



## December 2024

The Soil Builders' Network is a farmer-to-farmer network using soil-building practices such as no-till, cover cropping, diversified rotations, and well-managed grazing to improve water infiltration, reduce reliance on inputs, and regenerate soil health.

### Oats & the 3-Legged Stool of Farm Resiliency



In case you haven't noticed, the humble oat is having a bit of a moment. After decades of declines in oat plantings in Minnesota, acreage is now increasing slightly, but steadily, here in the state. Market demand for the small grain is up, a group of farmers in southern Minnesota are attempting to pull together funding for a major processing plant, and research is showing that this crop can serve as a key linchpin in a rotation that builds healthy soil and protects water quality. Finally, myself and other southeastern Minnesota farmers who are organizing around cooperatively marketing the grain were recently featured prominently in the *Star Tribune* newspaper. You can read more in LSP's [latest blog post here](#).

During conversations in our peer learning groups, as well as in one-to-one visits with farmers and partners, the importance of small grains and markets rises to the top of priorities. During a 2022 LSP workshop featuring Martin Larsen's talk on food grade oats, farmer Rick Matt stood up and said, "We can grow small grains here!" Yes, we can. And let's take that one step further: "We can grow AND sell small grains here!" To help farmers be successful, we are hosting a "Small Grains and Markets" workshop in January. For details, see below or [click here](#). Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions, concerns, or comments.

Thanks,  
[Shea-Lynn \(651-301-1897\)](#)  
LSP Soil Health Organizer

## Network News



### Small Grains Workshop: Economic Opportunity in a New Market Environment

Based on the visionary work of a fourth-generation farmer and scientist, Bob Quinn ([Kamut International](#)), and practical, farmer-innovators like Roy Pfaltzgraff ([Pfz Farms](#)) and Landon and Anne Plagge ([Green Acres Milling](#)), the Land Stewardship Project is hosting a workshop for producers who are seeking confidence and practical know-how related to raising and selling small grains. Join us at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion in Albert Lea, Minn., on **Tuesday, January 28**, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. [Click here to register](#). For more information, contact LSP's Shea-Lynn at 651-301-1897.

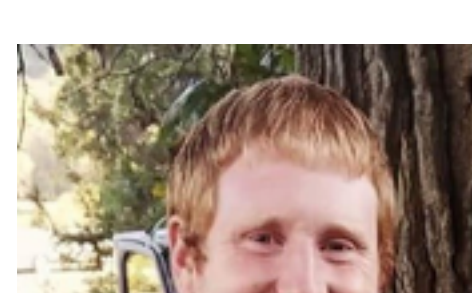
### Meet Our Soil Health Steering Committee Members!



**Mark Klinski**  
I am from Caledonia, Minn., where I raise organic crops. My farm has been certified organic since 2015, and I have grown corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, and peas. I retired in 2021 from my day job as a heavy truck mechanic in LaCrosse, [...more](#).



**Scott Holthaus**  
My wife, Amanda, and I own Oak Creek Pastures near Decorah, Iowa. We raise cattle, sheep, and chickens in a grass pasture-based operation. We direct market some of our production. The reason I am active with LSP is that I want to spread the hope of [...more](#).



**Tony Hackbarth**  
I took on this role to offer my perspective as a young farmer navigating the challenges of starting a farm from scratch. My journey through agriculture thus far has introduced me to some excellent role models. Many of these influences [...more](#).



**Bob Leisen**  
I farm with my brother south of Plainview, Minn., in southern Wabasha County. We also run a couple of farms in northern Olmsted County. We are currently growing just corn and soybeans, with a few beef cattle on the side. [...more](#).

Are you interested in guiding LSP's Soil Health program vision? We will be recruiting new members for our Soil Health Steering Committee this spring. [Contact LSP's Alex Romano](#) if you are interested or would like more information.



### LSP October Grazing Group Meetings

Click on the video to catch the highlight reel from our October 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Grazing Group meetings. The North Group met on the 10<sup>th</sup> and discussed water lines, looked at roller-crimped beans, and discussed equipment issues. Our South Group met the next day and talked about rest and management, stockpile strategies, and fertility. [Are you interested in joining a grazing group? Contact LSP's Alex Romano!](#)

## Sunflower Harvest



Logan and Tom Finnegan (left) fill a drone in early Sept to plant cover crops into their sunflower fields. Sunflowers are being harvested at the Lightly farm (right).

Austin Soil Hub members Scott Lightly, Tom Finnegan, and Tom Cotter all grew sunflowers this year to sell to the Minnesota based cereal company Seven Sundays. In August, LSP hosted an Austin area farmer gathering at the Lightly Farm to see their fields of sunflowers. The sunflowers have now all been harvested, and the farmers report a good crop this year.

Are you interested in joining a farmer-to-farmer soil hub? [Contact LSP's Shea-Lynn for more information.](#)

## Soil Health Resources

### LSP Farm Transition Planning Course

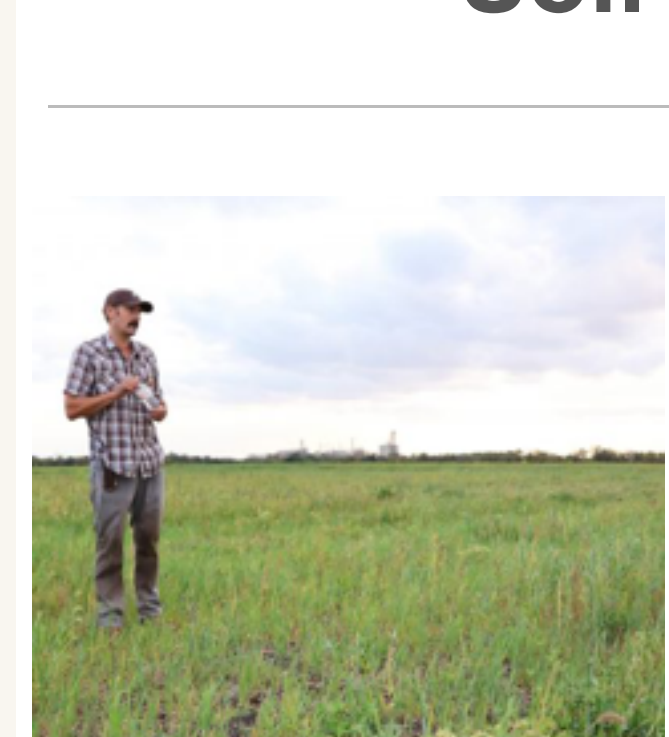
Are you a farmer or landowner thinking about the next steps for your farm and land? Or do you know someone who is? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Transition Planning Course provides a holistic opportunity to dig into important topics and learn from experienced farmers and professionals. The online course will be held on seven Tuesday evenings: Jan. 28, Feb. 4, Feb. 11, Feb. 18, Feb. 25, March 4 and March 18. The sessions build on one another, so attendance at all sessions ensures the greatest understanding and planning opportunities. The course fee is \$250 per family. The registration deadline is Jan. 12. For more information and to register [click here](#) or contact the Land Stewardship Project's **Karen Stettler** at [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org).



"The soil was here before you, and thanks to your conservation efforts, it will be here long after you are gone. The fact is, you are going to die. This is not a debatable statement. What can you do to continue the soil health and conservation progress that you have worked so hard to establish? In addition to many soil health workshops, LSP also offers a holistic Farm Transitions Planning Course online. I took this course in 2023 because I needed help in making a plan for the transfer of our farm. Having no interested family members, and hoping to continue the farm site based on a no-till, soil health focused life, I needed ideas about what was out there in the world of estate planning. The Land Stewardship's Farm Transition Planning course gives you many ideas and options, and you can hear how others have successfully navigated this important stage of life."

— Phil Hebrink, Conservation Farmer

## Soil Builders' Spotlight



### Allen & Kathleen Deutz

As farmers from across the region haul corn past the Deutz's farm to the local ethanol plant, they can't help but notice fences, livestock, and a diversity of plants. What's not as immediately evident is how this **counter-intuitive way of farming is building long-term soil health and resilience.**

Check out LSP's recent [Ear to the Ground podcast with Allen Deutz: "Against the Grain"](#)

## Upcoming Events

**Upcoming LSP Events**  
[\(see LSP's web page for more events & updates\)](#)

**January 28, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m., [LSP Small Grains Markets: Economic Opportunity in a New Market](#), Albert Lea, Minn.**

**January 28, 5:30 p.m.- 8 p.m., [LSP Holistic Farm Transition Planning Course](#), online**

### Upcoming Partner Events

**December 3 & 4, [2024 Premier Soil Health Event](#), Mankato, Minn.**  
*Hosted by Minnesota Soil Health Coalition*

**December 6, [Farming Forever Symposium](#), Winona, Minn.**  
*Hosted by Kelley & Cindy O'Neill*

**December 6 9:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m., [Virtual Organic Conference](#), Virtual**  
*Hosted by Albert Lea Seed*

**December 17 & 18, [Wisconsin Water & Soil Health Conference](#), Wisconsin Dells, Wis.**  
*Hosted by University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension*

**December 10 & 11, [PFI Annual Conference](#), Des Moines, Iowa**  
*Hosted by Practical Farmers of Iowa*

**December 21 - 23, [MN Young & Emerging Farmers Workshop](#), Mankato, Minn.**  
*Hosted by Minnesota Soybeans Growers*

**January 29 - 30, [20th Annual Soil Management Summit](#), Mankato, Minn.**  
*Hosted by University of Minnesota - Extension*



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