

## Ode to Windmills

by Dr. John Coe, Bloomington, Minnesota



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GRANDFATHER sold windmills in the Midwest. His own, set on a slight elevation, was the tallest structure on the property. A person could climb a narrow metal ladder to a small platform at the top where a magnificent panorama of farms extended to the horizon in every direction -- or a lethal fall if you lost your balance.

Wind up, the head would spin, driving a shaft up and down to pump water from a well into an adjacent horse tank. One heard gurgling sounds of the small stream cascading into the tank, rhythmic up and down clang of the shaft, creaking of the windmill head turning whenever the wind changed direction. At irregular intervals, the whinny of horses and the mooing, snuffling noise of cows. Interesting sounds, which still reverberate in my memory.

Two generations later, grandpa was broke. Rural electrification, drought, depression all wreaked havoc, and windmills began to disappear. Slats fell from the circular head. A maudlin picture developed of a broken windmill silhouetted against a crimson red bank of clouds at sunset. In the light of day, the old rusted tower, with its broken head, was a sentinel of disaster. Below, a swaybacked fading red barn, collapsed corncrib, uncapped silo and overturned outhouse. Peeling white paint emphasized the blank windows of the desolate, deserted farmhouse.

Two more generations and there is a rebirth. Each descendant is a tall, slender closed metal tower, a fulcrum for three long graceful blades resembling an airplane propeller, and suggesting a huge long-stemmed three-petal flower. Speed and tilt of the blades controlled by computers, the windmill provides electricity without disturbing atmosphere, environment, or fossil fuels. Whole fields are now occupied by these sleek silver-gray machines, placed so precisely, they look like a well-tended crop. Their measured spin gives a feeling of grace and power — ballerinas in a slow pirouette.

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*Dr. John I. Coe is an Emeritus Professor of Pathology, University of Minnesota Medical School, and retired Chief of Pathology, Hennepin County Medical Center. In 1964, Dr. Coe was appointed the first Medical Examiner in Minnesota. He has an international reputation in forensic science. In 1999, when 80 years old, Dr. Coe started composing poetry as a part of a memoir writing group, and discovered how enjoyable this genre of literature is. He included this poem in a book of poems he has recently self-published. ♡*

## Viewpoint

**T**HE LATEST VERSION of the Conservation Security Program rule arrived in Mid March. The sign-up for the next 220 watersheds, including six in Minnesota, follows until May 27, 2005. Sustainable farmers should jump on the opportunity; the window will only be open a short time.

The President recently proposed \$274 million for CSP in the 2006 budget. USDA Secretary Johanns noted that CSP is slated for a 35% increase over this year's funding. However, each year's CSP funding must pay for that year's payments on previously signed contracts and 15% for technical assistance costs. Only what is left over is available for new contracts. Despite Johanns' assertion that 200 new watersheds would be eligible in 2006, there would only be new funding for some 60 watersheds. USDA wants to get to every watershed every eight years, but at this level it would be every 30-40 years.

This is the first step in the process. Groups like the Minnesota Project will need to be very vocal to gain more funding than the President offered. With the ruling of the World Trade Organization on cotton subsidies and its likely effect of scaling back commodity subsidies because they distort trade, the CSP will need to be much expanded to offer both a reward for working lands that protect the environment, and also an income safety net for farmers. ■



Diane Jensen, Executive Director

## Dear Readers...

THIS SPRING issue is all about energy — from methane digesters producing electricity to legislative efforts enhanced by collaboration, and from Minnesota to Europe. Yet the pages are sprinkled with spring poetry of boats and ships and windmills. Why this mix?

Environmental leaders sometimes ask Minnesota Project Director, Diane Jensen, why there are stories and poetry in *Community Connections*. Our answer is simple and two-fold. First, the essays, stories, or poems are our gifts to you, the reader. We thank you — with creativity — for your subscriptions, your advocacy partnership or your volunteer time.

Second, we believe in the power of metaphor — it awakens. Ever since our first cover essay written fresh for that 1992 issue by Paul Gruchow about homemade bread, we have understood the power of creative words. Through story or poems, you can hear certain truths.

Author Marcus Borg writes about metaphorical truth, saying story is “not inferior to literal meaning but is more than literal meaning.” German novelist, Thomas Mann, defined a myth as “a story about the way things never were but always are.” And a Native American storyteller spins the same meaning as he begins his story with “I don't know if it happened this way or

not, but I know this story is true.” There is power and truth in story.

Furthermore, as Rebecca Solnit says in the March 2004 issue of *Orion* magazine, “Stories migrate secretly.” Have you noticed how a good story slips from house to house through a community, even crosses large bodies of water, and ends up circling back from England or somewhere via e-mail? Solnit quips, “Stories sneak in while no one is watching.” However they move, clearly there is intrinsic life to a story.

By this time, you've learned to read *Connections* differently than you might read other news that daily comes your way. If you are one of the hundreds of our long-term subscribers, we often hear that you even pass the pages around. Aha — so you are the energy behind that secret migration!

Travel with Joe Paddock's poetic voice from Litchfield, Minnesota. Enjoy the poems of Grindland and Coe. Taste Loni's home cooking. In these pages, you'll also hear from Mark and Amanda and Myron — all with educational messages about the renewable energy programs of the Minnesota Project.

So as spring mud and green re-appear, learn from and enjoy these pages of commentary mixed with poetry. Then pass your issue along to a friend!

— Beth Waterhouse, Editor,  
*Community Connections*, since 1992  
[beth.waterhouse@usfamily.net](mailto:beth.waterhouse@usfamily.net)



### Support the Minnesota Project in your workplace

The Minnesota Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, a coalition of nineteen environmental and conservation organizations in Minnesota working to make our communities better places to live.

The Minnesota Environmental Fund offers workplace giving as an option to help non-profit organizations who promote rural communities, preserve wildlife and parks, and prevent degradation of air and water.

If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it or call the Minnesota Project and we will approach the company, organization, or government unit. For more information, call 651.645.6159 or email [djensen@mnproject.org](mailto:djensen@mnproject.org).

# SEED: Eleven Years of Advancing Renewables

by Mark Lindquist, Minnesota Project's Energy Policy Specialist

THE SPRING ISSUE of *Community Connections* and the SEED Coalition — it is only natural that we think of them together. The Coalition's name ties into this season, but more significantly the focus of SEED is the Minnesota Legislature, which should be running in high gear as you read this.

The Sustainable Energy for Economic Development (SEED) Coalition is a group of 25 diverse organizations working to advance renewable energy in Minnesota. SEED members represent rural, community development, industry and environmental interests. Like



Photos: Minnesota Project (top) and Stan Waldhauser, Minnesota Historical Society (bottom)

all coalitions, there are tensions, which stem from differing perspectives and priorities. But advancing renewable energy remains the tie that binds us. Our coalition allows diversity to be a strength by creating a forum where we can define areas of common ground, build and maintain relationships and test and refine policy goals and proposals through spirited debate. It also provides the avenue for regular communication and coordination. Ultimately, we can speak with one voice on our collective priorities.

For eleven years, SEED has been a steady and important voice at the Capitol on renewable energy issues. While we have not achieved everything we would like, SEED and its members continue to drive change that makes Minnesota a leader. We have been able to sustain the groundbreaking victories hard won in the Prairie Island (cask storage of nuclear waste) debate of 1994. We have since expanded on those wins by establishing policies pushing all Minnesota utilities to make meaningful investments in renewable energy. SEED-supported policies have also opened the door for ordinary Minnesota farmers and small business people to invest in renewable projects. Sometimes our wins came by defeating policy proposals, such as deregulation of the Minnesota utility industry or policies undermining conservation programs.

Even though we have accomplished much, SEED has even more to achieve. To achieve the environmental and economic goals of the coalition, we need a much stronger commitment to renewables and community-based energy production. Virtually every utility in the state is talking about building coal plants, even though clean renewables can provide the same power at a comparable price. We need to establish a market place where there are stable opportunities for Minnesota farmers and business people to compete for a meaningful share of the renewable electricity market. We cannot let the transmission system become an excuse for failing to invest in renewables. Finally, we need to continue to push for further diversification of the electric power industry by ensuring that there is a place for solar and biomass energy along with wind in the electric energy mix.

## 2005 SEED LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. **Advancing Renewable Energy: Strengthen Minnesota's commitment to renewable electricity by replacing the Renewable Energy Objective with a stronger minimum content standard for new renewables.**
2. **Moving Renewable Energy to Market: Modify three regulatory processes to ensure that utilities adequately plan for and invest in the transmission needed to bring required renewable energy facilities on line in a timely manner.**
3. **Advancing Community Wind: Establish a fair pricing system, the "Community-Based Energy Development Tariff," that allows Minnesota farmers and small business people to invest in wind energy projects.**
4. **Solar Sales Tax Exemption and Non-Discrimination Act: Extend the expiring sales tax exemption on solar energy equipment, and expand the exemption from just the panels to the whole project.**

The Minnesota Project has been a leader in the SEED Coalition since its inception. In addition to contributing to policy content and advocacy efforts, the Minnesota Project has been responsible for establishing and managing the coalition processes. We make sure that communication tools are in place, meetings are held, all partners are heard, and that decisions are remembered. It is a role that the Minnesota Project commonly plays throughout its work.

## SPRING

Yesterday  
I waited —  
for warblers, crocus,  
the cold and snow  
to be gone.

My eyes reached  
forward, a pilgrim  
searching for spring  
the world only a blur  
on the road to  
better days.

Today I am lifted  
up into blue sky. I soften  
in the smell of mud  
and sing the spring song  
of a chickadee.

What if I could  
always see this round?  
Be the fat, earthy vessel  
and let the juice of the moment,  
whatever it is, well up  
through me and ripple out.

— Kay Grindland  
Lutsen, Minnesota

*In February, Minnesota Project's Loni Kemp was awarded a Distinguished Service Award for her seven years of leadership as co-chair of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. Our congratulations and gratitude go to Loni!*

## Europe and Energy: a Community Connection

by Myron Just, Agriculture and Energy Consultant

**T**HEY SAY THE WORLD is getting smaller. Instant communication, satellites, jet travel, the Internet, CNN, or global trade have dramatically expanded all our horizons and have changed our sense of what community is.

Last November, I spent a couple of weeks examining how the Europeans as individuals, states, and now as a 25 country European Union (EU) developed an aggressive energy policy.

Europeans have taken energy conservation seriously for a long time. They import an even higher percentage of motor fuel (98 %) than we do in the U.S. High fuel cost (due to a high government tax) has always throttled consumption. They pay for a liter of petrol what we in the U.S. pay for a gallon. One result has been smaller and much more fuel-efficient cars and greater use of public transit. The roadways are excellent and modern. Europeans believe the higher price for motor fuel more accurately reflects the true cost of petroleum. The world market price of a barrel of Middle East crude oil is only a fraction of the cost. The cost to maintain and protect the pipelines, build the roadways as well as the environmental costs of public and private transportation, Europeans profess, should be reflected at the pump.

None of this has dampened the development of great European auto makers and the huge presence of American and Japanese car makers as well. Advanced models are often developed and introduced there because of the high performance and efficiency standards required by government and demanded by the consumer.

Europe is also leading the way in other energy areas. Denmark now has 20% of its electricity coming from wind power and Germany, Spain, England and the Netherlands are other strong leaders in wind development. Commitments to achieve Kyoto Treaty goals in reducing carbon dioxide emissions are giving a boost to some renewable energy efforts. Another more recent example is the adoption of an EU target to have two percent of their motor fuel come from biofuels (primarily refined from the vegetable oil rape seed) by 2005 and five percent by 2010.

My last year's trip to Europe, focused on this energy issue, was a great education. Sometimes it's important for us to listen, not only to local communities, but to community responses across the ocean. It's another kind of community connection. ●

## Create a Clean Water Legacy

**OUR STATE WATERS** are not as clean as they should be. To test all of our lakes and rivers and implement clean up plans will cost money. A broad coalition of 40 groups, including The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Farm Bureau, and the Minnesota Environmental Partnership worked for two years to find a way to pay for testing and clean up. Under the Clean Water Legacy plan, \$80 million would be generated through a user fee on municipal wastewater connections and septic systems. While a new user fee is hard to swallow, dirty water is worse. Support the creation of The Clean Water Legacy. For more information: [www.ProtectOurWater.info](http://www.ProtectOurWater.info). ●

# Princeton Farmer Says State Energy Policies Should Encourage Digesters

by Amanda Bilek, Minnesota Project Outreach and Education Coordinator

**W**E KNOW THAT “DIGESTING” MANURE can produce electricity on farms with livestock. The benefits of the digestion process, however, extend beyond the kilowatt hours produced, and are highly affected by state policy decisions.

“When we started this project five years ago,” says Dennis Haubenschild, Princeton, Minnesota, “it was my objective to prove that there were energy and non-energy benefits from having on-farm anaerobic digesters. Now, I see that there is more work to do.”

Five years ago, the Minnesota Project began this cooperative venture with the Haubenschild family, partially funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Main questions have been:

- How is soil quality affected by using digested fertilizer as manure?
- Are temperatures inside the digester warm enough to destroy weed seeds in manure?
- What economic factors affect farm profits when you invest in a digester?

The project yielded many useful results, but also determined that there is still much to learn. For example, the analysis concluded that anaerobic digestion does not significantly kill weed seeds. These results, however, do not jive with what Dennis has observed in the field. “Since I started using digested manure as fertilizer, I have been able to reduce the number of herbicide applications, as a result of fewer weeds in the fields.” More study is needed to answer this important question.

The answer to this question — will it kill weeds—affects the economic analysis, because of the value of saved expense for herbicides. Current economic analysis did not include this

factor or other non-energy benefits such as odor control.

The economic analysis completed for this project did conclude that 5.6 cents per kilowatt hour is needed just to break even with a total investment of \$355,000. The breakeven price for the Haubenschild's is above the price that Minnesota utilities now offer to pay for excess energy. Clearly, if a farmer wants to not only break even on a digester investment but realize some profit, changes need to be made.

Haubenschild sees that policies need to be changed in Minnesota. “The greatest benefit or opportunity that I see in digesters is distributed energy in rural areas. There are now too many barriers to this opportunity. First, Minnesota needs to put some teeth into the renewable energy objective.” He refers specifically to the goals set for energy that must come from biomass in our state.

Dennis Haubenschild also challenges Minnesota to be more like Vermont, where rates for net metering (money

paid back for excess energy) apply specifically for digesters. Changes in this policy would help farmers pay off their investment faster, and would generate profit from renewable energy, encouraging it and thus contributing to a clean, secure energy future.

The Minnesota Project's role in all this was important, and it is far from over. The organization is committed to working with the Haubenschild Farm and other digester operators in the state as they evaluate and communicate multiple benefits. A major question remains — is Minnesota losing out by lagging behind on such energy incentives?

Haubenschild recognizes that other states are far outpacing Minnesota, and says this could result in lost benefits. “In 1999, when we installed our digester, we were the first in the Midwest,” he recalls. “Today, Wisconsin has 25 digesters planned or installed, and Minnesota has only two operating and a couple planned. Minnesota is really missing out on a value-added sector for agriculture.”

For more information on the Haubenschild Family Farm project, visit [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org).

*Dennis Haubenschild (far right) discusses his family dairy farm's anaerobic manure digester with visitors at the Haubenschild Field Day held this September.*



*Photos: NRCS (left) and Larry Nelson (right)*

# Poetry Selections

– Joe Paddock, Litchfield, Minnesota

## AWAKENING

Knowledge of its presence  
under the porch floor became  
a slight festering as I drank  
spring water in the shimmering  
of light and shade through screen.

I knew the small rowboat  
I had once built drifted  
on dry sand in darkness  
beneath me.

Festered 'til  
I took a screwdriver and turned out  
the long wood screws Dad,  
now dead, had turned in years before.

Lattice-work lifted  
easily away, and I drew  
my little boat slowly out past  
a scrawny bridal wreath bush.

Camouflage green, with first  
the long push pole,  
its duck's bill dangling. Then  
dried mud tracks of a cat and bits  
of cattail rushes from a morning  
in the marsh twenty years before.

Within the dark hollow  
between ribs, stretched  
deep masses of webs, hung  
with wisps of dried grass  
and tiny feathers, and  
deeper within, moving,  
the dark bodies of spiders,  
and deeper yet, for just an instant,  
the body of a man,  
sleeping. Had to be mine.  
In dream, Dad said he'd seen  
my eyes go dull, but now  
I could feel them burn  
in the sockets of my skull.  
I continued to pull  
'til the sleeping body  
vanished in light.



## PATRICK MATTSSON'S DREAM

Couples, Patrik and Judy, Nancy and I,  
we are the crew of a ship gone dysfunctional,  
wallowing in gray waters somewhere between  
our landlocked home and the Swedish pond  
into which Patrik first released  
the pristine model sailing ship  
of his youth.

But, in Patrik's dream,  
this clunk we are on  
has gone dead within  
its heavy armor, great metal plates,  
and the thing we must do  
is unbolt them and sink them,  
send them whirling  
down through bubbling green  
into the blackness again.

We do, and warming  
to our work, we begin  
to see that beneath — and we laugh  
in delight at what  
we are beginning to see, pristine —  
a fine wooden sailing ship  
is emerging from within  
what has gone hard  
and old and dead.

In a bursting of joy, then, we raise  
our shuddering mast and hoist  
snapping white sails, enter again  
that lovingly remembered  
brave thrum of the wind.

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*"Awakening" earlier appeared in Sidewalks, and "Patrik Mattsson's Dream" appeared in ArtWord Quarterly. We acknowledge both publications, now out of print. Joe currently writes biographies, screenplays, and poetry, and is known for his 2001 book, Keeper of the Wild, detailing the life of wilderness advocate, Ernest Oberholtzer. You can find more of Joe Paddock's poetry in his books, Earth Tongues (Milkweed, 1985) or Boar's Dance (Holy Cow! Press, 1993).*

*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society*

## *Homegrown Pleasures All Year Long*

by Loni Kemp

**W**E TEND TO THINK of summer as the time of high feasting. Gardens and farmers' markets are spilling over with freshly harvested foods.

But summer meals are quick feasts. Who wants to head into the kitchen on a sunny afternoon to start cooking? When dinnertime comes, we dine simply and elegantly on whatever is flooding the kitchen. Quick dinners of salad, asparagus pasta, broccoli stir-fry, or cool fresh pea soup are followed by bowls of sweet berries. By August, our cooking is so simplified all we do is boil a pot of water for the sweet corn and slice some tomatoes. After eating we're drawn right back outside for the long golden evenings.

Summer feasts are fresh, seasonal and satisfying in their own way. But for a really fulfilling and slow feast, we wait for the dreary days of late winter. Then, hours before mealtime, sometimes even right after breakfast, we start to muse about what to make for dinner. With time and a full pantry of homegrown foods, we can get creative.

*"Homegrown foods are also found year round in countless homes or at the potluck dinners of ordinary people."*

It is now March, and I still have some fresh vegetables, with onions, garlic, potatoes, carrots and apples in storage. The freezer has packets of corn, peas, spinach and jugs of apple cider. Our Amish neighbors butchered after the holidays, so we are again stocked with rings of beef baloney and pork sausage. A dozen whole chickens and what is left of our quarter of a beef wait in the freezer—all raised on pasture by my colleague, Mike McGrath. Jars of salsa and

applesauce nestle on cellar shelves next to precious bottles of hard cider. Dried cherry tomatoes, herbs and mint tea were the product of the dehydrator. Our weekly delivery of fresh Amish eggs comes, along with the fresh faces of the children who vie with each other for the chance to visit. Purchases of local blue and cheddar cheese keep the refrigerator stocked. I feel I am truly blessed with food security.

With such rich provisions and enough time to cook, the house is soon filled with the aromas of slow cuisine. I'm not into exotic cooking, but I will follow a recipe that takes all day for the flavors and textures to mingle and perfect. Beef stew in the slow cooker, a roast chicken one day and chicken soup the next, squash and sausage risotto, chili, homemade pizza with pesto from the freezer and dried tomatoes — these slow foods are pleasures we savor.

I wonder why local, in-season food has come to connote something for connoisseurs and elite high-spenders. You can find such foods at expensive restaurants and it might be worth every penny. But homegrown foods are also found year round in countless homes or at the potluck dinners of ordinary people. We treasure the taste and the satisfaction of knowing the stories of where our food comes from — best of all if we grow it ourselves. 🍄

## *Heartland Food Initiative*

**B**EGINNING MARCH 9, the Minnesota Project will kick off the Heartland Food Initiative with a dialogue at Fire Lake Grill House, hosted by Chef Paul Lynch. The Minnesota Project will host twenty dialogues this year as opportunities for people representing all parts of the food system—farmers, processors, distributors, chefs, schools, restaurants, food retailers, hospitals, university researchers, non-profit local food advocates, and Minnesota Department of Agriculture marketing specialists — to explore how to increase the profile of sustainably-produced Minnesota foods in the region.

The Minnesota Project is presenting some innovative ideas to chew on, including the possibility of an overarching "brand" for Minnesota foods and new ways of rewarding food service purchasers of local and sustainably-produced foods based on a commitment to continual improvement.

Stay tuned in following issues of Connections to find out what we're learning. Or better yet, contact Trish Johnson at 651.645.6159 Ext. 8, or [tjohnson@mnproject.org](mailto:tjohnson@mnproject.org), to reserve your place at the table! Dialogues are Wednesdays in the Twin Cities, with some dialogues taking place in Greater Minnesota on other days of the week. 🍄



Photo: USDA

# the MINNESOTA PROJECT

working for strong local economies,  
vibrant communities, and a healthy environment

*Community Connections* is published by the Minnesota Project each quarter. The Minnesota Project connects people with policy to nurture collaborations that build strong local economies, vibrant communities and a healthy environment. For more information visit [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org).

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