

# History of the Permaculture Movement in North America

## A book proposal by Michael Pilarski

I am proposing a group effort to produce a permaculture history for the US and Canada. Initially I can think of three major parts:

- 1) Stories by permaculture elders. Their own history and their perspective on permaculture history.
- 2) Histories of individual bioregions by collaborating authors who have been involved with the permaculture movement in their bioregion.
- 3) Youtube interviews with permaculturists about pc history. This of course can be open-ended and continuing

Sections 1 and 2 can be published as an in-print book as well as an on-line book. There can be on an on-line forum dedicated to updating the history as more people want to contribute to the effort.

### WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS COLLABORATIVE PROJECT?

It is possible that someone else may be working on such a book already. Please let me know if so. Have any bioregional histories been published? Or started?

For my own part I can contribute to a history of permaculture for two bioregions; the Maritime Pacific Northwest (Cascadia) and the Inland Pacific Northwest (Columbiana). I have been involved in permaculture in both bioregions continuously since 1981. For some years I published a regional paper called the Pacific Northwest Permaculture News & Gossip. I recall that Peter Bane, in the *Permaculture Activist*, once referred to me as perhaps the biggest permaculture gossip in the USA. Flattering at the time, but that was some years ago and I am sadly out of touch with developments in most other bioregions.

Here are some bioregions which have a strong permaculture history. I am not listing all the bioregions here and of course each of these has subset regions within it. Let's see who answers the call. I am not proposing a comprehensive history, nor a consensus viewpoint. But you gotta start somewhere.

Northeast US  
Mid-Atlantic Region  
Southeast US  
Texas  
Upper Midwest  
Southwest  
Southern California  
Bay Area, California  
Maritime Pacific Northwest  
Inland Pacific Northwest.  
British Columbia, Canada  
Canadian prairies  
Eastern Canada  
Quebec  
The Maritime Provinces  
Etc, etc.

This is an initial attempt to find out who is interested and what has already been done. Of course there are voluminous reams of articles and publications from the *Permaculture Activist*, regional pc magazines, articles, conference proceedings, the *1998 American Permaculture Directory* (online at

<http://www.permaculture.net/apd/index.html>), the 1<sup>st</sup> US permaculture directory by Guy Baldwin in the 1980s, etc, etc.

Let me know if you are interested and see what kind of team we can put together. There is room for varying levels of participation. Who would like to be on the coordinating/editing core team?

People who have volunteered to help in this project thus far include Roman Shapla of Children's Permaculture Guild in Eugene Oregon, Wesley Roe and Margie Bushman in Southern California, Jude Hobbs of Cascadia Permaculture, Michael Burns of Finger Lakes Permaculture and Northeast US, Lawrence F. London of ibiblio, and Bob Merrill, formerly of Lost Valley Center,

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## BOOK REVIEW

I had a great time reading “Permaculture Pioneers” which is a history of the first 30 years of permaculture in Australia. This is an inspiring book and I highly recommend it to all permaculturists no matter where they live. Of course unless/until it is translated it can only be read by English speakers. The book is composed of articles by 24 leading permaculturalists in Australia with an afterword by Stuart B. Hill. It contains many insights into the foundations of permaculture.

“Permaculture Pioneers: Stories from the New Frontier”. Edited by Kerry Dawborn and Caroline Smith. Melliodora Publishing, Hepburn, Australia. June 2011. Available in the US from Chelsea Green Publishing. \$34.95 retail. Here is the review from Chelsea Green’s website.

“Permaculture is much more than organic gardening. Arguably it is one of Australia’s greatest intellectual exports, having helped people worldwide to design ecologically sustainable strategies for their homes, gardens, farms and communities. This book charts a history of the first three decades of permaculture, through the personal stories of Australian permaculturists. From permaculture co-originator David Holmgren, to ABC TV's Gardening Australia presenter Josh Byrne, the authors span the generations and the continent.

These stories represent the scope, depth and diversity of permaculture in Australia and around the world. They explore some of the influences on those who have embraced it, record milestones and highlight recurring themes. The editors’ contributions and afterword by social ecologist Professor Stuart B Hill frame the stories in terms of transformation of the inner landscape of our minds and hearts, as the critical starting point for the outer change that is needed.

For those whose lives have been changed by permaculture, this book provides a context for articulating and celebrating their own stories and experiences. Even more, it invites each of us, permaculturists or not, to embrace our power in designing our world out of the best in ourselves, for the benefit of the whole earth community.”