

Slow Money picks up pace

It's almost cliché to discuss the unusual level of creativity found in this sparsely populated part of the world. Northern New Mexico is such an inspirational place that its originality is often the kind that gets reproduced elsewhere. From Zozobra, the original burning man, to Los Alamos, the home of the A-bomb, our remote stretch of high country has had its share of cultural impact.

Our sense of innovation has also attempted to counterbalance the carbon footprint left behind by our all-important fiestas and our national labs. Modern passive-solar architecture was born here with Ed Mazria's publication of the *Passive Solar Energy Book* (1979). Bioneers started downtown at La Fonda Hotel (1990) and St. John's College (1991). Held every year since in the San Francisco Bay Area, it's now the world's preeminent environmental conference.

The Permaculture Credit Union is another good example of our ecological

ingenuity. Since the turn of this century, the alternative-banking institution has slowly and steadily grown. It now stewards over \$8 million dollars in assets with less than a handful of "problem" loans. Although the credit union has yet to spread its philosophy to the rest of the lending industry, it's poised to try.

The newcomer on the scene grew out of a concept called "slow food." The opposite of McDonald's and Trader Joe's, slow food comes from local farmers and your own backyard. Good-for-your-community food doesn't come from Chicago, Chile, or China. But now that industrial agriculture has taken over our politics, our media, and our financial markets, the challenge has been finding startup money for farms in places that are often very far away from significant capital.

Enter Truchas resident Woody Tasch and his book, *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money*. At its core, *Slow Money* attempts to answer an essential question,

"How do you get people to invest dirt?" The answer is not easy, but with the world's looming food crisis it's hard to think of a more necessary pursuit. Fortunately, many people have quickly latched onto it. The first Slow Money Conference was held three years ago here in the Santa Fe Farmers Market building. Last year's conference spread to a farm just outside of Burlington, Vermont.

This year's Third Annual Slow Food National Gathering will be held from Oct. 12 through 14 in San Francisco. Headlined by three inspiring speakers, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Wes Jackson (The Land Institute), and David Suzuki (*The Nature of Things*), the conference also will feature over 100 other speakers — including yours truly.

I'll be on a panel with one of my heroes, Gary Nabhan. Nabhan is the author of several beautifully written books about slow food, seed saving, and Western culture at the edge of a high and



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narrow precipice. Please tell your friends and family on the West Coast that this appearance is part of my just-announced Observe with Every Nerve Tour featuring 25 gigs from Portland, Oregon, to San Diego, California. Please find more info on my facebook page or at www.harvesttherain.com.

Nate Downey is president of Santa Fe Permaculture (505-424-4444) and the author of the just-released book, Harvest the Rain: How to Enrich Your Life by Seeing Every Storm as a Resource (Sunstone Press).