



## **Ten Solution-Oriented Initiatives to Promote Sustainable Living**

**Prepared for the 2005 Northwest Regional Permaculture Gathering**

Given below are ten initiatives that could further efforts to establish a viable and sustainable way of living in Cascadia Bioregion. They are all based on, or are extensions of, presently occurring activities. That is to say, the initiatives proposed are all organic outgrowths of programs or resources already in place.

### **1] Sustainable Living Conversion Consortium**

Bring together a consortium of consultants and contractors skilled in the various facets of converting homes and yards into fully featured sustainable living housing. Such a consortium could collaborate as a team, providing a full service for those wanting a holistic conversion of their living space to sustainability. Represented in such a consortium would be consultants and installers with skills in ecobuilding, rainwater harvesting, greywater systems, passive solar design, solar hot water heaters, PV systems, composting systems, permaculture landscape design, etc.

### **2] Sustainable Living Technology Cottage Industry Cooperative**

As energy costs rise, there will evolve a market for inexpensive home appliances that reduce energy demand or support sustainability in the home. Examples include: solar cookers, hay boxes, rocket stoves, solar food dryers, worm bins, low tech solar hot water systems, solar generators, and solar refrigerators. These are products that could be produced in a home shop or a small industrial shop. Research and development on such products might be assisted, where needed, by Aprovecho Institute. (Aprovecho has already worked out designs for some of these appliances.) A number of producers could come together to create a marketing cooperative for these cottage industry produced sustainable living products.

### **3] Sustainable Living Theme Tours**

Sustainability tours give people exposure to models of sustainable living. There are already sustainability bike tours offered in Eugene, gardening tours given in Corvallis, and solar home tours conducted in several towns in the region. In Santa Rosa, regular sustainability tours are organized by theme – there are tours related to natural building, community housing, gardening, watershed management, alternative energy, and fair trade enterprises. Several towns in the region have enough diversity

of sustainability-oriented ventures that a Santa Rosa type program of sustainability tours could be offered. For local area tours, bikes can be used for transport; for visiting sites in outlying areas, perhaps a biodiesel bus could be used.

#### **4] Sustainable Living Initiatives Fund**

At present, Helios awards grants to support sustainable living initiatives. And the Eugene Permaculture Guild has decided (in principle) to set aside portions of income from its educational programs for a fund that could support sustainable initiatives. Were there to be broad support for contributing to such a fund, or more means found to endow these funds, then more worthy projects could get supported. Many good ideas do not get manifested because those who have capacity and inspiration lack financial support. At some point, communities could consider creating community wide funds, and were there a regional sustainability coalition, there a regional funding mechanism established to support region wide initiatives.

#### **5] Regional Sustainable Living Gatherings**

In the mid 70s to early 80s, there were large regional gatherings brought together the alternative culture community. For the past ten years, the Eugene Permaculture Guild has hosted regional permaculture gatherings that feature a diversity of sustainable living workshops. Though regional in name, and diverse in program offerings, most who attend are from the Eugene metro area, and the workshop content has a permaculture focus. However, there has been expansion in outreach to other communities and in the aspects of sustainable living to which permaculture is applied. The Solfest gathering in Hopland, CA is a model of a regional gathering that has more extensive outreach and a broader array of sustainability related programs. A Solfest like format might now be appropriate to this region. Also worth considering is giving the gatherings a bioregional congress type agenda, so that broad regional strategic initiatives toward sustainability could be deliberated.

#### **6] Sustainable Living Design Competition**

At this year's annual regional permaculture gathering, there will be an exhibit of appropriate technology. The idea was entertained, but not acted upon, to give recognition or awards for outstanding technologies in the exhibition. Giving awards or prizes for different categories of sustainable living design could become a regular feature of our regional gatherings. Design categories could include appropriate technology, permaculture landscaping, ecobuilding, alternative transportation, alternative energy generation, community living spaces, intersection repair, policy proposals, etc. Engaging in such design competition could give added motivation to those who are dedicating their creative energy to materializing new sustainable ways of living. Competition awards could be in a form that is related to enhancing the skills, knowledge and tools go into bettering design capacities - such as tuition to a relevant training, or travel to a distant conference. Such a competition would also enable people from around the region to be exposed to the cutting edge designs

coming out of the sustainability community.

## **7] Youth Migrant Mentoring Program**

Many youth are alienated by life in the dominant culture and turn to cultural alternatives. For the most part, these alternatives do little to ground them in a culture of sustainability and often devitalize their bodies and minds. The viable alternative that many of these youth seek requires the assimilation of skills and sensibilities that are not easily obtainable. There are some who do get valuable experience through WWOOFing. David Holmgren has spoken of the value of young people, who do not as yet have the assets and abilities to settle into their own space, traveling and working in permaculture projects. In their traveling, they would have comparative experience different models to permaculture design, becoming increasingly sophisticated in their own awareness. They would also help with the diffusion of design techniques from one place to another. This process could be facilitated were there a regional network of projects open to mentoring young migrant sustainability workers. In this way, they might work with a forestry restoration project in the Rogue Valley, or on a natural building project in Bend, or at an ecovillage in Eugene, or on an intersection repair in Portland, etc.

## **8] Cascadia Sustainability Coalition**

People in Ashland recently formed the Ashland Sustainability Coalition. This model of community wide connectedness between people and groups engaged in the practice and advocacy of sustainable living could be replicated in other towns in the region – Arcata, Corvallis, Eugene, Portland, Seattle, and Bellingham in particular. Were there several such sustainability coalitions established at the local level, these coalitions might come together, as a regional sustainability coalition. If there were a regional formation, there could be organization of sustainability groups on a sector basis – so that, for example, all of the local ecobuilding guilds and groups could be networked together as an interest area in the regional coalition. In a similar way, there could be sectors concerned with local currency, alternative transportation, organic farming, sustainable enterprise, media, renewable energy, community living, education, etc. A regional coalition could have a web site; it could host regional gatherings; it could initiate studies of creating regional self-sufficiency in important commodities; it could coordinate speaking tours; it could lobby for legislation; etc.

## **9] Sustainable State of the Metro Report**

For the past several years, the Eugene mayor's annual State of the City address has been an occasion for progressive groups in the city to give their own state of the city report – commenting on citizen initiatives and presenting their analysis of urban problems and urban priorities. In a similar manner, there could be annual events in which informed reports are given on, say, community preparedness for peak oil, or community efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, or progress toward local food self-reliance, or community programs to research and develop appropriate

technologies or to promote sustainable enterprise, etc. It would be better if such public events were not in content or audience to concerned cities, but instead were geared toward the whole of the metropolitan area, as most issues of sustainability involve rural-urban planning or initiatives. There are a number of towns in the region for which such a sustainable state of the metro area annual report could be conducted.

## **10] Sustainable Living Speaking Tours**

Notable speakers – such as David Holmgren, Richard Heinberg, and James Howard Kunstler have had recent speaking engagements in Cascadia. Their talks have been important community events that have done much to increase awareness of our global situation and of the need for adoption of a sustainable way of living. Initiative for bringing these speakers, and for promotion their lectures, has typically been handled by individuals or grass roots volunteer groups. And, in many cases, booking these speakers has been on a town-by-town basis. If there were a regional entity to take on arrangements for speaking tours, there could be better coordination, better regional coverage, better promotion, and, possibly, better approaches to benefiting from speaking engagements. In Eugene, for example, the group that brought Michael Ruppert organized follow up seminars, workshops, tours and meetings intended to give people opportunities to connect with sustainability information and initiatives. This kind of approach could be enhanced and standardized.