



PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE



Dear Climate Land Leaders,

Thank you for your unflagging commitment to land stewardship and recovery! Climate Land Leaders began in 2020, and by year's end 2025, 228 land stewards were participating, dedicating their 52,805 acres to restoring soil, trees, shrubs, and prairie, growing sustainable crops, and protecting wetlands and waterways.



The last year has been specifically challenging, as we've seen climate science and strategies for mitigation dismissed by policy makers and corporations alike. That's why the faithful tending to the land carries such deep meaning and brings me hope at this particular moment. We remain constant guardians of the soil and water despite the noise, violence, and intentional chaos around us. This is peace-making work.

The Climate Land Leaders Initiative has been a key resource for me, in the five years since I moved to rural Iowa from a lifetime in Minnesota. Without Climate Land Leaders' companionship and guidance, our prairie restoration may never have happened. Now a hundred acres of tillable land in our possession will begin its second year of flourishing as prairie instead of growing corn and beans.

Your stewardship, expertise, and kindness help repair the world we live in every day. Thank you so much for your support.

Kate Moos
BOARD PRESIDENT
IOWA LANDOWNER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jackie Armstrong (IA), Iowa landowner
- Heather Cusick (MN), *Climate Bridge Strategies LLC (partial year)*
- Rozina Kanchwala (IL), *Eco.logic and Illinois landowner*
- Ben Lilliston (MN), *Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (partial year)*
- Paul Mairet (MN), *Minnesota landowner (partial year)*
- Dr. Michelle Montgomery (WA), *Haliwa Saponi (enrolled)/Eastern Band Cherokee*
- Kate Moos (IA), *Iowa landowner, President*
- Meg Nielsen (WI), *Minnesota landowner, President Emerita*
- Ruth Rabinowitz (CA/IA), *Iowa landowner (partial year)*
- Jane Shey (IA), *Iowa landowner (partial year)*
- Angela Smith Harris (MN), *Iowa landowner (partial year)*
- Sylvia Spalding (HI), *Iowa landowner*
- Todd Western III (MN), *Iowa landowner (partial year)*
- In memory of Gail Hickenbottom, *Climate Land Leaders Board member and Treasurer (1948-2025)*

TEAM

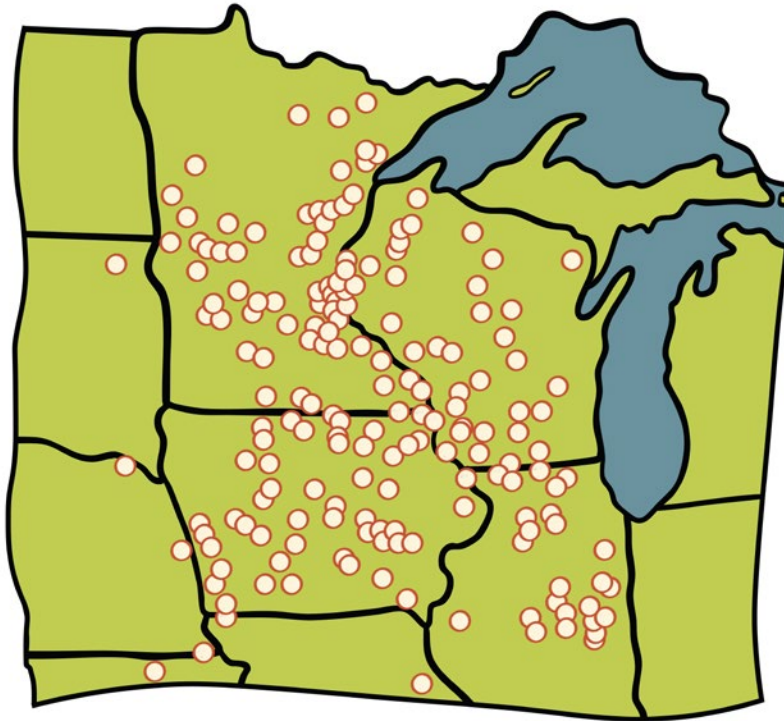
- Christina Foster, *Illinois Lead*
- Sarah Hunt, *Program Director*
- Wendy Johnson, *Federal Policy Co-lead*
- Dr. Katie Ross, *Science Consultant*
- Tiffany LaShae, *Soils Consultant*
- Theresa Keaveny, *Minnesota State Policy Lead*
- Teresa Opheim, *Executive Director*
- Dr. Teresa Peterson, *Indigenous Advisor*
- Taylor Sklenar, *Iowa State Policy Lead*
- Charlie Zieke, *Communications Consultant*

MISSION

To provide community and support for land stewards creating climate resiliency

VISION

Plant, animal, and human communities thrive through our land stewardship



52,805 acres

By year-end 2025, **228** who steward 52,805 acres were **Climate Land Leaders**

2025 Financial Information

TOTAL REVENUE: \$545,149

TOTAL EXPENSE: \$461,744

NET REVENUE: \$83,405

TOTAL ASSETS: \$364,323

TOTAL LIABILITIES: \$18,334

TOTAL NET ASSETS: \$345,989

INCOME SOURCES

Rural Climate Partnership: 18%

Other foundation grants: 19%

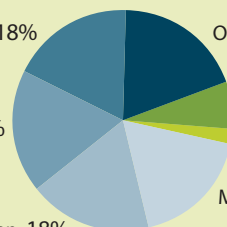
Individual donations: 7%

Fee for service, interest income: 2%

Buiders Vision: 18%

Morgan Family Foundation: 18%

McKnight Foundation: 18%



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Nature

Conservation goal-setting and reporting is core to the Climate Land Leaders model. Research proves that people are more likely to follow through if they share their goals publicly and are part of a supportive community to help them work through challenges and celebrate successes. In 2025, 71 Climate Land Leader farms reported a plethora of accomplishments, including: quarterly meetings with new renters, signing a contract to plant silvopasture, restoring a wetland, and tending a new 100-acre prairie.

82%

AGREE THAT “The Climate Land Leaders Initiative is helping me achieve my on-farm conservation goals.”

Community

In 2025, Climate Land Leaders had 64 opportunities to connect, which they took advantage of 950 times. Climate Land Leaders report that they are especially appreciative of the supportive community that the Initiative provides, the breadth of knowledge and experience in the group, the focus on goal setting and reporting, and the variety of learning opportunities. Many Climate Land Leaders connected 1:1 outside of scheduled meetings—a sign of a strong network.

86%

REPORT THAT “The Climate Land Leaders Initiative provides me with community and support.”



"I want to break down the false barrier between 'agricultural land' and 'conservation land' and blend the two to create the kind of agroecological systems that allow humans and fauna to flourish."

— MINNESOTA CLIMATE LAND LEADER



Healthy Food

Climate Land Leaders are working to strengthen our local food systems. Farmers in the cohort share the challenges and rewards in making a living off the land. And they offer valuable insights to those non-farming Climate Land Leaders who are renting out their land: How can all of us best support those growing our food? Our perennial stipends support both farmers and non-farmers in our network. In 2025, 34 Climate Land Leaders received \$32,508 in perennial stipends to help them achieve their goals.



Helping Nature Cool

By planting and tending to well-placed trees, shrubs, grasses, and wetlands, Climate Land Leaders help keep air and soils cool. In 2025, scientist Dr. Katie Ross visited an Illinois Climate Land Leader to show how a diversity of plants and animals on the landscape is good for the climate, for biodiversity, for water quality, and more. Farmer and educator Tiffany LaShae visited Iowa and Minnesota Climate Land Leaders to explore soils in different land uses, and a variety of Climate Land Leaders took samples and received reports that will help them better steward their soils.

97%

ARE LIKELY TO RECOMMEND the Climate Land Leaders Initiative to a friend.

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Democracy

Healthy democracies are crucial for a healthy planet. 28 Climate Land Leaders took policy actions in 2025, including contacting their elected officials, serving on governmental committees, and getting out the vote. Climate Land Leaders were quoted in local, state, and national media, were interviewed on the radio, and had opinion pieces published in the media. All together, 125 Climate Land Leaders were featured in the media and in social media in 2025.

“Funding for working lands conservation programs is a sensible investment for farmers, American society, and the planet.”

—IOWA CLIMATE LAND LEADER

Legacy

Will the Climate Land Leaders’ conservation continue after they are gone? In 2025, Climate Land Leaders shared in cohort meetings their legacy planning challenges, including working with siblings who have varying priorities for the land. The Initiative also published “Land Legacies: Stories from Landowners for Landowners,” a booklet featuring 11 Climate Land Leaders’ reflections on planning for the future of their land.

“My dream is that in 100 years, people will walk this land and feel the life teeming around them.”

—ILLINOIS CLIMATE LAND LEADER



PHOTO BY SHERI TRUSTY, THE BEACON



All Our Relations

In 2025, the Climate Land Leaders Initiative added an Indigenous Advisor to the team. Dr. Teresa Peterson grounded Climate Land Leaders in the concept of mitakuye owas'in (all my relatives), which include plants, animals, and people who are not necessarily related by blood or family ties. She developed a pilot project called "Becoming a Good Ancestor", through which a dozen Climate Land Leaders are exploring the history of their land and are preparing for its future seven generations out.

"In every moment, whether we like it or not and whether we know it or not, we are advancing values and influencing systems that will continue long past our lifetimes."

— DR. TERESA PETERSON (DAKOTA)

PARTNERS

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION



BUILDERS INITIATIVE



The Acreage at Osceola
 Biodiversity for a Liveable Climate
 Canopy Farm Management
 Climate Bridge Strategies, LLC
 Cornell Soil Health Laboratory
 CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
 Eco.logic
 Ecological Design
 Farmers Rising
 Green Lands Blue Waters
 Indigenous Speaker Series
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 The Land Connection
 Land Stewardship Project
 Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program
 Minnesota Native Landscapes
 Mother Earth News
 National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
 1000 Farms
 Peoples Company
 Renewing the Countryside
 Savanna Institute
 Sharing Our Roots
 Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
 Somali American Farmers Association
 Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
 USDA Agricultural Research Service
 Wallace Center

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