

# The Dirt

Newsletter of **Emerald Earth Sanctuary**  
**Mendocino County, California Spring 2020**



We delayed finalizing this spring issue of **The Dirt** partially because of the uncertainty around the COVID 19 situation, and mostly so we could get our new website launched. We still have a little more work to do on the website and will add some additional features and links in the next few weeks. But it is operational now and you can still find us at <http://emeraldearth.org/>

## **Intentional Community: What's in it for YOU and for the rest of the Biosphere** by Sandy Turner

**Intentional Communities** are helping to move humanity in some positive directions that are considerably more “sustainable” than the business as usual direction of mainstream culture in the U.S.

I bet the vast majority of you have seen at least one issue of **Communities** magazine and / or looked at the Communities website. Both are part of the **Foundation for Intentional Community** and have been around for many years. Many of you may have first learned about Emerald Earth Sanctuary from that magazine or their online listing of communities.

One day a few months ago, I was looking at the **Communities** website and the books that they sell. I read a short review of **Together Resilient** by Ma'ikwe Ludwig and decided to order it. I consider it to be an extremely valuable book for people living in an intentional community or

considering doing so in the near future. Ma'ikwe's objective in writing the book is to publicize how intentional communities can be a positive force moving large numbers of people towards goals of much less resource use and much more social connection and fun (and gross national happiness).

The subtitle of the book is *Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption* and Ma'ikwe does a great job of showing how some communities have GREATLY lowered their carbon and ecological footprints in many creative ways. A major case study in the book is the ***Dancing Rabbit*** community in rural Missouri. She lived there for 8 years and recently moved to another community in Laramie WY. My wife and I visited Dancing Rabbit when it was first starting back at the turn of the century, and we were quite impressed even then. It seems that they have made many creative strides since then to build eco-friendly infrastructure and attract and keep a large population. Whether you are living in an intentional community or wanting to find or build one, ***Together Resilient*** has some valuable ideas and facts and figures to ponder and utilize. She has quite a few footnotes which I have found interesting and useful. Here are just three of the chapters in the book:

Chapter 2 *Limiting the Damage: Community as a Tool to Reduce Carbon Footprints*

Chapter 4 *Starting a Residential Intentional Community*

Chapter 5 *Everyone's Work: Culture and Emotional Integration*

As you read this, circumstances related to the Corona virus in your area may be much more severe than they are in our rural county of Northern California. However the events around the virus play out in the next few months, the information in ***Together Resilient*** can be helpful for those living intentional communities, and for people in general who want to see creative ways to live lighter on the earth. And if you haven't visited the website of the *Foundation for Intentional Community* lately, you may want to see what's cookin' at <https://www.ic.org> There you can find their directory of hundreds of communities, and free leaflets and many free books.



## Sheep Hide Tanning Workshop

Labor Day 2019 was celebrated at Emerald Earth with traditional, authentic, hands on work. We hosted Maya Beth for the second year in a row for a sheep hide tanning workshop. Maya is the strong female artisan of [@be.holden@instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/be.holden). With her guidance 7 participants transformed raw sheep hides into clean and luxurious rugs. The celebration of labor also included wonderful rest and guided yoga classes. Food was deliciously and healthfully prepared by resident Eden Kellner. Yoga and mindfulness was also led by Eden. Look out for the possibility of another wonderful

@be.holden/@EmeraldEarthSanctuary sheep hide workshop this Labor Day. It will depend on what's happening with COVID19 by late summer. We could not think of a better way to celebrate an honest day's work.



<<<<<Several of us planted more fruit and nut trees this winter. Garnet is pruning a newly planted almond tree.



<<<<<<We have lots of plum trees and the bees have been busy this spring.



<<<<< We also have many pear, apple, and other fruit trees. We had many harvest helpers at a work party last fall.



Louisa has been planting many native plants on the property.

## Timber Harvest Autumn 2019

By Tom

Looking out the Great Room window, the view of the forest is as pretty as ever. I find little difference, from afar, in how the north slope looks post timber harvest. As I go back out to look for mushrooms, however, I find myself having to alter my normal harvesting route to get around slash piles along skid roads.

The areas where trees were thinned feel much more spacious. I sense the trees have space to move, grow and breathe. I recognize that there are many more rounds of thinning to do, and lament the ground disturbance from the conventional logging method.

Hearing the crash of falling trees and the roar of skidders tearing across the forest on a daily basis for many weeks was a traumatic experience, yet I appreciate being present to go

through that experience with the forest. I now have a deeper understanding of timber harvesting and greater empathy for forests that have been impacted by harvesting. The process was extremely stressful, with years of delays and constant decision-making demands during the logging operation. It has been helpful to have a strong, grounded belief that we are doing the right thing. For myself, this comes from a deep relationship with the forest that has been built over the last 13 years: living in buildings whose lumber came from this forest, working with wood from trees that I felled and milled, daily winter walks collecting mushrooms, goat walks through the forest and around the land, holding rituals in the Sacred Grove, and vision questing in a redwood stump. I know the forest as a living, growing, changing being with a trajectory toward maturity and vitality.

By extending the admonition to “think of the next seven generations” to redwood trees, I get a framework on how we humans can be helpful participants in supporting the development of those future generations. Before the first clear cut-- about one hundred years ago--, the redwoods were widely spaced with a wide distribution in age and height. A deep sponge of organic matter held water and a great diversity of undergrowth. The first clearcut that took out the old growth was followed by a burning of the stumps to inhibit their growth in order to make way for grass to grow for the grazing of sheep. The over grazing of sheep and lack of deep rooted undergrowth to hold the soil led to the demise of the spongy soil layer, leaving only a very thin layer of compacted topsoil. Meanwhile, some trees managed to grow and were joined by more trees following the discontinuation of sheep grazing. One of the loggers told me that there was another clear cut in the 50s followed by a more selective cut in the 70s.

This is not a situation that these trees would naturally have to deal with, as so many trees were felled at once. The regrowth post- clear- cut is much denser than natural. As a person entrusted with the stewardship of this forest, I feel it is my responsibility to do something to



assist the forest in dealing with this anthropogenic situation. What I sense is likely to happen is that three or four of the 6 to 60 stems in these clumps will emerge as dominant while the rest topple. Many of these emergent stems will have been so stressed and potentially scarred by other trees falling around them that they will not grow as old as they potentially could. Left alone, very few of the trees now growing in clumps will be counted among the first generation of old growth.

The dense canopy of redwood circles is inhibiting the re-establishment of understory trees, shrubs, and plants that are the habitat of animals, insects and birds. Thinning makes it more likely that deer forage will thrive within the redwood forest, along with plants that host

butterflies, provide nesting sites for ground birds and acorns for squirrels. Greater diversity of wildlife habitat makes it more likely that an even greater diversity of plants will get dispersed into the area.

The trees present now that are the most likely to reach their age potential are those growing at the edge of a clump that has been thinned and those that have been growing from seed some distance from clumps and benefitting from thinning around them, especially to the south. Another favorable aspect of doing a selective harvest is that those trees that are destined to fall, and could potentially cause a lot of damage to neighboring trees should they fall on their own, are directed by the fallers to cause the least damage to their neighbors.



While the main stems are taken to the mill, a lot of branch material and smaller hardwoods and firs that came down with larger trees are left in the forest to rebuild the layer of organic matter. The disturbance of the soil that came with the clearing of skid trails is compensated for by the increase of organic matter in the form of slash. Unlike former harvests that were cut and run operations, we are committed to doing the follow-up work to make sure any slash hung up above ground is brought down into contact with the surface. We have been putting branches down on roads with steep slopes. We will be continuing to thin hardwoods and small firs and placing them across contour.

The scale of tending is more than we can do with a small group. That we get income from the sale of logs enables us to have the selective harvest done and gives us the financial security to remain on site, build our resident population and pay for equipment and labor so that we can sustain our forest support activities. The point is to build a culture of collaboration among humans and the forest.

Having gone through the experience of a conventional logging operation, we now have a clearer sense of how to minimize the adverse impacts to the forest. We are now better able to designate areas to leave alone and determine which skid roads to discontinue using. Knowing the types of equipment normally used gives us the opportunity to specify different equipment be used next time. We are committed to exploring less-destructive ways to tend this forest on a large scale in the future, which may include draft horses or at least smaller equipment run by operators in alignment with our values and ideals.

Having done a timber harvest and having established a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan opens up opportunities to participate in forest land-owner organizations such the Redwood Forest Foundation ([www.rffi.org](http://www.rffi.org)) and Forest Landowners of California ([www.forestlandowners.org](http://www.forestlandowners.org)). Through these organizations we can get help in thinking how to better manage our forest and advocate for better timber harvest policy. We are in communication with our neighbors around forestry practices and hope to see this work extending beyond our property lines.

While daunted by the amount of post harvest work to do, having to adjust my mushroom foraging routes, and suffering still from PHSD (Post-Harvest Stress Disorder), I revel in the knowing that we made a great leap for the long term vitality of the forest.

## Mask Making, and It Isn't Close to Halloween

One of the projects some of us at Emerald Earth have been working on is making masks to give to neighbors and other people in our extended community.

### Life During COVID-19 in Communities

Some of you may have participated in the ZOOM event, *Coronavirus: Transforming Crisis into Opportunity* that the Foundation for Intentional Community hosted back in March. It was well attended with over 100

participants in communities all over North America and the world. Three of us here at EES participated. The COVID-19 shelter in place and social distancing guidelines were just starting to be enacted in many states, provinces, and countries at the time of the ZOOM event.

One of the benefits of the ZOOM event was to get communities interacting and communicating with one another after the call. Many communities have shared their COVID-19 protocols for social distancing and policies around visitors and residents going out into the public. It is helpful to learn how other communities are dealing with residents who get sick. You may want to go to <https://www.ic.org> to see what happened at the recent event and learn about future COVID-19 events.

As you read this, perhaps your region of the world will have already peaked for people testing positive for the virus, or maybe your region will still be waiting for the peak to happen. Whatever the case is for you and your family and comrades, we wish you well. And we wish



our planet well also, and hope that we humans use this time of changing reality to figure out ways to structure our societies that are more kind, eco-friendly, egalitarian, and fair after the Coronavirus is history.

## What's up with our Calendar of Events?

As you might imagine, we have postponed or canceled some work parties, workshops and other gatherings here at Emerald Earth due to the COVID-19 situation. As time goes on and we know more about if and when we can host some of our planned events, we will send out an email to you. Here are some work parties and events **that might happen as planned**, but be sure and check with us at [community@emeraldearth.org](mailto:community@emeraldearth.org) to know of any cancelations or date changes.

- **Work Party August 21, 22, and 23** Preparing our winter garden and some fruit and vegetable harvesting and processing
- **Sheep Hide Tanning Workshop on Labor Day weekend** There will be a fee for this workshop. See the related article on page 2 for details.
- **Work Party Oct. 16, 17, and 18** More fruit and vegetable harvesting and processing, and more fun in the garden and greenhouse.

## Internships we are offering in 2020 **if possible:**

### May & June: Spring & Summer Garden

In this internship position, you will learn to ...

- Start plants in the greenhouse for summer garden
- Prepare garden beds
- Make effective compost and manure piles
- Install & inspect irrigation
- Transplant veggies
- Weed & mulch garden
- Inspect, organize, & repair garden tools
- Harvest veggies & cook nutritious meals
- Create a greywater system

### May - October: Forestry and Land Management

In this internship position, you will learn to ...

- Understand concepts in Oak Woodland, Redwood forest, and oak savannah restoration, management, and fuel load reduction
- Run and care for a chainsaw
- Run a Lucas mill to create dimensional lumber
- Use a wood splitter and cure firewood
- Create debris swales for water infiltration
- Create biochar from forest thinnings
- Find grants available for forest work
- Use livestock in land management projects

### **May-October: Animal Husbandry and Dairy Processing**

In this internship position, you will learn to ...

- Do regular goat milking chores
- Maintain goat hoof and health in a small herd
- Make a land management plan
- Move fencing for Goats and Chickens for rotational grazing
- Make yogurt, kefir and cheese
- Slaughter and butcher goat, chicken, and sheep
- Make jerky
- Brain-tan or bark-tan hides

### **August & Sept. - Fall Garden & Preserving the Harvest**

In this internship position, you will learn to ...

- Can, dry, ferment, and freeze fruits, vegetables, and meats for future
- Use solar oven, stove, & dehydrator
- Use Cider press for fresh use and making vinegar, cider syrup and hard cider
- Harvest and glean fruits, vegetables and nuts
- Prep & plant garden beds
- Make effective compost and manure piles
- Weed, mulch
- Set up & maintain drip systems on annual and perennial food plants
- Utilize gray water
- Plan and cook several meals a week using in-season, local ingredients

**Please contact us at [community@emeraldearth.org](mailto:community@emeraldearth.org) if you are interested in an internship and we can let you know what we have available.**

**When you visit our website, you may want to visit our blog called *The Daily Dirt*. There you can read short updates of some of the activities and projects various members of our community are working on. <http://emeraldearth.org/>**