

Minutes. Interfaith EarthKeepers Hybrid Meeting

December 13, 2023

Attendees: Mark L, Carl B, Bob G, Ron H, Cynthia B, Sue C, Keith O, Ruth D

Moderator: Ron H Minutes: Britni C

Continuing Business

1. Fossil Free Eugene: The group is pushing for other communities in the state, including Portland, to ban natural gas. They are also pushing to have the state sue Northwest Natural because NWN did not sincerely communicate the implications of methane to their consumers. Another state recently voted to electrify new residential buildings.

2. Electrify UO: FFE supports campus advocates in transitioning the University boiler system off of polluting fossil fuels in order to reduce their climate emissions.

3. Divest Oregon: [COAL Act](#) legislation was introduced for 2024. Divest Oregon is planning a Lobby Day in Salem on Jan 10. [Click here](#) to learn more and sign up to participate.

4. Climate Forests: A letter regarding rulemaking was sent to the director of the BLM, USFS Chief, and the White House National Climate Advisor (Departments of Agriculture and The Interior). The next step is to define rule making on protections for mature and old growth trees.

5. Buford Park/Mt. Pisgah/Turtle Flats Earth Stewardship: The volunteer event in November went well. Volunteers removed blackberry vines and planted wild onion bulbs. They have completed 9-10 events now. Mark shared that he feels more connected to the land. The area around the pond is green. Controlled burns were done in the fall, which knocked down a lot of the weeds. They saw white egrets and a family of river otters (signs of wildlife returning). Kurt and Jared, Buford Park land stewards, shared information and updates about the land.

This was the Earth Stewardship group's first event without SOLVE, and they will likely continue to plan events separate from SOLVE. People were having trouble getting registered on the website. Jared is going to work on publicity for events. The goal is to plan four events per year. More people are noticing the work they are doing and wanting to be a part of it. Mark talked to Jared about the possibility of getting a key to the gate and having more autonomy to set up work parties on their own. However, it is helpful to have Jared at the events.

A connection to the book, Nature's Best Hope was highlighted: Studies show that people who spend time in the natural environment are happier and healthier. Sue also shared that members of the Sierra Club Many Rivers group volunteered on McKenzie River Trust land adjacent to Turtle Flats.

6. KEPW Radio Project Update: Mark received an email from the station owner who shared that they are postponing the project, and they plan to start in January. Mark doesn't have a

group of youth yet. He will ask about having a tour of the station for kids. Mark will follow up with Charlotte's parents, as Charlotte had shown a lot of enthusiasm toward the project. Please contact Mark at markl@fcceugene.org if interested.

7. EWEB and Small Modular Nuclear Reactors: A large segment of nations at COP28 committed to increase nuclear energy because they felt that was the only way to meet their emissions targets. It was reiterated that we need to move toward offshore wind in the Pacific Northwest. Some tribes are against wind because of the potential impact on fisheries. Sue shared that there was a large turnout for documentary Atomic Bamboozle at UU. A small nuclear reactor was being pushed by a group out of OSU, and it was backed by Wall Street investors; however, investors and the company pulled out because it was too expensive.

Additionally, they still don't know what to do with the nuclear waste. It takes 10,000 years to break down. EWEB is not seriously considering it. There is also the concern of nuclear proliferation. However, James Hansen, renowned climate scientist, and Bill Gates are pushing for the technology.

8. Earth Care Interfaith Fund for Holiday Giving: Betsy created cards that can be printed to give to friends and family as gifts; these are posted on the [Earthkeepers blog](#). Cynthia advertised this in her church's weekly bulletin. Sue shared at the holiday bazaar. Part of Friends Church trout friendly landscaping grant from the Long Tom Watershed Council came from the fund.

9. Location of Next Meeting: First Congregational Church

10. Leadership: Sue and Ron are going to be stepping down from moderating meetings. Ron will continue to manage the website. Mark may be interested in helping out. Others are encouraged to contribute.

11. Interfaith Earth Summit: Keith contacted the new leader at EMO several times, but they never responded. Sue will follow up. The summit has occurred annually for at least ten years.

New Business

1. Oil Change International Coalition: This includes hundreds of groups. Global Decarbonization Alliance shared a rebuttal letter at COP28 prior to the fossil fuel industry initiative PR. There was concern that heavy representation from the fossil fuel industry was going to influence the outcomes of the conference, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Ron shared that he signs on to initiatives if they align with the group's values.

2. Deep Canvassing as Tool for Changing Opinions: There is now science behind a more successful strategy on canvassing in neighborhoods. They've shown that we can change opinions by up to 40% by establishing an emotional connection with people. Ron attended a seminar on this topic through the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

Education Discussion - Nature's Best Hope by Doug Tallamy - Through Chapter 4

The book is available as an eAudiobook (free) through Hoopla via Eugene Public Library (search the title on the [library website](#)).

Tallamy argues that we need to do more to preserve the ecosystems on the planet. There needs to be more connectivity between places that are being preserved and our own properties. The chapter discusses the psychology of why people like lawns.

Mark: It was interesting to learn the hypothesis that perhaps humans prefer grass because ancient humans felt safer in that sort of setting. It's also a way of showing status and wealth.

Sue: We grow a lot of grass seed in the Willamette Valley. We should be growing food instead.

Keith: Minimizing the vegetation ladder helps reduce fire risk. How do we maintain diversity, which is an important aspect of permaculture design, while also keeping fire risk in mind?

Additional Discussion:

Group membership: Many members are elderly and/or have dropped out. How do we recruit more members? Suggestions included sending out a Doodle poll on the time, advertising at events, and sharing brochures at our congregations. Add this topic to the January agenda. Reach out to Westminster Presbyterian and St. Mary's Episcopopol to recruit members.

Lack of Water on the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation: UU has donated water. Dan Martinez, a member of the tribe, shared information. Their water system has broken down. The federal government is planning to build a new water treatment plant, but it will take approximately three years to complete. The river is so polluted that no one can take water from it. 600 people live on the reservation. Sue shared additional information via email.

Next Meeting: [January 10, 2023 \(online and in person at First Congregational Church\)](#)

Moderator: Sue C

Minutes: Britni C

Education Session: *Nature's Best Hope* - Read through chapter 5