

Fishers & Farmers
Partnership for the
Upper Mississippi
River Basin

FishersAndFarmers.org

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MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION FUNDS WATERSHED LEADERS NETWORK

Fishers & Farmers Partnership Will Invest In Leadership Development For Farm Landowners and Operators, Local Partners

NEWS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
9/18/2015

The McKnight Foundation announced this week it has awarded funding to Fishers & Farmers Partnership For the Upper Mississippi River Basin to develop the Watershed Leaders Network in 2016-17.

The award expands the Partnership's commitment to outreach and engaging farmers and landowners in shared work for healthy fish, streams, and farms in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

During the project's pilot phase, Watershed Leaders Network programming focuses on program development and two workshops for farm landowners, operators, and other local watershed collaborators from five subwatersheds of the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Program experiences build skills for confident local leadership, strong watershed groups, effective implementation of best management practices, and new norms on the landscape.

Participant feedback will inform Watershed Leaders Network programming so activities relevant and helpful to future participants.

NewGround, Inc., a Minnesota-based firm specializing in programs and strategic, branded communications for clean water action, is developing the workshops and related outreach with Fishers & Farmers Partnership.

Additional Watershed Leaders Network funding is provided by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

ABOUT THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

The Minnesota-based McKnight Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Its Mississippi River program focuses on restoring the water quality and resilience of the Mississippi River with attention to floodplains and wetlands, reduced agricultural pollution, and cross-boundary coordination.

Foundation assets were approximately \$2.2 billion in 2014, with grant awards of about \$88 million.

ABOUT WATERSHED LEADERS NETWORK

Please see the attached program summary sheet. Contact project manager Nancy North to learn more: Nancy.North@OnNewGround.com.

ABOUT FISHERS & FARMERS PARTNERSHIP

Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is a self-directed group of non-government agricultural and conservation organizations, tribal organizations, and state and federal agencies united to add value to farms while protecting, restoring, and enhancing the 30,700 miles of streams and rivers of the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Throughout the Basin, the Partnership works to build flexible, collaborative relationships between landowners, agriculture, and conservation organizations to empower landowners to act for themselves and the greater good.

More information can be found at www.fishersandfarmers.org. To learn more about Fishers & Farmers Partnership contact Heidi Keuler at Heidi_Keuler@fws.gov.

Watershed Leaders Network

Skills and connection for farming neighbors, ag landowners, and local coordinators who want to do and lead for healthy watersheds

Across the Upper Mississippi River Basin farmers and farm landowners are finding ways to evolve practices for long-term productivity and healthier fish and streams. Among those are local collaborators who've connected to identify erosion and nutrient sources, choose and implement solutions on their own farms, and share what they're doing with neighbors.

In 2016 and 2017 Fishers & Farmers Partnership will engage 15 people from five Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin watersheds in two two-day workshops. Participants will:

- Learn from each other through relaxed, facilitated conversation;
- Meet local watershed leaders;
- Participate in watershed project site visits;
- Participate in communications and organizational skill building activities;
- Learn from technical experts.

Project goals are:

- Strong personal and regional connections;
- Effective implementation of best management practices by participants;
- Confident farmer/landowner leaders and successful local groups;
- New norms on the landscape.

Participants also provide feedback so Watershed Leaders Network activities are relevant and helpful to future participants.

A pre-formatted website news page is provided to each participating group for local outreach. Pages are hosted on the Fishers and Farmers' website. Direction and support are provided to local site managers.

WHAT & WHEN

- Two 2-day workshops
- 2016 & 2017
- Scheduled during farming off-seasons

COMMITMENT

- 2 workshops | 3 days each including travel
- Fully participate, including post-event feedback for program development
- Local group provides photos and start-up content for its page at fishersandfarmers.org
- Local group posts photos, stories, or activity information occasionally, with Partnership support

COST

- Program, food, housing and travel paid by Fishers & Farmers Partnership
- \$100 refundable commitment fee per person

FIND NATURAL WAYS TO ACT FOR HEALTHY STREAMS, FISH, AND FARMS.



Arlo Van Diest connects with neighbors near Webster City, Iowa.

Do.
Agricultural Best Practices

Arlo and Claudia Van Diest and business partner Jim Larson use strip-till practices on all farmed acres, host field tours, and help neighbors try strip-till. As a result, several neighbors now strip-till with their own equipment on 100% of their land. When Van Diest Farms purchased a new 16-row strip-till unit, the old 1992 DMI 5310 16-row unit became a loaner to encourage more neighbors to experience strip-till on their land.

Lead.
Local Leadership

"Selling's never been my bag," says Arlo, "but I'm over 70 and I guess if we're going to make a difference it's time to speak up. I'm enthused about what's happening in our little corner of the world. East of town there's a stream, a tributary of the Boone River that's impaired. It's small enough that if we can get enough people to adapt practices, we can make a difference. There's less runoff than there used to be. Our goal is to have testing show that our actions make a difference."

GAIN CONFIDENCE AND SKILL. MAKE A DIFFERENCE CLOSE TO HOME.

FARM LANDOWNER & RENTER

Jerry Peckhum
Jefferson, Iowa



"Conservation on land is the responsibility of the landowner, because it's a long-term investment. But the tenant has the responsibility of stewardship, implementing the plan."

FARMER

Dave Dunn
Bourbon, Missouri



"As far as making a change, I think people listen to their neighbors. And if they have a neighbor who they think is pretty successful or doing well, they'll go to them and ask, 'how are you doing this?'"

WATERSHED COORDINATOR

Karen Galles
St. Peter, Minnesota



"The hardest thing is that key skills for succeeding are so intangible. Local leaders need models, training, and mentoring so they can learn to talk about this issue without bracing against fear."

"If you look around, a lot is happening. It starts with someone who sees the watershed-scale issue and wants to do something about it."

— Dave Vetrano, Farmer Conservationist, Coon Valley, Wisconsin

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OUR MISSION

Healthy fish, healthy streams, healthy farms.

Less polarization. More shared work.

Fishers & Farmers Partnership is a self-directed group of non-government agricultural and conservation organizations, tribal organizations, and state and federal agencies united to add value to farms while protecting, restoring, and enhancing the 30,700 miles of streams in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

We work for conservation action on farms and flexible, collaborative relationships between farmers, landowners, ag business, conservation staff, and local organizations.

fishersandfarmers.org

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