

Permaculture in Practice

Beam me up - bioneers coming to NM

***Bioneer** - a pioneer with a land ethic that differs from that of colonialism, that being to increase biodiversity, conserve habitat for wild species, and practice precision agriculture.*

-- Wikipedia

No significant distinction exists between permaculturalists and bioneers. "Permaculture" typically describes systems of sustainable design, while "bioneer" usually refers to a practitioner of sustainable design. The words also happen to be contractions that have recently barged into the vernacular, viz. "permanent culture" and "biological pioneer." This doesn't mean you must combine two words to jumpstart change in the world, but, clearly, it doesn't hurt.

On the frontier of the movement to save civilization from itself, bioneers demonstrate practical solutions to our planet's problems. For many years they have gathered at sold-out conferences in San Rafael, Calif. There they circle

the wagons, share experiences, make connections, nurture friendships, and firm up plans to improve their work.

This year, you can attend the Oct. 14-16 Bioneers Conference without a costly trip to the coast, because northern New Mexico is one of 17 communities in 15 states hosting satellite conferences (complete with satellite connection) during much of the proceedings. From the comfort of our local community, the so-called "beaming bioneers" will experience four hours per day of the conference. The remainder of each day will feature locally oriented programs harvested from our healthy crop of sustainability experts here in the Land of Enchantment.

Sponsored by Sustain Taos and UNM-Taos, the event will be the first of its kind in the state. Plan to catch Friday's events at the Taos Convention Center. Saturday and Sunday's events will be held at the Student Union Building on the University of New Mexico campus in Albuquerque. Depending on discounts and/or late

registration fees, admission will range from \$20 to \$35 for any particular day and \$60 to \$80 for the three-day weekend. For more information call 505-758-2103 or visit www.bioneers.org.

While you have your calendars open, your credit cards out, and your jaw half-cocked to drop (thanks to this shameless segue), please also consider attending my next workshop. "Practical Permaculture: Pumice Wicks Demystified" will take place at EcoVersity (another tortured but ultimately successful contraction) on Saturday, Oct. 1, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. I'll be joined by permaculturalist and landscape designer extraordinaire Megan Zeigler of Santa Fe Permaculture. Tuition is \$55. Please bring a sack lunch, so we can keep our midday break short.

This workshop is designed for two kinds of people: those who have taken "Practical Permaculture" before and those who have not. In past years I've taught a basic introduction to permaculture using swale-building as my hands-on activity.



NATE DOWNEY

Although I'm still a big fan of on-contour swales, I have come to be a true believer in pumice wicks, which are essentially underground sponges that keep plants alive between storms. Call EcoVersity at 424-9797 or visit www.ecoversity.org to sign up!

Nate Downey is president of Santa Fe Permaculture Inc., an ecologically minded, locally owned landscape-design and installation company. He can be reached at 505-424-4444 and via www.santafepermaculture.com.