

Second Open Letter to Iowa's Citizens

Dear Friends,

The Iowa Legislature has completed its work for the current session and it appears that legislators refrained from transferring funds designated for the Leopold Center as they had during the past two sessions. During the 2001 session they transferred \$250,000 of those funds to other purposes, and during the 2002 session they transferred \$1 million to the general fund to help balance the state's budget.

After last year's fund transfer I wrote my first open letter to Iowa's citizens encouraging them to "let their voices be heard" and tell us, as well as the legislature, how they felt about the Leopold Center's future and its work.

We know you did that. I understand that Governor Vilsack received more communications about the Leopold Center's budget cut than about any other cut. Many organizations made the Leopold Center and its future one of their legislative concerns. And many of you wrote letters to newspapers expressing your concern about the Center's future.

The Center staff and the advisory board, as well as the dedicated researchers who depend on us for funding to do the research vital to the future of Iowa's agriculture, are enormously grateful. Thank you! We hope you will all take a moment to thank the legislative representatives in your district for supporting our work.

Hopefully this phase of the Leopold Center's life is now behind us and we can, once again, devote our full attention to fulfilling our legislative mandate. We have recently focused the Center's work into three initiatives — Ecological Systems Research, Marketing and

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Food Systems Research, and Policy Research. We are moving forward on all three fronts but have initially put more of our energy into the marketing initiative, believing that farmers needed markets that would enable them to produce and retain more value if they were going to stay in business. With the help of additional grants that we obtained from both public and private sources, and the willingness of Iowans from many sectors of the food system to be our partners, we have been able to make significant progress.

As a result of frugal fiscal management and modest success in fundraising, we issued two new requests for project pre-proposals in May, one in policy and one in marketing and food systems. We hope to fund the best proposals by mid-September. We continue to explore options in the ecology initiative with numerous potential partners and hope to announce plans for our work in that area this fall.

Before the end of 2003 we also hope to conduct public meetings for researchers and other potential partners. We will more fully explain our new directions and the kind of research we want to support and facilitate.

In the meantime, we will continue our fundraising efforts in cooperation

with the ISU College of Agriculture, which has been very supportive of our work. It is our intent to build an endowment that will eventually be large enough to sustain the Leopold Center's core activities. With the help of additional "Friends of Leopold" (individuals who have contributed \$1,000 or more) and the many smaller contributions that come in to the Center almost daily, we believe we will eventually be able to achieve that goal.

So thanks again to all of you who took the time to support the Leopold Center in these many ways. You have spoken loudly and clearly: the Leopold Center's work continues to be a high priority for Iowa's citizens. Your determination to keep the Leopold Center alive and well has renewed our determination to do all we can to achieve the vision that created the Center 15 years ago.