The Land Stewardship Letter

Keeping the Land and People Together

Vol. 19, No. 4 www.landstewardshipproject.org SEPT/OCT 2001

Agriculture's Untapped Potential

By Brian DeVore

Study: Working farmland can produce many economic, environmental benefits

At the bottom of this page is a bar chart that at first glance looks to be all wrong. Why are the bars dipping into negative territory? But in reality, this graph shows what's "right" about replacing intensive row cropping systems with a diversified agricultural landscape; it provides a snapshot of one positive environmental impact working farmland can have on the landscape.

In this case the positive environmental impact is fewer pollutants—sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus—making their way into the water of a western Minnesota river basin. But the benefits of agricultural diversity aren't limited to the reduction of a handful of pollutants in one Midwestern watershed. In fact, a new study released in November finds that diversified farming can produce a number of positive benefits—from cleaner water and increased

Multiple Benefits *see page 14...*

A limited farm policy produces limited results; a multifaceted farm produces...

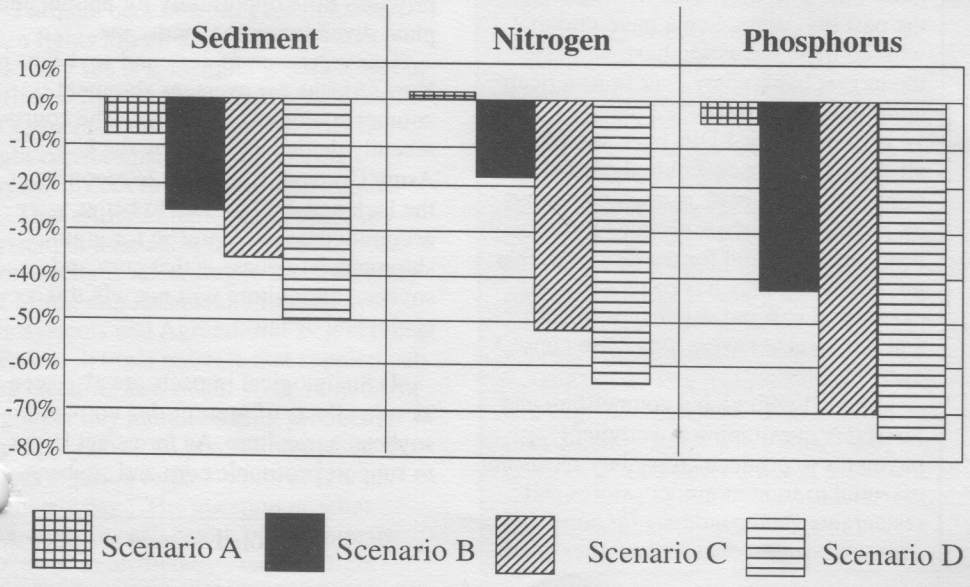
Greg Koether lives and farms a mile from the Big Spring basin in northeast Iowa. Big Spring is the subject of one of the longest-running nitrate contamination studies in the country. What scientists have found from studying the aquifer is that agriculture is one of the major sources of excessive nitrates in area wells.

"I think that's changed a lot of people's thinking about land use," says Koether.

Indeed, Big Spring is one of the reasons Greg and his wife Kathy have taken such pains to protect the land on their hilly farm, which lies just five miles as the crow flies from the Mississippi River, and which sits on top of a vulnerable Swiss-cheese like system of limestone geology called karst. Over the years, the Koethers became concerned that intensive

Untapped *see page 12...*

Change from Baseline in Chippewa River Study Area



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Volume 19, Number 4—Sept/Oct 2001

The Land Stewardship Letter is published six 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.

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the *Land Stewardship Letter* should be addressed to the editor, Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone/fax: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

This newsletter printed by Roscoe Printers, Wanamingo, Minnesota

Commentary !?!?!

Our corn-soybean system fails the sustainability test on all fronts

By Gyles Randall

Present-day corn and soybean production in southern Minnesota does not appear to be sustainable from economic, environmental, ecological and sociological perspectives. Let's examine these four factors:

1) Economics is a primary determinant as to whether an agricultural production system is sustainable—to the producer, the agricultural infrastructure and the surrounding community. Global competition, primarily from Argentina, Brazil, and China, will put extreme pressure on the U.S. corn and soybean market.

Visitors to Brazil say there are over 200 million acres of relatively flat land outside of the Amazon River Basin available to be cleared for crop production. This is more than the total acreage of corn and soybeans in the U.S. (about 140 million acres).

Due to low prices, federal assistance with loan deficiency payments (LDPs) has been the primary source of profit for most U.S. corn and soybean producers the past two years. Some have said that without them we would have witnessed the largest bankruptcy ever in American agriculture.

Unfortunately, LDPs have stimulated all-out field-edge-to-field-edge production, since the farmer is rewarded based on number of bushels produced. Although economically good for the producer, this government policy has come at the expense of soil and water stewardship and has created severe long-term consequences.

Coupled with global competition and taxpayers questioning government payments to produce crops they see as not essential to food in grocery stores and restaurants, the economics for current corn-soybean production becomes bleak.

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"Present-day corn and soybean production in southern Minnesota does not appear to be sustainable from economic, environmental, ecological and sociological perspectives."

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2) Environmental factors have become more prominent in recent years when determining the sustainability of crop production systems. In my travels throughout south central and southeastern Minnesota, I've never seen as much erosion as in the last few years. We've had some intense rains, but we've also converted the landscape to a crop production system (corn and soybeans) that is extremely susceptible to soil erosion.

We must question the sustainability of the corn-soybean rotation from an environmental perspective. This is due to more soil erosion, greater and more "flash flood" runoff water compared to cropping systems containing alfalfa and grass perennials, and more loss of nitrate-nitrogen to ground and surface waters.

3) Ecological factors must be considered when evaluating sustaina-bility. Diverse plant and wildlife systems are considered highly favorable in a rural ecosystem and present an aesthetically pleasing quality, which is gaining value in American society. But the current corn-soybean cropping system provides little opportunity for animal and plant diversity on the landscape.

Transportation of corn and soybeans to New Orleans for overseas shipment is another ecological challenge. The courts recently denied attempts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to reconstruct the lock and dam system to better accommodate barge traffic for grain shipment. My guess is that corn and soybean agriculture will not win this ecological debate.

4) Sociological impacts are also seen as side effects of present-day corn and soybean agriculture. As farms get larger to support profitable corn and soybean

Failed System *see page 3...*

...Failed System *from page 2*

production, we have fewer farms and farm families. Rural populations decline, student numbers in schools dwindle and church membership shrinks. Producers often bypass the local community to purchase inputs at larger regional outlets where prices are cheaper due to volume purchases.

And as more production contracts are developed between agribusiness and the farmer, the farmer will gradually assume the role of "custom operator" or "indentured servant" and lose the freedom to manage. These trends will likely continue regardless of the cropping system, but the corn-soybean rotation has speeded the process.

What does this all mean? Corn and soybean production systems with little livestock as part of the enterprise mix do not appear sustainable. We need substantial changes in Federal farm policy, cropping systems and usage of crops produced on the farm to sustain a healthy environment and rural community. ❐

Gyles Randall is a soil scientist and professor at the University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center, Waseca. He can be reached at 507-835-3620, or grandall@soils.umn.edu.

Letters

Say 'good night' to night-lights?

Farmers benefit from yard lights and barn lights left on all night. They can instantly see if something is amiss. But is artificial light at night good for the health of farm animals? Exposure to artificial light creates changes within living organisms not in harmony with nature.

That artificial light manipulates the system of animals is fairly well known. For example, according to the University of Minnesota Extension Program in Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, "Research trials indicate that supplementing lactating cows with 16 to 18 hours of light per day increases milk production by 5 percent to 16 percent compared to cows exposed to 13.5 hours or less of light per day." The question is, what about the overall health of the animals exposed to artificially extended light?

Most people know that it is good for our health to spend time outside and in the sun. What most if us have not realized is that we and all forms of life developed to benefit from exposure to darkness as well. It seems that the body (animal or human) gets a particularly effective boost in its immune system *when it is exposed to the dark*. This boost comes from the natural production of melatonin, a key hormone. But remember, the body needs to be in the dark! When it is exposed to light, the production of melatonin is immediately reduced. Much research is now being done to determine to what extent exposure to artificial light at night negatively influences the health of animals and humans.

Perhaps we should reconsider lights in the barn all night and instead give the animals some much-needed darkness. And perhaps a yard light on a switch would not be such a bad idea, either. Whoever thought that darkness is actually something to be celebrated? Much research needs to be done.

For more information, call the International Dark Sky Association at 520-293-3198, or log onto their Web site at www.darksky.org.

— Tine Thevenin
Lake City, Minn.

What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays and poems on issues covered in this newsletter. Contact: Brian DeVore, *Land Stewardship Letter*, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

◆ **Myth:** Mergers and acquisitions benefit the employees and shareholders of the firms involved.

◆ **Fact:** Such deals mostly benefit the top executives who spearhead them. According to an analysis by the investment firm Salomon Smith Barney, if you are a shareholder in a company that takes over another firm, you aren't going to exactly be the toast of Wall Street. Of U.S. companies acquired since 1997 in deals valued at $15 billion or more, the stocks of the shareholders in the "acquiring" company have under-performed the S&P 500-stock index by an average of 14 percentage points, says the analysis. Those results are supported by academic studies that have been done over the years, according to the Oct. 30, 2000, edition of the *Wall Street Journal*. One CEO told the *Journal* that top executives at large companies sometimes strike a merger deal simply to satisfy their "egos" and become "big, bigger and biggest."

Such thinking can make these executives' bank accounts "big, bigger and biggest" as well. For example, in late 1999, as the proposed merger of agricultural cooperatives Farmland Industries and Cenex Harvest States was being discussed, C. Robert Taylor examined a Securities and Exchange Commission filing related to the deal. Taylor, an agricultural economist at Auburn University, found that most farmer-members of these cooperatives would have received $50 to a few hundred dollars if the merger went through. In contrast, the top executive from Farmland and his counterpart at Cenex each stood to pocket $3.5 million to $4.8 million if the merger was approved, according to journalist Alan Guebert.

The farmer-members of Cenex Harvest States eventually voted to reject the merger. But in general mergers are continuing at a record pace. By late 2000, there were more than 30,000 merger deals announced worldwide, at a total cost of $3 trillion. That's up from 27,000 deals—worth $2.54 trillion— in 1999.

For a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* article on the downsides of mergers, log onto the Internet and type in econ.pstc.brown.edu/~ronel/179/readings/wsjmerger.pdf.

LSP News

LSP Applauds Passage of Conservation Security Act by Senate Ag Committee

But rest of farm bill package is a mixed bag

Calling it a "huge step forward in progressive farm policy," Land Stewardship Project members applauded the passage Nov. 15 of the Conservation Security Act out of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee.

"This is a victory for family farmers and the environment," says Dave Serfling, a Preston, Minn., farmer and member of LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee. "This proposal recognizes some of the long-term investments farms like mine are making in the future of the land and our communities. Taxpayers should be happy that they will finally be getting something for their generous subsidies to the American farmer besides huge surpluses of commodity crops that the marketplace doesn't want to pay for."

If signed into law, the Conservation Security Act (CSA) would reward farmers who care for the land by paying for the public benefits—such as enhanced water quality, soil conservation, and increased wildlife habitat—that stewardship farming produces (see page 1).

LSP's Federal Farm Policy Program, led by a 10-person committee of LSP members and staff, has been very involved with designing the CSA and working to pass it. Eight of the committee's members are farmers.

Mark Schultz, LSP's Policy Program Director, says passage of this proposal onto the Senate floor is a testament to a lot of work on the part of farmers and other citizens concerned about the sustainability of rural economies and the environment. People provided input to their members of Congress via telephone calls and e-mails. In addition, LSP members testified at Congressional hearings in Washington, D.C., and Minnesota this spring and summer (see www.landstewardshipproject.org for testimony given by Monica Kahout, Dave Serfling and Dan Specht).

"We won it through sharp thinking, strong organizing and by building alliances with progressive leaders like Senators Paul Wellstone and Mark Dayton, as well as Tom Harkin, the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee," says Schultz. "They hung onto the Conservation Security Act as a top priority."

The Conservation Security Act & farmers

Participation in the program stipulates that conservation farm plans must achieve resource and environmental benefits, but does not require the removal of land from production.

Farmers are given a large amount of flexibility for choosing land management practices suitable for individual farms. They have the choice of enrolling in one of three tiers:

- **Tier I** participants address priority resource concerns on all or part of their farms/ranches. Practices may include soil and residue management, nutrient management, pest management, irrigation management, grazing management, wildlife habitat management, contour farming, strip cropping, cover cropping, and related practices.
- **Tier II** participants address priority resource concerns on the whole farm/ranch and meet applicable resource management system criteria. Tier II practices entail adoption of land use adjustment practices such as resource-conserving crop rotations, rotational grazing, conversion to soil-conserving practices, installing conservation buffer practices, restoration of wildlife habitats, prairies, and/or wetlands, and other related practices.
- **Tier III** participants satisfy the requirements of Tiers I and II, while integrating land use practices into a whole-farm, total-resource approach that fosters long-term sustainability of the resource base.

Payments are based on the natural resource and environmental benefits expected from plan implementation, the number and timing of management practices established, income forgone due to land use adjustments, costs related to on-farm research, and several other factors. Payments may not exceed $20,000, $35,000, and $50,000 for Tier I, II, and III contracts, respectively.

The bad news...

But the Conservation Security Act is one of very few bright spots in an Ag Committee package that grants large subsidies to factory farms and undermines the ability of family-sized sustainable operations to compete, says Schultz.

Agribusiness interests were successful in keeping in place the basic elements of the current "Freedom to Farm" law that spends tax money on production of a handful of "program crops"—basically corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton and rice. Environmentally, the adverse effects of this approach include more intensive row cropping, reduced biodiversity and higher rates of chemical applications and soil erosion, says Schultz. Economically, it means lower crop prices, cheaper feed costs for factory farms, and giving huge payments to the biggest farm operators. Commodity groups such as the National Pork Producers Council and agribusiness firms like Cargill support this approach, but it is bad news for family farmers and for the environment, says Schultz.

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"With this Farm Bill LSP has had a greater impact than ever before when it comes to Federal policy. That's because more members have taken action, helping to shape the debate and legislative language on both conservation and corporate concentration issues. Organizing, fresh thinking, and commitment are the keys to our work. And we're not stopping now."

—Mark Schultz, LSP Policy Program Director

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The bill also fails to target payments to those farmers who need it most, thus providing a windfall to some of the nation's largest farms. An Environmental Working Group analysis shows that from 1996 to 2000, just 10 percent of the nation's biggest subsidized crop producers absorbed two-thirds of all subsidies.

Farm Bill, *see page 5...*

...Farm Bill *from page 4*

"In fact, as the bill now stands it will provide extra money to big producers who plowed up soil-saving hay ground and pasture and switched to soybeans in recent years, increasing the taxpayer subsidy of large-scale erosion," says Serfling. "Why should they be rewarded with a new crop base that produces extra subsidy payments?"

Proponents of factory farms also pushed through a change in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) so that it can be used to fund construction of large-scale liquid manure lagoons. In the past, the EQIP program has been utilized by family farmers to improve the environmental performance of their farms.

"By all accounts, the aggressive lobbying of agribusiness and the big commodity groups like the National Pork Producers Council approached the obscene," says Schultz. "But we'll take this fight to the Senate floor."

Making progress on competition

In addition to the Conservation Security Act, LSP's other top policy priority was to restore some measure of fairness and competition to the livestock industry. Corporate meat packers like Smithfield, Cargill and Tyson have used acquisitions and another round of factory farm expansion to consolidate their control of the hog and cattle markets. Packers use direct ownership of livestock to force independent producers to take lower prices. Packers also use captive supplies—hogs they buy under premium long-term forward contracts that are kept secret between them and the largest producers—to control the market, reduce fair competition, and keep prices to independent producers down. LSP supports a comprehensive competition title in the Farm Bill, which would include a ban on packer ownership of livestock and restrictions on the use of captive supplies.

However, agribusiness interests (see "Who's afraid" sidebar below) were successful in defeating a watered-down competition title in the Senate Ag Committee by a vote of 12 to 9. On the up side, two amendments offered by Wellstone in committee demonstrated growing dissatisfaction in the countryside to increasing corporate control. His amendment requiring country of origin labeling on all agricultural products passed 11 to 10. And a strong amendment to ban packer ownership of livestock, on which LSP worked with Senate staff, was defeated by only three votes. The Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, of which LSP is a member, organized around the packer ban, generating publicity on the issue and hundreds of calls to Senate Ag Committee members from family farm livestock producers. As the Farm Bill headed to the floor for a vote by the full Senate, LSP members and staff were working to build support for further reform measures. ❐

The next step

The Senate Agriculture Bill, which includes the Conservation Security Act, was scheduled to come up for floor debate after Thanksgiving. The House has already passed its farm bill—without any of the elements of the Conservation Security Act and with many negative provisions related to family farms and the environment. After the Senate passes a bill, the House and the Senate will then create a joint conference committee to hammer out a compromise farm policy that can be sent to President Bush. That means there still may be opportunities to fashion a final farm policy that includes more pro-family farmer provisions, such as a bill that would ban packer ownership of livestock.

Contact LSP's Policy Program by calling 612-722-6377 or e-mailing marks@landstewardshipproject.org for information on how to send an important message to your representatives in Congress, and to be put on a special e-mail action alert list. Check www.landstewardshipproject.org for regular updates.

Who's afraid of competition?

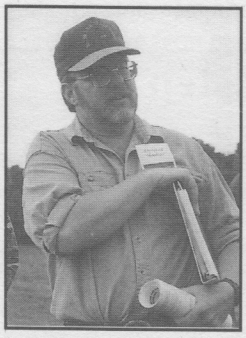
Here are a list of groups and corporations who signed a letter opposing the Competition Title in the Senate Agriculture Committee Bill:

- National Pork Producers Council
- Cargill, Inc.
- Tyson Foods, Inc.
- Smithfield Foods, Inc.
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Monsanto Company
- Seaboard Corporation
- Pioneer Hi-Bred
- National Chicken Council
- National Corn Growers Association
- National Cotton Council
- National Sunflower Association
- United Egg Producers
- U.S. Canola Association
- Wheat Export Trade Education Committee
- American Cotton Shippers Association
- American Soybean Association
- American Crop Protection Association
- American Feed Industry Association
- American Frozen Food Institute
- American Meat Institute
- American Seed Trade Association
- Animal Health Institute
- CGB Enterprises, Inc.
- Chicago Board of Trade
- Corn Refiners Association
- Food Distributors International
- Food Marketing Institute
- Grocery Manufacturers of America
- International Dairy Foods Association
- Louis Dreyfus Corporation
- National Association of Manufacturers
- National Food Processors Association
- National Grain and Feed Association
- National Grain Trade Council
- National Meat Association
- National Renderers Association
- National Turkey Federation
- North American Export Grain Association
- North American Millers' Association
- Oklahoma Fertilizer and Chemical Association
- Oklahoma Grain and Feed Association
- Oklahoma Seed Trade Association
- Pacific Northwest Grain and Feed Association
- Texas Grain and Feed Association
- United Egg Association
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce

LSP News

LSP staff changes

Richard Ness has left the Land Stewardship Project to pursue other interests in Wyoming. Ness was an on-farm researcher and educator in LSP's southeast Minnesota office from 1989 to



Richard Ness

1994. During that time Ness was instrumental in promoting grazing and Holistic Management in Minnesota. He left LSP for two years and upon his return worked on various initiatives, including the Monitoring Project, Farm Beginnings and the coordination of grazing support groups.

Lori Lea Harms

Lori Lea Harms has joined LSP's southeast Minnesota office as an AmeriCorps volunteer. Harms attended the University of Wisconsin, where she received a bachelor's degree in dairy science and a master's degree in social work. She has served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador and a project coordinator for the Community Action Coalition. Most recently, Harms was a Project Assistant for Family Farm Defenders. During her AmeriCorps service, Harms will work with the southeast Minnesota Farm Beginnings program. ❐

LSP happenings

LSP's southeast Minnesota office hosted a potluck picnic on Sept. 8 at Farmer's Community Park in Lewiston.

The Second Annual Western Minnesota Chili Cook-off was held on the Main Street of Montevideo Oct. 13. The Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office sponsored the event, which was part of a fund-raiser/membership drive. More than 150 people participated.

On Nov. 10, LSP co-sponsored a lecture and book-signing by Joe Paddock, author of *The Life and Legacy of Ernest Oberholtzer: Caretaker of the Boundary Waters* (see review on page 17).

The western Minnesota office co-sponsored the Pride of the Prairie Banquet and Local Foods Forum Nov. 15 in Morris, Minn. More than 110 people came to eat locally produced food and to hear about the exciting possibilities creating a regional food system offers. Watch the next *Land Stewardship Letter* for more information on this event, including results of a survey of western Minnesota farmers who market food straight to consumers. ❐

Farm Aid Benefit Concert

Since 1985, musicians Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Mellencamp have been putting on Farm Aid concerts to raise money for programs that benefit America's family farmers. Some of that money has gone to help the Land Stewardship Project's efforts to maintain a competitive livestock industry in this country. This year, the Farm Aid concert was held Sept. 29 in Noblesville, Ind. LSP staff members Mike McMahon, Bobby King and Mark Schultz, along with LSP members Paul and Ramona Garver, attended the event.

The day of the Farm Aid concert (*above*)**, the Campaign for Family Farms announced it was donating 5,000 pounds of family farm pork to the New York Labor Council and several churches in Harlem to help workers who have been laid off since the Sept. 11 attacks. Patchwork Family Farms, a program of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, delivered the pork. Pictured here with the pork delivery truck are members of LSP and the Missouri Rural Crisis Center.**

Before the Farm Aid concert (*left*)**, LSP and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms sponsored a rally.** (*photos by Bobby King*)

Twin Cities Local Foods Banquet

Southeast Minnesota dairy farmers Vance and Bonnie Haugen keynoted the 2001 Land Stewardship Project Twin Cities Local Foods Banquet on Sept. 29 (see page 10). They talked about how they are working to make connections between their land, their food production system and consumers. "I truly encourage each of you to put your feet on a sustainable farm, use your eyes, ears to give your minds and hearts a better understanding of our farms," Bonnie told banquet participants. "Then put your hands into action by buying local food as much as you can."

During their talk, the Haugens referenced three reports related to our food system:

• *Finding Food in Farm Country: The Economics of food and farming in Southeast Minnesota*, March 2001; www.ncrlc.com/meter_CRC.html.

• *Consolidation in the Food and Agriculture System: A report to the National Farmer's Union*, 1999; www.nfu.org/images/heffernan_1999.pdf.

• *Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa perspective on how far food travels, fuel usage, and greenhouse gas emissions*, June 2001; www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/leopold/pubinfo/papersspeeches/food_mil.pdf.

More than 140 people enjoyed a locally-produced meal prepared by chef Brad Beal and several volunteers.

Several farmers set up displays at the banquet.

Court ruling favoring Waseca County factory hog farm to be appealed

A Waseca County District Court Judge ruled Nov. 2 against requiring an environmental review of a 2,400-sow factory hog farm and its 2.4 million gallon lagoon. Farmers and rural residents had petitioned the county to require an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) on the factory farm because it threatens area groundwater and is located near a state wetland. When the county refused, Citizens Concerned for Waseca County challenged the decision in District Court. The District Court, however, has upheld the County's decision not to require environmental review.

The citizens' group has decided to appeal the decision to the Minnesota Appeals Court.

Much of the 2.4 million gallons of manure will be spread on nearby land, which is composed of extremely porous soil. This porous soil may allow pollution to quickly enter the Galena aquifer, which is near the surface. The Galena aquifer supplies the drinking water for much of Waseca and Steele counties.

"This 2,4000 sow operation and 2.4 million gallon lagoon may have the potential for significant environmental effects in this area of Waseca County and we believe that the petition presented by the citizens demonstrates that potential," says attorney Jim Peters, who is representing the group.

"We have to appeal—not for ourselves but for our kids and grandkids," says Richard Scholljegerdes, a local farmer and member of the Land Stewardship Project. "They will ask us if we did everything we could to protect our water. The Galena aquifer that this 2.4 million gallons of liquid manure will sit on is very vulnerable. That's my water, my kids' water and my grandkids' water."

Construction on the factory farm was halted when the court ordered the feedlot permit suspended until a ruling on the environmental review could be reached. However, with the Nov. 2 ruling construction can begin again. Scholljegerdes, who is a lifelong farmer and resident of Waseca County, made the point that this factory farm is not only bad for the environment, but also bad for independent pork producers.

"This is a Wakefield Pork contract operation," he says. "Wakefield owns the hogs, calls the shots and takes the profit out of our county, leaving us with millions of gallons of hog manure. What really bothers me is that these types of operations squeeze out the independent family hog farmers we want to keep in our county."

Wakefield Pork, based out of Gaylord, in Minnesota's Sibley County, is the twenty-third largest commercial pork producer in the nation, according to *Successful Farming* magazine's 2001 Pork Powerhouses list. Wakefield owns 25,500 sows, up from 23,000 in 2000.

In addition to appealing this ruling, Citizens Concerned for Waseca County will continue its work at the grassroots level for county and state policies that promote family farming and protect the environment.

Citizens Concerned for Waseca County was formed over a year ago with the help of LSP and works to protect the Waseca community from large factory farms. As part of its work with LSP, the group stopped the construction of a proposed 1,600-cow dairy with 25 million gallon capacity open-air manure lagoons. It also worked with LSP to help prevent passage of state legislation that would have set up a pool of $1 million of taxpayers' money to pay for the cost of environmental review of factory farms. ❐

Farm Beginnings opens doors

Like many new farmers, Dave and Erin Varney are working hard to learn as much as they can in as short a time as possible. Pest cycles, soil types, marketing strategies—those things and more fill the heads of the southwest Wisconsin couple as they wrap up their first vegetable growing season on their own land. But they also have other things on their minds these days.

"Farming isn't just about planting crops and raising animals," says Erin, 29. "You can diversify into so many things. There's just a wealth of knowledge to tap into."

The Varneys know firsthand about such knowledge. They recently graduated from the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program, an educational/mentorship initiative that introduces participants to profitable, innovative farming methods. Last fall and winter, the Varneys drove to Plainview, Minn., twice a month where they joined 28 other would-be farmers for a series of Farm Beginnings workshops. Through these classes, participants learned, among other things, decision-making skills, goal setting, marketing and business plan writing. During the spring and summer, Farm Beginnings participants got a firsthand look at some innovative farming practices through a series of educational tours in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The farms that hosted these tours were involved in everything from vegetable production and on-farm dairy processing to commercial flower raising and grass-based livestock. These tours gave participants an opportunity to ask questions and form networks with these established farmers.

A new Farm Beginnings class began in November, marking the fifth year of the program in southeast Minnesota/southwest Wisconsin and the second year for a western Minnesota version. The program originated in the mid-1990s with a group of southeast Minnesota farmers who were concerned about where the next generation of farmers would come from. Alternative practices such as grass-based livestock production offer low-cost, profitable, entries into farming, but can be very information and management intensive. That's why networking is so key to successfully launching new farming enterprises, says Karen Stettler, who coordinates the southeast Minnesota Farm Beginnings program out of LSP's Lewiston, Minn., office.

"It just seems when people get together, some wonderful things result. Doors open that people didn't even know existed," she says. "That's why we've been able to shatter the myth that there's simply no way for people to get started in farming these days."

Sam (*left to right*)**, Erin, Dave and Daisy Varney.**

Indeed, of the 56 families who have graduated from the program, over 60 percent are involved in farming today, according to Stettler.

The Varneys always knew they wanted to produce food, but Farm Beginnings has introduced them to some new ideas about how to go about it. They are now considering permaculture—food crops that don't have to be replanted every year. They have been talking to farmers who are raising permaculture crops such as hazelnuts and blueberries and are looking at how those would fit in on their own farm. Permaculture may not have been something the Varneys would have considered five years ago, when they first started raising a few vegetables on some rented land near Prescott, Wis. But earlier this year they bought a 35-acre farm near LaFarge. Now that they own land, they can consider enterprises that will be carried over from year to year. And through Farm Beginnings, the Varneys were introduced to ways of utilizing the land beyond traditional crop or livestock enterprises. In fact, Dave says one of the most useful class sessions involved wiping the chalkboard clean and brainstorming about all the things that could be produced on a farm.

"That list got pretty wild," recalls Dave, 32. "Some of these people looked so deep into the farm."

Corn mazes, u-pick produce, wood carving and bed and breakfasts were just some of the enterprises chalked up. But Stettler says no matter how exciting or innovative an enterprise is, it will go nowhere without a good business plan.

The Varneys, who have two children—Sam, 6, and Daisy, 5—crunched some numbers and decided to use this as a "transition" year. They left their base of direct-sales customers behind in Prescott when they moved, so this season they raised most of their vegetables for the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool. Erin went to work for the Pool and Dave waited tables at a restaurant part time. As the winter snows pile up, the couple is already planning for 2002, when they want to raise more vegetables for direct sales to local residents.

Whatever the future holds, the Varneys say being exposed to so many ideas through Farm Beginnings has given them the confidence to try a variety of enterprises. Dave says he would recommend such training for anyone considering farming. But, he added, there's also another group of people that would benefit from such an experience.

"Even though it's called Farm Beginnings, I think it could be a new beginning for established, conventional farms," says Dave. "A lot of those people who get stuck in a rut of doing the same old thing could be helped by looking at different enterprises." ❐

Classes for the 2001-2002 Farm Beginnings program started in November. For more information on the southeast Minnesota Farm Beginnings program, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org. In western Minnesota, contact Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

Giving good farmers some credit

By Caroline van Schaik

"...was turned down 15 times before I received a loan. I was given advice that ranged from expanding my herd to three times its size to filing bankruptcy to getting out of farming to getting a job in town."

The above quote was taken from a recent letter of support a farmer wrote for an exciting new Land Stewardship Project initiative on agricultural credit. LSP has embarked on a project to learn why the financing of sustainable, low-input, and/or new farmer enterprises is a significant challenge in rural areas. And as this quoted passage makes clear, we have a lot of obstacles in our path.

Anecdotal evidence tells us already that lenders think farmer/entrepreneur business plans are poorly written with little track record or substantiating data to show the viability of a new way of making the farm pay. Farmers charge that lenders don't understand alternative farming methods and usually recommend that they get bigger or find a job in town.

This is a problem with community, environmental, and, of course, financial implications. Studies (see sidebar below) show that sustainable farming can pay. So why are there so many problems financing it?

A 16-member steering committee has begun its collaborative work to create targeted surveys and a series of round table discussions to—perhaps—answer that question. More accurately, our goal over the next two years is to substantiate some of the hunches farmers, lenders and a few agriculture educators already have. Hunches speak volumes, but imagine what we could learn about the myths and misunderstandings if we asked a variety of players some pointed questions.

For example, among our steering committee members are bankers who have begun to acknowledge that their assumptions about agriculture are problematic. Portfolio analyses suggest that the larger, conventional farming enterprises are no longer necessarily the good credit risks they once were. But there is a painful need for some farmer education in the stuff of good business, which necessarily starts with a plan. This, say even the friendliest of bankers, isn't happening much.

In addition, our collective stories suggest that language—bank jargon, farmer talk—is a problem. But is it? Is it a matter of "wearing the other shoe" long enough to understand its owner? Does the unfamiliarity of grass farming or cheese processing, for example, make a loan application a non-starter? Is it the lack of enterprise data or a bank's cost-per-loan threshold that stops a farmer at the door?

These questions set the stage for an exploration of the real problems behind financing sustainable agriculture, which can build soil, contribute to the economy, and as one of many multiple benefits, even be an asset at the local bank. Community banks on Main Street and the farmers behind the specialty cheeses, wood products and home-processed poultry *all* contribute environmental and social capital into a local economy. They contribute real dollars, too. Sad to say that consolidations in the banking and farming communities offer a window of opportunity for each to look the other over again. We hope our research lights the way.

The starting point, as always, is the farmhouse. Our horizon, as always, embraces the many worlds that impact and are impacted by farming. Bankers and farmers are vital parts of their respective communities and it behooves us to get to the bottom of why their relationships aren't always fruitful. ❐

Caroline van Schaik is an organizer in LSP's Twin Cities office. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or caroline @landstewardshipproject.org.

Sustainable farms are good for the environment *and* profitable

Farm profits and environmental performance on sustainable farms match and often exceed that of conventional farms, according to a recently released four-year study that the Land Stewardship Project helped conduct.

The study, which was coordinated by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), profiled three farms in detail, measuring soil loss, rainfall and field runoff. Production and financial data were also analyzed to evaluate the bottom line. Besides LSP and MISA, other cooperators in this study were the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Project.

Two of the farms were dairy operations in the Sand Creek watershed, which is part of the Minnesota River system. On those farms, a combination of rotationally-grazed pasture and contour strips rotated among alfalfa hay, corn, soybeans and small grains held sediment and nutrients on the fields, making the operations very eco-friendly despite the relative steepness of the land.

The third farm studied was in the Chippewa River watershed. That farm is mostly flat pasture, where beef cows and calves are rotationally grazed. Storms caused sediment runoff on the farm, but at rates 20 to 40 percent less than the watershed average.

Both dairy farms were very healthy financially. One farm consisted of 41 cows and produced organic milk. The other farm had 141 cows and produced regular milk. Net income averaged $83,000 per year on the larger farm—two to three times the average for similar dairy farms in the region. Net income on the smaller dairy farm averaged $57,000 per year—one and one-half to three times higher than the income of peers.

However, the beef cow-calf operation on the third farm didn't fare as well. The beginning young farmer faced several problems common to many beginning farmers, including high debt levels. Net income was negative, and both spouses worked full-time jobs off the farm. Start-up costs are partly to blame as the farmer invested in pasture improvement that will pay off later in lower feed costs. And bad luck was a factor. A combination of a barn fire that destroyed winter feed and weather-related herd mortality problems resulted in further losses.

The 44-page report on the study, *Sustainable Farming Systems: Demonstrating Environmental and Economic Performance*, can be obtained by calling MISA at 612-625-8235 or 800-909-6472, or e-mailing misamail@umn.edu. A pdf version can be downloaded from http://www.misa.umn.edu/.

Educating consumers one person at a time

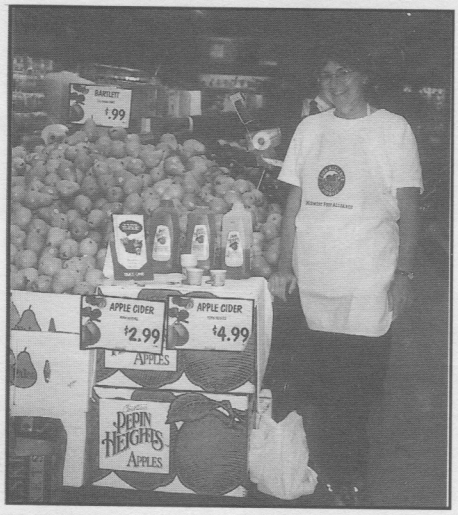
By Britt Jacobson

When was the last time you stopped to try a sample at your local grocery store? This fall in Minnesota, if you stopped at Kowalski's Markets, select Coborn's stores, Barlow's Plaza Hy-Vee, T. Harberts Foods or Mississippi Markets, you might have met one of the Midwest Food Alliance food demonstrators.

Since August, Midwest Food Alliance (MWFA) has hosted over 40 demonstrations featuring MWFA-approved products, including fresh apple cider, cucumbers, and even potatoes. With the help of over 45 Land Stewardship Project members and other volunteers, we have spent more than 200 hours talking with consumers in their local grocery stores.

Unlike most grocery store demos, when MWFA volunteers ask, "Would you like to try some fresh apple cider?" they are doing more than selling product—they are starting a dialog with customers. The immediate result is increased sales of MWFA-Approved products, but we hope the effects will be longer lasting. Many people who try a sample are too busy to chat for long, but a seed has been planted.

We are busily planting other seeds as well. Throughout the season, MWFA has run advertisements in local newspapers, posted signs and brochures in participating grocery stores, and hosted outdoor events at grocery stores to highlight the MWFA Seal of Approval and approved products. Midwest Food Alliance now has 32 approved farms. Many of these farmers have been featured in their local newspapers for their MWFA approval and a few farms have even had articles in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*.



Volunteer Ann Fox helped tell the MWFA story at a Kowalski's store in St. Paul this fall. (*photo by Britt Jacobson*)

As in nature, these seeds may lay dormant in the ground for months or even years before they begin to sprout. However, when these seeds do start to sprout they will take many different forms. Perhaps some customers will continue to buy and request local products with the MWFA Seal of Approval. Possibly a few customers will take a brochure to share with a family friend who farms. Maybe others will start to question the origin of their food more frequently. With care, these seeds will grow into a beautiful, abundant, sustainable landscape. ❐

Britt Jacobson is the Assistant Marketing Manager for the Midwest Food Alliance. For more information about the MWFA marketing efforts or how you can become a MWFA volunteer, contact Britt by calling 651-265-3682 or e-mailing bjacobson@foodchoices.org. Information on MWFA is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org (click on Food & Farm Connection*).*

3rd annual Local Foods Banquet

By Cathy Eberhart

The third Land Stewardship Project Twin Cities Local Foods Banquet was held on September 29. On that lovely fall evening, 140 LSP members and friends gathered in St. Paul, Minn., to enjoy the bounty of our local stewardship farmers.

Acoustic guitar, farmer displays and elegant appetizers greeted guests as they arrived. Bonnie and Vance Haugen, grass-based dairy farmers from southeast Minnesota, gave a heartfelt keynote address about farming and food systems, and showed slides of their farm.

The star of the evening was the food, expertly prepared by LSP member and chef Brad Beal with the help of many LSP members and staff who volunteered in the kitchen. But as Brad himself has said, "A cook is only as good as the freshness and quality of the ingredients. There is absolutely no substitute for the quality ingredients that we were treated to by our local producers." The appetizers of Italian sausage, goat cheese and heirloom tomatoes, as well as the main menu of roasted pork shoulder, stuffed squash,

Banquet *see page 11...*

...Banquet *from page 10*

garlic mashed potatoes, autumn greens, focaccia bread and polenta pound cake, were created out of rich ingredients from local farms (see sidebar below).

If you were unable to attend, or if you did join us and want to recreate the menu or learn more about regional food systems, visit our Web site—www.landstewardshipproject.org. There you will find recipes, brief interviews from farmers who provided some of the food ingredients, links to recent reports about regional food systems issues, and a check list of ways you can take action. ❐

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator and master banquet organizer. She can be reached at 651-653-0618, or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org.

Meet the farmers who filled the table

We asked the farmers who supplied products for the Local Foods Banquet to provide some insights into how they produce the food and how local the meal truly was. Here are some of their responses.

◆ **Anderson Farm—Randy & Lynn Anderson—Arkansaw, Wis.**

➔ *Provided Italian pork sausage and potatoes*

How do you raise your hogs?

"We raise our hogs on pasture and in the winter they have access to the pole shed, which has deep straw or hay. The pigs eat grass and clover from the pasture and get excess garden produce. They are also fed organic grain mix with natural minerals and kelp.

"We raise them this way because this keeps the hogs and land healthy and produces healthy meat for us and our customers."

How far is your farm from St. Paul – how many "food miles" were on the sausages?

"Sixty miles southeast of St. Paul."

◆ **Upstart Seed Project—Elizabeth Wheeler & Lisa Bergin—Spring Valley, Wis.**

➔ *Provided heirloom tomatoes, carrots, dried peas, squash, thyme and marjoram*

How do you raise your vegetables?

"We grow many of our own seeds from varieties chosen from Seed Savers Exchange to do well in our region—short growing season, hot summers, etc. We use a lot of mulch and try very hard not to do any auxiliary irrigation. That was not possible this year, though. We tie up indeterminate vines to wires strung between posts to keep them off the ground.

"We love food that looks different—has a different kind of beauty—colors shapes, etc. We use heirlooms to help keep genetic diversity, keep varieties from being lost/going extinct and to stay free of the corporate hybrid seed world. It is important to us to keep selecting and improving strains of vegetable crops that "work" in the rural Upper Midwest. The most commonly available varieties are not adapted to our area. We believe part of a regional food system includes regional seed production. Anyone can learn simple seed saving and selection and make it part of the process in their farm or garden. It's a skill members of our grandparent's generation were trained in; we can take it back and regain more control of our own food."

How far is your farm from St. Paul; how many "food miles" were on these products?

"About 45 miles."

◆ **Dancing Winds Farm—Mary Doerr—Kenyon, Minn.**

➔ *Provided goat cheese*

How do you raise your goats?

"I raise them naturally (no growth hormones) on mixed grasses and sunshine because letting them frolic outdoors, browse on a variety of plants and giving them access to clean, fresh air keeps them healthy and produces quality milk. Quality milk equals quality products."

How far is your farm from St. Paul—how many "food miles" were on the cheese?

"Fifty miles."

◆ **Plowshare Community Farm—Erika Jensen—Prairie Farm, Wis.**

➔ *Provided tomatoes, leeks, kale*

How do you raise your vegetables?

"All my vegetables are raised organically and form an important part of my Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) deliveries. I grow my tomatoes on black plastic mulch for better production. I sometimes mulch my leeks and kale with hay mulch for weed control. I grow a mixture of heirlooms and hybrid varieties."

How far is your farm from St. Paul—how many "food miles" were on the tomatoes, leeks, and kale?

"Eighty miles."

◆ **Farming with Nature Co-op—Eric & Lisa Klein & three other farm families—Southeast Minn.**

➔ *Provided pork roasts*

How do you raise your pork?

"Our pork is raised on pasture and deep bedding. We believe this is a more humane way to raise hogs and they usually finish in the same amount of time or faster than crowded confinement pork."

How far is your farm from St. Paul—how many "food miles" were on the pork?

"One hundred miles."

◆ **Elsie's Farm—Don Roberts and Joni Cash—Ridgeland, Wis.**

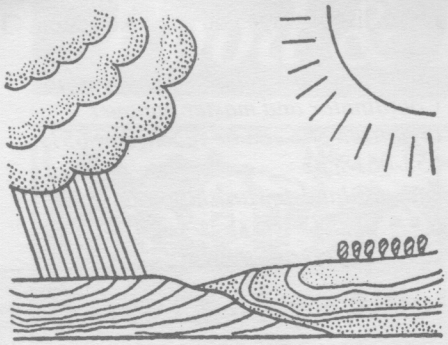
➔ *Provided cabbage, squash, flowers*

How do you raise your vegetables (specifically the cabbage and squash) and why?

"Organically (certified by MOSA), sustainably. That is a very complex question. No special techniques for cabbage—the problem is to keep the flea beetles from taking them. We just have to plant extra and hope for the best. Squash and pumpkins are planted in small hills of soil and composted manure within large sheets of black plastic for weed control and early heat and then we put mulch around the plants to temper the heat."

How far is your farm from St. Paul—how many "food miles" were on the cabbage, squash and flowers?

"One hundred and eighty miles."



Farming's Multiple Benefits

...Untapped *from page 1*

row cropping was sending contaminants into the river, as well as through the karst formations into the drinking water. To top it off, they often found themselves raising corn for market prices that were below the cost of production.

"It just seemed we were doing the same things year after year and getting nowhere," says Greg.

In 1986, they planted their last crop of corn. In fact, in 1988, the Koethers did their last bit of field tillage altogether when they drilled some milo.

This produced dramatic changes.

"We went from five pounds of atrazine herbicide and one hundred pounds of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer to nothing," recalls Greg.

The Koethers now produce beef cattle on some 430 acres of grass using management intensive rotational grazing. Most of those cattle are being raised for other farmers who fatten them for a specialty lean beef label.

Greg loves trees and has planted a lot of oaks and walnuts on former cropland. He started out planting trees as shelterbelts for cattle, but his dream is to practice agroforestry. Greg is ecstatic about the wild flowers growing amongst the trees and he takes care to make sure his cattle don't damage the mature timber already present on the land. The farmer thinks there is an opportunity to someday have hunters and wildlife watchers pay for the use of these woodlands. He even has plans to build tourist cabins on the land and wonders if visiting nature lovers would buy some of his beef to help support the stewardship of the landscape they enjoy.

The Koethers have persisted in their stewardship efforts despite pressure to the contrary. For example, current government commodity programs punish them for switching from corn to grass by denying them the subsidy payments the government reserves for crops like corn and soybeans. In addition, their efforts to protect trees means they don't qualify for a lot of government conservation cost-share programs.

"You're doing too good of a job for us to worry about you," some local government conservation staffers told Greg when he approached them about getting cost share money through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. But that doesn't mean he doesn't need the money. Setting up water lines and fencing for management intensive rotational grazing costs money.

Even when society does try to reward farmers for doing the right thing, it often misses the mark. Greg runs earth-moving equipment on the side. He describes how he once spent two weeks digging eroded soil out from behind the terraces of a local landowner who had been named "Conservation Farmer of the Year." The terraces had been built with government help so row crops could be raised on steep hillsides in a conservationally correct manner. But as the dredged soil attested to, the engineered structures may not have been the best use of tax money.

"At every turn, it rewards the wrong people," Greg says of current farm policy. "The government treats a farm like mine as if it's bad for society."

That's because right now, Federal farm policy generally recognizes farmers for one thing and one thing only: their ability to produce lots of cheap raw material. The way commodity programs are run now, the more corn, soybeans, rice and cotton a farm operation can produce, the more money it receives from the government. Such a system ignores many of the negative side effects that come with producing bumper crops year after year: the erosion, contaminated water, reduced wildlife habitat, etc. Such a single-minded policy also avoids addressing an ugly truth: such subsidies are producing more commodities than the market can pay a livable wage for. In turn, it leaves no room for recognizing the multiple positive benefits that diverse farming operations like the Koethers' can produce: cleaner water, improved soil (which can also lock up greenhouse gases), more wildlife habitat.

Such a narrowly-focused crop support system puts severe limitations on how society views farmland: it either sacrifices itself environmentally to all-out food production, or sits idle, like some sort of agrarian preserve. Conservation policies have attempted to mitigate environmental problems through technical assistance and cost-share programs to improve farming practices. Remember those silted- in terraces Greg Koether dredged out? Those were the results of government-funded technical fixes to prop up a cropping system on highly erosive land. Such fixes are done under the umbrella of "conservation," but they don't get at the root of the environmental problem: should row crops be raised on such erosive ground in the first place?

And when it is determined that land is too environmentally sensitive to produce row crops, often the government's response is to pay to idle it completely. In fact, acreage retirement programs have become a major tool for environmental mitigation on agricultural lands, gobbling up about 70 percent of Federal agricultural conservation spending since 1985. Such setasides have had major positive environmental impacts while producing income for landowners. However, these programs do not address agricultural working lands, which represent approximately half—excluding Alaska—of the privately held acreage in this country.

Keep in mind, the Koether farm is still producing food—beef—it's just doing it in a way that allows for the existence of more diverse plant systems. In fact, since 80 percent of corn production in this country goes to animal feed, it could be argued that even if the Koethers were still raising corn, they would be raising meat as well, just in a more indirect manner. This farm is producing food and environmental benefits. And since the Koethers are convinced that raising beef cattle using low-cost grazing systems is more lucrative, their operation is also a benefit to the local Main Street businesses where they shop.

Such a farm produces multiple benefits—and that doesn't mean two different kinds of row crops.

Agriculture's public goods

Society can be forgiven for ignoring the fact that farms like this are capable of producing more than bins full of corn and soybeans. After all, there is no Chicago Board of Trade for wildflowers. One cannot check the latest value of silt-free water on the Internet or in the morning newspaper. These kinds of benefits are non-market "goods"—items that produce positive benefits for society but that we haven't put an economic price tag on. The value of keeping silt out of water may not have an up-front cost, but society

Untapped *see page 13...*

...**Untapped** *from page 12*

definitely pays big time in the form of ruined fish habitat, impaired drinking water systems, blocked shipping lanes and damaged equipment such as pumps and turbines. In 1997 alone, excessive erosion cost American society more than $29 billion, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

It doesn't have to be that way, as the results of the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project study summarized in the sidebar below make clear. Greg Koether, for one, has already observed firsthand what the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture analysis has documented through modeling. Now farmers like him are waiting for policy makers to catch up.

"I've reforested much of my land and am using rotational grazing to produce cattle in a way that protects the soil and water on some very steep ground," he says. "The organic matter in my soils is rising, erosion levels are next to nothing and I see more wildlife every day. I've seen many environmental gains on my land in recent years and the land's showing it. When will the government come to the same conclusion?" ❐

Key Findings of the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture analysis

Soil Erosion

✔ Switching from conventional tillage to conservation tillage reduced the amount of soil eroding into streams by 25 percent to 31 percent, depending on the watershed studied.

✔ Switching to an agricultural system that is more reliant on perennial plant systems reduced the amount of soil eroding into streams by 50 to 80 percent, depending on the watershed.

Water Quality

✔ In the Wells Creek study area, adoption of best management practices (100-foot grass buffers, conservation tillage on all cropland and nutrient application at recommended rates) would help meet national goals for reduction of the hypoxic "dead" zone in the Gulf of Mexico (40 percent in-stream reduction of nitrogen).

In Wells Creek, there are many small tributaries, the land is hilly and significant tree and grassland cover is part of the current land use. Dairy farming is a major part of the agricultural economy.

✔ In the Chippewa River study area, however, adoption of best management practices would not produce results adequate to meet national goals for hypoxia reduction. In this case, meeting such goals would require adoption of more diverse farming systems that involve the use of perennial plant systems and natural drainage features such as wetlands. The land near the Chippewa River is relatively flat and includes significant artificial drainage. The Chippewa River study area, with its intensive tillage of corn and soybeans, is representative of the way the Corn Belt as a whole is farmed.

Financial

✔ Substantial environmental benefits could be achieved for little more, and possibly less, than what taxpayers currently pay into federal farm programs.

✔ On average, Minnesota citizens are willing to pay an additional $201 per household annually for specific and substantial public benefits that are produced under diversified land use and farming systems.

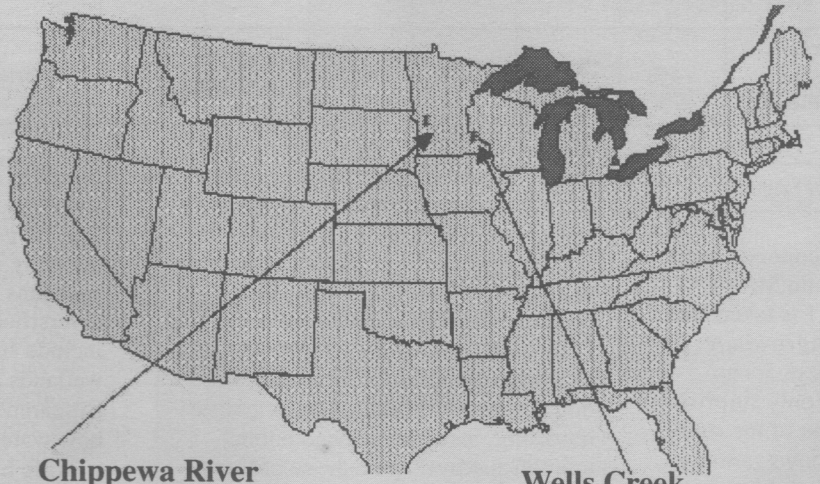
✔ The annual downstream costs of sedimentation could be cut 50 to 84 percent, depending on the watershed, by switching to a more diverse farming system that includes perennial plants and wetland habitat. Other significant "avoided costs" could reduce the need for such things as minor flood damage mitigation and trout stream habitat renovations.

✔ Based on 2000 market prices, hay and other perennial plant enterprises are more profitable in the study areas than corn and soybeans. However, federal subsidies often make it uneconomical to raise anything other than corn and soybeans. That is a significant disincentive for diversifying farming operations. Society needs to replace those subsidies with incentives for creating public goods.

Greenhouse Gases

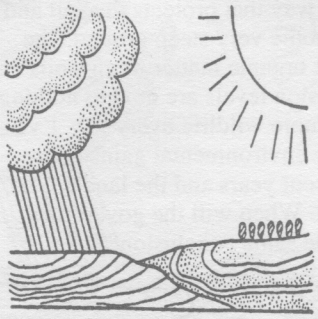
✔ Greenhouse gas emissions, in carbon equivalent, would be reduced as much as 36 percent in the Chippewa River watershed if more perennial plant cover were used on the working landscape.

✔ Based on a $20-per-ton "price" for storing carbon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the average Minnesota crop farm (318 acres) could receive $1,000 per year for using conservation tillage. Pasture and grazing systems should benefit even more because they hold even greater potential for capturing and retaining carbon in the soils.



Wildlife Benefits

✔ In the Wells Creek watershed, diversifying the agricultural system would reduce lethal fish events by more than half. A scenario where a diversified agriculture is combined with the presence of increased wetlands and other characteristics of natural landscapes would decrease lethal fish events by almost 100 percent.



Farming's Multiple Benefits

The 4 scenarios of the Multiple Benefits study

Scenario A

The ***extension of current trends scenario*** is characterized by fewer and larger farms with increasing acreage in row crops and no significant trend toward the application of best management practices. Without incentives to control the external effects of farming, negative environmental outcomes such as erosion, nutrient runoff and habitat degradation will continue.

Scenario B

The ***adoption of best management practices (BMPs) scenario*** includes conservation tillage, 100-foot vegetative buffers along streams, and recommended nutrient application rates on all farmland.

Scenario C

The ***expanded community and economic diversity scenario*** focuses on increased agricultural diversity. In modeling different versions of this scenario, increased crop diversity and a shift to a five-year rotation are included. One model shifts pasture lands to management intensive rotational grazing systems, and introduces wetland restoration in appropriate areas. One hundred-foot vegetative buffers along streams are used in this scenario.

Scenario D

The ***managed year-round cover*** scenario is characterized, when possible, by continuous plant cover on working farms. Common land uses in this scenario include, management-intensive rotational grazing, cover cropping and land managed for hunting preserves. One focus is to increase rotational grazing acres by 15 percent to 20 percent (and to increase cattle numbers by the same amount). Prairie restorations are also included in this scenario. Expanded (300-foot) vegetative buffers along streams are used.

% Change in Environmental Damage Compared to Baseline Data

	Wells Creek Study Area					Chippewa Study Area			
Scenario	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**		**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**
Sediment	+4%	-31%	-56%	-84%		-9%	-25%	-35%	-49%
Nitrogen	-7%	-37%	-63%	-74%		+1%	-17%	-51%	-62%
Lethal fish events/year	+10%	-57%	-72%	-98%		+2%	0	0	-10%
Water runoff	+1%	-3%	-24%	-35%		0	-1%	-21%	-34%
Downstream cleanup costs from sediment	+4%	-31%	-56%	-84%		-9%	-25%	-35%	-49%

...Multiple Benefits *from page 1*

wildlife habitat to more economic and social activity on rural Main Streets.

The bar chart on page 1 is taken from *The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture: An Economic, Environmental & Social Analysis*, and it's not the only surprising set of statistics to come out of the study. This extensive analysis shows farming has a lot of untapped potential to produce various food and non-food benefits for society. That's an important message at a time when Congress is debating the future of farm policy that up until now has focused on producing mountains of raw material (see page 4).

The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture analysis was conducted in southeast Minnesota's Wells Creek watershed, and a sub-watershed of the Chippewa River, in western Minnesota. The study was done using a combination of scientific modeling, focus groups and public opinion surveys. At the heart of the analysis were four land use "what if" scenarios (see sidebar above) developed by scientists and local watershed residents to predict how various farming practices could affect the environmental and economic health of the study areas. The "what if" scenarios ranged from allowing intensive cultivation of corn and soybeans to continue, to establishing diversified land management systems that include small grains, grasses and even wetlands as part of working farms. Researchers then used modeling to gauge how water quality, soil erosion rates, wildlife habitat, greenhouse gas emissions, and local economic/social systems

Multiple Benefits *see page 15...*

Multiple Benefits of Agriculture's key policy recommendations

- Pay farmers for public environmental and social benefits from their farms, including those resulting from ongoing and newly adopted practices and farming systems.
- Provide incentives to farmers through programs that graduate payments according to increasing levels of stewardship on working lands.
- Move toward paying on the basis of environmental results, not simply the installation of practices.
- Create and expand new markets for crops used in diversified farming systems through rural development and marketing program funding.
- Redirect research, education, extension and conservation technical assistance to more effectively promote stewardship, integrated farming systems and diversified marketing.
- Create conditions for fair market prices and fair access to markets.
- Develop a process for national and local goal-setting and public involvement.

...Multiple Benefits *from page 14*

would be affected by each scenario.

What the analysis found was that significant improvements could be brought about through a combination of land use changes, ranging from individual practices (e.g. adoption of minimum tillage) to more comprehensive systems (e.g. establishment of perennial plant systems and wetlands).

But there is no one cookie-cutter method for bringing about positive results in all watersheds. For example, in the less row-cropped watershed studied (Wells Creek), adoption of best management practices—100-foot grass buffers, conservation tillage on all cropland and nutrient applications at recommended rates—would go a long way toward meeting national goals for reducing the contaminant runoff that contributes to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. However, in the more row-cropped watershed (Chippewa), adoption of best management practices would not be enough to meet those national goals. In this case, meeting such goals would require more diverse farming systems that utilize perennial plant systems which can cover the ground much of the year.

Different types of geography, climates, soil types and even social infrastructures require a variety of strategies for bringing about public goods in different watersheds. If farmers were to adopt more crop diversity and perennial cover in the watersheds, rather than simply improving management of the dominant crops, more environmental benefits would result.

And citizens are willing to provide the incentives for producing that diversity. On average, Minnesotans would pay an additional $201 per year, per household, or a statewide total of $362 million, for significant improvements in environmental performance, according to a random statewide survey conducted by the Multiple Benefits Project. That shows citizens put an economic value on "goods" that may not be available for purchase in the marketplace.

But these goods won't come without changes. The Project's survey of local watershed residents shows an urgent need to develop policy, research, education and marketing strategies to promote greater diversification of food and fiber production in ways that yield clear environmental and social benefits. Local, state and Federal institutions, along with the residents they serve, must adapt if they are to provide the support needed to develop a "multiple benefits" agriculture.

The policy recommendations (see sidebar at top of the page) that emerge from the Project's analysis focus on creating incentives for farmers to use their own creativity to produce results that benefit the public while fitting local situations best.

If such policies were adopted, considerable environmental benefits could be achieved for no more than and possibly less than the current public costs, after transition expenses are overcome, according to an analysis of farm financial data conducted by the Project.

And all of this can be done on working land. Farmland does not have to sit idle in order to be environmentally sound. That seemingly counter-intuitive graph on page 1 shows how greater diversity can produce increasing amounts of environmental benefits. But even the bar that dives the deepest into negative territory represents a scenario that involves working agricultural land. And that working land is rooted in farms, people and communities. ❐

The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Team

A multidisciplinary research team guided the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project. Farmers, rural residents, academics, and nonprofit and government staff served on the Project's steering committee. The University of Minnesota's Department of Applied Economics provided the biophysical modeling and developed productivity and profit estimates. The University of Minnesota's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife conducted biological modeling, including estimates of fish and wildlife benefits. Bemidji State University provided the expertise to conduct a contingent valuation survey to assess the real economic value of improved environmental outcomes from farms. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provided technical expertise on fish and wildlife benefits. Minnesota State University-Mankato provided the GIS, or mapping services. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy assisted with scenario development and gathered data on avoided costs. Researchers associated with Iowa State University and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture conducted the sociological analysis. The Land Stewardship Project directed the research project. In addition to this project team, several additional researchers and consultants contributed to this work.

Want to learn more?

For a copy of the 52-page *The Multiple Benefits of Agriculture: An Economic, Environmental & Social Analysis*, call 651-653-0618, fax 651-653-0589, or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

The price for the 52-page publication is $12 ($12.78 for Minnesota residents), plus $3 shipping and handling. A brief executive summary of the report is free.

A free pdf version of the report can be downloaded from the Land Stewardship Project Web site at www.landstewardshipproject.org. An executive summary of the report is also available on the Web site.

Water quality WWW

When compared to extensive laboratory-based water sampling, using bugs as water quality indicators can be a relatively easy and cost-effective way to check out the health of a stream. That's why the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources have created a Web site devoted to helping people use insects to monitor water quality.

Water Quality Monitoring with Aquatic Invertebrates provides information on why aquatic invertebrates are such good indicators of how healthy a water system is. It also provides a step-by-step "keying" system for identifying various species. At first glance, identifying key macroinvertebrates may seem like something only scientists can do, but this Web site proves anyone, including schoolchildren, can tell the difference between a mayfly and a midge.

This Web site is an outgrowth of the Monitoring Project, a unique initiative involving farmers, scientists and government personnel who developed a set of indicators for measuring a farm's environmental, economic and social sustainability.

To get to the Aquatic Invertebrate Web site, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on "Programs," and then "Sustainable Farming Practices." ❐

The New American Farmer book

The New American Farmer is a collection of in-depth interviews with farmers and ranchers from across the United States. The book's diverse profiles detail the effects of innovative farming practices on profitability, quality of life, rural communities and the environment. It features a variety of producers—from a banana producer in Hawaii to a potato farmer in Maine—and almost every state and commodity in between (several Land Stewardship Project members are featured).

The entire book can be downloaded from the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program Web site at www.sare.org. To purchase a paper copy of the 160-page book, send $10 to: *The New American Farmer*, Sustainable Agriculture Publications, 210 Hills Bldg., University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082. A CD-ROM version can be purchased from the same source for $5. Make checks payable to "Sustainable Agriculture Publications." For more information, call 802-656-0484. ❐

MN ag grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) accepts applications for grants from Minnesota farmers, researchers, nonprofit organizations and educators who have innovative ideas for sustainable farming systems.

Applications and more information are available from the MDA Web site (www.mda.state.mn.us), or by contacting Wayne Monsen, Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, MDA, 90 W. Plato Blvd., St. Paul MN 55107; phone: 651-282-2261; e-mail: Wayne.Monsen@state.mn.us. ❐

Small-scale meat packing in NE Iowa

Several Land Stewardship Project farmer-members in northeast Iowa are researching the idea of building a multi-species custom meat packing plant in their area. The facility would be based on "New Zealand style" facilities, which have a reputation for being very efficient and ultra-hygienic. The organizers behind the "Upper Mississippi Family Meats Processing Facility" have received a USDA grant to conduct a feasibility study. They are currently conducting a survey to determine how much of an interest there is in having such a facility in the area.

For more information, contact Greg Koether at 563-873-3385 or kkoether818@hotmail.com. ❐

Sustainable ag research grants

Farmers and ranchers have until March to apply for USDA Ag Research and Education (SARE) program grants in the North Central Region. These grants can be used to fund experiments on individual operations and with farmer groups. The SARE North Central Region consists of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Abstracts and contact information for funded projects can be found on a fully searchable database at www.sare.org/projects. To obtain a grant application, contact North Central SARE at: SARE, University of Nebraska, 13A Activities Bldg., PO Box 830840, Lincoln, NE 68583-0840. You can also obtain applications by calling 402-472-7081, or logging onto www.sare.org/ncrsare. ❐

Green label help

Increasingly, consumers are seeing food on store shelves that bares some sort of "green" labeling. These labels tell us everything from whether a certain coffee bean is "bird friendly" to whether a gallon of milk was produced using chemicals and artificial hormones. The Midwest Food Alliance seal of approval (see page 10) is one of the latest examples of a green label.

The Consumers Union has developed a Web site that helps consumers sort out the standards and claims of various green label-certifying agencies. The site (www.eco-labels.org) provides various ways to find information on labels. You can search the site by label name, certifying agency, food product or even by the look of the logo. The site includes information on green labels for wood products as well. ❐

Sustainable policy on real farms

Profiles of Three Working Farms and the Conservation Security Act: How Stewardship Incentives Would Enhance Working Agricultural Lands is a new report that describes how an innovative farm policy proposal (see page 4) would work "in the field." The report, which was written by Mike McGrath for the Minnesota Project, profiles a large corn-soybean farm, a mid-sized dairy, and a small family cattle ranch.

For a copy of the 20-page report, log onto www.mnproject.org. Paper copies are available by calling the Minnesota Project at 651-645-6159. ❐

Ag subsidy database

The Environmental Working Group has made available a searchable Internet database of government farm subsidy payment records.

The database (www.ewg.org/farm/) is searchable by name, zip code, county or municipality. It includes 70 million records of farm subsidy checks sent between 1996 and 2000.

Taken as a whole, the database shows that 10 percent of the biggest subsidized crop producers absorbed two-thirds of all subsidies, averaging $39,864 in annual payments between 1996 and 2000. The bottom 80 percent of those eligible for payments received only $1,089 on average per year during the same period. ❐

Reviews

Keeper of the Wild

The Life of Ernest Oberholtzer

By Joe Paddock
2001; 316 pages
$27.95 hardcover
Minnesota Historical Society Press
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906
www.mnhs.org/mhspress

Reviewed by Beth Waterhouse

In *Keeper of the Wild, The Life of Ernest Oberholtzer*, author Joe Paddock has woven together the threads of this man's amazing life from 1884 to 1977. Oberholtzer was a tireless advocate for the conservation of wilderness canoe country. We learn of his early years in Iowa and at Harvard, and of his decades of activism which formed a foundation for the preservation of the current Boundary Waters Canoe Area. In a deeply loving way, we also are taught about Oberholtzer the man himself; about elements of life that drove him or encouraged him to be the person he was.

Paddock's research of this man's life is impeccable, and there is a smooth stitchery between and among a thousand bits of information. Clearly the man writing knows the man in question, has conducted many of his own interviews, and knows the total picture. Paddock also knows the lay of the land and the challenges facing its sustainable future. He served as a Land Stewardship Project consultant during the early 1980s, and, along with Nancy Paddock and Carol Bly, wrote the 1986 book, *Soil and Survival: Land Stewardship and the Future of American Agriculture.*

This biography does not begin at the beginning, nor always end at the end. The first words of the first chapter give this away: "Near the end of his life, Ernest Oberholtzer…" and we begin to experience how Paddock's mind carries us in and out of real time, in and out of history, reality, and foreshadowing. Yet in all of that, the reader always knows where she or he is sitting.

The author's style will hint at the future, even if one is not already a scholar of Oberholtzer lore. Joe Paddock visibly thinks through the possibilities and implications of journal accounts or choices made.

For example, speaking of the young Oberholtzer in 1909 when he traveled 3,000 miles by canoe: "During that winter, Ober's own health once again failed, and his doctor told him he likely had but a year to live. One can only wonder if he would have survived had he continued in that division from self which is usually necessary in building a career. Ober, however, made no such choice." Often we read the biographer's own reflections: "Unable to find institutional funding for his new dream, Ober then did what by this point one might expect: he went ahead on his own."

In his weaving, Joe Paddock reminds us of the main themes in Oberholtzer's life: the themes of health and financial support, the themes of sensuality or spirituality, the drive toward recognition and legacy. Paddock himself also often shows up, as he considers Ober's writing career or in a reference to Jung or Buddhist thinking. In *Keeper of the Wild*, we come to learn about the man, Ernest Oberholtzer, through the man, Joe Paddock.

The story of the epic exploratory canoe journey to Nueltin Lake and Hudson Bay is seamlessly revealed by Joe Paddock, yet is told in the words of Ober himself. We proceed smoothly from journal entry to story entry, from quote to quote. If the reader has heard bits and pieces of this journey, here at last is a full account, day-by-day and week-by-week, of the trials and beauty, the fears and joys of that mythic effort.

"This was to prove the most significant outward adventure of Ober's life, and memory of it would haunt him until the end of his days," writes Paddock.

Through this writing style we are clued in that the story's main characters survive, yet the details fascinate—details of the far north's sights, sounds, and smells, as well as of despair, anger, and renewed partnership of Ober and his Ojibwe traveling mate, Billy Magee.

Throughout this biography, one comes to be completely at ease with Paddock's style of narration alongside a sculpting of bits and pieces of Ober-lore. Joe Paddock's knowledge of the man, as well as so many individuals who surrounded him, is so complete that he seems not to miss a link in the complicated chain of events in conservation policy-making nor in the connections to Ober's friendships and life at home on Mallard Island. Included is a chapter, "Friendship with the Ojibwe," which reveals how Ober got the name "Atisokan" and is itself a beautiful description of Ojibwe culture and spirituality.

Readers who have studied or heard stories of the life of Ernest Oberholtzer will be thrilled with the chronological style that Paddock uses to teach us of Ober's early life and career. Jigsaw pieces finally slip into place. In like manner, when the chronicle relaxes in Section III into more of a story format, it also seems to be a natural thing. The final section is told more in the style of Ober-stories related around the stone fireplace in the Big House, Ober's long-time home on Rainy Lake's Mallard Island.

Momentum grows in the telling of Oberholtzer's ending years, and the final chapters of this biography created for me an urgent day of reading.

"Couldn't put the book down," is how we speak of such urgency. "Did not want to" is certainly the truth. ❐

Beth Waterhouse is a Twin Cities-based writer and former member of LSP's Board of Directors.

Poetry

An Abel Song

Come spring
and lambing,
I know
the joy of births,
new life
in a delicate
pretty package
of long legs
and kinky, curly wool.
To see a
nursing lamb
warms my heart.
I live
to see lambs
dance and spring about
like popcorn;
crops just don't do that.

—Big Thoughts from a Small Farmer: 1988-1999
By Terry Jacobson, HCR 1, Box 53, Wales, ND 58281

Membership Update

LSP to celebrate 20 years

By Katie Person

The year 2002 marks Land Stewardship Project's 20th year of keeping the land and people together. As we near the new year, we are preparing to make the most of this important milestone. While this will include celebration, we must also use the year's excitement to lead us into a solid future of encouraging a sustainable food and agriculture system.

Over the past 20 years, LSP has worked hard to protect the land, support the family farm and build strong communities. We have seen many positive changes made on farming landscapes. We have helped introduce farmers to sustainable farming methods that are ecologically sound and economically feasible. We continue to fight against large-scale confinement of dairy cows and hogs and recently organized a vote against the unpopular pork checkoff tax. Also, LSP has brought the plight of farmers and a greater understanding of how to support good land stewardship to rural and urban people.

Now, we must look forward toward the next 20 years and how LSP will continue to work for a sustainable food and agriculture system. While we plan to continue supporting and promoting sustainable methods of farming, we realize that in order to make sustainable farming profitable and therefore possible, we must now strengthen our work to develop markets for locally and sustainably raised food.

LSP's 20th Anniversary Celebration will be Aug. 24 at Good Counsel Hill in Mankato, Minn. Watch future newsletters for details.

Of course LSP's work could not be done without the participation of many people. LSP depends on its members, staff and board to support and carry out ongoing programs such as the Stewardship Food Network, which will be featured in the next issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. The Stewardship Food Network is one way we hope to support a local food system by bringing consumers and producers together. Through the *LSL* we are able to keep our members informed about important issues in sustainable farming and link them to resources such as the Stewardship Food Network. Such initiatives are funded primarily through member donations.

LSP co-founders Victor Ray (*left*) **and Ron Kroese, during the organization's 10th anniversary celebration.** (*photo by Marta Cleveland*)

LSP's work needs financial support

Our work is ongoing and so is our need for funds. For this reason, we are launching a special appeal during the holiday season. In honor of our 20th Anniversary, we are asking members to become major donors by **pledging $20 a month ($240 a year) in 2002.** This is an affordable way to support LSP at a major donor level. Members who are already major donors will be encouraged to give a special gift of $20, $200, or more in addition to their usual yearly gift. You've probably already received a letter explaining how to participate in our 20th Anniversary Special Appeal. Please take some time to consider our request. This kind of support is more important than ever as we begin the next 20 years of linking land, food and people.

2001 McKnight Match Met

Thanks once again to our members' generous support, we have met the 2001 McKnight Match. Due to last year's success with the original McKnight Match, the foundation challenged us to raise an additional $25,000 in new and increased donations of $200 or greater. Again, they offered to match the money we raised. I am proud to announce that not only did we meet the challenge of raising $25,000, we exceeded it. In all, we raised $32,600 in new and increased gifts toward the 2001 McKnight Match! Our success in reaching this goal is the result of our members' commitment to the health of our land. ❐

Katie Person is LSP's Development Associate. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or kperson@landstewardshipproject.org.

Thanks to our volunteers

The Land Stewardship Project would like to thank the volunteers who devoted their time this fall to in-store Midwest Food Alliance demonstrations. Volunteers are our lifeblood, and they offer something the corporate-controlled food system never can: person-to-person contact. The volunteers were:

- Louise Arbuckle
- Jeannie Dixon
- Ann Fox
- Sister Mary Goergen
- Mary Ann Graeve
- Nancy Gunderson
- Gary Nicosia
- Linda Peck
- Diane Peterson
- Sister Arnold Ritchey
- Karen Schulte
- Dean Stynsburg
- Sister Kathleen Welscher
- Arlene Draeger
- Caroline McDonald
- Kathy Draeger
- Darlene Coffman
- Mary Stadick
- Lori Wellman
- Larry Hampel
- Mary Kopet
- Julia Olmstead
- Jean Scheu
- Sister Loretta Denfeld
- Janice Welle
- Jennifer Buckentine
- Rick Miller
- Sister Ruth Lentner
- Jane Bennett
- Jessie Harper
- Charlotte Stephens
- Judy Hoffman
- Alan Hoffman
- Mary Schulte
- Bill Beyer
- Lois Braun
- Mary Ann Litfin
- Jon Abu-Saba
- Ramona Robinson
- John McNelis
- Joyce Gibbs

Volunteers handed out samples of Midwest Food Alliance-approved apples at Barlow's Plaza Hy-Vee store in Rochester, Minn., this fall. The volunteers also talked to consumers about the importance of regional, sustainable food production. (*photo by Britt Jacobson*)

LSP member's book receives award

Land Stewardship Project member Dick Levins' writing has received recognition from the American Agricultural Economics Association. His recent book, *Willard Cochrane and the American Family Farm* (see July/August 2000 *LSL*, page 16) has been awarded the Quality of Communication Award by the Economics Association.

Levins, who is an economist with the University of Minnesota Extension Service, wrote the LSP publication, *Monitoring Sustainable Agriculture with Conventional Financial Data*, in 1996. He recently received a Food and Society Policy fellowship with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The fellowship program focuses on trying to address the need for consumers and societal leaders to better understand how to sustain family farms and food production in the U.S. ❐

Give to LSP through the Minnesota Environmental Fund

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 18 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offers workplace giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work toward:

- promoting the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protecting Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educating citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserving 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 Katie at LSP's Twin Cities office by calling 651-653-0618 or e-mailing kperson@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ *JAN. 5* — **Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Crow River Chapter Annual Meeting, featuring discussions about "real food from the soil up" and "10 reasons to buy local food,"** Delano Public Library, Delano, Minn.; Contact: Connie Lahr, 320-963-3690 , or Maribel Fernandez, 800-362-3667

→ *JAN. 18-19*—**Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Meeting and Winter Workshops**, Gateway Center, Ames, Iowa; Contact: Nan Bonfils, 515-432-2389; FullCircleFarm@opencominc.com

→ *JAN. 23-26* — **LSP's Dana Jackson will speak at the 2002 Eco-Farm Conference**, Pacific Grove, Cal.; Contact: 831-763-2111; www.eco-farm.org

→ *JAN. 24-25* — **Minnesota Grazing Conference**, Mankato Holiday Inn; Contact: Jan or Doug Gunnink, 507-237-5162; dgunnink@prairie.lakes.com

→ *JAN. 25-26*—**7th Annual Local Food Systems Conference**, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Contact: Jan Libbey, 641-495-6367

→ *JAN. 25-27*—**Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) Annual Conference**, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Contact: 919-367-9652; www.attra.org/ssawg/

→ *JAN. 26*—**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Northeast Chapter Annual Meeting, featuring Bill Heffernan** (*location to be announced*); Contact: Jenifer Buckley, 218-727-1414; sfa@skypoint.com

→ *JAN. 29*—**2002 Session of the Minnesota Legislature begins**—call LSP's Policy Program at 612-722-6377 for information on legislative issues that will affect family farmers & sustainable agriculture

→ *JAN. 31-FEB. 2*— **4th Annual Value Added Conference**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: 715-834-9672; www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/valadconf.html

→ **Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 763-434-0400

→ *FEB. 1-3*—**Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Annual Winter Conference, featuring Joel Salatin**, Mandan, N. Dak.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

→ *FEB. 3-5*—**Wisconsin Grazing Conference**, Stevens Point, Wis.; Contact: Mary Anderson, 715-538-4396

→ *FEB. 7-8*—**Minnesota Organic Conference**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: Jan or Doug Gunnink, 507-237-5162; dgunnink@prairie.lakes.com

→ *FEB. 8-9*—**Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Annual Conference**, State College, Penn.; Contact: 814-349-9856; www.pasafarming.org

→ *FEB. 23*—**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota 11th Annual State Conference, with the theme "Sustaining our Food System—Creative Alternatives to Globalization," featuring agricultural economist John Ikerd**, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.; Contact: Carmen Fernholz, 320-598-3010 or DeEtta Bilek, 218-445-5475

→ *FEB. 24-26*—**National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture 5th Annual Meeting**, Washington, D.C.; Contact: 845-744-8448; www.SustainableAgriculture.net

→ *FEB. 28-MARCH 2*—**Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, LaCrosse Center, LaCrosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-6819; www.mosesorganic.org

→ *MARCH 9*—**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Central Chapter Annual Meeting, with the theme "From the Field to the Table—Value Added Agriculture,"** Holiday Inn, Alexandria, Minn.; Contact: Lynda Converse, 320-594-2456; converse@rea-alp.com

→ *MARCH 16*—**Buckwheat Growers of Minnesota Annual Membership Meeting** (*location to be announced*); Contact: Tom Bilek, 218-445-5475; www.buckwheatgrowers.com

→ *APRIL 22*—**Earth Day**; Contact: www.earthday.net

→ *JUNE 21-23*—**Midwest Renewable Energy & Sustainable Living Fair**, Central Wisconsin; Contact: 715-592-6595; www.the-mrea.org

→ *JUNE 23-27*—**18th North American Prairie Conference**, Kirksville, Mo.; Contact: Kirksville Area Chamber of Commerce, 660-665-3766; www.napc2002.org

→ *AUG. 24*—**Land Stewardship Project 20th Anniversary Celebration**, Good Counsel Hill, Mankato, Minn.; Contact: 651-653-0618

→ *SEPT. 17-20*—**Third Annual USDA National Small Farm Conference**, Albuquerque, N. Mex.; Contact: Denis Ebodaghe, 202-205-0467; debodaghe@reeusda.gov

Event information

Check the *Newsroom* (click on *Press Releases*) or *Calendar* at **www.landstewardshipproject.org** for the latest on upcoming events.

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