

Living Energy Farm

October-November-December 2012 Newsletter

Upcoming Workshops

Living Energy Farm will be hosting two workshops in January 2013. First is a workshop on pruning fruit trees to be held Sunday, January 13th from 1-4PM. This workshop will take place at 912 Woodfolk Drive in Charlottesville, NOT at Living Energy Farm in Louisa. This workshop is free, but donations are accepted.

The second workshop is an overview of green building, which will take place Saturday, January 19th from 9AM-noon at Living Energy Farm. It will be followed by an afternoon work day. Please contribute a few hours of work in exchange for the workshop (donations are also accepted). Lunch will be provided.

2012 Retrospective

As we celebrate our second anniversary on the land, we at Living Energy Farm are taking stock of the past year and looking towards the future. This year has been filled with both accomplishments and challenges. We had a hugely successful seed growing season, thanks to our industrious interns and volunteers. We put into service our solar-powered water system, which is performing better than we hoped it would. We finished designing the house and began construction on our fossil-fuel-free home and kitchen.



We've had setbacks this year, too. Probably the biggest was the loss of Jon, who decided to go back to school. We appreciate all the time and energy he put into Living Energy Farm, and wish him the best of luck. Without Jon, however, we have decided to put our oxen program on hold. With our self-imposed deadline to cut ourselves off fossil fuel only one year away, there are several alternative energy projects that demand our attention- in particular, building a biogas digester for cooking fuel, and converting our tractors to run on woodgas. Instead of working on these projects we have been focusing on time-critical projects like building the house, improving the road, and running the seed growing business.



The intent of Living Energy Farm is to create a small community that uses no fossil fuel on a daily basis, and supports itself economically. We want to show that it is possible to live comfortably and happily without fossil fuel. We are not aware of anyone other project quite like this. Starting a farm is a lot of work. We have given the farming side of our project priority, with much success- this year our income from seeds production is likely to be more than double last year's. The alternative energy side of the farm is not moving along nearly as quickly. But help is on the way, and your support can make a big difference.

Fund Drive!

The global environmental crisis is getting more serious each day. No matter how optimistic or pessimistic you might choose to be, the bottom line reality is that humans are going to be living on this Earth for a long time to come. The question of how people can live, and be truly sustainable, is of great importance. At LEF, we are trying to build the project as cheaply as possible in order to establish a model that is accessible to a maximum number of people. Once we put an operational infrastructure in place, others will be able to imitate us without "re-inventing the wheel."



At this point, we are finding ourselves stretched to do all we need to do to run a farm, build a house and other necessary infrastructure, and develop the renewable energy systems we need. You cannot buy a woodgas tractor or a biogas system for cooking over the counter. Even solar electrical systems are designed to either be grid-tied or based on lead-acid batteries. Our use of solar is unique and demands customization of equipment. We find that we are having to either build from scratch or do a great deal of modification of the renewable energy systems we use. This takes time, skill, and money.

Living Energy Farm has secured about \$60,000 in agricultural income and donations. This might be enough to build the house, making use of free, recycled, and cheap materials as much as possible. But it does not budget for paid labor, and we need help.

Among our friends and supporters is an experienced carpenter, Nina, who would like to work for us if we can cover her modest expenses, which total about \$3,600 a year. If we can raise enough money to hire Nina as construction manager for two years, this should be enough for us to build the house and kitchen. It would free the rest of us to focus on alternative energy development, workshops, and expanding the farm. It would make our vision of a fossil-fuel-free community and farm come into fruition years earlier than it might otherwise.

This is where you come in. We have set a fundraising goal of collecting \$7200 in the first 6 months of 2013 so we can bring in the help we need. Tax deductible donations can be given to Virginia Organizing care of LEF. Other donations can be given straight to LEF. We believe the world needs a model like Living Energy Farm. Please give what you can to help make it happen.

