



2022
Annual
Report



“This is a community that I can learn from, who understands the dire need to make changes to agriculture.”



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In March 2020, just as the pandemic was closing things down, my husband Glenn and I opened the door to cyberspace and entered our first Zoom meeting with about a dozen other first-time Climate Land Leaders. We knew right away that we had discovered something extraordinary. Connections crackled across the internet as introductions were made and ideas were exchanged.

Since then, the Climate Land Leaders Initiative has grown to 65-plus participants who own more than 25,000 acres. Through our contact with other Climate Land Leaders, Glenn and I have learned how to access helpful government programs, received practical information about planting trees and been nurtured by the strong support of others who feel passionate about caring for their land. Perhaps most importantly, Climate Land Leaders give us hope in a future whose fruition, like the trees we have planted, we will not see. It is a privilege to be part of such an organization. I offer thanks to our exemplary Executive Director Teresa Opheim and Program Director Sarah Hunt for their remarkable dedication and leadership.

As CLL Board President, I am pleased to offer this first Annual Report about our amazing participants and accomplishments. Our small and already successful organization has more than tripled in size and is poised for continued growth. We invite landowners, supporters and partners to join us in building soil health, increasing biodiversity and protecting water so that ecosystems and communities can thrive in a rapidly changing climate.

Meg Nielsen, President
Climate Land Leaders Board of Directors

Board of Directors

- Jackie Armstrong
- Carol Bouska
(2020-22 Governing Committee)
- Kate Moos
- Meg Nielsen
- Julie Ristau
- Jane Shey

Staff and Consultants

- Suzi Howk, 100 Degrees Consulting, CFO
- Sarah Hunt, Program Director
- Wendy Johnson, Spokeswoman and Federal Policy Consultant
- Theresa Keaveny, Minnesota Policy Consultant
- Teresa Opheim, Executive Director

Strategic Planning Committee

- Jackie Armstrong
- Carol Bouska
- Wendy Johnson
- Theresa Keaveny
- Joe Luetmer
- Kate Moos
- Meg Nielsen
- Julie Ristau
- Jane Shey

Equity Subgroup Leads

- Carol Bouska
- Sally McCoy
- Paula Westmoreland

Technical Advisors

- Heather Cusick, Climate Bridge Strategies
- Cathy Day, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Tiffany LaShae, farmer and soil scientist
- Ben Lilliston, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- Paula Westmoreland, Ecological Design
- Dr. Sharon Weyers, USDA Agricultural Research Service
- 1000 Farms, Ecdysis Foundation
- Cornell University Soil Health Testing Laboratory



Carol and Peg Bouska of Highland Farm worked with Technical Advisor Tiffany LaShae to pull soil cores for their 2022 Climate Land Leaders farm tour.



Kyle McClure,
Climate Land Leader

“I appreciate the ongoing information sharing between members in Climate Land Leaders. I routinely find new strategies and resources that help me think in deeper ways about the decisions we make on our farm.”

VISION

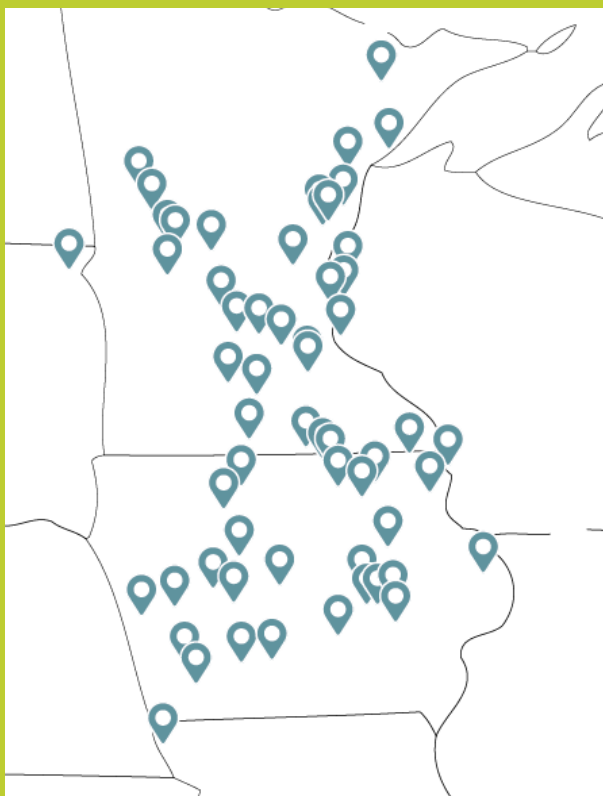
Land stewards build soil health, increase biodiversity and protect water so that ecosystems and communities can thrive in a rapidly changing climate

MISSION

Landowners create community and support to alleviate climate change through land stewardship and conservation



CLIMATE LAND LEADERS' FARMS



Most of the Climate Land Leaders' farms are in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and South Dakota, with expansion planned to other Midwest states.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE, INSPIRATION

Climate Land Leaders work to alleviate climate change through land stewardship and conservation. They work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on their land, sequester carbon in soils and grasses and woody species, and ensure that our lands and farms are resilient in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

Climate Land Leaders are talented women and men who have a wide variety of lived experiences. They rely on the Climate Land Leaders Initiative to provide opportunities for sharing practical advice as well as synthesized information and knowledge from regenerative agriculture experts. Participants also use the Initiative as a safe place for sharing their grief about our degraded Earth – and as a home for inspiration on the amazing power we have to address the climate crisis on our lands.

Climate Land Leaders track and share their progress on:

- Improving soil health
- Reducing synthetic chemical use/external inputs
- Increasing diversity of plants and animals
- Increasing perennial agriculture
- Restoring the land's hydrology
- Enhancing community vitality and equity
- Deepening their relationship with the land
- Practicing self-care to maintain their well-being for the long-term
- Moving to protect their regenerative land practices after they're gone.

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative was launched in 2020 at Sharing Our Roots, a fitting first home as that nonprofit organization has transformed a 100-acre farm from degraded row crops to a diverse system of perennial crops, gardens and natural areas. In 2022, Climate Land Leaders became a separate nonprofit organization; Sharing Our Roots staffers continue to be valued participants in the Climate Land Leaders cohort.

IMPACTS

In 2022, participants overwhelmingly report that the Initiative:



Helped them achieve their on-farm conservation goals



Strengthened their commitment to address the climate crisis on their lands



Provided them a community of support

POLICY FOR THE CLIMATE

With their extensive experience with agricultural programs, Climate Land Leaders like Ruth Rabinowitz and Sylvia Spalding know how our climate and agriculture policy could be improved.

Ruth, Sylvia and the following participate in Climate Land Leaders' policy work: Antonio Alba, Hannah Bernhardt, Peg Bouska, Noemi Carreon, Lori Cox, Mary Damm, Angela Dawson, Naima Dhore, Matthew Fitzgerald, Sarah Hunt, Wendy Johnson, Joe Luetmer, Martha McFarland, Maggie McQuown, Meg Nielsen, Danielle Piraino, Harold Robinson, Ron Rosmann, Fagas Salah and Jane Shey.





Landowners like Becky Lourey (left) and Joe Luetmer (right) benefit from Climate Land Leaders who make a living farming, like Hannah Bernhardt (center) of Medicine Creek Farm.

CLIMATE LAND LEADERS ACTIVITIES

At the start of 2022, 39 individuals who steward 11,000 acres in the Midwest were participating as Climate Land Leaders. By year-end the cohort included 67 Climate Land Leaders who are stewarding more than 23,000 acres. Climate Land Leaders focus on change on the ground: Participants set ambitious conservation goals for 2022, shared those goals with the other cohort members and kept each other updated on progress and challenges. In 2022, Climate Land Leaders restored wetlands, planted prairie, shrubs and trees and worked with farming tenants to keep their soil covered with cover crops.

Climate Land Leaders have had more than 55 opportunities to meet with each other since the Initiative was launched, with 21 opportunities in 2022 alone. 2022 topics included: weed management, leases with farming tenants, finding funding to implement conservation, agricultural conservation easements – and many more topics. Because the participants are so geographically dispersed, much of the cohort's work happens on Zoom. However, the Initiative did hold three in-person gatherings in 2022 to explore wetlands restoration, grazing and vegetable production, forest management and more.

Cohort members are leaders in many other ways. Twenty participated in efforts to make climate change front and center of federal and state policies, with robust funding for conservation and streamlined administration of government programs. Thirty Climate Land Leaders presented at workshops and were featured in press and social media.

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative is science-based. Participants take baseline soil tests before making significant changes on their land. They take advantage of one-on-one conversations with scientists to better understand their land. In 2022, three Climate Land Leaders participated in an ambitious research project called 1000 Farms that is documenting biodiversity, water quality and soil health measurements under a variety of management practices.

Equity is core to the Climate Land Leaders' work. Through speakers, readings and discussion, participants are learning about the U.S. history of enslaved labor and stolen land and the ways that White landowners have continued to benefit from the racist foundation and institutions of our country. Climate Land Leaders are thinking expansively about their resources, exploring the legacy they want to create and taking action – now – to address inequities and support the next generation of farmers and land stewards.

2020 - 2022
BY THE NUMBERS



67 CLIMATE LAND LEADERS



23K ACRES INVOLVED



125
TIMES
FEATURED IN
THE MEDIA



Paula Westmoreland
Climate Land Leader

“The Climate Land Leaders Initiative mobilizes a group of landowners that haven’t had a community built around their situation. So much land is changing hands – where that land goes, who gets it, who benefits – those are really big questions. The Initiative helps landowners address those questions and act on their values.”



55
EVENTS
HELD



38
SOIL TESTS AND
CONSULTATIONS



Sally McCoy
Climate Land Leader, Donor

“When you are taking risks with your property and trying to make good conservation decisions, it really helps to have other people who are also on that same journey who can share some of the concerns and some of the joys. Because we really are moving into uncharted territory.”

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

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FOUNDATION**



Regenerative
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Foundation



**MORTENSON FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

- AgArts
- CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
- Green Lands Blue Waters
- Indigenous Speaker Series
- Land Stewardship Project
- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Sharing Our Roots
- Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
- Wallace Center at Winrock International

Individual Donors (2020-22)

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Andrew Boyle
Rebecca Burke
Jack Busse
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Jane Shey
Elisabeth Spratt
Barbara Strandell
Suzanne M Swanson
Lee Tesdell
Jason Walker
Paula Westmoreland
Marilyn Winsor
Anonymous (12)

2022 FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR CLIMATE LAND LEADERS:

Since its founding in March 2020, Climate Land Leaders was an initiative of Sharing Our Roots, Northfield, Minnesota. In June 2022, Climate Land Leaders became a nonprofit 5013c organization and signed a fiscal sponsorship agreement, ending June 2023, with Sharing Our Roots. Climate Land Leaders' consulting CFO is Suzi Howk, 100 Degrees Consulting.

See www.climatelandleaders.org/accountability for more information.

Total Revenue: \$210,315
Total Expenses: \$200,841
Net Revenue: \$9,473

CONNECT WITH US

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Minneapolis, MN 55406

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