

The Soil Series: Grassroots for the Climate Emergency  
Part 5: Soil Mycelium: the Fiber of Community Resilience  
Speakers: Mindy Blank, Simon Dennis, Chris Wood, Henry Harris  
April 10, 2019

## Contents

- Living Notes FROM THE WALL: Actions; People; and information to connect with (from this Series session and links to past sessions)
- Events (upcoming, collected from all Series so far)
- Group Discussion - *statements and questions from this Series session*
- Presentation notes

## Soil Series Hosts

- [Building A Local Economy \(BALE\)](#) - South Royalton, VT. BALE is a community resource center for local economy initiatives in the White River Valley of Vermont, intentionally multi-issue in focused and multi-dimensional in their programmatic work. Check out the [documentary film](#) Dancing With the Cannibal Giant: Five New Stories for the Great Transition.
- [Vermont Healthy Soils Coalition](#) - To join the Vermont Healthy Soils Coalition Email Listserv, fill out this [quick survey](#). Then, follow the instructions in the email confirmations that you'll receive to join the listserv. Join the [VHSC Facebook group](#).

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## **Living Notes FROM THE WALL**

*This is not complete list of resources by any means The lists below were compiled from the collective voices throughout the event. All this in just 2 hours!*

**ACTIONS** (*people are already doing these things in our region*)

- Knowing our neighbors

- Water-Energy-Food-Nexus community co-creation
- Scenario planning/response
- Past-present-future
  - Resilience
  - What brings me joy?
  - Contribute "gifts/services"
- Social media - outreach
- What will/can/does it take?
- Investing in the social field
- Investing social capital into disruption
- Inspire people
- Share skills
- Grow food for others
- Come together - identify pain, discomforts; change our routines
- Make a bigger offer to the network
- Listening
- Build-listen
- Hartford 5 Village Potato festival - September 24th
- Vote with your dollars
- Tourism/ecotourism/agrotourism
- Zero waste community events
- Talk about it
- Community gardens
- Consume less
- Permaculture food forest - Airbnb offers experience
- More youth
- Connect to schools
- Forest bathe
- Live in tiny house
- Grow seedlings
- Grow food with kids

## EVENTS

### PAST SOIL SERIES EVENTS

Part 1 Ground to Body Soil Health and Human Health: [VIDEO](#), [NOTES/RESOURCES](#)

Part 2 Shielding Soil with Plants & Animals (VIDEO *coming soon*) [NOTES/RESOURCES](#)

Part 3 Connection Through Stories (VIDEO *coming soon*) [NOTES/RESOURCES](#)

Part 4 Building the Soil From the Ground Up (VIDEO *coming soon*) [NOTES/RESOURCES](#)

Part 5 Social Mycelium: the Fiber of Community Resilience (VIDEO *coming soon*) Notes Below

### UPCOMING SOIL SERIES EVENTS

[The Soil Series: Grassroots for the Climate Emergency](#)

**April 24** Part 6 A Soil Sponge to Cool the Planet

**May 8** Session 7 - Next Steps: Growing Grassroots Agency & Action for the Climate Emergency

## **ONGOING CALENDAR OF EVENTS collected the from Soil Series**

**April Events are below - [Full calendar HERE](#)** (getting into summer!)

[Extinction Rebellion](#) - week of action; civil disobedience 4/15-4/22 **That's NOW!** No actions that I am aware of.

**April & May** Hartland Resilience Group 2nd Saturdays Sept - May. Community breakfasts and presentation/discussion. Contact Laurel Stevenson a.laurel.stevenson@gmail.com

**April 18** Lunch Talks on Racial Equity in the Food System 12:45 PM at Vermont Law School in Yates with Karen Spiller of Food Solutions New England

**April 22** [Brattleboro Mother Up!](#) Monthly Meet-Up Mon 5:30 PM 350 Vermont

**April 23** Montpelier, Statehouse [Ban Fossil Fuel Infrastructure!- a public hearing](#), 4:15 PM 350 Vermont

**April 23** Post Oil Solutions [Climate Café](#) usually meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month 6:00 PM, at Brooks Memorial Library, Brattleboro. "Our House is on Fire" Community Conversations

**April 24** [Randolph Region Re-Energized](#) 5:30 PM

**April 25** [Spoiled to SOIL](#): Backyard Composting with Cat Buxton 6:30 - 8:00 PM Ascutney

**April 25** Our Four-Town Future 6:30-9:00 PM for the 4-Town Regional Priority Setting Session (Location TBD)

**April 25** [Rural Vermont Small Farm Advocacy Day](#) at the Statehouse 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM

**April 25** Spiritual Gardening: Dowsing & Agriculture 1 PM @ [Earthwise](#)

**April 26 - 27** [Cows, Land, and Labor](#): Local Farming in a Globalized World. Dartmouth College, Hanover Inn and Moore Hall in Hanover, New Hampshire

**April 27** Statewide event Vermont Community Garden Network's Day in the Dirt.

**April 28** [Middlebury Mother Up!](#) Monthly Meet-Up 5:30 PM 350 Vermont

**April 29** [Local Solutions, Global Change](#) Middlebury 7 PM 350 Vermont

### **CONNECTIONS** (*from this session*)

- [Community Resilience Organizations](#) - 12 communities
- Peg Elmer Hough - Founder of CROs
- Randolph/Braintree/Brookfield CRO
- [Center for Transformational Practice](#)
- Greta Thunberg - [TED Talk](#)
- Town Committees

- [Center for Grassroots Organizing](#)
- [Vermont Climate Union](#)
- [Via Campesina](#)
- A Just Transition - <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/movement>
- [Soul Fire Farm](#) - Leah Penniman Book: [Farming While Black](#)
- Link with gov/CIA/etc. regarding strategic planning and climate change
- [Green Mountain Girls Farm](#)
- [Montpelier Tree Board](#) - planting 200 trees in May
- [Soil4Climate](#) - 11,000 member FaceBook group
- Cooperative community in Randolph - Rick
- [Greenzine Radio WFVR](#)
- [Randolph Region Re-Energized](#) - April 24
- Peter Donovan - [\\*\\*\\*Measuring Soil Carbon Change: A Flexible, Practical, Local Method, by Peter Donovan](#)
- East Valley Community Group - East Randolph
- [Joanna Macy](#)
- Gene Kahn - [Cascadian Farms](#) founder
- [Parmelee Farm](#) and Joel in Randolph - Beef
- [Bloodroot Farm](#) - Bellows Falls Farm
- CSA childcare for providers
- Rising Mist Farm and Mark Shaw - organic farm in East Randolph
- Fungal Forest Farm
- [Grace Boggs](#)
- East Valley Community Group (Middle Branch/East Randolph)  
[evcgroup@googlegroups.com](mailto:evcgroup@googlegroups.com)
- Randolph/Braintree/Brookfield CRO ([john.pimental@gmail.com](mailto:john.pimental@gmail.com))

### **INFORMATION** *(from this session)*

- Social field
- Dancing with the Cannibal Giant: [Film](#)
- Food Apartheid
- Addiction = lack of connection
- Book: [Dirt to Soil](#)
- [Extinction Rebellion](#) - week of action; civil disobedience 4/15-4/22
- 50% species loss in the last 40 years
- Walter Jehne - Cool the Planet
- Youth may be less tied to place, community is shifting (to online)

**We've moved these two important sections to separate pages.**

- 1) [PEOPLE](#) *(alphabetical)* *(from ALL Soil Series sessions so far)*

[also a list of recurring topics of interest on this page]

- 2) [GROUPS/INITIATIVES](#) (from all Soil Series so far, broken down into lists of Local and not-so-local, with links)

## Group Discussion

Note: these discussion rounds will directly inform the May 8 event.

Pose a question that won't be answered; State a comment or how you're feeling; Question(s) you're left with.

*Below are your questions and statements as best as we could capture them*

Questions:

- How can I listen more intentionally?
- How can I be a part of this movement?
- What can we put at the base of trees to help build tree guilds in an urban setting facing lawnmowers, salt, snowplows? (similar idea as cover crops -Gabe Brown)
- How to build local community?
- What's the most important thing for us to do right now?
- How did Soul Fire Farm emerge from its social field? Did it grow organically or start with a business plan?
- How do we cultivate a sense of responsibility?
- Can we visit with our diet choices and appropriate land use?
- How to turn on the community to action?

Statements:

- "Resilience" take away is to look inward. Think about consumption, especially as Americans
- Asked about a particular crop at the market today and recognized where food is coming from
- Homestead, gardening, microfarm, permaculture food forest at an Airbnb as an experience
- Organic gardening/teaching/promoting
- Appreciated the quality of the presenters today
- Personally spurred to reassess everything in life (climate emergency especially) by a health emergency
- Trying hard to do the right thing
- Vegetarian for 55 years, beginning in high school - just kind of figured it out and began living this way. Invitation to think about the relationship we have with animals (killing and eating) and what relationship we want to have with the land? Check in with yourselves about these issues/questions.
- Organizations should check in with Pentagon, CIA, NSA, National Institute of Health - they already know that the major problems for the US are monetary and weather. Those people are smart and they are thinking about these things too; we should link up with those analysts.

- Starting to get a feeling of coming together and being somewhat of one mind
- Very excited for Soil Series May 8th action meeting!
- You can spread the word in a way that is not difficult for people to swallow: humor!
- Humans tendency to want to compete/contest with each other can bring people together: bring the 5 villages together in Potato Fest (September) to vie against each other to get as many residents as possible to start growing their own potatoes
- Encouraged by connectivity in this space
- Thinking about own social mycelial network - 1 in 3 (or 2) Americans are on medication - the root of addiction is a lack of connection. This type of social fabric building can save people. Heal the wounds socially, maybe even more than physically.
- Concern about the people who are not here - inclusion. Some people don't even think this is problem. Would like to see more involvement with the schools/young people.
- Greta Thunberg's TEDTalk
- Soil4Climate - Facebook group
- [Living Soils Symposium](#) - Montreal
- Heartened to realize that this issue (heal the land and soil) crosses all political lines
- Green Mountain Girls Farm - Northfield
  - Documentation of carbon and air deep in their soil at the farm
  - Has had a family shopping from them for 10 years, instead of at the grocery store.
- Not that many people step forward to vote with their food for the things they care about
- Tourism that's based on regenerative agriculture in Vermont (geotourism/agrotourism)
- Food and farms as medicine - Farm Soak
- Thank you for talking about this is a crisis and an emergency - felt a sense of relief that other people were feeling this too
- Montpelier Tree Board - planting 200 trees in May in neighborhoods to bring neighbors together to call attention to life systems involving trees, rain, and soil.
- Forming cooperative community based on low income, low consumption, and mutual aid
- Idea of resistance and civil disobedience
- Extinction Rebellion - movement started in UK - civil disobedience. Calling for a week of action worldwide (120 cities worldwide coming together). The idea is for civil disobedience in your own way; we need a new way forward and we need to slow down the destruction. April 15th-22nd worldwide call.
- We've lost 50% of (number counting) species on the earth in the last 40 years
- Used to teach about raising livestock for profitability; previously knew about sequestering carbon. Now know about covering plants and that keeping plants growing all the time can cool the planet - Walter Jehne
- We're moving like molasses in January in terms of combating the climate emergency
- Belief that movements can grow exponentially once people wake up
- Quality of life comes from community and community relationships
- People aren't getting out and doing so much together as we used to i.e. media and jobs
- Impressed with in-depth scientific knowledge presented by speakers previously
- Apologize for breaking the topsoil via John Deere
- Didn't apologize for pulling the honeywagon and redistributing manure onto the fields
- Randolph Region Re-Energized Program - Come to meeting on April 24th to say that soil has to be added to the priorities
- "Connections"
- Thinks swimming pool issue is very important - all about connections

- Move from “We and Them” to “Us” - this is our only way forward
- Bewildering experience in Annapolis, MD to attend music event with traffic, lack of community; concert created unity
- New leadership in Randolph, VT coming up; collaboration between two people who are on different sides of many topics - need to model this as a civilization right now
- I don't know if we're going to be successful, but we can start living that higher expression of civilization now anyway
- Parmelee Farm - beef
- Trying to sort through thoughts from these events and NOFA conference (Leah Penniman speaker)
- Growing seedlings is a lot like working with young children
- Ways to take responsibility - forced into it through parenting and teaching and being a farmer
- Seeing how kids eating healthy, fresh food and how it impacts their parents via CSA over the summer
- We're in a crisis but also an ongoing process of supporting people through that process
- Bloodroot Farm
- Flower garden ah-ha moment of being at war with weeds, but being at war with the land is not what she wants to do
- Soul Fire Farm - concrete manifestation of food sovereignty
- Zero waste community events hosting
- Feeling a better sense of community about the health of the planet
- Community between different generations looks different - place based vs online
- Always understood idea of feeding the soil, but thought about it as an inert thing. Now know that there is a diverse, symbiotic system in the soil. Healthy soil could be the answer to a whole lot of problems
- What do I do now - I'm just going to start talking about it
- [Wendell Berry](#) idea- if everybody took care of their backyards, then we could really have an impact
- Extended community across Vermont
- Seeing with different eyes
- Peter Donovan - visiting farms via school bus across the country, speaks with presence and passion. Key message: if you want to make small changes, do things differently. If you want to make big changes, you need to see things differently
- Practice of pausing in daily habits; allow myself to be aware that I have a lot to give thanks for
- If I'm not happy; clean the lenses
- Worldwide crisis of loneliness, not connected in ways that we used to be
- Excited that the response to the climate crisis is community
- Going to be turning home into a community garden
- Community building is the key to resilience and we need to build resilience and soil building is one of the keys to the environmental crisis. Would like to get clarity about the nature of the crisis.
- Every 5 years the CIA (and EU) does a scenario planning exercise - what should the response be to certain scenarios?
- Perform scenario planning with this group!
- Rising Mist Farm in East Randolph

- East Valley Community Group in East Randolph - building resilience by forming community group; sponsoring social events, reopen community hall; social infrastructure to promote democracy
- Positive proximity - being around people is a good thing!
- Social infrastructure - you have places to go. We need to have that feeling of belonging for people; where people are physically welcome

## Presentations

### Mindy Blank

#### Presentation Overview

- This is the most important work that we can be doing: Resilience Building Locally
- Link between soil health and community resilience
- Community Resilience Organizations - Mindy is the executive director
  - Based in Vermont mostly; also around New England
  - Living evidence that beautiful things can come out of terrible disasters (Tropical Storm Irene)
  - Peg Elmer - founder - from South Royalton - Vermont Law School
  - Hazard Mitigation Planning
  - Noticing what is was about communities that allowed some to bounce back faster from natural disasters
    - Tight knit; closer relationships
  - To survive climate change - we need closer communities
  - Importance of localizing in a different way - particularly: Water, Energy, and Food
  - Having healthy soils is a huge part providing our basic human needs
  - Need sovereignty and connectivity locally; relationship building
- Challenge: Think about "Resilience" broadly
  - In terms of past, present, and future
  - In terms of your individual role
  - What brings me joy?
  - What are my strengths/passions/personal gifts that I can share with my community through contributing?
  - Can come in many different forms!
  - Examples:
    - Hosting community dinner
    - Volunteer with local nonprofit for social media
- CRO's operate in different communities around the state - 12 communities currently!
- CRO in Randolph/Braintree/Brookfield is new
- People decide to form a community resilience team and they get to choose what they want to focus on and how to come together and share information across communities
- Potato Fest - Hartford event!



- Question: What will/does/can it take for individuals to get involved more and in different ways; how can we turn this into a bigger movement to build a culture of resilience?

## Simon Dennis

### Presentation Overview

- Center for Transformational Practice in White River Junction, VT
- Retreats, networks, workshops, etc.
- Social Mycelia - not thinking about organizational connections, but rather what's subtle and underground and unseen; collective consciousness
- Social field of groups - evolve, flexible
  - "We are a group" in this room
  - Shifts energy
- Allows us to build the social field and exercise a greater collective synergy; create hospitable, comfortable environment
- The social field also dictates everything that can be said or thought within a group
- Experiment: don't try to answer the question, just observe how the question being posed feels in your body
  - Response: maybe tension, but also navigating business as usual too
- Greta Thunberg: "Our house is on fire" - powerful statement that disrupts our collective assumptions
- 350 Next Steps walk posted signs to alert people and wake them up
- Selectboard for Town of Hartford - Simon Dennis
  - Deeply tapped into social field of the entire town community
  - Political capital cost of bringing these things up
- The municipal social field excludes discussing:
  - Potentially facing human extinction
  - Massive society collapse
- Conversation with Town Manager
  - Severe weather events; projections; road repairs
  - Dropping bombs in other countries
  - US dollar not being used as much
  - Social unrest
  - Should we be talking about these things on the Selectboard floor? - YES
  - Our responsibility includes informing the public of the notion of systemic collapse
- Willingness to disrupt; bring forward the counter narrative
- What are the costs of doing it and what are the costs of not doing it?

## Henry Harris

### Presentation Overview

- Center for Grassroots Organizing in Marshfield, VT
  - Nonviolent revolutionary organizing centering on regenerative agriculture
- Vermont Climate Union
- In a moment of the climate emergency

- Felt relieved when asked the question because it was being talked about
- Right now we hope there is a moral argument between scientists and experts and in turn shame capitalists and politicians into doing the right thing
- There have been movements before - mobilizers; but sometimes unorganized
- Basic tenets for A Mass Movement Based in Justice
  - a mass movement
  - keep it in the ground
  - a just transition
  - scientific solutions
  - resilience
- Civil rights movement - use strategies
  - [Ella Baker](#) - strategist for civil rights movement
  - Made sure the organizations were independent and coordinated
- The Populist Movement
  - Started in 1889 in North Texas
  - In 3 years - had 40,000 trained lecturers presented about bulking cotton and agricultural strikes for economic pressure
- Mass movement theory
- A Just Transition
  - Combination of global south organizations trying to really make change

## Chris Wood

### Presentation Overview

- Clip from a film: Dancing with the Cannibal Giant, New stories for the great transition
- How is it that we really get to change ourselves - both individually and in a collective space?
- Film is shown around the area: ideally 18 people to watch and have a conversation after
- Soul Fire Farm - Leah Penniman
  - deep knowledge and belonging for children of the farm
  - delivering food into food apartheid (not referred to as "food deserts")

### Speakers summarize what they heard from each other and set the stage for the discussion:

"We are the ones we've been waiting for"

Chris Wood: Personally focus on concept of consciousness raising, culture shift, and being able to identify both pain/trauma and move beyond the place where we are incapable of finding the capacity to change our routine and our daily lives. What are the things that are going to move you to make that shift?

Mindy Blank: "What is it that makes some people feel a sense of responsibility for other people and the world, and that others don't have?" We are able to get rid of our sense of emergency.

How can we use the feeling of emergency and of calm/nourishment/joining together to actually address this emergency moving forward with cohesion?

Henry Harris: Love the idea of coming to Randolph - the center of the state! Diligence of getting people to move through. We're all called on to make change and share effectively. This is the first time in human history when we have to fight for our right to sacrifice instead of the gain - Grace Boggs. There have been agricultural movements in the past that were successful. Dairy industry in Vermont needs our help collectively. Take this opportunity to work together in this space.

Simon Dennis: No one solution, but rather the solution is through doing what you love. Sometimes with urgency we think we need to twist ourselves into a pretzel, but actually doing what you're passionate about and creating change is a factor of depth of dwelling which leads to depth of impact. Fierceness and willingness to be in community with each other - like tonight. Sharing with an open heart.