



## Four Stories from an Environmental Storyteller

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## **Biodiversity at Greenweath Village**

### **A Story / Specification**

"I think of biodiversity has a measure of resilience," Hank remarked to the kids gathered around him. "Biodiversity is the variety of all living things and their interactions." Greenweath Village, a sustainable community, home schools it children as the settlement is situated in a deep rural area of Northern California. Many adults have advanced degrees and serve as teachers.

"Biodiversity makes the wild work. A garden with more biodiversity is a healthier garden, a more resilient Earth, and better able to adapt to environmental changes." Hank brings years of permaculture practice with him and makes sure the kids understand the basic premise supporting it. "Nature." Food forests dot the acreage and wild animals range the territory. "We work with Nature, not against her," he laments.

"Let's pick-out three permaculture principles that help support Nature's biodiversity:"

"One: Produce no waste - Waste interferes with the healthy interaction of plants and animals. Not good for biodiversity!

Two: Integrate rather than segregate - Integration brings strength resilience to the ecosystem.

and Three: Creatively use and respond to change - Biodiversity 101." Hank is on a roll.

Next the kids slither over to the computer lab to write papers on connecting Biodiversity with something in their local environment. All of them opt to write about the community gardens. "Food and a rich, integrated soil base speak to the importance of Biodiversity. It's not just about fruit and vegetables guys!"

"There are several strategies to preserve biodiversity."

"Reforestation involves planting trees on land to restore habitats and promote biodiversity. Preserving keystone species, those that have a disproportionately large effect on their environment, is also crucial. These species often play unique roles in their ecosystems, and their loss can lead to significant changes in Biodiversity," beams Hank.

Time for lunch.

## Project Story

### Resilient Communities Project

Imagine...

The wooden plaque at the community gate reads:

"The Resilient Communities Project, is composed of an experienced organizing team, multiple Pacific Northwest landholders with from 2 to 120 acres, and an initial formative group of prospective community members. Together we will innovate and demonstrate the transformative power of a truly convivial, equitable, and sustainable way of life."

###

Sandy and his wife Zoe landed at Commonwealth last month and are adjusting to a new life at the sustainable village. Friends, like shared tasks, are coming along. Reflective practices such as meditation, prayer, journaling, or therapy are just getting started. Some of the essential roles are paid jobs and some are necessary aspects of cooperating in community.

Tech meets the permie! The planned community's wired library is Zone Zero.

"What's for dinner, babe?" Sandy doesn't know that he is cooking! The shared kitchen on site is especially good for meeting fellow residents.

"What did we just buy in Portland?" she asks.

"I'll check-in at the garden," says Sandy.

After dinner, the pair attend a Maker Workshop about quilting blankets. They have the hot tub reserved from 10pm - 11pm.

###

The idea of a shared commons permeates life at Commonwealth, both legally and in everyday living. The Land Trust drives the governance at the evolving site. The site is held in commons. Equity shares replace the mortgage. This is often a difficult shift for the new residents. Some form cooperative enterprises together. The daily activities and way of life of the community not only greatly reduce or eliminate harmful impacts on the local and planetary environment, but also actively heal and regenerate the land and natural world. This is no small feat and requires serious study and ongoing experimentation.

Community sustainability can be a mixture of one or more of the following disciplines that can guide land-based decision making:

1. Permaculture (Nature-based community planning)
2. The New Mythology (Community in the Hero's Journey)
3. Transition Town (Localization)
4. Regenerative Agriculture (Conservation and rehabilitation-centered)

## 5. The Circular Economy (Re-Use, Recycle...)

###

Zoe is the family recycler. With a religious zeal, she sorts and transports the family waste to the village recycling center.

The family home is made of cobb which is an earthen material that keeps costs down and beauty up.

"Nice salad Sandy," coos Zoe. "We are blessed to be Commonwealthers," Sandy says.

## The Sebastopol, CA Environmental Council Story

Sebastopol is a city in Sonoma County, in California with a recorded population of over 8000. Today, wine grapes are the predominant agriculture crop, and nearly all lands once used for orchards are now vineyards. The creation of The Barlow, a \$23.5 million mall on a floodplain at the edge of town, converted old agriculture warehouses into a trendy marketplace for fine dining, tasting rooms, and art, has made Sebastopol a popular Wine Country destination. Famous horticulturist Luther Burbank had gardens in this region. The city hosts an annual Apple Blossom Festival in April and is home to the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebastopol,\\_California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebastopol,_California)

Danny has friends in the City and the country. Since Earth Day 1973, he has been an active member of the Sebastopol Environmental Council (SEC), building a coalition with eco-justice and sustainability. The EC espouses something called "whole systems thinking," or factoring in all inputs and outputs of a system. Call it self-sufficiency. Inspired by the Transition movement, the SEC works on localization strategies, especially around food production and energy usage. The 37-member Council takes a conservation and rehabilitation first approach to food and farming systems, especially to grape growing. Challenging the monomyth of mythologist Joseph Campbell, Sebastopol is on a Community journey with stories that involve a community that goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes out transformed. Sebastopol is building resilience to climate change and increasing biodiversity. The SEC teaches and practices Regeneration - using Nature to revitalize a person or a system and Recovering or creating a healthy community and/or ecosystem. The Council seeks traditional or "natural" approaches to agriculture.

## Collaboration Trust at the Resilience Community

Imagine...

Commonwealth, OR is searching for tech folk to inhabit an emerging resilience settlement 90 miles west of Portland. Here people are taking the future into their own hands, both in the sense of being able to wield something new and powerful, and to activate a "pioneers" spirit with their families. An online simulation game and brief questionnaire are ready for those who have permaculture, tech, and other skills at [resilientcommunities.network](http://resilientcommunities.network).

The community is designed and operated so that minimal money is required, but there are land and construction costs, personal and community needs, and development requirements to secure the future of the community as volatile outside conditions increase. Most community members make at least part of their livelihood from or on the land in ways that support the self-reliance of the community and local region.

Commonwealth, truly a new frontier, is:

- nurturing the healing and well-being of members and the wider community
- rejuvenating ecosystems while building soil and benefiting the climate
- providing simple, affordable, low impact housing
- regeneratively produces much or most of our own food and other necessities

The project is not only an ecovillage, but a social movement: each individual can relate their own personal activity to a specific, important role in a larger transformation. Exchange rent for an equity share for housing. Reduce food costs to a minimum. A computer center is on sight for remote workers and childcare is available.

The way of life and infrastructure are designed to minimize the need for public utilities. Water is most likely from a filtered well. Electricity is conserved and comes from a combination of the local utility and off-grid solar and wind energy. Heating is from highly efficient wood stoves. Cooking is from wood, biogas, or propane. Sewage processing is through well-managed sanitary composting systems backed up by septic systems where legally required. Fully seasoned and tested compost is used for trees but not directly on vegetables.

Let's build Commonwealth together!