It is a maxim universally agreed upon in agriculture, that nothing must be done too late; and again, that everything must be done at its proper season; while there is a third precept which reminds us that opportunities lost can never be regained.

Pliny the Elder, Natural History

Field Notes, the quarterly newsletter of the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, has been absent for two years. It has not been lack of news that halted publication production, but the lack of a publication producer -- the NCR-SARE communications director position was empty from March until September, 2003. The position filled (by Jennifer Robison, a nationally published writer with a strong family farm background), Field Notes is going back into the field -- late, but not too late.

Ordinarily, Field Notes highlights a specific aspect or form of agriculture. Past issues have covered sustainable agroforestry, marketing, watering systems, and swine production, among many others. This method is deliberate. It allows us to cover sustainable agriculture projects in great depth, and lets us show you the scope of complex farming techniques. More important, single-topic reporting is a good way to introduce you to the people putting sustainable practices to work. It's a method we're committed to, but one we're not using this issue. After such a long absence, we feel it is the proper season to do something we've never done before -- report every single grant we've awarded in a single year.

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is committed to helping producers, students, scientists, and educators lead American agriculture into an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable future. So as you review the lists, consider the people behind the data. Each of them devoted long hours, hard work, and real passion to their projects. Each of them knew that their experience might be of more benefit to others than themselves. Each one of them took the opportunity to take a chance -- one that might have been lost, never to be regained.

People and Projects: NCR-SARE’s Grants in 2003

**Iowa**

Project Coordinator: James Blankman  
Project Category: Animal Production  
Project Title: Using Flathead Catfish to Renovate Ponds Overrun with Bullheads, Improving Water Quality Within and Exiting the Ponds

Project Coordinator: Michael Nash  
Project Category: Economics/Marketing  
Project Title: Local Foods Buying Club

Project Coordinator: Tom Wahl  
Project Category: Crop Production  
Project Title: Value Added Processing for Small Sized Chestnuts

Sized Chestnuts

Project Coordinators: Jeff and Jill Burkhart  
Project Category: Economics/Marketing  
Project Title: Picket Fence Creamery...to Sustain a Family Farm and Preserve a Way of Life

Project Coordinator: Eric Jellum  
Project Category: Natural Resources  
Project Title: Deep Placement of Compost

Project Coordinators: Maury and Mary Wills  
Project Category: Crop Production  
Project Title: Evaluating Alternative Pest Management Strategies for Organic Apple Production
Project Coordinator: Bruce River
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Over-Wintering Beef Cows by Grazing Standing Corn as a Cost Effective Alternative to Stockpile Grazing or Stored Feed

Iowa
Project Coordinator: Jon Klingenberg
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Okra Test Trial of 16 Varieties in an Organic Farming Operation

Project Coordinator: Irene Seals
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Raising Tilapia Fish in Tanks Along with Plants and Vegetables in Beds

Project Coordinator: Louis Reuschel
Project Category: Education
Project Title: Student Producers for the Future

Project Coordinator: Brenda Lyons
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Reinventing the Family Farm

Indiana
Project Coordinator: Jim Tarnowski
Project Category: Natural Resources
Project Title: Investigating the Use of Compost Tea for Rapid Restoration of Soil Ecology on Four Indiana Farms

Project Coordinator: Glenn Brands
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: The Use of Cover Crops in Western Kansas Rotation in Lieu of Summer Fallowing, and the Economic Return of Both

Project Coordinator: Karen Rains
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Moveable High Tunnel

Project Coordinator: Kevin Morrill
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Clover 101: Can Clover Help Eastern Kansas?

Project Coordinator: Larry Sorell
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Lazy S Farm Cold Frame Production

Kansas
Project Coordinator: Ben Hunter
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Crawfish Production in Reestablished Wetlands

Project Coordinator: Patricia Altrichter
Project Category: Agroforestry
Project Title: Developing a Saskatoon Berry Market in the Upper Midwest

Project Coordinator: Sally Auger
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Dream of Wild Health, a Project of Peta Wakan Tipi

Project Coordinator: Brian Fredericksen
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Adding Value to Honey Products through the Use of Melissopalynology

Minnesota
Project Coordinator: Winona LaDuke
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Restoration of Traditional Anishinaabeg Agricultural Practices, Utilizing the Three Sisters Gardening Method

Project Coordinator: Tim Gieseke
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Using a Vertical Shoot Position Trellis and Micro-Nutrients to Reduce Labor and Increase Fruit Set

Project Coordinator: David Sjostrom
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Yield and Feeding Value of Annual Crops Planted for Emergency Forage in Minnesota

Project Coordinator: Patricia Altrichter
Project Category: Agroforestry
Project Title: Developing a Saskatoon Berry Market in the Upper Midwest

Project Coordinator: Sally Auger
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Dream of Wild Health, a Project of Peta Wakan Tipi

Project Coordinator: Brian Fredericksen
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Adding Value to Honey Products through the Use of Melissopalynology

Missouri
Project Coordinator: Ben Hunter
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Crawfish Production in Reestablished Wetlands

Project Coordinator: Rick Hopkins
Project Category: Economics/Marketing
Project Title: Diversity Increases Profits for Small Livestock Producers

Project Coordinator: Daniel West
Project Category: Energy
Project Title: Ethanol from Waste Fruit
The threatened Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. This one was found on land belonging to Larry Woodbury of McLeod, North Dakota. Woodbury received a Producer Program grant in 1996 for “Incorporating Holistic Resource Management.”

Kentucky Bluegrass Management and Variety Evaluation for Sustainable Seed Production in Western Nebraska, was a field day, featuring this sign. Laursen’s land is near Alliance, Nebraska.
**Professional Development Grant Program**

**Illinois**
Project Coordinator: Stewart Jacobson
Project Title: Professional Development Program in Apiculture and Pollination

**Kansas**
Project Coordinator: Jerry Jost
Project Title: Grow Your Farmer's Market

**Minnesota**
Project Coordinator: Caroline Van Schaik
Project Title: Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders: Educating Toward a Sustainable Community

**South Dakota**
Project Coordinator: H. Trey Patterson
Project Title: Training in Sustainable Production Systems in the Northern Great Plains

**Wisconsin**
Project Coordinator: Will Allen
Project Title: Building with Community: Professional Development Training in Sustainable Food Systems

**Research and Education Grant Program**

**Iowa**
Project Coordinator: Derrick Exner
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Research Alliance for Farrowing, the Weak Link in Alternative Swine Systems

**Illinois**
Project Coordinator: M Babadoost
Project Category: Disease/Pest Management
Project Title: New Strategies for Management of Vegetable Diseases in Organic and Traditional Farms

**Indiana**
Project Coordinator: Steven Hallet
Project Category: Weed Management
Project Title: Microbial Processes Underlying the Natural Weed Suppressiveness of Soils

**Kansas**
Project Coordinator: Ted Carey
Project Category: Economics/Marketing
Project Title: Growing Growers for Greater Kansas City: Improving Skills for Sustainable Local Food Production and Marketing

**Michigan**
Project Coordinator: Bernard Knezek
Project Category: Natural Resources
Project Title: Calcium Inputs for Soil Quality Improvement

**Minnesota**
Project Coordinator: Paul Peterson
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Enhancing Pasture Productivity by Improving Winter Survival of Perennial Ryegrass

**Project Coordinator: Meg Moynihan**
Project Category: Economics/Marketing
Project Title: "Livestock Your Way" Series Publications: Producer Guides to Goal Setting and Management Options for Dairy and Poultry Enterprises in the Upper Midwest

**Project Coordinator: Francisco Diez-Gonzalez**
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Microbial Safety of Organic Fruits and Vegetables

**Project Coordinator: Helene Murray**
Project Category: Education
Project Title: Experiential Learning Opportunities for Graduate and Undergraduate Students

**Nebraska**
Project Coordinator: David Baltensperger
Project Category: Education
Project Title: Producer Driven Education to Improve Bio-Diversity in Semi-Arid and High-Plains Cropping Systems

**Project Coordinator: W. Ken Russell**
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Providing Farmers the Technology Required to Efficiently Breed Corn Varieties Specifically Adapted to Alternative Cropping Systems

**Ohio**
Project Coordinator: David Barker
Project Category: Animal Production
Project Title: Financial Implications of Non-Toxic Endophyte-Infected Fescue Pasture: Establishment Costs and Livestock Returns

**Project Coordinator: Matthew Kleinhenz**
Project Category: Crop Production
Project Title: Variety Evaluation, Selection and Management for Organic Vegetable Systems
Bluebirds provide natural, pesticide-free -- and cheap -- insect control, which is why Myron Herek of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, installs bluebird houses, like this one, on his property. Herek was a 1993 Producer Program grant recipient for his project, “Evaluating Various Forage Combinations in a Rotational Grazing System.”

Graduate Student: Dario Stefanelli
University: Michigan State University at East Lansing
Project Title: Effect of Sustainable Ground Floor Management Systems on Root System Dynamics of Apple and their Contribution to Carbon Sequestration and Nutrient Cycling in the Soil

Graduate Student: Ebener Ballinger
University: University of Minnesota at St Paul
Project Title: Systems Evaluation of the Components of Reduced Input Dairy Farms

Graduate Student: Marjorie Ross
University: University of Minnesota at St Paul
Project Title: Comparing Vesicular-Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Colonization in Conventional vs. Organic Strawberry Production Systems

Graduate Student: Elaine Krumpelman
University: University of Missouri - Columbia
Project Title: Enhancing the Sustainability of Producer-Owned Organizations

Graduate Student: Mindi Schneider
University: University of Nebraska at Lincoln
Project Title: Land Ethics: Connecting Producers, Consumers, Land and Food

Nancy Aspelund of St. James, Minnesota, with several sows and their piglets. Aspelund received a 1997 grant for “Diversifying a Small Crop Farm With Hogs and Poultry on Pasture, Apple Trees, and Plums.”

Graduate Student: Taradon Luangtongkum
University: Ohio State University at Columbus
Project Title: Comparing Antimicrobial Usage in Commercially Raised and Organically Raised Chickens and Turkeys and the Development of Antimicrobial Resistance in Campylobacter jejuni

Graduate Student: Joshua Smith
University: Ohio State University at Columbus
Project Title: Comparative Strategies for Accelerated Wetland Restoration on Agricultural Land

Graduate Student: Matthew Stoltenberg
University: South Dakota State University at Brookings
Project Title: Effects of Prairie Dogs on Sustainability of Cattle Grazing in Mixed-Grass Prairie
In 2003, NCR-SARE awarded 17 R&E projects, one each in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, and South Dakota. NCR-SARE funded two projects each in Wisconsin and Ohio, three in Nebraska, and four in Minnesota. Most of the research was in the category Natural Resources, followed by Animal Production and Disease/Pest Management. Historically, this is slightly unusual. Over the past 11 years, the majority of funded R&E projects have been in Education, followed by Crop Production. Animal Production and Economics/Marketing have rounded out the top four slots.

Since the program began, NCR-SARE has awarded 485 Producer grants. This year, NCR-SARE awarded 57 projects. Missouri claimed the highest number of funded projects, eight, followed by Iowa with seven, Minnesota and Ohio with six each, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin with five each, Kansas received four grants, North Dakota, Nebraska, and South Dakota each received three, and Indiana got one. Over the years, the project subjects have been evenly split between Animal Production and Crop Production -- each comprise 25% of all projects -- followed closely by Economics/Marketing. This year’s projects follow the historical trend, but not the percentages. Twenty projects focused on Crop Production, 15 were on Animal Production, and only nine concentrated on Economics/Marketing.

Of the 13 grants awarded in 2003, the highest percentage of funding, almost $30,000, went to students in Iowa. Two projects, totaling $20,000 together, were funded in Minnesota and Ohio. Graduate student grants in Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota totaled $10,000 each. The Graduate Student Grant program has awarded 24 projects since its inception two years ago and doesn’t recognize specific subject categories.

In 2003, five grants were awarded, one each in Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The PDP program was instituted in 1994; 178 projects have been awarded since then. Prior to 2003, the PDP program has had only one subject category, education.

*All dollar amounts have been rounded to the nearest whole number*