

## Goose and Hawk

by Connie Claire Szarke, Mound, Minnesota

SUNDAY AFTERNOON settles on West Arm Bay, Lake Minnetonka. Shades of winter blue creep along the shoreline. The last low-slung rays of sunshine glint off snow and ice that seem to have covered the lake forever. All is soft white, gray, and ochre as in a Utrillo painting. Yet, for those who remember, a hint of green lingers where leaves used to grow.

A northern lake in winter offers a lesson in reduced expectations; it is a place where life plays hide and seek in a blocked and frozen world. For long weeks there is little movement beyond the dangling, string-like branches of a willow tree or the occasional brittle leaf nudged by the wind.

But this day, in the middle of the bay and observed from above, a tiny form inches its way along the slick and bumpy surface. Like the last living thing, a grounded

Canada goose totters on webbed feet, sweeping the ice with the tip of a light brown wing. The cheek band, startlingly white against her black neck and head, wraps under her throat like the chin strap of a helmet. Suddenly she stops, stretching her long neck upward.

Against the overcast sky, a hawk, winging in tight circles, plunges toward the goose, opening a hooked beak. The goose pecks at him and he quickly swoops upward. While he circles again the goose plods on, watchful, gauging the next attack. Over and over, the hawk dives, the goose halts, elongates her body and neck, and strikes at the hawk from below.

For half an hour, the hawk executes his arch maneuvers against the hobbling bird who parries with her long bill. They are dive bomber and ground artillery.

A young woman, watching from the hillock,

wonders how long the goose can defend herself before her energy is gone. When do will and tenacity fade away, she ponders. When does one sense that it is time to let go, to lie down on the ice and become food for the hawk?

She never could watch the parts of nature programs that showed attacks and killings. Why didn't the photographer stop it, she used to ask her father. His answer didn't make sense until she was older.

Now she can't take her eyes off the battle. She almost feels like giving up for the goose, just to get it over with. The end is bound to be brutal, she thinks, agonizing, and she feels sick at how the hawk continually goads the crippled bird. She imagines the small, hooked beak connecting with the jugular, then ripping the body apart, feathers flying everywhere. Yet she can't stop watching. She tells herself that it is simply another lesson in how not to interpret animal behavior through human values. This is the way of nature. It is also a lesson in strength and survival. What amazes her is how steadfastly the goose fights back, showing no signs of flagging energy.

Not so long ago, from the top of the hill, her father carried pails of water and corn down to the shore: something for stray birds separated from their flocks and forced to winter over. Season after winter season, the old fisherman carried his pails until he

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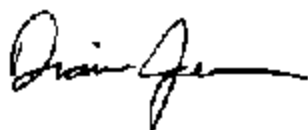
# Viewpoint

**T**HE HOLIDAY SEASON is a time for family and friends, a time for sharing, giving and grace. The folks at the Minnesota Project have much to be thankful for, starting with all the friends that showed up last month to celebrate our 25th Anniversary with locally grown food, beverages and humor!

We also want to thank the donors — large and small — who have supported our work this year. We rely on all of you to support our work to build a sustainable future for Minnesota and our region. There is an envelope enclosed in this newsletter. If you appreciate our work, if you appreciate our stories, if you want a better future for you and your family, you can join us by supporting our work. Thank you!

As you sit down to celebrate the holidays, try to put as many local foods on your table as possible. Your choice supports a growing trend that celebrates freshness, tastes great, and supports local farmers. Our work on local food is expanding this year, thanks to new support from the Bush Foundation.

To find locally grown produce and meats go to our website: [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org) or that of others listed there. ♡



Diane Jensen, Executive Director

## Dear Readers..

ALTHOUGH I'm gazing out at a sunny, blue November day, I'm appalled as enormous yellow Caterpillar trucks and front loaders trench into the back yard of the neighboring nursing home. Yesterday, their tires rolled over the east end of our garden, decimating a blooming purple mum.

The problem is a water main, yet now the soil that I came to know intimately, the soil we carefully fed with our own kitchen scraps, the black clayish soil so full of earthworms, is being compacted by machinery the size of small houses. I spy a remaining broccoli plant shadowed by a 12-foot mountain of dirt and go down to let my gardener's thumbnail snip off the last possible food. When helmeted men are running trucks that size, they simply cannot watch where their feet are trodding! Their eyes are working at a scale far larger — preventing any attention small as a gardener's eye.

It is all so much the same for our dear Earth. The machinery of modern industrialized progress, in every sphere, can overwhelm the small-eye care of the

gardener, organic farmer, specialized logger, small fisherman, small anyone doing anything. And while we lose attention to the small scale we steadily lose the observation skills so desperately needed to restore nature.

To the nursing home, this small garden seemed like a modest loss. But what of the losses of atmosphere or species that are so far beyond human imagination that we cannot even grieve for them? Tears come into my nose, and I must quit watching the yellow machines.

In these pages this issue, I am heartened by Loni's thinking and Margaret's telling of local clean energy projects. I'm encouraged by Mark's philosophical discussion of balance-well said! See what you take away from the cover essay of goose and hawk. As always, *Connections* brings you food for thought but also rewards you with sparks for the imagination.

Please subscribe to this fine journal/ newsletter at \$18 per year. Oh, and remember to send me poems and stories!

— Beth Waterhouse, Editor,  
Community Connections, since 1992  
[beth.waterhouse@usfamily.net](mailto:beth.waterhouse@usfamily.net)

## A MARVELOUS UNION

Stand among the trees  
See the blue or gray of sky  
Listen to the rustlings  
There and there  
And over there.

Relish the nearness  
Knowing you are present  
With them, though they are hidden.  
You inhale what they inhale,  
And if you are quiet enough,  
You may sense  
What they read from this air.

— Mary S. McConnell  
Marine, Minnesota



# Conservation Security Program Comes Home

by Mike McGrath, Minnesota Project Staff

ON FRIDAY MORNING, November 5, I drove out to the Dan and Cara Miller farm in western Fillmore County to attend a special ceremony announcing five Minnesota watersheds that will be eligible for the Conservation Security Program in 2005.

About 30 people had gathered in a large hoop barn, sitting on straw bales before a makeshift stage that consisted of a podium and a flip chart, with a very large Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) colorful display serving as backdrop.

This was an NRCS-sponsored media event that had originally been scheduled as a national event for the day before the election, to announce all 202 watersheds in the nation selected for the 2005 Conservation Security Program. The NRCS had given Dan Miller three day's notice to get ready, but at the last minute the powers that be in Washington shifted that day's event to Ohio. Wonder why.

So, three days after the election, with TV and the press, we were at the Miller farm to hear the announcement of Minnesota's selected watersheds. Congressman Gil Gutknecht was there along with three top NRCS officials, a few NRCS staffers, state and local conservation professionals, friends, neighbors, and the Miller's six small children.

Before the ceremony began, visitors gathered around inside the barn and enjoyed Krispy Kreme doughnuts and coffee, while Dan showed the Congressman and NRCS officials his cows. Dan and his family have a rotational grazing system on their 450-acre farm, so the NRCS chose his farm as the setting for this historic moment.

As the speeches began, in my own mind I reflected back on the years of work that the Minnesota Project has done to make this moment possible.

Coincidentally, it was four years ago this first week of November that I began working with the Minnesota Project on proposed legislation called the Conservation Security Act. At that time we were still two years away from the farm bill, and David Minge, chief sponsor of the Conservation Security Act in the House, had just been narrowly defeated by Mark Kennedy in the election of 2000.

During the next six months, the Conservation Security Act was reintroduced in Congress as the Conservation Security Program by Senator Harkin from Iowa and Congressman Thune from South Dakota, giving it a better chance at authorization as a bipartisan bill. But even with this bipartisan appearance it was still going to be an uphill battle to get the new "CSP" authorized as the nation's first entitlement conservation program.

In the spring of 2001, Senator Harkin became Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee upon the exit of Vermont's Senator Jeffords from the Republican Party, and CSP was pushed to the top of the priority list for the Senate's farm bill agenda.

At the Minnesota Project, we hired David Minge to help us build a coalition of agriculture stakeholders in Minnesota

to educate and advocate for this new conservation giant, CSP. This coalition met as the first CSP Roundtable the week after September 11th, with over 50 representatives of agribusiness, federal and state agencies, conservation groups, farm groups, and environmentalists at the table. This meeting was so successful in its goal to get Minnesota's agriculture and conservation communities on board with CSP that it still meets regularly to develop strategies to increase farmer awareness of the program.



Here, buffer strips between farmed land and stream offer wildlife habitat.

Later, in the winter of 2002, Loni Kemp and I led a coalition of agribusiness representatives, conservation professionals, and farmers-Republicans and Democrats- into Congressman Gutknecht's office to press for his support for CSP in the farm bill battles that were ongoing. Gil listened intently and was impressed with the diversity of our group, but told us he didn't know where the money would come from for such a big conservation program.

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## CSP COMES HOME

*continued from page 3*

Publicly, he was silent on CSP during the farm bill debates.

Here at the Miller farm, as the TV camera recorded the event Congressman Gil Gutknecht made his remarks at the podium on the makeshift stage. "CSP is going to be an important part of the 2007 farm bill conservation component," declares the Congressman.

He's come a long way.

The Conservation Security Program was authorized in the 2002 farm bill, but little did we know at the time that two more years would pass before we would see program implementation. During those next two years I spoke at dozens of meetings, workshops, and conferences, from St. Louis to Idaho, explaining to farmers and other stakeholders just what the Congress had authorized in the Conservation Security Program.

As the NRCS Minnesota State Resource Conservationist, Paul Flynn, gave his remarks at the Miller podium, he thanked all those in Minnesota who have contributed to making this CSP moment possible. I smiled inside as he publicly acknowledged the Minnesota Project for our role.

The best part for me is knowing that the Conservation Security Program has now come home to the Root River Valley. Many of my farmer neighbors who have done a good job with conservation will finally be rewarded for their efforts. 🐾

## What's Wrong with Balance?

*by Mark Lindquist, Minnesota Project Staff*

**O**NCE AGAIN a prominent politician has raised the issue of balance between the environment and the economy. Most of the comments in a recent opinion piece discussed the incredible natural heritage that we enjoy and have strived to protect in this state. It was pretty upbeat. Then at the end, the writer added the perfectly practical but dreaded words: BUT we have to balance nature with economics.

Balance — what's wrong with balance? Nothing is wrong with balance, but it brings the issue of managing our natural resources back to this old model of thinking: tradeoffs between prosperity and preserving our heritage. The mental model is a scale or teeter-totter, and the political debate is about shoving the fulcrum point incrementally one way or the other. We shift the balance toward either economic prosperity or environmental integrity depending on who wins the day's fight.

This image does not capture the richness and complexity of the real world. The "environment" and the "economy" are not two discrete piles of goodies that are independent and mutually exclusive. Farming, for example, is an economic activity that depends upon the health of the underlying resource — the soil. We don't make a trade between healthy soil and long-term farm productivity. They are inexorably linked. The "trade offs" between economics and environment are often also the balance between short-term and long-term economic benefits. It takes time for certain costs to come through the economy.

If we want to continue to think about balance, we quickly find that the teeter-totter does not serve as a helpful metaphor. We are making trade-offs across too many dimensions. This is why when we think about sustainability we imagine the three legged stool. Each leg representing environmental, social, and economic values. Balance is achieved not by moving a fulcrum but by providing three strong legs.

The Minnesota Project is deeply committed to the proposition of sustainability. What is just, is good for business. What preserves our natural capital preserves our capacity to create and enjoy wealth. In turn, economic progress provides the innovation, technology and capacity for justice and stewardship of our natural heritage. Minnesota and our country thrive when we unify these interests. 🐾



*Kaija Schlangen and Neil Lindquist demonstrate the fine art of finding good balance.*



# Clean Energy in Your Community

by Margaret Broeren, Minnesota Project Intern

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in 2003, "CERTS" or Clean Energy Resource Teams have forged a link between communities and the resources they need to move toward a clean energy future. Team members in each region represent a variety of stakeholders within the community, industry and government. CERTS teams have met, brainstormed, and many have identified best-bet projects for their region. Around the state, Clean Energy Resource Teams are poised for action.

## Stimulating Community Energy in Morris

The West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minnesota, is an excellent model of a community-scale project incorporating research and demonstration of renewable energy. On Nov. 10, people gathered at the center to break ground for a new large-scale wind turbine. The turbine, which is expected to generate enough electricity for more than half the electricity needs of the University of Minnesota-Morris, is the Midwest's first large-scale wind installation at a public university.

*"The reality is, upgrading from incandescent to fluorescent is a huge step in efficiency," Ann Morse added.*

Michael Reese, renewable energy coordinator for the center, has been involved in the energy resource teams from the start as a member of the West Central team's steering committee. Through CERTS, "We are able to distribute information directly to the stakeholders," Reese reports. "[CERTS] is a tool for all of our communities to actually start implementing renewable systems."

Beyond conducting wind-to-hydrogen research, the center is involved in a number of other renewable energy

projects including a biomass district heating and cooling system, a hybrid wind and biodiesel energy system, and a "smart" solar building addition. The center also hopes to facilitate a community anaerobic digester and methane pipeline system.

## Encouraging Efficient Lighting in Winona

The City of Winona is another community that is making the most of their involvement in CERTS. Anne Morse, of Winona environmental services and a guiding member of the Southeast CERTS team, has partnered with a conservation project that will facilitate a smoother transition to efficient lighting for area businesses. Lighting accounts for 20 percent of commercial energy costs, Morse said. "The reality is, upgrading from incandescent to fluorescent is a huge step in efficiency," she added. Savings from the reduction in energy use pays for the investment in new bulbs.

The program is collaboration between the City of Winona, the nonprofit



Center for Energy and the Environment, Xcel Energy and CERTS. "It is a wonderful opportunity for businesses in the community to reduce their energy use," Morse said.

As part of the CERTS process, Morse hopes to replicate success in the City of Winona in other communities. Center for Energy and the Environment and Xcel Energy have succeeded in implementing similar programs within the Twin Cities, but have faced obstacles in Greater Minnesota because they lacked a relationship with the community. "CERTS was the missing link to the community," Morse explains.

## Linking Demonstration to Education on the North Shore

By reaching out and building on existing community ties, the Northeast CERTS team has identified a school demonstration as their priority project. The North Shore Community School, a charter school dedicated to environmental stewardship, was an excellent place for the team to start. "They were very receptive to the CERTS team," said Okey Ukaga, Executive Director of the Northeast Minnesota Sustainable Development Partnership. The school had considered a solar project, Ukaga said, and are now considering wind as an additional option.

Ukaga stressed the importance of community in the success of a demonstration and education project, explaining that community, environment and the economy fit together like a three-legged stool. "This type of project encompasses all three," he said. "When you have locally distributed energy generation, it empowers the people. It brings a sense of ownership and social sustainability." ●

## GOOSE AND HAWK

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couldn't walk the distance. After that, he struggled each afternoon just to stand watch on the hill. Then for a part of each day, he sat bundled up on the porch until late one night, like his gray and weathered boat, he simply collapsed.

Just so, the young woman sees that the injured bird is not about to give up. This day is still hers and she fights for it with a strength that comes from a place beyond understanding.

It is the hawk who finally quits. Stopping his dives and flying one last broad circle high above the goose, he glides away over trees etched into the horizon until the speck of him disappears.

The goose pauses in front of a brown leaf skittering across the ice. Then, as if having abided no other interruption, she resumes her clumsy shuffle along the last, uneven stretch of frozen lake.

It is dusk now, and the goose, huddled under bent cattails and parched grass, pecks at a patch of ice in search of water.

The young woman takes up her dented pails and descends the hillock. ❧

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*Connie Szarke shared her short story, "The Pollen Path," with us in the summer, 2004 Connections. She describes her primary themes in writing as "nature and the tenacity of the human spirit" a theme that comes through clearly in this fine hawk and goose story. Coming in the spring of 2005, you'll see Connie's short story, "Youth in the City of Light," featured in Minnesota author Jon Hassler's new anthology entitled Stories Teachers Tell. Connie taught high school French until a few years ago when she began to dedicate her life to writing.*



### IT IS I WHO MUST BEGIN

It is I who must begin.  
Once I begin, once I try—  
here and now,  
right where I am,  
not excusing myself  
by saying things  
would be easier elsewhere,  
without grand speeches and  
ostentatious gestures,  
but all the more persistently  
—to live in harmony  
with the "voice of Being," as I  
understand it within myself  
—as soon as I begin that,  
I suddenly discover,  
to my surprise, that  
I am neither the only one,  
nor the first,  
nor the most important one  
to have set out  
upon that road.

Whether all is really lost  
or not depends entirely on  
whether or not I am lost.

— Vaclav Havel  
*Shared across the E-mail.*

### SUPPOSE

Suppose life is  
an encounter with the sacred and  
divine,  
every day?  
Not running from something...  
(the old hell of Christianity)  
but toward something  
which is already here.

Even in these winter rocks and trees  
stark and cold,  
even these might point to that  
which we seek...  
If only, if only we knew  
how to listen.

Suppose life is  
warming, relaxing,  
wrapping its arms around us,  
every day?  
Not an endless chain of error,  
misjudgment...  
but a spiraling toward spirit,  
toward today.

Even as the garden sleeps under its  
white blanket  
broccoli stems jutting brown,  
even these point to the seeds  
which we seek...  
If only, if only we knew  
where to look.

Suppose life is  
Grace,  
every day?  
Even as the crow soars —  
shadow over field of white

— Beth Waterhouse  
*Excelsior, Minnesota*

## Moral Values

by Loni Kemp

**A**S OAK LEAVES SWIRL outside my window, they seem a perfect accompaniment to the speculation churning from all sides in the wake of the election. Do voters care more about "moral values" than specific issues? Does one side embody moral values that the other side does not? Does policy talk leave some voters cold? I'm pondering the way we communicate about our work.

I have been fortunate to be part of the Minnesota Project, which has always articulated its values-driven identity. How we see the world, our role in it, and how we work together are the foundation of everything we are as an organization. Thus I understand that it is not enough for our leaders to have a platform of issues that draw together clusters of people who care about one or more of those issues.

*"A successful movement speaks from the heart."*

How to frame the public debate is the subject of George Lakoff, a University of California, Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics. I've been considering his advice and how it applies to the work we do on agriculture policy. Can we frame our

issue in a way that speaks to people's values?

The conventional frame around current farm policy goes like this: Farmers are good, but the world poses threats, including weather and fluctuating prices. Mostly we believe the free market will solve problems — more global trade and more technology will reward successful farmers. As a safety net, we provide government subsidies to make sure temporary downturns don't throw agriculture into turmoil. If the biggest farmers get the most money, that is fine because the successful deserve the most rewards. Natural resources are out there to be used, and while it is a shame when they become impaired or depleted, it is not an overriding concern.

This framework does not speak for our values at all. Naturally we see a need to change the "frame" around this issue from a sustainable agriculture viewpoint.

I believe a new frame would look something like this: Farmers are good, because they produce our food and they care for the land. The world poses threats like bad weather and low prices. It is society's duty to make government policies to cushion farm income from these threats as well as the extremes of market forces and unfair practices of corporations. We meet this duty to farmers because agriculture provides jobs for all who work in food systems. Agriculture also fosters a clean environment and human health through safe and nutritious food. And agriculture contributes to feeding the world, in part with exports and in part by being fair to farmers in undeveloped countries who need fair prices.

Framing issues to speak from our values is always a work in progress. Haven't most of us been trained to be objective, scientific, factual and issue-focused? Perhaps we'd better get more comfortable with words like responsibility, fairness and stewardship. What we are learning is that a successful movement speaks from the heart, and draws support by communicating basic shared moral values. ♣

## Your Editor, an Author

**A**S PRODUCT OF HER YEAR in the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems, Beth Waterhouse has completed a small book. Called *Time, Soil, and Children*, it encapsulates conversations with the second generation of some of Minnesota's sustainable farm families. The blue eyes of a happy, muddy baby shine on the cover of this little book. Ariana Lentz Andres is playing in the soil of her Grampa's farm one warm summer day, and she looks to be enjoying every minute.

The book does not set forth answers, but with the voices of 15 young people, you surely get good questions — and many great stories. Waterhouse heard from young people what it's like to grow up on farms working so intentionally on the issue of sustainability. She recorded and wove together dozens of stories. You get to meet children of well-known and active Minnesota farm families, and here you also get to meet their children. As Waterhouse comments, "It becomes apparent that each generation puts its hopes on the next one, and not so much on specific behaviors but simply on their presence." In the final aspect, this is a book about hope. Beth writes, "This group of people has been handed a deeper-than-ordinary knowledge about the land and its ills and losses. This knowledge could have buckled the knees of these young lives, but it did not. To a person, they meet their knowledge with enthusiasm and resolve."

*Time, Soil, and Children* can be purchased from the Minnesota



Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, for \$ 6.00 per copy. Contact (612) 625-8235 or (800) 909-6742 or go to [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu).

# *The* MINNESOTA PROJECT

working for strong local economies,  
vibrant communities, and a healthy environment

*Community Connections* is published by the Minnesota Project each quarter. The Minnesota Project connects people with policy to nurture collaborations that build strong local economies, vibrant communities and a healthy environment. For more information visit [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org).

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## *This Is Really Us!*

**Y**ES, YOU ARE READING THE RIGHT NEWSLETTER. *Community Connections* has just received a major face-lift. As part of a new look for all printed materials of the Minnesota Project, *Connections* has some grand new two-color attire. In and among the graphic and layout changes, however, you'll find the same commitment to quality copy. Our editorial principles assume that connectedness is part of what motivates us, story and poetry foster a sense of connection to the Earth, and social commentary is an empowering form of education. We're grateful for your loyal readership these past twelve years. ☘

## *Thank You!*

**T**HE MINNESOTA PROJECT bestows a hearty thank-you to those who have recently donated to our organization. Your generosity helps us connect people with policy to nurture collaborations that build strong local economies, vibrant communities, and a healthy environment. ☘

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