



Reel and Meal March Films to Feature Permaculture and Food Security Topics

On Monday evening March 15, *The Reel and Meal (R&M)* at the *New Deal Café* will show a sampler of short selections from four Permaculture and food security films from around the world. This event is one in a series of monthly films and discussions that explores vital environmental and social justice issues. R&M is sponsored by a consortium of Greenbelt community organizations (Greenbelt-Climate Action Network (G-CAN) and

Green Man Festival both projects of the Chesapeake Education Arts & Research Society (CHEARS); Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group (BCWWG); Prince George's Peace and Justice Coalition; and Greenbelt Vegan Network. Chef Karim will prepare a vegan meal for \$13.00 at 6:30 pm. There is no charge to see the films, which begin at about 7PM.

The video showings will be followed by a discussion addressing food security and eco-friendly land care right here in Greenbelt. Greenbelt was designed taking inspiration from the **Ebenzer Howard's Garden Cities** of England, and soon afterward the nation mobilized for food security through the **Victory Gardens** in the 1940's. Now as we approach Greenbelt's 75 anniversary, it is widely recognized that so called "modern agriculture", which has accelerated in the period since Greenbelt's founding, is not sustainable as the way to feed the world's almost 7 billion people. Modern food systems are heavily dependent on burning fossil fuels for mechanization, fertilizers, and pesticides. As NASA's James Hansen has stated..."the climate system is on the verge of tipping points. If the world does not make a dramatic shift in energy



policies over the next few years, we may well pass the point of no return." (Hansen 2009, *Storms of My Grandchildren*). In addition conservation scientists tell us that over the years since Greenbelt was founded, much of the nation's topsoil has eroded and that we have long since reached Peak Soil –with perhaps 40 years of soil left. Soil experts estimate that for every pound of food produced 6 to 24 pounds of soil are lost to erosion. Currently 80 percent of water use is for agriculture and available supplies are diminishing. In a modern chicken factory it takes 9 eggs worth of energy to produce just one egg. That leaves the waste of 8 eggs worth of energy (usually pollution from burning coal or oil) to clear up. With over half the world's food production now consisting of just 4 crops (wheat, rice, maize and potatoes) there are very real hazards from monoculture food production, and loss of food and seed diversity.



Google Earth picture of Greenbelt footprint in Community Center area 2010

In addition, Chesapeake Bay scientists point out that on a per acre basis urban landscape practices with large areas in concrete and grass contribute 7 times the pollution to the bay as agricultural land.

Permaculture is a design system that provides a tool for addressing these issues around the world and in our local neighborhoods. The March R&M films provide an introduction to permaculture and

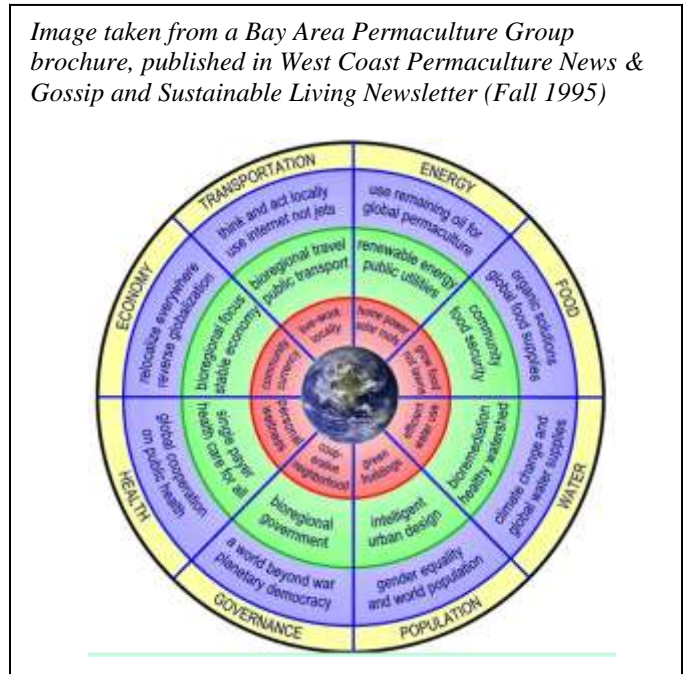
examples of folks who are putting permaculture into practice in their communities.

The video, **GRAVE DANGER FROM FALLING FOOD** features Australian Bill Mollison, the father of the Permaculture Movement. The video begins with the provocative statement---“You wouldn't welcome anybody who laid waste to their house and wanted to live in yours!” Mollison goes on to share why he first developed permaculture after spending years living in the forest. He believes that a stable permaculture system can help “avoid this laying waste to the planet” and supply our needs while we embrace and enrich nature.

The idea of forest gardens (food forests) was first articulated by Robert A. de J. Hart in his book ‘Forest Gardening’ and subsequently became one of the keystone concepts in permaculture. Both informative and inspiring, the video **FOREST GARDENS** features Robert Hart in his pioneering Shropshire England garden, explaining the principles and practice of forest gardening; and includes Mike and Julia Guerra who have created a tiny garden behind their maisonette in Hertfordshire, using permaculture, forest gardening and organic principles. For as little as two hours work a week, they find they can supply produce for six months of the year.

EAT THE SUBURBS, a film by Tanya Curnow, takes the oil debate from the browser to the backyard and follows Melbourne's "permablitzers" as they prepare for the end of the oil age--- one garden at a time. In **SUBURBAN PERMACULTURE**, we tour Janet Barocco & Richard Heinberg's quarter acre suburban California lot for an example of what's possible in suburbia. The backyard radiates out from an herb and kitchen garden to vegetable beds and containers; 25 fruit and nut trees; and a restful Zen garden. We

Image taken from a Bay Area Permaculture Group brochure, published in West Coast Permaculture News & Gossip and Sustainable Living Newsletter (Fall 1995)



also look at Owen O'Dell's concept of *Creating a Suburban Foodshed* with neighbors working together to grow food in their yards, as a way of both producing food and creating community.



Discussion after the film will feature Leslie Riddle, Assistant Director for Parks and Grounds for the City of Greenbelt. Leslie will share some of her ongoing efforts to promote Eco-Friendly landscaping in Greenbelt. One of these efforts is the free workshop on *Sustainable Landscaping for the Home* on Saturday March 13 from 10-2 PM at the Community Center.

Also at the March 15 Real & Meal film Maggie Cahalan will discuss a volunteer opportunity to help with planning and implementing the **Three Sisters Garden project**. The project was recently approved by the Greenbelt City Council, upon the recommendation of the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability (Green ACES) and the Public Works Department. The CHEARS and Transition Towns volunteer project will receive start up support from the Greenbelt Community Foundation. The Three Sisters project goal is to establish diverse co-learning demonstration gardens on public lands in each of the three areas of Greenbelt. Shown above are the three approved sites---(behind the community center in old Greenbelt; behind the Springhill Lake Recreation Center in Greenbelt West; and in Schrom Hills Park in Greenbelt East. Volunteer “expert gardeners” and “want-a-be-gardeners” are much needed for the project. For more information contact Maggie Cahalan at maggie@chears.org.