

The Ecosystem Guild Handbook

Working Draft for Discussion

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Introduction

How do we create an expanding and self-organizing cultural system that is not dependent on money, which brings people and land into a bio-cultural restoration process, and grows in response to the emerging wisdom and empowerment of participants?

The purpose of the Ecosystem Guild is to establish and sustain *bio-cultural restoration field stations*. Field Stations are temporary camps where our Guild gathers to study and restore ecosystems and our cultural relationships to place. They typically recur at the same places over time, where incremental efforts enhance ecosystem functions, the habitability of the site, and the skills, knowledge and abilities of participants.

The Guild aspires to operate field stations through the collaboration of independent groups without financial transactions, depending on gifts, reciprocity and shared purposes on conservation lands through the Salish Sea and surrounding bioregions. Wherever possible, the functions of field stations are self-organized so that field stations and the groups that support them can operate and expand largely independent of institutions.

Through this process we may develop an interconnected network of field stations across Puget Sound periodically opening and closing, matching the needs and opportunities of the land. By moving between these sites, anyone can participate in bio-cultural restoration and develop their skills, knowledge and abilities, while restoring biodiversity and hydrology and living a resource-efficient lifestyle.

This Ecosystem Guild Handbook defines our shared agreements and expectations as we form field stations. The Handbook clarifies the desired relationships among hosts, the site stewards, groups, and individuals, and how we expect to make invitations, conduct ourselves at field stations, and interact with the land. The handbook is not a contract and does not imply authority of one individual or institution over another, nor does it represent any promise or obligation by any individual or institution to provide or receive a service. The handbook functions because groups of individuals consent and govern themselves in alignment with the handbook as a shared practice, based on good intentions and trust. The handbook defines our experiment in cultural design.

The goal of this approach is to develop an ecosystem stewardship capability that is distributed, effective, efficient, and culturally-motivated, so it can

operate in synergy with, and exceed the value created by existing governments and the restoration industry. We aim to develop technologies and practices that allow people to become beneficial inhabitants of ecologically important lands, and bring any learning back to their home communities.

This goal is based on the presumption that a government-led restoration industry alone will never be sufficient to restore and protect our bioregion and that development of culturally-motivated stewardship is necessary to reverse ecological collapse. This stewardship work will ultimately and necessarily involve millions and the development and transfer new skills between generations, not as a privilege or vocation, but as a cultural birthright and a sustainable means of living on Earth. Development of culturally-motivated stewardship will depend on new *cultural infrastructure*.

Toward this end, the field station system experiments with “self-organized coherence.” Coherence is defined as “the quality of forming a unified whole”—in this case the collective ability to work towards bio-cultural restoration. Self-organized describes how “overall order arises through local interactions in an initially disordered system” through a body of shared practices and concepts. Through the invitation of a site steward, individuals and groups arrive at a field station with resources and a shared set of practices and concepts, and are thereby able to advance bio-cultural restoration with a minimum of external direction. This handbook describes our practices and concepts.

The Life of a Field Station

The field station host has legal control over parcels of land and is committed to restoring the public trust and building a culture of stewardship. A site steward from The Guild negotiates an access agreement and a management plan with a host. The site steward crafts an invitation to the Guild, defining the specific needs and opportunities offered by a site and the host, and proposes a work plan for the field station. An institutional sponsor may provide the field station with a risk management infrastructure (typically insurance and a volunteer registration and oversight program). Groups and individuals offer to support the field station and describe their interests and capabilities, and commit to attending. The steward distributes responsibility among groups to meet the needs of the field station. Groups arrive as guests with resources and a commitment to the Guild practices described in the handbook. Group stewards join the site steward in forming a stewardship circle to tend the field station. Groups show up on an arrival day and set up the field station. Field days follow a regular schedule including morning work sessions where guests contribute to the work of the field station, and the afternoon is spent in study and self-care

and developing the Guild. The work of the field station is used to develop the traditions and efforts of the Guild. Learning at the field station is recorded in the station log and shared with the Guild through the Salish Sea Restoration Wiki.

Definitions

- **Access Agreement** – A document acknowledged by the host and the steward that describes the agreement for access to a property.
- **Arrival Day** – the day where groups arrive at a field station, where the site and group stewards make sure everything is in order, and we set up camp and have an opening circle.
- **Bio-cultural Restoration** – “the science and practice of restoring not only ecosystems, but also human and cultural relationships to place, such that cultures are strengthened and revitalized alongside the lands with which they are inextricably linked.”
- **Cultural Infrastructure** – the network of stories, beliefs, rituals and taboos that enable an enterprise such as bio-cultural restoration.
- **Ecological Collapse** – where the degradation such as loss of biomass, biodiversity and water retention cause a permanent reduction of carrying capacity from which a social-ecological system will not reliably regenerate without significant intervention.
- **Field Day** – a predictable scheduled field station day with work in the morning and the afternoon spent in study, community development and self-care.
- **Field Station** – A temporary gathering of infrastructure and people for a period of time to do work, study and develop the Guild.
- **Groups** – all guests at a field station are part of a group. A group has a shared purpose and a defined membership, and acts consistent with the handbook.
- **Group Steward** – an individual selected by a group to represent the group at a stewardship circle.
- **Guest** – a person who agrees to participate in a field station as part of a group, with an implication of reciprocal graciousness.
- **The Handbook** – this pamphlet describing field station practices that support self-organization and distributed leadership at field stations.
- **Host** – The legal land owner that grants the Guild rights to inhabit a site and complete work.

- **Institutional Sponsor** – a legal institution that provides the field station and its groups with a corporate identity and helps manage risk and liability.
- **Management Plan** – a document that defines the agreement between the site steward and the host.
- **Public Trust Landscapes** – Under federal and state laws, rules and regulations and local ordinances, landscapes like rivers, wetlands and their buffers are not wholly subject to the whim of landowners, but where the water and ecological functions are regulated for the benefit of rights-holders.
- **Regeneration** – the life process by which organisms and ecosystems renew and sustain themselves, increasing in biodiversity, complexity, productivity and biomass over time.
- **Restoration Industry** – Programs funded by taxes or compensatory requirements that purchase real estate, goods, and services from conservation institutions with the goal of increasing ecosystem services.
- **Roles** – The organization of the necessary work of the field station, so that the work can be shared among groups and individuals.
- **Salish Sea Restoration Wiki** – a decentralized shared open-source bioregional platform for storing and sharing information, managed by the Society for Ecological Restoration and its partners.
- **Self-organized Coherence** – the goal of groups that gather at field stations to act in concert through local interactions around shared purposes.
- **Site Steward** – a group or member of a Guild group that has negotiated access to a field station site, and makes invitations to form a field station.
- **Station Log** – a digital record from a field station, with entries among topics, that supports learning and information retention.
- **Stewardship Circle** – the governing group of a field station that collaborates with the site stewards to make the field station successful.
- **Work Plan** – a proposal defining work created by the site steward, consistent with the management plan described in the invitation.

The Field Station System

What is the simplest shared management system that enables groups of groups to assemble and inhabit land owned by a willing host, to study, protect and restore and interact with regulated ecosystems in a way that is safe and satisfying for all involved?

Field stations are easy to establish and comfortable for all because they have a predictable social and physical norms. The field station is defined by an invitation.

The Invitation

A site steward invites the Guild to form a field station. That invitation honors potential guests by providing information about what they can expect. An invitation uses a standard template which includes:

- **The Schedule** - The invitation defines the duration of the field station, windows for arrival and departure, and any deviation from the standard field station day. The schedule also identifies any event days, where outside guests are anticipated at the field station.
- **Transparent Relationships** - The invitation defines the obligations of the host in managing the site and their relationship with the steward. It describes the duration, purposes, and conditions surrounding the access agreement. The invitation defines the shared goals of the host and steward in relationship to the land. The invitation clearly defines if there will be any exchange of money or other payments between host, steward and groups for playing roles at the field station. We also identify any other restoration industry activities anticipated at or in association with the field station site. The invitation also outlines the liability management strategy, including who is holding insurance or requesting liability waivers.
- **Hospitality** - The invitation defines how infrastructure will be managed and if groups are being asked to play a role in providing infrastructure for the station. By default, groups are assumed to be self-provisioning in terms of infrastructure (see *field station infrastructure* below) meaning that each group should arrive able to meet its survival and wellbeing needs for the duration of their stay at the field station.
- **The Work Plan** – the invitation introduces the general nature and purposes of the work plan, and how the work plan fits into a larger social-ecological vision.

- **Access, Rituals and Taboos** - The field station has a location and boundaries. Each station may have specific rituals and taboos required of the host, or to meet the needs of the Stewards as they offer hospitality.

A Hierarchy of Hosts and Guests

Restoration field stations are designed around a network of roles, which define mutual obligations under a culture of hospitality. The steward is a guest of the host, and groups are guests of the steward, and individuals are guests of the group. Each host honors their guests. Every individual at the field station is a guest of a group, which are the guests of the site steward who is the guest of a host. These roles have legal authority. If guests don't meet their obligations and are asked to leave this request represents the legal authority of the host and the access agreement. While a guest accepts a role and takes on responsibility to serve the needs of the field station, as part of that responsibility, they have an obligation to meet the needs of the site stewards and the host.

The Stewardship Plan

In addition to the access agreement, the relationship between a steward and a host is defined in a stewardship plan. To ensure coherence in our relationship with the land, the steward and all groups that operate on the site share a single plan, and the Guild avoids operating on land where there is not a shared stewardship plan. This shared plan is how we honor each other's work on a site. Part of the shared work of the guild is to develop stewardship plans using standard practices.

When attending a field station we are guests on active conservation and restoration sites. Careless footsteps can damage new plantings. While we encourage exploration, as Guild members we move carefully and mindfully on a site. The steward provides maps to draw attention to areas with special considerations. The steward seeks group input in steward planning as part of study and community development. However, our groups recognize the responsibilities carried by the steward, and that stewardship planning requires building and maintaining a relationship with the host.

Groups of Groups

All guests come to a field stations as part of a group. In groups we are better able to care for each other's needs and can accomplish much more than we can

alone. To fulfill our broader shared purpose of bio-cultural restoration will require culturally-motivated groups.

Field stations attract individuals interested in bio-cultural restoration, but bio-cultural restoration is assumed to be something we do in groups over time. In the absence of coherent groups, all individuals arriving at a field station become one group hosted by the site steward. However this increases the burdens of the site steward, and the work of developing field stations, and thus the importance of group formation remains.

Part of the desired social technology of the Guild is to develop ways that multiple groups can share land over time while working with shared purposes and honoring each other's work. A revegetation process takes a decade, and forests are intergenerational systems. Long-lived and well organized groups are very likely necessary for tending landscapes over time.

Field Station Infrastructure and Strategies

Our field stations depend on a set of social and physical systems. This allows groups and individuals to quickly understand their roles and support the field station. Our goal is for groups to be able to arrive at any station, and quickly fulfill necessary roles, while maintaining the highest standards for the wellbeing of all, and the care for the land.

Our default infrastructure is that groups are “self-catering”—they are responsible for all the infrastructure necessary for their health and wellbeing of their group in a primitive environment. Infrastructure provided by the steward is described in the invitation, and may be limited to a toilet. Field station infrastructure ultimately includes the following elements:

The Entrance – the field station has place that serves as a threshold for the event where groups check in, guests arrive, and information about the field station is visible on an information board. There is usually a bell to signal gatherings.

The Information Board – includes the invitation, identifies the host, steward, groups, contact information, roles, infrastructure, schedules, and maps, and is usually located under shelter near the entrance or the cooking area.

Water – Either there is potable water on site, or groups carry in potable water, or groups purify water on site as they see fit.

Toileting – Urine and feces are contained in a composting toilet or a porta-potty. Urine disposal may be integrated into plantings.

Washing – all handwashing, bathing, and dish washing areas are organized and use only biodegradable materials, with appropriate greywater disposal so that we leave no trace.

Food Storage & Provisioning – we minimize the need for refrigeration, and store food at appropriate temperatures and moisture content to avoid food borne illness.

Cooking – We preferentially cook using solar ovens, locally grown wood fuel or charcoal, biogas, or alcohol burners as part of our fossil fuel independence experiments. There is no shame in using fossil fuel cooking technology. Even where groups are self-catering, spontaneous sharing may occur, but occurs without the involvement of responsibility of the institutional sponsor.

Shelters – we create temporary communal shelters for cooking, study and socializing.

Tools – we bring hand tools for completing the work plan and store them in a shared tool area or in vehicles. Volunteer use of power tools are typically excluded by insurance policies of institutional sponsors. All tools should be checked by the site steward before use. “Trade Groups” may enter into contracts with the site steward or host to bring resources not typical for study groups.

First Aid – We have identified first aid trained individuals and resources on site. The closest emergency medical services are identified in the invitation.

Vehicle Access – we drive and park vehicles in prescribed locations. Vehicle access instructions are included in the invitation and marked on site.

Camp Layout and Paths – we organize foot traffic in paths and areas to minimize trampling, so we can cultivate wild gardens near camp. If pets are allowed by the steward, their management may involve constraining their activity. Layout uses a “stakes or flags on the right” to mark paths while reducing layout effort at a new site.

Sleeping – we organize sleeping areas to provide some separation from group activity and each other.

Youth and Childcare – we may develop support resources and programs for groups with children. Involvement of youth may have implications for the insurance policies of institutional sponsors. Involvement of youth must be considered and described by the site steward before the arrival day.

Shared Study – Field Stations may have multiple teachers who offer study opportunities using open space or some other strategy. There may be simple infrastructure to identify meeting locations, times, and topics, and report results.

The Stewardship Circle

Each group arriving at a field station identifies a member of the group to represent the group at a stewardship circle—this person is called the group steward. The stewardship circle meets every day, even if only briefly, typically after lunch, and as part of coordinating any shared study. The stewardship circle works to ensure that all groups, the stewards, and the hosts are all getting their needs met, and the circle shares information and proposals so the field station can improve. The stewardship circle supports the site steward in resolving conflicts or concerns. The stewardship circle makes at least one daily entry into the field station log book describing any thoughts or concerns. At the end of a field station cycle, each group steward is expected to enter an entry in the station log book summarizing the experience of their group, and identifying improvement opportunities for stewards, groups, or the handbook.

Stewardship circles make decision by consent within its domain ([as defined in sociocracy](#)), while recognizing that the site steward has autocratic authority around the access agreement and stewardship plan negotiated with the host. The role of site steward may be shared.

Gift Economy and the Social Toolkit

Except where trade groups enter into contract with the site steward, or a site steward is able to subsidize groups with supplies and equipment, the field station operates based on a gift economy. There is generally no purchasing or selling of materials or services at a field station. We freely support each other in fulfilling our roles in support of the field station. The exception is where a group makes a provisioning run, and groups collaborate on purchases of supplies.

Groups are anticipated to over time develop proficiency with Open Space Learning, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), the Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) matrix, Sociocracy (as a form of consent-based decision making), and Ostrom's principles of common-pool resource management as a shared tool kit for management of the field station social system.

Arriving At the Field Station

Preferred arrival protocols are described in the announcement. Group members may arrange with the site steward to arrive earlier to help set up camp. Predictability supports the stewards and the work, and groups are expected to arrive on arrival days, depart on departure days, and stay for all field days unless arranged with site steward.

It is useful for a group steward to arrive first, and bring all required registration materials for all group members, or insures that all materials are completed and delivered to the site steward as members arrive. Upon arrival, the group steward meets with the site steward, confirms their attendees, verifies roles, reviews the invitation, the schedule, including the opening ritual, and stewardship circle meeting time, and then supports arrival of all group members.

Once all members of a group have arrived, the group steward is responsible for arranging for a whole-group safety briefing and any other intake processes required by the site steward. Arrival checklists for site stewards and group stewards are provided at the end of the manual.

Youth and Pets

Both youth and pets create special circumstances. Their needs and behaviors are less predictable and they require identification of caretakers. Insurance may have specific requirements for programs that engage youth. In addition, social norms around caretaking of both youth and pets vary among sub-cultures. Within intentional communities, youth and pets are among most common source of community conflict. How we include or exclude youth and pets should be explicitly addressed in the invitation. Including youth and pets in every field station is not required, and is the domain of the site steward.

When a site steward chooses to accommodate youth or pets, and a group decides to bring youth or pets to the field station, they should expect to collaborate closely with the steward and other groups so that their choices doesn't undermine the needs of other guests, and the needs of youth and pets are being met. We expect all agreements around youth and pets may change at any time based on what's happening on-the-ground. A check in on youth and pets should be a standing item in the daily stewardship circle conversation.

Field Station Taboos

In addition to any taboos described in the invitation, the following taboos are enforced at each field station unless explicitly defined by the steward in writing.

- Extending the invitation outside of your group except through the site steward's processes.
- Visiting the field station outside of the field station schedule.
- Entering adjacent properties.
- Arriving or departing without checking in with the site steward.
- Not identifying yourself by full legal name by any participant if asked.
- Working on the land in ways that are outside the management plan.
- Behaviors which meet a commonly accepted definition of violence, intimidation or harassment.

Use of electronic noise or digital entertainment is strongly discouraged, and may be taboo at some field stations, or restricted to certain locations. This principle is based on the hypothesis that many forms of digital entertainment have become addictive, weaken community formation, undermine conversation, increase disconnection from having sensory experiences in nature, and increasingly dominate public life, replacing modes of human interaction common throughout human history. For these reasons, regulating digital entertainment may be an important part of bio-cultural restoration efforts.

Opening the Field Station

Each field station conducts an opening ritual prior to the first field work session ideally on the arrival day, and including all members of all groups, where at minimum:

1. Affirm handbook, hosts, stewards and groups
2. Affirm indigenous land claims
3. Provide site orientation and safety training
4. Affirm roles and infrastructure
5. Review daily schedule and work plan
6. Identify any event days
7. Complete open space agenda creation
8. Resolve questions from guests and groups

Leaving a Field Station

If a group needs to leave a field station for any reason, the stewardship circle assembles for an immediate meeting, and the necessary roles are reallocated among remaining groups, or the field station is closed.

The Field Day

Field stations organize around a daily schedule. The exact timing of a day may vary based on seasonal daylight hours or steward needs, but follows this general sequence:

1. Breakfast
2. Field Work (with mid-session check-in break)
3. Tending Tools and Dinner (often followed by the stewardship circle)
4. Open Space or Shared Learning
5. Supper
6. Evening Activities
7. Quiet Hours

Morning Field Work

Field work is organized by the steward in alignment with a management plan. Typically field work includes assessment, installation, camp development, tending, or monitoring. The scope of field work is generally described in the invitation. The specific work may shift depending on site conditions and the skills of groups.

During field work, guests may be divided into one or more teams, assigned different tasks. Each team starts a field work session with a safety training, where the rules of work and safety strategies are acknowledged. In addition, all participants should verify that they have completed a site orientation and attended the field station opening.

Tending and Dinner

After field work we gather at camp, and there is a natural period where we tend to our tools, change out of field clothing, and prepare food. In winter camps, this is a chance to get dry and warm.

Afternoon Open Space

Outside the field work session, field stations use [open space learning](#) to create opportunities for teaching, learning and recreation. Open space creates a matrix of time slots and locations displayed at a central location (usually the info board). The agenda creation process of open space occurs at the opening session, guests may make requests for open space sessions, and then individuals identify their offerings, and commit to showing up at a time and place. Over the field station, people follow the “law of two feet” and go where they are either contributing or learning, and the agenda is adjusted according to open space methods. Through open space, anyone can create an activity space, and only those who are moved to attend need to attend. An offering may be pre-planned or improvised, and may be a lesson, shared craft, or a conversation.

Evening Activities

Evening typically revolves around a campfire, small group, or solitary activities. Groups bring offerings and traditions to share. Many field stations will be located in places where boisterous noisy behavior undermines relationships with the surrounding community, affects the experience of other guests, or effects local wildlife. However, humans have told stories and shared songs around the camp fire for at least 200,000 years. Quiet hours are defined in the invitation. Noise regulation is in the domain of the site steward.

Keeping Each Other Safe

Restoring an ecosystem, while living away from familiar comforts, while seeking clarity about our roles in ecological collapse can be challenging. We honor the structures of a field station to keep each other safe and to make the environment as coherent as possible. Ultimately the site steward arbitrates issues at the camp, working with groups to resolve conflict. Groups report on their experience at field stations under the hospitality of site stewards.

Problem Solving Traditions

To ensure the wellbeing of a field station, we have a toolkit of specific traditions to solve problems where the experiences and needs of individuals prevent the field station from doing the work of studying, protecting or restoring ecosystems. Some of these terms are borrowed from practices of Quakers (The Religious Society of Friends). The site steward is expected to respond to the unmet needs of their guests, but where there is no threat to health or

wellbeing, that response may be at a time convenient to all participants, often during open space. Those traditions include:

- **Bells** – a field station is usually equipped with a bell at the info board. Different rings can be used to indicate the passing of time (open space), or for the assembly of the stewardship circle or to rapidly disseminate information through the field station.
- **The Buddy System** - people are expected to explore the field station site. Unlike much of the modern world, sites are not regulated for safety. At a new site when the buddy system is in operation, when exploring beyond 100m of camp we travel in pairs, and let your group steward that you are leaving and when you have returned.
- **Clearness Committees** are for when an individual is feeling conflicted and uncertain about their relationships at the field station, they may select individuals, typically from their group who can sit with them and ask and answer questions to come to clarity.
- **Threshing Sessions** are where a decision is particularly difficult because of many strong opinions around an issue. At a threshing session a group can spend time to specifically share observations, feelings and needs, without the pressure of making a decision. A space is maintained between each short statement. Non-violent communication is expected. No decision will be made.
- **Eldering** is when an individual within a group is exhibiting behaviors that are destructive of field station coherence. Their group steward and two other guests selected because of their social weightiness may have a conversation with the individual to clarify expectations and set boundaries.
- **Group Dismissal** - the site steward, acting under the authority of the host may at any time ask an individual or group to leave the field station. Group dismissal is followed by an immediate meeting of the stewardship circle where roles will be reallocated among remaining groups, or the station is closed.

Queries About the Field Station System

1. *How do we enable groups to make prompt, efficient and detailed responses to an invitation?*
2. *What strategies support efficient collaboration around development and sharing of field station infrastructure?*
3. *How can we automate the registration and arrival process?*

4. *How could the development of field station infrastructure work in synergy with disaster preparedness of involved groups and their communities?*
5. *How do we streamline the arrival process to make both parking, vehicle use, and receiving guests more predictable and easy?*
6. *How can groups with access to fewer resources be supported by the Ecosystem Guild community in contributing to field stations or becoming site stewards?*
7. *How can we encourage and support consistency in group stewards to maximize the self-organization of the stewardship circle?*
8. *What are the best ways to both accommodate families with children, while also allowing adult participation to remain deeply focused?*

Bio-cultural Restoration Groups

How can the formation of distributed autonomous groups interested in bio-cultural restoration increase the collection and organization of the diverse resources to support bio-cultural restoration at a bioregional scale?

The group is the core social structure of the Guild field station system. With each group maintaining a level of coherence, they are able to be guests at a field station, and support the coherence of work, without burdening the site steward, cultivate shared knowledge, and become site stewards. Through a consensual sharing of responsibilities among groups, we can create a self-organizing culture of stewardship.

We encourage individuals to return and develop a personal relationship with a piece of land and fellow stewards. We expect that bio-cultural restoration will require people to cultivate coherent groups.

Site Stewardship Apprenticeship

A primary goal of field stations is to cultivate the capabilities of individuals to form groups, become site stewards, and invite the Guild to new field stations. We anticipate six bundles of skills that are necessary to develop field stations.

1. **Ecosystem Knowledge** – This includes understanding the natural history of creatures and the relationships among them and the physical environment. This leads to the ability to develop site assessments.
2. **Regenerative Practices** – This includes the methods, means, timing and sequence of work by which groups can tend ecosystems in ways that are useful for people and other creatures. This includes the use and care of the necessary tools. This leads to the development and implementation of stewardship plans.
3. **Camp Infrastructure** – this includes the development and stewardship of tools and technologies for making it easy for people to gracefully live at a field station, including food, water, shelter and waste management. This leads to the ability to host field stations.
4. **Camp Culture** – How we cultivate an ecologically regenerative, inclusive, safe-enough and rewarding space to explore bio-cultural restoration and enjoy conviviality. This leads to increased participation in field stations.
5. **Social Weaving** – How we cultivate varied relationships among individuals and institutions to develop the shared vision and trust necessary to develop a field station to explore share stewardship of land. This leads to the ability to develop and sustain site access.

6. **Learning** – How do we synthesize and tend knowledge and relationships over time within a community to increase our capabilities and evolve our assessments and plans. This leads to our ability to cultivate the Ecosystem Guild and restore our relationship to the land.

Usually mentorship involves joining a stewardship group in the work of tending a field station. We encourage individual site stewards to establish a mentoring relationship with serious apprentices. The structure of that relationship is developed through the consent of involved parties, but usually involves substantive work over a period of time, leadership in multiple roles at field stations, reflective conversations, contribution to the shared knowledge of the Guild, joining gatherings of site stewards, and developing independent relationships with new hosts.

Group Identity, Membership and Training

Each group establishes a page on the Salish Sea Wiki, providing contact information and basic information about the group's membership, shared purpose and location. This roster of active groups is used by a steward to invite groups to a field station.

In our groups we identify group stewards who become fluent in the handbook, maintain a roster of group members, and lead activities to support group coherence. Groups may collaborate on activities to build skills or develop infrastructure between field stations. These activities may have local benefits, or use resources shared among groups. Groups are supported by using the [Salish Sea Wiki](#) for information sharing, and identifying social media networks that support chat communication without manipulation (like [the Hylo Platform](#))

When developing a field station, a site steward provides an invitation to group stewards using a shared roster. Group stewards respond for their group to the site steward, with an estimate of the number of people that would like to come, number of vehicles, and the capabilities that the group is able to offer to the field station. In this way group coherence supports the site steward in gathering a field station.

Prosocial and Nonviolent Communication

Having a common language for decision making and conflict resolution is critical for maintaining our coherence. While the Guild is open to a wide variety of groups and styles, we propose that group stewards work to develop fluency in two systems that support social coherence, and encourage skill within their group membership: prosocial and nonviolent communication.

[Prosocial](#) is an approach to group formation and collaboration that is based on Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) an approach based in cognitive behavior therapy. In prosocial, ACT is combined with [Dr. Elinor Ostrom's design principles](#) for common pool resource systems. Exercises using the ACT matrix supports groups in noticing differences between personal goals and group goals relative to shared purposes, and in developing strategies for collective management of common pool resources (those resources that are depleted if consumed without restraint.) The purposes of a field station, to allow many people to explore bio-cultural restoration, may be different than the needs of individuals or of groups. It is useful for all participants to be able to consciously reflect on those differences. The social context as well as field station infrastructure, and the surrounding ecosystem are common pool resources, which require guests to contribute to their sustenance and restrain their consumption. The steward and groups responsible for common pool resources can be more effective if they can develop collaborative systems for managing those resources. In this way the field station serves as a microcosm for common pool resource challenges at the watershed, community, or societal scale. Individual and group responsibility for tending the field station, becomes a metaphor for the social coherence necessary to reverse global ecological collapse.

Non-violent communication (NVC) complements prosocial, by providing a more intimate framework by which individuals can differentiate between their personal observations, feelings, needs and requests, and work to remain curious about the experiences of others. [Center for Nonviolent Communication](#) promulgates the work of Dr. Marshall Rosenberg in deconstructing communication to support clear and mutually supportive communication. These practices are commonly applied to support professional mediation. Field stations may commonly offer shared study around prosocial and NVC.

Individuals who, even with support are unable to understand how personal actions may deplete common pool resources, are unable to mediate conflict using NVC, and are unable to meet the needs of their hosts, are likely to be asked to leave a field station.

Types of Groups

Under a bio-cultural model, the restoration field station system aims to restore the “human and cultural relationships to place”. Different groups come to a field station with different capabilities, expectations, needs or interests. Some groups come for the experience, while others may want to establish a durable relationship with a site or a host. Still others are hoping to become better

compensated for providing skilled work. It is the obligation of the site steward to maintain transparent relationships between hosts, stewards and guests at a particular field station. Each field station will develop its own dynamics. The purpose of the manual is not to control those dynamics, but to make them transparent and consensual.

We use a shorthand to define different ways that groups might interact with a field station over time, with increasing negotiation of responsibilities. A host or steward may specifically seek a relationship. A group may propose a relationship.

Ad Hoc Groups – During our development of the guild, groups of individuals often assemble as guests of a site steward, to participate. This is more like a typical volunteer work party, but does not express this vision of culturally-motivated stewardship and bio-cultural restoration.

Study Groups - most groups may regularly participate in field stations to support the common good and to strengthen their group member's capabilities to study, protect and restore ecosystems.

Steward Groups - groups may seek the ability to independently operate a field station, establishing their own relationship with a host through a management plan. Steward groups cultivate field station sites from which they make invitations.

Harvest Groups - a group may negotiate more substantive harvest opportunities in exchange for a more substantive contribution to management of the site. For example a group of basket weavers may manage an area of hazelnut cutting beds, and have harvest rights, while contributing to restoration of the site.

Trade Groups - the group has specific capabilities needed by stewards or hosts, and provides services under a traditional contractual model.

Money and land tenure are particularly influential sources of privilege and power. Everyone brings different forms of capital to a field station. The allocation of privileges or financial exchanges should be explicit and transparent.

Obligation For Subsistence

Each group is responsible for its own subsistence at a field station. Each group should be able to provide emergency subsistence for itself and for others if station infrastructure fails. However redundancy of subsistence infrastructure

also increase effort and cost of attending a field station. Based on the infrastructure at a station or among groups, some subsistence may be shared with consent among groups. This sharing typically beginning with water and sanitation, washing, shelter and fuel, and perhaps followed by cooking, food storage, and tools. Groups should consider where they can provide infrastructure to support field station life.

Group Liability and Risk Management

Our society has compromised our individual ability to act through how we structure risk and liability. A landowner is afraid to invite people in fear that they will hurt themselves and sue for damages. A steward is afraid to invite volunteers for fear that they will hurt themselves and sue for damages. Even if the injured individual doesn't pursue damages, an insurance entity may step in, find fault and make a damage claim. One of the goals of group formation is to strengthen our ability to take responsibility for ourselves as we help others.

At this point, all group members who respond to a field station invitation, become volunteers of the institutional sponsor, who carries insurance, and has a representative at the site, serving as site steward, or who delegate responsibility to a volunteer who through ratifying the handbook operates under the guild vision. An institutional sponsor may have a group. Institutional sponsors will have their own guidelines and rules defined through negotiations with their insurance carriers. The handbook is our agreement about how we support a site steward, whoever they are, and assemble to form a field station. Group formation and our organization under the handbook allows us to become leaders and collaborators rather than institutional volunteers.

Queries about Bio-Cultural Group Formation

- 1. How do we appropriately honor the relationships a site steward develops to access a site, while creating meaningful involvement in management planning and work planning for groups?*
- 2. What level of responsibility do we ask of groups that want to participate in work plan development?*
- 3. How can we organize group readiness to reduce the effort necessary to initiate a field station?*
- 4. How do we balance the interest of new groups in a field station while honoring the deepening interest of groups that have invested in a site?*
- 5. How do we thoughtfully incorporate frameworks like prosocial or NVC into field station experiences without creating burdens or in-group/outgroup dynamics?*

6. *How do we make it easy for groups to support each other in developing capabilities between field stations?*
7. *How do we make it easy for people who want to be part of a group to find each other or groups that are looking for members?*
8. *What are our best strategies for developing insurance options that can be shared among groups that are not dependent on funding for staff to participate from an institutional sponsor?*

More Open Queries

The structures and processes described above are not a random collection of ideas, but are an attempt to respond to a set of underlying queries. How do we develop “bio-cultural restoration field stations” as a uniquely liminal and productive source of inspiration and experience in our peculiar culture? A significant part of developing field stations is to recognize that bio-cultural restoration is a novel concept. However for the vast majority of human evolution we have lived in small groups interacting with ecosystems, eating, working and sleeping together and telling stories around a fire. We recognize and respect the uncertainty that comes with encouraging interaction between groups and ecological systems through novel social structures. The following queries are offered as doorways into the field station concept, and are not given in any particular order of importance.

- 1. How do individuals living dependent on a colonial- industrial society respond to a global ecological collapse created by those same societies?*
- 2. How can people with complex and diverse social and political beliefs collaborate on bio-cultural restoration?*
- 3. How do we create mechanisms by which learning about ecological systems, bioregional patterns becomes a birthright?*
- 4. How can bio-cultural learning be embodied in an experimental lifestyle that reduce consumption?*
- 5. How can we maximize the development and transfer of appropriate technology skills in an industrial consumerist society?*
- 6. How do we teach and honor the skills of laboring when labor has been devalued and is perceived as a marker of servitude?*
- 7. How do we heal wounds that emerge from a society where controlling the labor of others is a marker of success?*
- 8. How do we build bio-cultural restoration efforts that benefit from the restoration industry, but are not dependent on the restoration industry?*
- 9. How do we connect the restoration industry to our broader communities in mutual understanding and support?*
- 10. How do we increase culturally-motivated stewardship of ecosystems?*
- 11. How does the dominance of hierarchical institutions where power revolves around industrial currency affect an individual’s ability to participate in bio-cultural restoration?*
- 12. How do we engender experiences where people can best learn directly from ecological systems?*
- 13. How does deliberation among people result in greater sensitivity to lessons from ecological systems?*

14. *Where is quantitative analysis not useful, and what replaces the scientific method in these circumstances for engendering understanding?*
15. *What are reliable methods for inquiry in groups or in societies that do not depend on quantitative data?*
16. *How can a field station serve as a microcosm for how larger social systems make decisions about how we interact with ecosystems?*
17. *How do you conduct ecological experiments in a collaborative social context?*
18. *How do experiments at a field station inform work to improve ecological stewardship within society?*
19. *How can the personal experiences at a field station support collaboration on bio-cultural restoration upon returning to our lives outside of field stations?*
20. *What are the positive and negative roles of cognitive frameworks like ACT, prosocial, NVC, cynefin framework, three horizons practice, or panarchy theory in building individual or group capabilities?*
21. *How does the use of frameworks either support belonging or exacerbate exclusion?*
22. *How do we embrace the beneficial feelings of solitude in nature in a communal social environment?*
23. *How does using or being around users of electronic devices affect individual experience of attending a field station?*
24. *How does abstinence from the use of electronic devices affect the field station experience?*
25. *How can the kinds of technologies used at a field station enhance our education about ecological processes and our relationships with ecosystems?*
26. *How can field station infrastructure create a useful awareness of waste and pollution in industrial consumer societies?*
27. *What are examples of non-hierarchical institutions that are important in our society?*
28. *How does living in hierarchical institutions affect our ability to experiment interact with ecosystems?*
29. *How does hierarchy affect how we think about our personal responsibility for ecosystem stewardship?*
30. *What aspects of the cultural infrastructure of our birth that we bring to the field station interfere with bio-cultural restoration?*
31. *How can the cultural construct of a field station be used to experiment with cultural norms that affect our collective ability to achieve bio-cultural restoration?*

32. *In what ways have specialization and consumerism affected our relationships with ecosystems?*
33. *How do we create a field station environment that encourages people to see themselves as producers of culture and stewardship?*
34. *How does extensive use of industrial currency in social systems affect how we think about ecological stewardship?*
35. *What “resources” are important in a healthy social system?*
36. *What aspects of a field station are “common pool resources” where unrestrained individual consumption degrades the resource?*
37. *How does the relationship between steward and guests mimic or differ from social structures outside the field station?*
38. *Who is responsible for what happens at a field station?*
39. *How do people attending a field station chose what to do with their free time?*
40. *How does the balance of structured and unstructured time affect the field station experience?*
41. *What is the relationship between responsibility and authority at a field station?*
42. *How do natural relationships between individuals and feelings of belonging affect how people invest in a field station?*
43. *How do people obtain benefit from a field station?*
44. *What conditions encourage people to invest in a field station?*
45. *What do people arriving at a field station want from the experience and how does this vary?*
46. *What is the difference between a guest and a participant and a volunteer, and how is that manifest in field station culture?*
47. *What is the obligation of a guest, and how is that different than the obligation of a host?*
48. *What are the recurring themes of bioregional thinking and bio-cultural restoration that can organize our cognition about what and how we are learning?*
49. *What are the core understandings of social-ecological systems that strengthen the ability to act constructively?*
50. *How does recognition of scale affect the ability of individuals to act on ecological literacy?*
51. *How do we organize within field stations, a distributed learning process where anyone with knowledge is a potential teacher, and students can build relationships with the teachers that will meet their needs?*
52. *How can Bruner’s spiral curriculum concept support self-organization of learning and knowledge at a field station?*

53. *How do we structure self-directed learning journeys so participants can pull knowledge and experience from the field station?*
54. *How can we create accomplishments by which those educated through field stations can be recognized by employers?*

Group Steward Checklist

The following checklist is to support group stewards in preparing for and arriving at a field station in a way that supports the site steward:

- Maintain workgroup page (on Salish Sea Restoration Wiki)
- **Respond to the invitation** with:
 - the number of guests,
 - the number of vehicles,
 - the needed number of tent sites
 - the roles you are able to fill, and
 - estimated arrival time(s).
 - Any arrivals or departures outside of expected times.
 - Any requests around youth or pets
- **Provide each guest** with:
 - the invitation,
 - the handbook,
 - the registration package, and
 - the safety briefing
- **Gather completed registrations** as required by the site steward
- **Arrive first** on the arrival day and meet site steward
- **Deliver the group roster** and registration packages,
- **Support group** with finding camping and parking
- **Bring your group to the opening**
- **Check for wellbeing** of your groups
- **Attend daily stewardship circle** conversations or a called circle (by bell)
- **Enter a group feedback** into the Station Log after the event.

Site Steward Checklist

- **Negotiate site access** and institutional sponsor
- Define workplan and get approval from the host
- Develop and distribute invitation
- **Layout site prior to arrival**, including
 - Safety inspection
 - Parking
 - Sleeping
 - Kitchen (& washing)
 - Gathering (fire and fuel)
 - Info board (Bell, signage, manual, invitation, maps)
- **With each group steward** upon welcoming
 - Collect the group roster, scan and post
 - Offer sleeping areas
 - Schedule and conduct site orientation/safety training
- **Host field station opening**
 - Affirm handbook, hosts, stewards and groups
 - Affirm indigenous land claim
 - Repeat site orientation/safety overview
 - Affirm group roles and infrastructure
 - Review daily schedule and work plan
 - Identify any event days
 - Complete open space agenda creation
 - Resolve questions from guests and groups
- **Host opening of each work session**
 - Clarify work leads for each work period
 - Ensure use of safety training checklist
 - Check for name tags
- **Host the daily stewardship meeting (typically over lunch)**
 - Record work accomplished
 - Coordinate any shared learning
 - Resolve any unmet needs in the field station
- **Resolve any problems or needs**
- **Take care of yourself so you don't burn out.**