

Sustain Taos presents: De la Tierra a la Cosecha (From Earth to Harvest)

"You cannot save the land apart from the people or the people apart from the land. To save either you must save both." —Wendell Berry

I recently had the opportunity to meet the writer and elder statesman of the environmental movement, Wendell Berry, and hear him speak at the annual Quivira Coalition Conference in Albuquerque this January. Wendell is a wise and humble human being who cares about the world and how we live in it, and he has spent his long writing career making the case for the fundamental connection between land and people.

In recent years, many environmentalists have come around to understand the environment in a bigger way as encompassing more than just wild ecosystems out in some faraway backcountry. The "environment" also includes anywhere people live, work, play, pray, grow food and kids. In our modern world of brutal disparities, the environmental movement can no longer ignore issues of social and economic justice. And global warming reminds us that everything and everyone on the planet are inextricably connected and all of our choices and actions have a consequence. It's time to broaden our horizons and recognize that, ultimately, it's all about our relationships with each other and with the land.

The Quivira Coalition, an organization that brings together environmentalists, ranchers,

farmers, public land managers and scientists, is an example of this new approach. Here in Taos we have our own home-grown example in the De la Tierra a la Cosecha (From Earth to Harvest) project.

De la Tierra is a collaboration among the Taos County

Northern New Mexico Río Grande Bioregional News

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lands and land-based culture. Growing more food locally also reduces our dependence

Bioregional Calendar

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 9 A.M.-3 P.M. — "The Art of Agriculture in Hispanic Tradition," a cursillos, or short courses, taught by experts in their field. Join Sustain Taos board member Juan Estevan Arellano for a course based on his latest book, "Ancient Agriculture: Roots and Applications of Sustainable Farming." Sign up and reserve your space. Call (505) 246-2261, ext. 148.

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 7 P.M. — Rivers & Birds Eco-Film Series continues with a free screening of "The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil." Cuba's economy crashed when the USSR collapsed in 1990. Oil and food imports were cut drastically and people became desperate for food. From hardships to creativity, from industrial to organic farming and urban gardens, Cuba is an example of options and hope. Showing at the Taos Center for the Arts. Call (505) 776-5200 for more information.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 7 P.M. — Taos Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico monthly meeting: "Xeriscaping for Patios, Patios & Beyond." Jeff Clark of Santa Fé Greenhouse will focus on the hardiest native plants of Northern New Mexico and those that maintain year-round interest in the garden. Bent Masonic Lodge, Camino de Santiago and GUSDORF Road, just south of Southside Bean and one block east of Paseo del Pueblo Sur. Meetings are free and the public is welcome. Call Sallie at (505) 776-0860.

Economic Development Corporation, Taos Land Trust and Taos Valley Acequia Association, promoting profitable family farming and ranching and local food security, which in turn helps sustain local

on the fossil fuels required to transport our food from distant places, and therefore reduces our impact in the world.

Northern New Mexico is known for its vast and inspiring natural landscape, but it's just as famous for a distinctive cultural landscape of ancient villages, acequias, farms and ranch land. There is an old and intimate relationship between land and culture that makes this region what it is. This "land of enchantment" fuels much of the local economy, supports the unique land-based traditions of centuries-old communities, protects biodiversity and still holds great potential to grow food.

Thanks to many generations of careful stewardship of land and water and the traditional wisdom that still exists in local American Indian and Indo-Hispano communities, our region may be one of the few places left with the resilience to survive the inevitable changes that will come as the petroleum economy collapses.

The Río Arriba, or "Upper Río Grande," bioregion has that resilience, but only if we work to save what we can right now.

Agricultural land is disappearing at an alarming rate. During the past 10 years, there was an 18 percent reduction in farms nationwide, while Taos County had a 29 percent reduction! Private lands like these throughout the West are also sanctuaries for biodiversity, containing more than 60 percent of remaining populations of threatened and endangered

species.

As local farmers and ranchers lose their property to development, it removes land from food production, unravels centuries of tradition and diminishes both biological diversity and cultural diversity.

The Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos Land Trust and Taos Valley Acequia Association have been working on different angles of this problem for many years, but our combined effort is a much more powerful force for change. Together, the three partners bring many years of experience and a huge collection of tools to address land and water conservation, sustainable agriculture and locally appropriate economic development — everything from conservation easements and acequia water banking to the Mobile Matanza. We are tackling many pressing issues on several levels, including an inventory of the assets and needs of the agricultural community; highlighting the important connection between healthy lands and healthy communities and the consumer choices we make;

direct assistance to farmers; and ranchers; public policies to support land, water, food and culture; and engaging youth to carry on.

De la Tierra helps local landowners keep their family lands intact and undeveloped, helps create a livable income from farms and ranches, encourages the production of local food for local consumption, and helps sustain unique traditions and cultural diversity. All of which makes our community a richer and healthier place for everyone.

For information about De la Tierra a la Cosecha, or any programs of the three organizations, contact: Taos County Economic Development Corporation, (505) 758-8731, tcdec@tcdec.org, www.tcdec.org; Taos Land Trust, (505) 751-3138, info@taoslandtrust.org, www.taoslandtrust.org; or Taos Valley Acequia Association, (505) 758-9461, tva@kitcarson.net.

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