

# Farmer Rancher Grant Program

## Final Report Form

Please fill out the final report form and return it to the North Central Region-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Missouri office. The report may be prepared on a computer or handwritten (please write or print clearly) but electronic reports are preferred. The final payment of your grant will be awarded when the final report and final budget report are received and approved.

Use as much space as needed to answer questions. You are not limited to the space on this form. The more details the better.

### I. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

- **Name:** White Earth Land Recovery Project/Native Harvest
- **Address:** 607 Main Ave,
- **City, State, Zip Code:** Callaway, MN, 56521
- **Phone:** 218-375-2600
- **Website:** welrp.org
- **Project Title:** White Earth Goat (*Maanadikoshensag*) Project
- **Project Number:** Farmer Rancher Project, FNC09-788
- **Project Duration:** 2.5 years
- **Date of Report:** 4/19/2012

### II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

#### 1. Briefly describe your operation (i.e. how many acres, what crops, types of cropping systems, type of livestock or dairy production, grazing systems, family operation, etc.)

The White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP), founded in 1989, is a multi-issue, non-profit, Native American organization based on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. Our approach to systemic change is honed with almost two decades of experience, and today we are one of the largest reservation-based non-profit organizations nationally. Our staff is primarily residents of the White Earth reservation, and our programs are structured in such a way as to strengthen community leadership and build citizen participation involving environmental and cultural justice and preservation work, restoration of sustainable communities, renewable energy, media, and youth and leadership development programs. Our work is both focused on addressing the long-term issues of our Anishinaabe Akiing, and also supports work nationally and internationally on the issues of seed security, food and culture, working with other Indigenous communities to promote these issues.

We have three main farming initiatives.



- 1) 607 Main Ave. Callaway, MN, 56521: Here we have a 5 acre garden planted. This is where we focus much of our squash and corn variety restoration. This is a collaborative community project, and we instruct many of our young people in farming, gardening and the importance of bringing back our ancestors—our ancestral seed varieties.
- 2) The Round Lake Berry Farm: This 52 acre farm is where much of our corn variety restoration work takes place, as well as a large raspberry field, and where we raise our goats. The pastures are degraded, and the goats aid in elimination of thistle and brush.
- 3) The Skov field, is a 30 acre field, and we focus on corn restoration at this location as well.
- 4) We worked with with the Gellings family, who practice organic gardening and maple syrup production. They have been involved with Heifer International through their work with the White Earth Land Recovery. They raise one family of our goats on their 120 acre farm, where the goats have much to forage, and preserve the integrity of their fields.

We also supply labor, materials and training in traditional, sustainable agriculture support for numerous community gardens on White Earth.

**2. Before receiving this grant, did you carry out any sustainable practices? If so, briefly describe what they were and how long you had been practicing them.**

The White Earth Land Recovery Project became twenty years old in 2009, a distinguished achievement for a grassroots Native American organization. After twenty years, of working on many facets of our community, we are proposing an agenda for our organization in the upcoming years in four areas:

(1) Nurturing Civil Society, (2) Energy Sovereignty (3) Food Security and, (4) Economic and Environmental Justice. Our strategies respond to our present situation as a Native community- one in which our reservation has a stronger set of non- profit organizations and broader community participation than many reservations, and has, as a consequence, many opportunities to deepen collaborative work for a stronger ji- misawaabandaaming, a view for the future.

We are also a community, like the rest of the country facing the challenges of peak oil, climate change and food insecurity—a result of the first two circumstances, and the concentration of seed ownership and the destabilization of our Indigenous food systems. Our work is on the front lines of restoration of Indigenous food economies and creation of Indigenous energy economies which interface with the largest energy market in the world. We intend to strengthen our work in local food systems, food economies and our farm to school tribal program. Finally, our organization is engaged in the restructuring and recovery of our own Indigenous economies and the creation of value added economic trade and justice, through Native Harvest, and other ventures. We will continue this work.

We are also a community of resistance: we have opposed the theft of our land, and worked to see the return of land, sacred items, language, and ceremonies, as well as redoubled our work to restore and strengthen our traditional food and economy. We are able to collaborate with an increasing number of community organizations that work in all of these arenas, to nurture this work at White Earth and regionally, to create a dignified future for our people and our relatives, whether they have wings, fins, or roots. Most recently, we have been recognized by the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation with an award for Organizational Achievement. This award was received the same time

the organization received two other awards; the Blue Cross Upstream Award for our work on diabetes, and the Northwest Area Foundation Great Strides Award, which we are sharing with the White Earth Community Investment Initiative. We also received international recognition through the 2003 Slow Food award, recognizing our integral part in Indigenous food systems and biodiversity, in particular our work to preserve the genetic integrity of wild rice.

These honors illustrate the strength of our innovative community collaborations. As a result of our community work we have seen the development of language recovery programs and new youth leadership development. We wish to continue to be part of this holistic process and help to bring a better, sustainable, future to our people.

### **III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**This is the core of the report. Consider what questions your neighbors or other farmers or ranchers would ask about what you did with this grant. Describe how you planned and conducted your research or education activities to meet your project goals and discuss the results.**

There are three goat families involved in this project—one more advanced and two are fledgling. The goats were kept at two locations: the WELRP Berry Farm (the initial herd, purchased during the fall of 2010), and at the Gellings' farm (the second herd, purchased during the spring of 2011).

#### *Degradation of pastures, overbrush, and need for soil improvements*

We began some rotational grazing to determine if the goats were able to improve our pastures. Our results were promising, with an estimated 60% of the Canadian thistle and burdock gone from the paddock the goats were in both in the summer and fall of 2011, and 40% in the summer and fall of 2010. Using your funding we were able to fence and build infrastructure at the Gellings and at the White Earth Land Recovery Project Round Lake Berry Farm. Funds were also



used to provide a fixed stipend to a Native young man for the daily care, feeding, and facilities maintenance of the goat tribe at the WELRP Berry Farm.

All six goats at the WELRP facility enjoyed good health throughout 2010, 2011, and 2012. They initially had their hoofs trimmed regularly, and we were able to successfully train our in-house staff to trim the hooves. The goats at the Gellings' farm (five) are also enjoyed good health and enjoyed life in the woods for the same time period as the WELRP Farm goats.

We were eager for the snow to melt, so that they may once again graze. In the meantime, we supplemented their diet with mixed hay, vegetable food scraps, some grain, evergreen and popple branches. We explored various feed options for the goats to reduce costs and improve health. We found that we were struggling to collect enough food scraps in the winter order to keep their diet in balance—in terms of grain vs. forage plants. So with the early spring this year, we brought the goats from the Gellings farm to WELRP to graze on the early green-life.

### Value-added dairy industry for a lactose intolerant community



During the summer of 2010, a few of our staff were trained in goat cheese making by board member and homesteader Sue Wicka. We were then able to bring about 40 children from Pine Point School to a goat farm at Stearns and Harms farm in fall of 2010. We were also able to serve the children goat cheese at the farm, this was very popular and a first for the kids.

Funding contributed to the regional Indigenous Farming Conference of 2012 and 2011, which featured a workshop by Sue Wika on goat tribe management and care, and featured goat cheese and goat milk ice cream. Funding purchased supplies to make Goat's milk ice cream for over 100 participants. Child participants at the conference assisted in making the ice cream and turning to hand-cranks, which we used the ice cream as a teachable moment to talk about the benefits of goat's milk consumption. This has become a very popular component of the Farming Conference.

### Valuable relationships

We worked with the Program Manager for the Lutheran Social Services Refugee Program in Pelican Rapids (about 45 min from White Earth), MN, whose primary focus is the Somali population (about 50 families, 175-200 individuals). There is a stated need by this community for Halal goat meat—which they have been importing, for the most part, from Australia. Our program was able to support them in 4 Halal goats (which were slaughtered by a practitioner of the Islamic ritual) in the fall of 2010, and in 4 goats in 2011. This was a great relief to the Somali community, as they are generally unsure of the diet of the goats that come from Australia (it may not have been Halal).

Developing critical, and sustainable relationships with communities near us is very important. We hope to continue helping this community to identify farmers and farms in the area that are willing to raise the goats in a Halal way.

## **GOALS**

**List your project goal(s) as identified in your grant application.**

The goals of this project are to address:

1) degradation of pastures, overbrush, and need for soil improvements: Mob Grazing of goats improves pastures. Small ruminates can assist farmers in improving pastures which are invaded with thistle. As well, other invasive underbrush is considered delicious by these animals. We anticipate using the goats for our own pastures which have been degraded and are presently used by horses. We also anticipate expanding our “leasing out “ of the WELRP goats as a part of integrated sustainable development strategies for our community.

2) value-added dairy industry for a lactose intolerant community: The White Earth Reservation has a very high related of dietary related illness. One third of the service population has diabetes, and with the majority of our tribal members living below the poverty level and in tribal housing projects, many of our sources of nutrition are not readily available. Many Native people are lactose intolerant, and thus, have contributing challenges in securing dairy based protein, which traditionally was not a part of our diet. We would like to explore the possibilities of chevre for our local community as a cottage industry and as an opportunity to expand nutritional opportunities for our people, as goat milk is more nutritionally acceptable for lactose intolerant people.



*1 A farmhouse cheddar cheese that was produced during a goat cheese seminar taught by Sue Wicka.*

3) to create valuable relationships between Indigenous Ojibwe people and our neighbors, and new immigrant families through providing hallal goat meat: Indigenous peoples of North America have little experience with Indigenous African refugees who come to live in our territories. The Pelican Rapids area hosts a relatively large Somali population and is located some 50 miles south of the White Earth reservation. As well, Fargo North Dakota has a large Somali population. In both cases, the dietary needs of the immigrant population ( new Mexican immigrants) are very challenged in the market of the region. Previous SARE grants have sought to link urban Minneapolis/St. Paul Somali consumers with small ruminant farmers in the Big Lake and other regions of Minnesota. Similar SARE grants have considered this initiative in Wisconsin. We will utilize the knowledge gained in these projects during the development of this project.

We are, however very unique in our own cultural experience as Ojibwe people. Like many of the

Somali immigrants, we have unique cultural foods and spiritual /religious practices. Most of our participating farmers from the White Earth reservation, for instance are not Christian, and maintain strong traditional Ojibwe religious practices. These practices, we believe, are complimentary to Hallal needs of a Somali population. And, we anticipate that a very great relationship could be developed between our Anishinaabeg people and the Somali immigrant community, which will be healthy for both of our communities. This intent is at the core of this grant proposal.

## **PROCESS**

**Describe the steps involved in conducting the project and the logic behind the choices you made. Please be specific so that other farmers and ranchers can consider what would apply to their operations and gain from your experience.**

### **Items prepared before undertaking project:**

We identified intersecting needs: 1) our communities need for fields to be properly grazed, as overgrowth of thistle and other plants that are harmful to other forage animals was becoming predominant. 2) A new refugee community of Somali immigrants in a nearby town need Halal goats.

### **Early Spring 2010:**

- Met with representatives of the Somali, Mexican and other immigrant communities in Fargo, Moorhead, St. Cloud and Pelican Rapids to discuss potential relationship, needs and expectations.
- Met with farmers and plan operations, locate goat sources and options in breeds for milking and meats.
- Completed a pasture and shelter plan for the goats. Fence and prepare land and farm as needed.
- Hold training meeting with Sue Wika and others, as needed in goat rearing-  
*gaanawaabaamag maanadikoshensag.*
- Indigenous Farming Conference Demonstration, February 2010: Sue Wika presented hands-on demonstrations of goat milk cheesemaking at the 2010 Indigenous Farming conference. Children from Pine Point School, grades 1 through 8, were offered samples of milk and cheeses. Adult conference attendees sampled milk and cheeses while participating in the manufacture of feta cheese and discussing the nutrient profile of goat milk products. Sue also presented an extensive resource table for conference attendees interested in learning more about cheesemaking.
- Identified all volunteer and paid labor for the project. Identify and create marketing and educational resources.

- Equipment and Fencing—fenced pastures and enclosures as needed.
- Continued outreach and trainings.
- Field site visit: May 6, 2011. Sue Wika and Tom Prieve met with Jim Gellings, Tony Tibbets, and Winona LaDuke at the WELRP farm at Round Lake regarding the Maanidikoshensag project. Discussion covered fencing options, predator control, grazing management of goats and goat selection for holistically managed farms.
- Selected goats and bring to farm.
- Invited Pine Point School to meet the goats. Invited Somali community to meet our community. Hosted feast.

**Summer/Fall 2010:**

- On-farm intensive seminar: A beginning cheese-making and goat keeping seminar for Maanidikoshensag project leaders was held 29 July, 2010. Attendees were Winona LaDuke, Tony Tibbets, Barb of Native Harvest, Deborah Alexander, Molly Campbell, and two children.



*2 This photo illustrates three strands of electrified polywire used to train baby kids*

The group toured the Paradox Farm dairy

goat operation. Attributes of the milking room and dairy doe loafing areas were discussed in depth. Dairy goat selection and breeding characteristics were also highlighted. Paradox Farm selects dairy goats that will do well in homestead goat dairy situations. Emphasized characteristics are: attitude, body structure, udder and teat conformation, health and vigor.

Electrified goat netting and three- and four-strand polywire fences were demonstrated. At Paradox Farm the goat tribes are stocked at low rates in mixed oak savannah and grass-forb pastures. The milking does are maintained on a forage ration, with grain only being used in small quantities at milking time. The wether tribe is used for brush reduction and a source of goat meat for personal and retail uses. Paradox Farm advocates carefully managed goat numbers. Many beginning goat farmers accumulate far too many goats than the natural forage resources of their farm can support. Goats will outstrip their food

supply, so if goats are desired for the long-term then the farmer must carefully consider their land and forage bases when managing herd sizes.

A hands-on goat hoof trimming demonstration also took place.

Common goat cheeses, chevre and feta, were made during the seminar. In addition to technique, the essential supplies of cheesemaking were discussed: culture, rennet, and good milk. Also, the necessary materials were highlighted: cheesecloth, stainless steel kettles, dairy thermometer, cheesemaking books. Dairy Connection and New England Cheesemaking Supply Company were both recommended as good resources for beginning artisan cheesemakers.

The seminar attendees sampled chevre, feta, and French Neufchatel cheeses, as well as goat milk ice cream and fresh goat milk.

- We consulted with local farmers and goat people on proper feeding, received instruction and training in care and identified proper locations for grazing the goats.
- We properly fenced the locations for the goats (after discovering they have a tendency to be escape artists).
- We developed a dispersed grazing routine, and stipended a care provider for our goats, who took the goats on long grazing walks, and insured their maintenance.
- We were trained in goat cheese, and other goat milk product production. We shared these gifts with the youth of our community who were very interested in the ice cream, and enjoyed petting the goats as they learned about sustainable livestock, and intersecting needs.
- We built good relationships with the Somali community of Pelican Falls, who purchased many of our goats for Halal meat.

### **Winter 2010:**

Holistic Veterinary Farm Site Visit: December 16, 2010 . Tom Prieve, Sue Wika, and two students in the Sustainable Food Production program made a requested visit to a farm experiencing wide-spread health issues with their dairy goat herd. A program for holistic goat management was generated and shared with project leaders and the goat farmer. This report was delivered under separate cover to Ms LaDuke. The report detailed that the goats at this farm had CL. As this was one of the farms that we purchased our goats from, we became very vigilant for signs of CL in our herds. We have managed the goats by proper grazing techniques on healthy soil and have found no signs of this disease on our goats. They all look very healthy in all aspects.

### **Spring 2011 and spring 2012:**



- Indigenous Farming Conference presentation: March 5, 2011. “Don’t Let Your Goat Get Your Goat,” was delivered by Sue and Tom as a break-out session on the holistic management of goats. Special emphases of the presentation: selection of goats to build a nativized goat tribe, grass-based holistic management, holistic approaches to health and production. Fencing options and goat husbandry techniques were demonstrated to the audience.
- We maintained a good relationships with the Somali community of Pelican Falls, who purchased many of our goats for Halal meat.
- We took a group of young people on a trip to a holistic goat farm, where they learned how the goats lived without medicines and intervention.
- We hosted a three day Permaculture course including a workshop on “Goats in your Permaculture landscape” led by Sue Wika and Tom Prieve.

## **PEOPLE**

**List farmers, ranchers, or business people who assisted with the project and explain how they were involved. List any personnel from a public agency, such as the Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Services or Soil and Water Conservation Districts who assisted with this project. List people from non-profit organizations who helped you.**

- The White Earth Land Recovery Project- through Executive Director Winona LaDuke is the lead farming family/organization in this project. Pastured our goats on our 52 acre raspberry farm, and also utilized the goats to improve our pastures which are degraded, through elimination of thistle and brush. We provided administrative support for this project and convened farmers, technical assistance and markets, as well as facilitated exchanges.
- We worked with two other farming families to actualize this project. Jim and Lori Gellings (Zerkel, Minnesota) raised goats on their 120 acre farm. The Gellings family presently raises heritage Narragansett Blue turkeys, chickens and horses on their farm, is active in gardening and maple syrup production. They have been involved with the Heifer Project International through their collaboration with the White Earth Land Recovery Project.



3 The Paradox Farm Site Visit ends with a meal featuring several goat cheeses.

- Sue Wika and family: This family presently raises dairy goats and has a small, family based farm, with some home cheese production. Located south of Perham near Battle Lake Sue has extensive working relations with the White Earth Land Recovery Project and is an adjunct professor at Fergus Falls Community College. Sue provided technical assistance in raising goats, and has experience with “mob grazing” of goats for brush

reduction and pasture improvement. Sue assisted in

coordination between milking goats and selecting of meat goats for the farming operations, as well as energy-efficient and environmentally innovative shelters for the goats.

- Lutheran Social Services of Pelican Falls (facilitating critical connections with the Somali community).
- The Somali Community of Pelican Falls (instructed us on Halal raising of goats, and purchased goats for meat).
- Pine Point School (were involved in our education initiatives).

Farmers: Andy Hayner, Terri Laduke, Sue Wika  
Veterinarians: Tom Prieve

## RESULTS

**What results did you achieve and how were they measured? For production projects, include yields, field analysis, and related data. How do these compare with conventional systems used previously? For education projects, include outcomes achieved and how you measured them through surveys, attendance, or other methods. Were these results what you expected? If not, why not? What would you do differently next time?**

We raised three families of goats, and were able to sell 8 to the Somali community of Pelican Falls for Halal meat. Somali cultural leaders and were able to offer two goats for their ceremonies and feasts. This was the initial stage of the project. The goats were butchered using traditional Halal practices, which we have learned is an important practice in preserving Somali culture.

- The conventional system for obtaining Halal meat for the Somali community is ordering it pre-slaughtered and frozen, as it is shipped from Australia. While we didn't come close to providing the community with all the meat it needs, we did facilitate connections between their community and other goat farmers—who we demonstrated to the business incentive for raising Halal goats.

We held two workshops on goat raising and care at the Indigenous Farming Conference of 2011 and 2012.

- Proper training in care, maintenance, and health for these animals was made accessible in a way it had not been previously. We made it seem possible and accessible for folks to obtain and care for their own goats.

We served goat products—including cheese, milk and ice cream—at these conferences, which interested many young people, and provided alternatives for a lactose-intolerant community.

- We present many folks with alternatives to expensive lactose-free milk products, alternatives which are often located very close by, as we have a few really great goat farms in the area.

The goats grazed, and took care of our pasture resulting in 60% of the Canadian thistle and burdock gone from the paddock the goats were in during the summer and fall of 2011, and 40% in the summer and fall of 2010.

- We had not had any livestock-related invasive species and plant competition solutions available at the conference prior to this goat project. The alternative is tilling, gas motor machines, and rotating animals that prefer burdock to other fields.

We hosted youth at three main educational experiences with the goats.

- For the young people to see where their beloved goat milk ice cream comes from, and to develop a relationship with these small, children-friendly animals was helpful in teaching them sustainable solutions where pesticide and machinery are the most commonly suggested.

## **DISCUSSION**

**What did you learn from this grant? How has this affected your farm or ranch operation? Did you overcome your identified barrier, and if so, how? What are the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a project such as yours? If asked for more information or a recommendation concerning what you examined in this project, what would you tell other farmers or ranchers?**

- In terms of animal feed, in the winters we were in a position of needing to supplement the goat's diet with mixed hay, vegetable food scraps, some grain, evergreen and popple branches. We found that even small amounts of grain were not optimal for the goat's health, as they are, indeed ruminant creatures. We would recommend coordinating this better, and would recommend to others that they instead make a concerted and regular effort at collecting vegetable scraps—to avoid grain all together, even though some would recommend supplementing with a small amount of grain. We found this is not the

way to go, as it has the potential to through their rumens out of balance—especially in the smaller goats.

- We worked to overcome this barrier by diverting waste in the Native Harvest production facility and at Pine Point Elementary’s kitchen by feeding the goats unwanted food scraps.

- Through trial and observation, we are coming to understand goats’ dietary, hygiene, and spacial needs, and to structure their care accordingly.
- We have identified other goat ranchers in the area and connected them with the project’s goat experts to better manage their herd of over 70 goats.
- We have shared our goats with over 50 children, who like them very much—and we learned through this that the best way to engage the youth is to coordinate trips to visit the goats with ice cream making workshops, and sharing goat cheese with them.



*4 A second visit to Paradox Farm occurred 12 December, 2010. Winter management of goats, emphasizing the use of “solar rooms” and winter feeding, were the main topics. The above photo illustrates the winter feeding of grass hay to a wether and buck tribe.*

#### **IV. PROJECT IMPACTS**

**Evaluate the economic, environmental and social impacts of this sustainable practice by completing the Benefits and Impacts form. Also, if possible, provide hard economic data.**

*\*See attached form*

#### **V. OUTREACH**

**What methods did you use for telling others about: 1. Your project, 2. Project events or activities, 3. Project results? How and to whom did you communicate this information? Be sure to include details on how many people attended field days or demonstrations, and how information was further disseminated by media covering any events. What plans do you have for further communicating your results? Include press releases, news clippings, flyers, brochures, or publications developed during this project. Also include photos which might be helpful in telling your story to others. (Mail items separately if you cannot**

send them electronically.)

- Connecting with other goat herders in the area and offering an working together on evaluation of their management plan—we continue to work with them to develop holistic strategies.
- Hosting field trips for the Pine Point Elementary School children to local goat ranches, farming conference events, and other events that included goat cheese and ice creams.
- Indigenous Farming Conference: workshops on goat management with nearly 30 attendees each, and serving goat's milk ice cream to 100 participants at the conferences.
- The three day Permaculture weekend April 29-May 1 2011, which included a workshop on goats. Participation: 30
- Networking and meeting with other goat keepers, and featuring our project on our website and in our annual reports.
- Contacting local newspapers and press in order to generate meaningful coverage of the program.



*5 Our winter management strategy: vegetable scraps obtained from the local school and Native Harvest production site kept our goats on almost a completely forage-based diet.*

## **VI. PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**This was the nineteenth year the North Central Region SARE Program sponsored a farmer**

**rancher grant program. As a participant, do you have any recommendations to the regional Administrative Council about this program? Is there anything you would like to see changed? Please fill out the Evaluation form.**

*\*See attached form*

## **VII. BUDGET SUMMARY**

**Complete the final budget form and return it with your report. You will only be reimbursed for expenses incurred and items purchased for conducting your project. If you made significant changes to final expenses listed by budget category (more than 10% of your grant total or \$1,000 – whichever is higher), please include an explanation for the changes. Call Joan Benjamin with questions at: 573-681-5545.**

Submit your final report to:

E-mail: [BenjaminJ@lincolnu.edu](mailto:BenjaminJ@lincolnu.edu) or mail to:  
Joan Benjamin  
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