lot of people felt the same, but they didn't know how to get together on these issues.

Eventually CURE fought another straightening project, but the difference was we had an organization behind us to fight it and we won. That was a big victory. It changed some attitudes.

Now I feel people have ownership of the Minnesota River and care what goes into it. Before no one seemed to care. The only time the environment has a voice is when people give it one.

Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership

LSP also launched another watershed group, the Chippewa River Stewardship Partnership. It was a daunting task: At 1.3 million acres (2,080 square miles) and 41,000 residents, it is the largest Minnesota River watershed that has all its boundaries within the state. Drainage, intensive farming and human sewage have made the watershed a major source of Minnesota River pollution. In order to deal with the source of the problems, farmers, general landowners, business owners, and private conservation and sporting groups had to be brought to the table from a seven-county area. And that doesn't even count the local, state and Federal agencies that are involved.

LSP organizer Patrick Moore helped bring all these groups together. In 1998, **Kylene Olson** was hired to direct the watershed group.

◆ **Kylene Olson:** *In March I was hired and in April we had our first meeting and I asked Patrick if he was coming and he said 'No, it's kind of baptism by fire.' It was, but I learned a lot from Patrick about facilitating meetings, and setting up meetings and even where people should sit. Now we have the biggest volunteer citizen-monitoring network in the state for a watershed. We could never pay for a monitoring program. So the citizen monitoring is a valuable tool for us, and for raising awareness. These citizens record transparency tube readings and take water samples. It's been a great tool for us to measure trends and figure out priority areas for implementing conservation measures.*

I really feel community-organizing skills helped keep this project going. Having people sit in a circle is really important. We can collect data all we want, but we have to stay together as a group. We aren't going to see changes with one season of best management practices.

Policy work

LSP has long been involved with trying to change state and Federal farm and environmental policies to benefit family farmers and rural communities. **Greg Koether**, a northeast Iowa farmer



At times, LSP members have had to take direct action to get their voices heard by corporate and government decision makers. Here, Rice County, Minn., farmer Dale Snesrud is shown calling a Travelers Insurance Company representative in Hartford, Conn., during a 1988 action at the company's St. Louis Park, Minn., headquarters.

who is a member of LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee, has been to Washington, D.C., twice—first in 1999 and again this past July. During those trips, he and other LSP members met with lawmakers and USDA officials to make it clear that present policy punishes stewardship farmers who are trying to take good care of the land. LSP was instrumental in developing what has become the Conservation Security Program (CSP), which was signed into law earlier this year. This program has the potential for setting a precedent for how farm programs treat stewardship farmers.

◆ **Greg Koether:** *These trips kind of renewed my faith in government that a group of farmers with excellent guidance could accomplish change. In fact, I'm very optimistic that if CSP becomes implemented as planned both, maybe all three, of my kids could come home and farm the way we want to. That's quite a feeling of satisfaction to think you've had an impact on their future. I don't feel like I have to discourage them from farming like I did a number of years back. I don't have any qualms about holding farming out as choice number one.*

Community Supported Agriculture

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farming is more than a new marketing model, it's a revolutionary way for people to renew connections with the land through food. CSA farms sell shares

in the operation before the growing season. From June to October, these farms then make a weekly delivery of fresh, organically grown produce to their shareholders. This system has proven quite effective at making consumers part of the sustainable agriculture revolution. **Dan Guenther**, along with his wife Margaret Pennings, started a CSA farm in the Twin Cities area in 1990.

◆ **Dan Guenther:** *In the fall of 1992 LSP and the Minnesota Food Association sponsored an open event at Hamline University and brought in Trauger Groh to talk about Community Supported Agriculture. We thought we would have 100 or 150 people but we had 400 to 450. I remember at the time saying to the late Ken Taylor at the Minnesota Food Association that this is big, something is happening here. The Hamline event made it clear that there was a real potential to connect people to sustainable agriculture. There were maybe two or three other CSA*



LSP Board Member and Renville County, Minn., farmer Monica Kahout made a point at the “Taking Action on Concentration and Monopoly in Agriculture” town meeting in 1999.

farms in the Twin Cities area besides ours at the time, and it became clear that the demand was outpacing our ability to grow for it. The demand was there for dozens of farms like ours.

As a result of that LSP helped sponsor a one-day CSA workshop in December 1992. It attracted farmers from other states and Canada. That was when LSP really stepped forward and helped with the initial organizing. That was important. Because as growers we were so busy with just growing the food that we didn't have time to work with the larger picture.

I had house meetings just to talk about the importance of land in people's lives.

What we found was a lot of people were really grieving the loss of land in their lives. That was a very, very apparent thing in these house meetings—this longing to be connected to farmers and the land. It was not so much about a business model, or business plan, it was much more of an emotional connection. We were dealing with something different than picking out organic food at the co-op. CSA can offer that connection.

Factory farm organizing

Over the years, just as it promoted alternative production systems, LSP has helped rural citizens organize against the factory farms that are wrecking their communities environmentally, financially and socially. **JoAnn Eckstein**, along with her husband Tony, have been at the epicenter of factory farm growth in Minnesota's Renville County.

◆ **JoAnn Eckstein:** *In July 1993 a company called Churchill Farms decided they were going to put an operation about a mile and an eighth from our farm. It consists of two lagoons covering six acres or so and holding 18 million gallons of manure. A guy who was putting it up had called Tony. Tony said he would do everything in his power to stop it. And we did try everything. When we first discovered what was going to happen, we were looking at each other, saying ‘What do we do now?’ But after speaking with a neighbor named Heidi Anderson, we learned of other people in the county fighting factory farms, so we got together with them.*

After you get together with people and you laugh and talk, you have a support system. Anybody who has been affected by these factory farms is willing to help.

Paul Sobocinski and Monica Kahout of LSP helped organize a meeting in Bird Island at the Catholic church there. We had it planned at the community center but we were afraid it was too small, and we knew it would be controversial so we moved it to the church. So the opposition didn't know we were at the church until almost all of us were all there, and they walked in and we thought it was going to be a brouhaha, but it was peaceful because it was in the church. We had a pork barbecue dinner and desert and about 200 people there. It gave people a chance to just talk. It was great to get



together with people who felt the same way and to see we weren't the only ones in the community against these things.

Over the years we've also testified at the state Legislature. I had never done anything like that before. We often felt we were taking our heads and beating them against the wall because a lot of the politicians were ones that didn't want to listen, but we did change some minds.

If we hadn't started fighting these things there would have been a lot less for other people to work on. We have people calling all the time for help. If none of us had never done anything, we would have more of these operations.

Planting in the Dust

Between 1985 and 1989, more than 500 performances of the one-woman play, *Planting in the Dust*, were given throughout the Midwest and beyond. This LSP production, which was written by Nancy Paddock, talks about the relationship with the land that “Annie” has, and her frustrations that a neighbor named “Jordan” isn't a good steward of the soil. The play was used as a way to spark land stewardship discussions in small communities. Glencoe, Minn., farmer and former LSP Board Member **Joe Fitzgerald** saw the play four or five times.

◆ **Joe Fitzgerald:** *It was a sort of Upper Midwest Grapes of Wrath story. It sort of had that heartsick feeling of tragedy and loss that you get with Grapes of Wrath. The loss of community, the loss of the land was there with Planting in the Dust, just as it was 60 years before with Grapes of Wrath. Unfortunately those themes are still very relevant today—both the recognition of the loss as well as the need for neighborliness, that need for environmental stewardship. There's a timelessness to that play. Every neighborhood has a Jordan—so there was something very immediate, very local for most rural people.*

I'm seeing a new version of Jordan. I do custom combining and I see a lot of over-spraying of Roundup on soybeans that drifts onto the neighbor's corn, killing eight rows or so. Often it's in the

back forty where no one notices until harvest time. That's unneighborly, allowing this drift to go onto the neighbor's land. It's a trespass issue, whether it be hydrogen sulfide, or soil, or herbicide drift. On the positive side, programs like Planting in the Dust can help people articulate the vision of what it means to be a good neighbor. You don't do things like allow eroding soil or drifting Roundup to affect your community.

Bringing life back to the land

LSP works with various individuals, groups and agencies to help protect and revitalize the land. **Gary Lentz** has worked with LSP in western Minnesota since the early 1990s.

◆ **Gary Lentz:** *I was over at a friend's place and he told me about a farm over on the Chippewa River on Highway 40. So I went up and looked at it. It was 160 acres and three-quarters of a mile long, traversing the Chippewa River Valley. I wound up buying this farm and over a five-year span I had many, many meetings, and I worked with LSP and the Minnesota Land Trust, and we put 60 acres into a rotational grazing system. I worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and we put a canoe access on the Chippewa River, which is named after me, Lentz Landing. I worked with the ASCS office and Pheasants Forever putting a buffer strip along the river. Before that, it had been farmed right up to the river. It was farmed for the farm programs and not for anything productive. We worked with some college students from Macalester College who are passionate about the land. And I wound up selling it to a couple, Mike Jacobs and Malena Arner Handeen, and they have a daughter now, Hazel, and they have a Community Supported farm there now. They have many people from the cities come out there and buy memberships and it's doing quite well. So this run-down farm is now full of activity and it's doing something positive. If you're ever driving lonely Highway 40 between Willmar and Milan and you come into the Chippewa River Valley, you'll see something positive happening. This is the result of Land Stewardship's passion.*

Generation-to-generation

After two decades of work, LSP is starting to see multiple generations get involved. **Joe Finley** of St. Charles, Minn., is a part of one such LSP family.

◆ **Joe Finley:** *My first associations with Land Stewardship actually start with another Minnesota organization called Minnesota COACT that stood for some of the same ideas that Land Stewardship stood for. My parents were involved with*



LSP's work to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland means reaching out to a new generation. In this photo taken in 1987, staff and members from LSP's southeast Minnesota office are teaching school children the finer points of tree planting.

holding creditors accountable for some of the same issues that the Give A Damn's got started with on John Hancock and Traveler's Insurance. I started farming in 1985, and we actually got on a farm that John Hancock was in the process of foreclosing on, and were able to buy the farm. We were able to get a farm family going again to try and make up for the fact that they'd pushed one off.

I joined LSP, got involved like my parents had in the ag financing part and joined a group called FACT, Farmers Accessing Credit Together, to try and hold some local banks accountable for their lending practices, to try and promote sustainable agriculture.

There was a guy named Richard Ness who worked in the Lewiston office and started putting on these Holistic Resource Management classes that talked about quality of life, family decision-making

and working with the whole.

Then they asked me to join this project called the Monitoring Project. I found I came back from these meetings and working with these people energized and recharged, and even university folks, agency folks, were starting to change.

My daughter is a graduate of the Farm Beginnings program. She has 20 dairy cows that she owns and she is going to be renting the farm that I had been running from her grandpa. So now we're third-generation LSP members.

Building community

Building community is the core of LSP's work—whether it be around food, stewardship or family farmer issues.

Kara Slaughter of Minneapolis has belonged to LSP for less than a year; in fact she joined via the Internet.

◆ **Kara Slaughter:** *I actually joined LSP before I knew a single soul involved in LSP. One of the first LSP staff people I met was Audrey Arner.*

[One summer] I got a chance to stay at Moonstone, the farm Audrey owns and operates with her husband, Richard Handeen. Audrey said something during that visit that really stuck with me. She was giving I and a couple of other people a tour of their farm and one of the other people said, 'Do you have any issues with your neighbor? You know, do they spray? Do you have any problems with that?' And she said, 'We're having some conversations,' and left it at that. Later I told her that was a really diplomatic response. And she said, 'Community is built on relationships,' and I thought that was beautiful. Ultimately what I've seen at LSP so far as its strength is the relationships between people, and I'm so glad to be a part of that.

A long road

Twenty years is a drop in the bucket when it comes to making real changes on the land. However, members like activist **Joe Morse** of Winona, Minn., know LSP will be around long enough to see those changes brought about.

◆ **Joe Morse:** *It takes years to bring about change. It doesn't take one year, two years. Some people think that with organizing you get a few people together and have this meeting and something happens. No, it's a long struggle. It's 10 years. It's 20 years. I appreciate that LSP is in it for the long haul and understands that. □*

Now, the next 20 years...



At the Land Stewardship Project's 20th Anniversary Celebration, we asked participants to reflect on what they hoped to see LSP accomplish by 2022. Here are some of the answers they wrote:

→ "Minnesota is (and always has been) a melting pot of all kinds of people. When I look around at LSP functions, I see so many white people (which is great) but there are so many more people—southeast Asian, Somali, Latino/Latina and Native American people—people who come from rural/agricultural backgrounds, people with voices that can only enhance the vision of LSP."

→ "I would like to see Hmong, African-American, Hispanic and Native American faces at the 2022 celebration—this is essential!"

→ "I would like to see the rural farming situation more sustainable and our communities sustainable. This means a good percent of our food raised locally. Our communities more connected with farms and farmers. Farmers truly working with the land, not against it."

→ "My deepest wish is that Land Stewardship and its program/involvements will continue to influence people and government that will sustain and encourage family farmers. We need it to succeed—to continue a way of life, to insure economic success—to save rural America for ourselves and future generations."

→ "Everyone should have access to good, wholesome organic/sustainable food, not just wealthy people. LSP should have a voice at the policymaking level when it comes to getting good food to everyone. When WIC [Women, Infants and Children program] mothers no longer have access to organic/sustainable foodstuffs at their grocery store/co-op, then organizations like LSP have a responsibility to lobby for these people."

→ "A return to widespread ownership of our land."

→ "Facilitate sustainable production, distribution and marketing of high quality, tasty and healthy foods. Provide support for rural residents in the battle for diversity and creativity in rural economic sustainability."

→ "Thousands of young Minnesota farmers—45 and under—who now believe their only opportunity to farm lies in becoming hog house janitors for Christensen Farms and Land O' Lakes, etc., etc., will have been inspired by LSP and its partner organizations, and its farmer mentors to become independent, self-motivated and humane sustainable farmers."

→ "Have an extensive and robust network of farmers who want to and are willing to pass on their farm to new farmers ('Passing on the Farm'-cubed, or to the tenth power!). Have to be able to compete with developers, corporate farms urban doctors and lawyers who will pay more or use bullying tactics to get land."

→ "I'd like to see sustainable ag become the norm where people make a conscious choice to buy their food from people who treat the land and animals right."

→ "A rural culture that values diversified small farms that produce wholesome healthy food for themselves and for local communities that cherishes the biodiversity and productivity of the land. We want our children and grandchildren to be able to choose to be farmers and to love rural life."

→ "On LSP's 40th Anniversary we hope we can say, 'Remember when everyone (or most) said GMO crops were the future? Well they were wrong. And

remember when the average age of farmers was 56? Now it's 40—Wow!"

→ "In 20 years, when I eat a meal at the University of Minnesota cafeteria, it will consist of Minnesota-grown and sustainably produced food. And it will be delicious, of course!"

→ "To have an effect worldwide on land stewardship and conservation practices. To have an even greater impact on U.S. ag policies that support family farms, to preserve our rural areas and communities."

→ "Have a Federal farm program that recognizes small family farms are the only workable sustainable system of food production—and the VALUE of food includes cost of farm production and a living wage return to producers."

"I'd like to see sustainable ag become the norm where people make a conscious choice to buy their food from people who treat the land and animals right."

→ "Publicly funded land grant university fully engaged with sustainable family farms. Through newly evolved/imagined cooperatives, active citizens are retaining the value of what they produce. Our consumers have become citizens and we are turning on the corporate model to dismantle and destroy it."

→ "Will have kept the culture in agriculture—not simply have let agribusiness run amuck. A new generation of families will be stewarding healthy food from healthy soils, diverse plants and healthy animals to appreciative and healthy communities."

→ "To make a deliberate, strong connection between LSP and education (public schools and institutions of higher education) in making the knowledge from LSP and the work of LSP visible, credible and part of their curriculum." □

"Everyone should have access to good, wholesome organic sustainable food, not just wealthy people."

I would like to see Hmong, African-American, Hispanic and Native American faces at the 2022 celebration—this is essential!



Membership Update



Who are LSP's members?

By Cathy Eberhart

In April, we invited all of our members to support our communications program through gifts of money and by sharing their opinions through a membership survey. We greatly appreciate all of you who responded. This special campaign raised over \$15,000 and provided valuable feedback to guide our work.

I'd like to return the favor and share some of that information with you. The results that follow are based on responses from 161 surveys.

LSP's programs are important to you. In general, survey respondents ranked all of our programs highly, with Organizing Against Factory Farms, Linking Farmers and Consumers, the *Land Stewardship Letter*, Federal Policy and Farm Beginnings among the favorites.

We were disappointed to learn that nearly two-thirds of survey respondents had never visited LSP's Web site. Of those that had, the most important sections were: Food and Farm Connection, Breaking News, Program Information, Upcoming Events, and Take Action.

Our general Web statistics show that LSP's site receives approximately 3,000 visits each month and Food and Farm Connection is always the most visited section.

About one-third of survey respondents receive our e-mail alerts and/or Web site updates, and the vast majority (83 percent) find them to be useful.

Forty percent of all of our members have provided us with e-mail addresses and receive our action alerts a few times per year. A growing number of members (nearly 10 percent) are interested in renewing by e-mail, which saves on paper and mailing expenses.

We were pleased to see that the *Land Stewardship Letter* continues to be popular. Nearly half of survey respondents say they always read it cover-to-cover, and an additional 40 percent say

they read some articles. Seventy-seven percent say they pass the LSP newsletter on to others.

We were also happy to see that 45 percent of respondents place the Land Stewardship Project among the top one-third of their giving priorities. And another 37 percent place LSP in the middle one-third. More than one-third of respondents have been familiar with LSP for over 10 years and another 50 percent for four or more years.

Our members are a modest bunch, however—over two-thirds do *not* want to see donor names listed in the newsletter.

People learn about LSP in different ways, but the biggest group by far was those that were introduced to LSP through a friend or relative, confirming what we already suspected that one of the most effective ways to bring in new members is through existing members.

Many others learned about LSP through attendance at events. Thirty-four percent had attended farm tours or field days, 21 percent had attended local foods dinners and 17 percent had attended

policy meetings.

Consistent with our history, farmers and rural residents continue to make up the core of LSP's membership. Over one-third of survey respondents (and overall members too) are actively farming. Over 50 percent live in rural areas or small towns with less than 5,000 residents. Twenty percent live in urban areas of more than 100,000 residents. The remainder live in medium sized communities of 5,000 to 100,000 people.

LSP members are a diverse group with a variety of occupations. At 35 percent, farmers represent the largest occupational group among respondents. The next biggest groups are retired (21 percent), educators (15 percent), and business owners/self employed (11 percent). □

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org. LSP thanks Michele Burlew and Cathryn Vranyses, who volunteered their time to compile and analyze the survey information.

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 18 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

A P R O U D M E M B E R O F

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



You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP's Twin Cities office or e-mail lsplib@landstewardshipproject.org.

An active organization, an active board of directors

By Dana Jackson

“As you know, we have begun the process of acquiring our own IRS nonprofit status (Thus far we’ve been operating under the aegis of National Catholic Rural Life Conference). With that in mind, we need to discuss, and hopefully adopt, LSP articles and by-laws. It is obviously important that the Project be formally set up as thoughtfully as possible... I’ve had no previous experience in formally organizing an ongoing organization, and I really need your help and advice.”

—Ron Kroese, Memo to LSP’s Board of Directors, Dec. 2, 1983

Ron Kroese did get the help of his four-member board of directors. With the guidance of his Land Stewardship Project co-founder and board chair, Victor Ray, along with Greg Cusack, Sara Ebenreck, Milo Hanson and Osgood Magnuson, and many other board members to follow, Kroese developed the fledgling group into a nationally recognized organization by its 10th anniversary in 1992.

Kroese left LSP in 1993 to become the president of the National Center for Appropriate Technology. By that time there was a nine-member board of directors chaired by Beth Waterhouse. Her nonprofit management experience helped LSP work through a redesign of board and staff structure in 1992 and 1993.

Reflecting on the role of LSP’s board, Waterhouse recently wrote:

LSP is unique in many ways, even in regard to the role of the board. In the early years, when the board of an organization is commonly a grassroots working board, LSP’s board was immediately aware of the strength and presence of its founder, Ron Kroese, and the personal and ongoing advisory role of the board chair, Victor Ray. The full board fairly quickly evolved into a policy-level board, and advisory level board to Ron.

When Kroese wanted to do a sabbatical and find a Managing Director to ease his administrative and managerial responsibilities with a growing staff, the board played a strong role in this shift. That in itself is fairly unusual—to have a board so involved with the

managerial structure of the organization—but perhaps it is a reflection of the skills on the board at that time, or perhaps a reflection of the way in which Ron Kroese needed and used his board.

I remember during the late 1980s, when the organization took on the idea of a board committee structure. By that time, LSP had four Minnesota offices, a number of staff, and a budget flirting with the million-dollar figure. The Board needed to evolve. No longer could the board absorb and advise all programs within the agenda of one meeting without the loss of detail, and the staff wanted Board members well-connected to LSP’s work. The board decided that a committee process would allow for a specializing of the board and give them clearer ways in which to be involved, so they designed a committee structure.

The committee structure continues to function in LSP’s board and evolve as organizational needs evolve. The executive committee (President, Vice President and Secretary) has been particularly important and helpful during George Boody’s nine years as executive director. Led by Chairs Larry Olson, Dale Hennen, Dave Andow, and now JoAnne Rohricht, they’ve advised Boody between the quarterly board meetings.

LSP’s board has helped the staff work through significant structural changes during Boody’s tenure also, such as officially becoming a membership organization in 1994 and spinning strong programs off into separate nonprofit organizations. Extensive discussions, planning and negotiations accompanied the separation of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, 1000 Friends of Minnesota and, to a lesser degree, CURE (Clean Up our River Environment). The board also voted approval of a new, five-year program plan in 1999 after collaborating with the staff in its creation.

Developing LSP’s policy positions with input from the staff is an important role the board plays. For example, Bruce Vondracek, Char Brooker, Cheryl Miller and JoAnne Rohricht worked on a policy related to renewable energy from farms for discussion at the November 15 Board meeting. A policy on genetic engineering was developed two years ago. These policies guide staff in making decisions

about joining coalitions, signing on to letters, and promoting public policies.

Board members are nominated by a board development committee with considerable attention paid to staff recommendations. It is not a representational board, but it is required to have a certain percentage of farmers. Traditionally, the board has kept a slot open for someone from the faith community, from another nonprofit organization, and in recent years, the academic community. Gender balance is always important in the make-up of the board.

LSP begins its second 20 years facing serious new funding challenges as a slow economy puts the squeeze on contributions. But with a strong, active Board of Directors, we are prepared to meet those challenges head-on. □

Dana Jackson, LSP’s associate director since 1994, served on LSP’s board of directors from 1986 to 1993.

Guenther joins LSP Board of Directors

Dan Guenther has joined the Land Stewardship Project’s Board of Directors. Guenther, along with his wife Margaret Pennings, operates Common Harvest Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation along the bluffs of the St. Croix River Valley south of Osceola, Wis. Common Harvest will be starting its 14th year of operation in 2003, making it one of the oldest CSA farms in the Twin Cities area. Guenther and Pennings have played a key role in getting CSA farming established in the region. They give many presentations throughout the year on the importance of connecting food consumption/purchasing habits with good land stewardship. Guenther is the author of *To Till and Keep It: New Models for Congregational Involvement with the Land*. □



Dan Guenther

Just in time for the gift-giving season:

Get the latest in stewardship fashion

...and salute LSP's 20th when drinking your coffee or tea!



20th Anniversary mug



Bucket hat & baseball-style cap

These items are available in each of LSP's offices, or use the coupon below to order by mail.

QUANTITY

_____ Ceramic coffee mugs with 20th Anniversary LSP logo. \$5.50; \$5.00 for LSP members

_____ Organic cotton T-shirt with LSP 20th Anniversary logo in sage green; adult sizes small, large, XL & XXL (please specify size when ordering). \$16.50; \$15.00 for LSP members

_____ Baseball style cap; cotton, green & tan, fits all sizes. \$11.50; \$10.00 for LSP members

_____ Bucket style hat; cotton, tan, available in 2 sizes: small/medium & large/XL (please specify size when ordering). \$13.50; \$12.00 for LSP members

\$ _____ Minnesota residents please add 6.5% sales tax

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Enclosed is my check (please make checks payable to LSP)

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Signature: _____

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Clip & mail to: LSP, 2200 4th Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110
(you can use the envelope enclosed in this newsletter).
For more information, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lsfwbl@landstewardshipproject.org

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JAN. 4—Crow River Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Meeting**; Contact: Connie Lahr, 320-963-3690

→ **JAN. 5-7—Wisconsin Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference**, Oconomowoc, Wis.; Contact: Anna Maenner, 920-478-3852 ; acminc@gdinet.com

→ **JAN. 7—The 2003 Minnesota Legislature convenes**; call LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377 for information on initiatives that support family farmers, sustainable agriculture & rural communities

→ **JAN. 7-9—Minnesota Apple Growers Association Education & Trade Show**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: Ralph Yates, 507-895-2388

→ **JAN. 11—Western Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association Annual Meeting**; Contact: LeeAnn VanDerPol, 320-847-3432 or vanderpol@prairiefare.com

→ **JAN. 22-23—Heart of America Grazing Conference**, Hannibal, Mo.; Contact: 573-985-3911 or Kennetta@missouri.edu

→ **JAN. 23-25—Minnesota Grazing & Organic Conference**, St. Cloud (Minn.) Civic Center; Contact: 507-237-5162; dgunnink@prairie.lakes.com

→ **JAN. 24—LSP's Dana Jackson will co-lead a workshop on wildlife friendly farming at the 23rd Ecological Farming Conference**, Pacific Grove, Cal.; Contact: 831-763-2112; www.eco-farm.org/efc/efc_main.html

→ **JAN. 24-25—LSP will be presenting at the "Prairie Wetlands: Restoring Connections" conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: 608-252-8505; www.wiscwetlands.org/PrairieWetlands.html

→ **Midwest Value Added Conference—Bringing Profit Back to the Farm**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: Heather Amundson, 715-834-9672; heather.amundson@wi.usda.gov

→ **Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Meeting**, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 515-232-5661; www.pfi.iastate.edu

→ **JAN. 26-27—Winter Meeting of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG)**, Nebraska City, Neb.; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 651-653-0618; danaj@maroon.tc.umn.edu or Mark Schultz, LSP, 612-722-6377; marks@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JAN. 27-28—Food, Health & God's Creation**, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: 651-649-0454

→ **JAN. 31-FEB. 2—LSP's Dana Jackson will keynote the annual meeting of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group**, Moscow, Idaho; Contact: Jeff Schahczenski, 406-494-8636; www.westernsawg.org/index.htm

→ **Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Conference**, Western Ramkota Inn, Aberdeen, S. Dak.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

→ **FEB. 1—11th Annual Living Green Conference**, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: Craig Minowa, 877-264-4440; craig@earthology.net

→ **FEB. 6-8—Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference**, St. Cloud (Minn.) Civic Center; Contact: Marilyn Johnson, 763-434-0400

→ **FEB. 7-8—Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Annual Conference**, State College, Penn.; Contact: 814-349-9856 or www.pasafarming.org

→ **FEB. 10-11—Great Lakes Grazing Conference**, Battle Creek, Mich.; Contact:

517-788-4292, ext. 1319; bivens@msue.msu.edu

→ **FEB. 13—Midwest Food Alliance Annual Meeting** (location TBA); Contact: Jim Ennis, 651-265-3684; ennis@foodchoices.org.

→ **FEB. 16-18—Wisconsin Grazing Conference**, Stevens Point, Wis.; Contact: Grassworks, 715-261-6009; www.uwrf.edu/grazing/

→ **FEB. 19—LSP's Dana Jackson will speak to the Twin Cities (Minn.) Chapter of the Sierra Club**; Contact: Ron Williams, 612-303-3307

→ **FEB. 20-22—Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Growers**, Hudson, Wis.; Contact: John Hendrickson, 608-265-3704 or jhendric@facstaff.wisc.edu

→ **FEB. 22—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota 12th Annual Conference**, featuring biodynamic farmer Trauger Groh, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: Joel Rosen, 218-389-3306; www.sfa-mn.org/

→ **FEB. 27-MARCH 1—Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: Faye Jones, 715-722-3153; www.mosesorganic.org

→ **APRIL 5—Central Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association Annual Meeting**, Wadena, Minn.; Contact: Lynda Converse, 320-594-2456

→ **JULY 25-27—MSAWG Summer Meeting**, Delaware, Ohio; Contact: LSP, 651-653-0618 or 612-722-6377

Event information

Check the *Newsroom* (click on *Press Releases*) or *Calendar* at www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on upcoming field days, conferences, meetings and other events.



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