

Leopold Center Advocacy Day Press Conference February 6, 2018-02-27 Des Moines, IA

Introduction by Patti Edwardson Naylor

(Patti speaking) Good morning, and thank you for joining us today! My name is Patti Naylor. I am a board member of Women, Food, and Agriculture Network, and on the executive committee of the Sierra Club Iowa Chapter. But most importantly to me, I am a farmer. The challenges that Iowa's farmers are expected to face in the future will require the kind of collaboration, creativity, innovation, transparency, and science-based approaches that only the Leopold Center can provide. I believe it is important to recognize that this issue isn't just about the business of agriculture. It is about sustaining life with that most basic element: food. How we grow our food; how we protect our natural resources for future generations, and even how we support and value those farmers who grow our food are all part of the Leopold Center's research.

The vision that many Iowans seek for agriculture here and around the globe is of a regenerative and balanced system grounded in relationships to our environment and to our communities. It is one in which farmers and citizens share a social contract of mutual support. And it is of a system that creates diversified land use, diversified rural economies, and diverse communities. No one else in Iowa is taking such a comprehensive approach to these issues. This is why, now more than ever, we need the Leopold Center. So, we are here as farmers, scientists, community leaders, and students to call upon Iowa's decision makers to support a fully-funded, fully-staffed, re-imagined Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Thank you!

Testimony by ISU graduate students Carly McAndrews and Kristine

(Carly speaking) Hello, my name is Carly McAndrews, and this is my fellow graduate student, Kristine Lang. As I was searching for agricultural research programs across the United States, the Leopold Center drew me to Iowa, where I am now a graduate student of Sustainable Agriculture. The two of us stand up here on behalf of many fellow students who came from out of state or were encouraged to stay in their home state of Iowa because of the Leopold Center. As students from a wide range of disciplines, we are passionate about developing sustainable solutions to modern agricultural challenges such as more extreme weather events, resource depletion and food insecurity.

(Carly speaking) We are excited to play a role in advocating for a new, re-imagined, and fully-funded Leopold Center. The mission of the Leopold Center is, to identify and develop new ways

to farm profitably while conserving natural resources as well as reducing negative environmental and social impacts – this work is clearly not finished. We need a fully- and publicly-funded Leopold Center as we continue to move in the direction of an ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable and vibrant agricultural system in Iowa,

(Kristine speaking) As future researchers, farmers, and advocates, many of us have fallen in love with the state of Iowa. We want to stay here and put down roots working alongside the citizens of this state. A reimaged Leopold Center, with its focus on science-based, ecological agriculture would continue to make this future possible. Supporting a socially just, environmentally sound agricultural system goes beyond simply providing food, fiber, and fuels - it means revitalizing rural communities, and turning Iowa into a shining example of how a resilient, locally focused agricultural system can make a large difference in individual communities and throughout the world.

Remarks by Aaron Lehman, Iowa Farmers Union

Good Morning. My name is Aaron Lehman. I am the president of the Iowa Farmers Union. I farm in northern Polk County with my family. I am the fifth generation on our family farm where we grow corn, soybeans, oats, and hay.

The challenges facing family farmers are many. According to the USDA, farm income has dropped for the 4th consecutive year. This is a nearly a 50% drop from our most recent highs. Farmers are tightening their belts and looking for innovative solutions to become more sustainable. This is all occurring in an agribusiness setting that is becoming more and more dominated by just a few multinational corporations. Farmers have fewer and fewer options to buy their inputs and sell their products.

In addition, the average age of the Iowa farmer is over 59 years old. A new generation of Iowa farmer will be needed on the Iowa landscape.

At the same time, we as a state are asking farmers to do more than ever to address water quality concerns that, if left unaddressed, will almost certainly lead to more regulations and lawsuits down the road. In order to meet the goals of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, we need “boots on the ground” options to meet these challenges.

That is where the Leopold Center fits in. The Leopold Center has been a leader in the farming community by helping farmers become more efficient and profitable and by developing innovations that lead to a more sustainable future for farmers and to improvements to the Iowa landscape.

The research is reviewed and overseen by a broad range of farmers and it highly prioritizes work that can make a real difference in the field. This farmer friendly approach has led to the development of countless practices now in place that make farmers more efficient, our environment cleaner, and our landscape more diverse. On farms in my neighborhood, this has translated to conservation buffers, biofilters, cover crops, rotational grazing innovations, conservation strips, and the development of real local food opportunities, among many, many others.

It is also clear that Leopold research dollars have been multiplied many times over because these worthwhile projects have been leveraged to find additional research dollars down the road. It has been a sound investment. I am confident that once completed, the current Leopold center review will create a positive path forward.

In summary, we need more innovation, not less. We need to build on our wise investments toward sustainability. And for this generation and the next, we need the Leopold Center more than ever.

For more information, contact Aaron Lehman at alehman@iowafarmersunion.org, 515.291.2656

Remarks by Nick Wuertz, Lutheran Services in Iowa , Des Moines

My name is Nick Wuertz and I'm the Director of Refugee Community Services at Lutheran Services in Iowa or LSI. Our team of staff and volunteers has the privilege of helping welcome families that our county invites to Central Iowa through the US Refugee Admissions Program. These families have been forced to leave their countries due to violence and persecution and for those who are most vulnerable and at-risk our country offers an opportunity to begin a new life in the US free from persecution.

In 2010 a group of Central Iowans who all came from farming backgrounds in countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Bhutan, and Burma, approached LSI wondering how they and the families in their ethnic communities could put to use their agricultural skills and knowledge and get their hands back in the dirt in their new home state of Iowa. They expressed a desire to return to farming, in order to grow familiar foods, pass on family traditions, heal from the trauma and violence of their past, and to contribute to health and wellbeing of their new community.

Thanks to the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture that desire was able to take root and become a reality for hundreds of families in Central Iowa. In 2011 the Leopold Center awarded LSI a planning grant that allowed a planning team of staff, volunteers, local food experts and interested farmers to research and visit established incubator training farms around the region and country. From that research a model was developed for how an incubator training program

could be implemented in Central Iowa to assist refugees in adapting their agricultural skills and knowledge to begin small farming businesses.

What has happened since has been nothing short of amazing thanks to the outstanding staff, network of partners and support provided by the Leopold Center. Leopold's investment in this research has grown into LSI's Global Green program. The program builds upon the agricultural skills and aspirations of recently arrived refugee families and through access to land, and culturally and linguistically appropriate training provides a spectrum of opportunities for families to re-engage in agriculture – ranging from small garden plots to multi-acre farming operations. Over the last 8 years the initial \$7,000 investment of the Leopold Center has attracted additional cash and in-kind investments totaling over a million dollars to support that mission.

Now each year more than 250 families are able to access land through 18 newly established community garden partnerships in neighborhoods throughout the metro. In 2013 the 6 ½ acre Global Greens Farm was established in West Des Moines and to date has assisted 27 farming families in incubating small farming businesses. The first farming families have now graduated off the training farm and are operating their own independent farming businesses on land around the metro. You can find them selling their produce at the Downtown Farmers' Market, through the online Iowa Food Coop, through the Global Greens CSA, and amongst their ethnic communities both locally and nationally. These farmers are using their love of agriculture to care for the land in our urban area and are helping meet the demand for sustainably grown fruits and vegetables in our capitol city. The model that was first researched through support of the Leopold Center and has since been developed has now been shared as a toolkit with other Iowa communities who are now starting their own projects to assist aspiring immigrant farmers in their communities.

Without the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture I don't know what would have become of those farmers' dreams and aspirations. LSI and all those who have been impacted by the Global Greens program are so grateful that the Leopold Center was there to help give life to those dreams of farming in Iowa and help people find their place in Iowa's agricultural landscape. Please ensure the Leopold Center continues to be there for all those who aspire to be a part of Iowa's agricultural future.

Remarks by Liz Garst, Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids, Iowa

Good morning, I'm Liz Garst from Coon Rapids. I am a conventional farmer with farms in Carroll, Audubon, and Guthrie counties. I'm also associated with Whiterock Conservancy. The Leopold Center was formed to address some of the issues generated by our agricultural systems. I have

been very interested in these topics for a long time. Iowa has lost one-half of its topsoil since we started farming. It's lost half its organic matter since we started farming, and its lost about a third of its inherent nitrogen in our soils.

I have been a no-till farmer for about 40 years and over that time I've decided no-till is not sufficient to address all the problems we have in conventional agriculture. Necessary, but not sufficient. I have done a lot of work with the Leopold Center over the years including research in prairie hay nutrition, which is something all of our neighbors enjoy because we harvest some of our prairie hay in wet years, lots of work on cover crops, prairie strips and saturated buffers. The work is far from done.

As a practicing cover crop farmer now, having dipped my toes into that, I have way more questions than answers. I know we desperately need more research in seed coatings so we can efficiently plant cover crops. We need to research the allelopathic effects of cover crops going into corn. We need to better understand how to get multi-species cover crops to better work in our seasons. We also need work in third crops. Corn-soybean rotation is not sufficient for the health of our soil and we need a lot more work in that. And we need a lot more work on the brand new subject of soil health. In particular I would love to know more about the effect of specific chemicals on the health of soil biotic communities.

We have a long ways to go, and I encourage the state legislature to fully fund the Leopold Center so that conventional farmers can start to do better, so that organic farmers can start doing better. Local food producers - there is tons of work to be done. I want to represent conventional farmers today. There's a lot the Leopold Center can do for us too. Thank you very much.

Remarks by Ellen and Daniel Rosmann, FarmTable Procurement and Delivery, Harlan, Iowa

Hello, my name is Daniel Rosmann and this is my wife, Ellen. We are third generation organic crop and livestock farmers from Harlan, Iowa. Our farm has personally benefited from the research and outreach the Leopold Center has provided since its inception. But we're here today to share another positive impact the Leopold Center has had on our state.

After growing vegetables for a couple of years, we quickly realized that there was no infrastructure support for marketing and delivering our produce. We decided to work with our neighbors and farming friends to create a food hub in Western Iowa. Currently we work with over forty producers from across the state of Iowa, marketing and distributing their products to the Des Moines and Omaha foodsheds with purchases from these farmers totaling over \$1 million. We supply schools, institutions, grocery stores, and restaurants with local foods. But

this would not have happened without help from the Leopold Center. In 2015, with support from the Leopold Center, a food hub managers working group was formed in the state of Iowa. With that group we were able to navigate the early stages, which were often stressful, of our business development. To add even more stress, we were expecting our second child in the spring of 2016. The Leopold Center reached out and offered support during this vulnerable time by providing an interim manager who researched food hub practices and improved our efficiency. This allowed Ellen to go on maternity leave.

We live in a community that is losing population year after year. School enrollment is decreasing, church pews are becoming empty, and your closest neighbor now lives further and further away. The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is one of the few organizations that provides a beacon of hope. They have created an understanding of what rural communities need to survive and thrive. Their promotion of diversity within agriculture has shown the best promise for revitalizing rural Iowa. We alone have created five jobs, not to mention all the economic support for the producers through our purchasing.

The economic impact of the Leopold Center has been immeasurable and the return on investment very substantial. A fully funded Leopold Center is needed now more than ever. Farmers need the Leopold Center. Rural communities need the Leopold Center. Iowa needs the Leopold Center!

Closing Remarks by Katie Rock, CFRA

Thank you. I'm Katie Rock, Policy Associate with the Center for Rural Affairs. Let's have another quick round of applause for our speakers.

How fitting is it to begin our day here in the Wallace building. Henry Wallace inspires me and made history by shaping the future of agriculture through policy. He is part of a ring of characters that has become a legend for Iowa State's College of Agriculture, of which I'm a proud alum (class of 2006). We celebrate the trio of George Washington Carver, Henry Wallace and Norman Borlaug and the legendary impact on agriculture in the last century.

But there were other characters that passed through Iowa State and became legendary in their own right. Barbara McClintock discovered transposable elements in corn and became the first woman to win a stand alone Nobel Prize in medicine in 1983. Ted Schultz left Iowa State for the University of Chicago in 1943 after making the controversial statement that people should eat margarine instead of butter. He went on to win Nobel Prize as well.

I would hate to see the Leopold Center fall into the path of McClintock and Schultz and become part of the legends not told at Iowa State.

But enough talk, time for some action.

LTE by Dr. Kamyar Enshayan, UNI

Readers should be aware that publicly funded, long term agricultural research has produced robust results that can benefit Iowa. Three exciting examples include:

- Crop rotations of three to four years can increase yields, and result in 80 percent less need for synthetic fertilizer, 88 percent less herbicides, and 50 percent less fossil fuel energy.
- Planting just 10 percent of a farm into native Iowa prairie can increase soil retention by 20 fold, increase phosphorus retention by 4 fold, reduce runoff by 37 percent, increase pollinator abundance by 3.5 fold, and increase grassland birds two-fold.
- There are active collaborations all across the state to revive Iowa's local food economy by expanding local markets for local agricultural products, creating value chains that retain our food dollars locally.

What do these findings and practices have in common? They are the direct result of sustained public funding by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Iowa legislators must restore funding for this and other work to restore Iowa's soil, water, biodiversity, and rural communities.

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