

INLAND NORTHWEST PERMACULTURE CONFERENCE

Spokane, Washington. Early November, 2011



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Here is an announcement (December 27, 2010 version) for a new event that Friends of the Trees Society is starting in 2011.

The Inland Northwest Permaculture conference will bring together permaculturists and people working on sustainability issues from around the Inland Northwest to share information, ideas and inspiration. Permaculture is about ecological gardening and farming, natural building, renewable energy, local self-reliance, local governance, local economic systems and other initiatives leading to a healthier society and environment.

Calling all permaculturists in Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and Southern Interior British Columbia. This is a vast area with a low population density overall. The vast majority of people have never heard the word permaculture. Of those few who are conversant with permaculture only a small % of them have taken a permaculture design course or consider themselves a permaculture practitioner. If there are 5 million people in the Inland region and 1% know about permaculture that is 50,000 people. If 1% of those have taken a permaculture design that is about 500 people. This is a likely estimate. I would guess there are around 500 permaculture design course graduates in the region at this point. There have only been about 20 courses around the Inland Northwest thus far, but in-migration of permaculturists from elsewhere is common. Plus there are likely hundreds of people who have carefully studied permaculture and are putting it into practice, but who have not gone through a formal pc design course.

We will also invite some of the most outstanding permaculture practitioners from west of the Cascades to share their knowledge. They may have a somewhat different plant selection than the Interior, but the permaculture principles and many of the techniques are applicable here.

The conference will include plenary sessions, small groups, workshops, round tables, displays, a trade show, demos, field trips and of course, lots of conversations in the aisles and over meal tables.

Conference Tracks

- Food production.
- Introduction to permaculture.
- Green jobs and Earth healing.
- Social permaculture including economics and governance.

Another goal of the conference is to provide an educational opportunity for people who are eager to learn more about permaculture. People who know a little about permaculture and want to deepen their knowledge and understanding. The Inland Northwest has a long history of back-to-the-landers and progressive people in general. They tend to be scattered in pockets across the landscape. Some centers include: Spokane, Stevens County/Colville area, Sandpoint and Moscow, Idaho, Missoula has a huge progressive community. The Bitterroot Valley to its south and the Flathead region to the north. Bozeman and other points in central Montana. There are less permaculture folks in the industrial farmlands and dry

landscapes of the Columbia Basin, but there are some. The east slope of the Cascades in Washington and Oregon including: Okanogan, Lake Chelan area, Wenatchee valley, Kittitas Valley, Yakima valley, the Columbia Gorge, and Bend, Oregon. There are also pockets of folks in Northeast Oregon including La Grande, Enterprise, the Wallowas, Hells Canyon. They are found throughout central Idaho and in Boise and surrounds.

Why Spokane?

1. Spokane is geographically centered for the Inland Northwest in terms of transportation corridors because of its placement on I-90 and other main highways.
2. It is the largest population center in the region.
3. There is already a lot going on in Spokane in terms of local food, sustainability, democracy, etc.
4. Spokane likes to call itself the Capital of the Inland Empire.

We expect most people who attend the conference to come from within a three-hour drive radius of Spokane which encompasses much of the Columbia Basin, northeast Washington, Okanogan, Ellensburg, Northern Idaho, and the Missoula area. The longer the drive to get there, the more interested a person has to be, so we expect smaller turnouts from the farther reaches of the Inland Northwest.



Spokane community involvement. This conference is also about Spokane. The conference will explore the theme of how can Spokane County produce more of its own food, energy, building materials and resources and reduce imports. How can Spokane have a strong local economy and a high quality of life? People already involved in making things happen are invited to come and learn how permaculture can assist them in reaching their visions. Permaculture is a useful tool. Permaculture is best known in the realms of food production, gardening, food forests and forest gardening. But at its essence, permaculture is a set of design principles and a methodology that can be applied to any field of human endeavor. Permaculture applies equally well to social design as it does to ecosystem design. Social permaculture will be one of the conference tracks. Permaculture isn't about leading the pack. Permaculture is about applying the

permaculture principles in all fields of endeavor. Spokane organizations and people are invited to get involved. There have been permaculture workshops, informal groups and a small community of permaculture people in Spokane. We expect the conference to help coalesce and enlarge the existing permaculture community in Spokane. Spokane has a Sustainable September every year that includes many things covered in permaculture. The Permaculture Conference is sure to attract a lot of local interest and participation. Local volunteers will be necessary to help with local preparations and provide home-stay housing for people from out of town who do not wish to go the motel route.

So that gives us three groups of people. 1) Hard core permaculturists from around the region. 2) Highly interested people within a three-hour drive. 3) Spokane County residents. Our goal is 300 participants or more.

The idea for this conference was hatched at the Northwest Permaculture Convergence held at South Seattle Community College on September 19-21, 2010. There was a caucus of interior folks (about 10 of us) and we decided it is timely to call for an Inland Northwest permaculture event. A bit of history. In 1981, I organized (along with the Tilth Association) the first two permaculture conferences held in the Pacific Northwest. The Maritime Northwest Permaculture Conference was held outside of Portland, Oregon and the Interior Northwest Permaculture Conference was held outside of Sandpoint, Idaho. I have been organizing permaculture events ever since including the Northwest Permaculture Convergences held on the west side of the Cascades. I am on the team organizing the 2011 Convergence which will be in Oregon in early fall, 2011. All of the people attending our Inland caucus in Seattle said they would help in various capacities. There are a few permaculturists in Spokane who are appraised of this proposal and are on board with helping. As a sign of local interest, in February, 2010 I gave a one-day, permaculture workshop in Spokane and 50 people attended.

The biggest needs at this time are:

1. one or more Spokane co-sponsors;
2. a suitable venue;
3. more people to join the organizing team;
4. setting up a communications system for a regional network;
5. Graphic help for promotional materials and a webmaster.

We are just at the beginning, but already things are starting to come together. There are three people on the core organizing team and other people have offered support. A venue team will visit prospective venues in Spokane in early January and we hope to announce a venue shortly.

Please contact us if you would like to:

- _____ attend the conference
- _____ be a presenter
- _____ help organize the conference
- _____ co-sponsor the conference

Please forward this announcement to people you think would be interested.

Towards a greener, happier world,

Michael Pilarski December 26, 2010
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