



BACK - TO - THE - LAND

project

Newsletter #15

2025

Dear advisory board and friends,

We hope that this Newsletter finds you in good spirits and health!

This 2025 issue is particularly meaningful, as it marks the 7th anniversary of the [Back-to-the-Land \(BTL\) Project](#). In 2021 the BTL project became a founding member of the [Counterculture History Coalition \(CHC\)](#). This transatlantic coalition of scholars, community archivists, artists, activists, and first and second-generation back-to-the-landers is dedicated to preserving and presenting counterculture history. This anniversary is therefore less about nostalgia than about recognizing a collective trajectory—and the many hands, voices, and places that have shaped it.

Since our last Newsletter, both the BTL Project and the CHC have continued to expand in scope and momentum. Below, we are pleased to share several key developments from the past year.

A major update for the BTL Project this year is the arrival of [Kate Harnedy](#), photographer and community archivist based in Deadwood, Oregon. Already an active CHC member and a long-time collaborator, Kate officially joined the BTL Project in 2025. Her photographic work and archival practice—deeply rooted in place, memory, and lived experience—bring a vital visual and community-centered dimension to our ongoing research on rural countercultures and back-to-the-land trajectories. Together with CHC affiliates Jerry Joffe and Felisa Rogers, she is also actively developing a Deadwood Oral History Project based on interviews with first-generation back-to-the-landers. We are thrilled to deepen this collaboration and to integrate her work more fully into the project.

In 2025, the CHC entered a phase of consolidation and growth, marked by the arrival of several new individual members and projects, as well as strengthened transatlantic ties. New additions included Alicia Bay Laurel—activist, artist, and writer, and a key countercultural figure notably through her book *Living on the Earth*; Sylvia Amar, an independent researcher in architectural history (Marseille, France); Mara Folse, community archivist with Eugene’s historic SCA cooperative; Felisa Rogers, writer and second-generation back-to-the-lander from Deadwood, Oregon; and Michelle Aldrich of the California Cannabis Historical Society (San Francisco, California). Archival initiatives were further reinforced with the arrival of the GI Press Project (Berlin, Germany). The coalition also welcomed Karie Crisp, a Bay Area-based PhD candidate researching bioregionalism, and Alan Smart, a Berlin-based researcher, further expanding CHC’s interdisciplinary and international network.

For the second consecutive year, the main in-person event jointly held by the BTL project and the CHC was participation in the Oregon Country Fair (Veneta, OR, July 11–13), which again stood out as the central public event of summer 2025.

On Saturday, July 12, a Spoken Word Session was hosted at Chez Ray’s stage. CHC affiliates Jerry Joffe, Paolo Stuppia, Kate Harnedy, Carla Newbre, and Terry Baxter shared stories and reflections on preserving and celebrating the living history of the counterculture. Exchanges with the audience—through questions, comments, and shared memories—highlighted the intergenerational vitality of these histories.

On Sunday, July 13, joined by Brian Hill and several first-, second-, and third-generation counterculturists, we gathered at the Still Living Room for an open discussion circle. This informal space allowed participants to connect, reflect, and collectively explore the ongoing relevance of countercultural practices across communities and generations. We warmly thank everyone who participated and contributed, and we look forward to returning next year.

On the research front, Paolo continued to publish and present work focused primarily on counterculture, bioregionalism, and contemporary social movements. Brian pursued his long-term work of organizing and activating

parts of his extensive archive. Kate continued her photographic work on Deadwood, alongside her oral history project, whose public presentation is expected next year (check our social media for more updates).

In this Newsletter issue, you'll find a new article by Brian on bioregionalism and present global perspectives, a fresh Denny Story—this time told by Susan Oneglia—as well as archival materials, updates from our networks, and links to our social media. Thank you, as always, for your continued support, attention, and engagement. After seven years, the Back-to-the-Land Project remains very much a collective endeavor, rooted in place, history, and ongoing relationships.

Warm regards,

Paolo Stuppia, Kate Harnedy and Brian Hill



CHC open discussion circle @ Oregon Country Fair, OR, July 13, 2025 (© Kate Harnedy)

***BTL Project Mission Statement: A collective ethnography of the
BTL movement in Northern California & Oregon***

Countercultural changes that took place in the 1960s led thousands of youth to leave cities and experience alternative lifestyles in the countryside, particularly in Northern California and Oregon. This “back-to-the-land” (BTL) movement hasn’t stopped since, and today 3 generations of “Back-to-

the-Landers” have succeeded. From the hippies in the late 60s to the new “off-gridders” of the 2020s, they have all contributed to the revitalization of Northern California and Oregon rural communities and economies. They have also actively originated and diffused environmentalism for the last half century. Finally, they have begun relationships with other local groups, including Native Americans and grass roots right communities, renewing and revitalizing together “place-based” cultures which are very different from the mainstream Western culture.

The pioneers of the BTL are still alive, although their numbers are rapidly diminishing: our project will do its best to allow them to give first hand descriptions of their experiences during the years following the 60s. Moreover, the kids and grandkids of these first Back-to-the-Landers are now adults and also have their stories to tell about how times changed as their parents left cities and returned to more natural ways of life. Lastly, our research will include new settlers and homesteaders who have moved into the countryside or the wilderness more recently. We called this collaborative effort, sharing first-hand experiences and academic expertise, a “collective ethnography”. By recording and preserving the stories of the original participants of a movement which has simultaneously spread in the United States and seemingly around the rest of the world (particularly in Europe) and by analyzing its cultural evolution, the BTL project hopes to bring a sort of living history into classrooms, media and art.



Kate Harnedy speaking @ Chez Ray's Stage, Oregon Country Fair, OR, July 12, 2025 (© Paolo Stuppia)

Counterculture History Coalition Mission Statement (Excerpts)

We members of the Counterculture History Coalition (CHC) believe that the health of our communities and the planet itself will depend upon knowing our past, in particular the experiments in ways of living, doing business and political organizing born in the Sixties. Because the Sixties generation is dying off, it has become urgent to save their history of back-to-the-land homesteading and small-town life, and the organizations and actions they undertook to restore and protect forests and rivers, to develop and promote organic agriculture, and to establish community-based healthcare, education, civil rights, media, crafts, and performing arts.

Vision

To gather, organize and curate exhibits from Affiliates' collections, which showcase the various aspects of Counterculture values and methods of harmonious living, community self-reliance and individual inventiveness and resilience arising out of the Counterculture of the 1960's. These displays could be incorporated into events, conferences, interpretive centers or on-line.

Coalition Objectives

1. Combine and offer existing Coalition Affiliates' materials as a unified resource. a) By compiling a comprehensive listing of Coalition materials to date. b) Seeking funding to refine a combined Coalition listing with an online index and "finding aids" for its content. c) Seeking funding to equip each Coalition location with facilities to provide access to the public and researchers.
2. Coordinate funding for Affiliates to support gathering and cataloging additional materials including documents, media, oral histories and ephemera.
3. Develop portable systems for the presentation of CHC materials.
4. Develop a method of accepting new items from donations or acquisitions and funneling these materials to the most appropriate Affiliate's collections.





Oregon Country Fair, July 12, 2025 (©Kate Harnedy)

Entering the Great Mother Global Culture phase #2

Bioregionalism first appeared as a spontaneous social movement in the early 70s thanks to Peter Berg and Judy Goldhaft of San Francisco. They were part of the Diggers who were a part of the early back to the land groups that were rooted in the CounterCulture of the 60s. But within the Diggers, Weather Underground, woman's movements, ... were roots to the Beatniks, Bohemians, Existentialists and many more leftist groups who were standing up against the exploitation endemic to the Industrial Revolution's capitalist market economics and the class based nation state itself. Gary Snyder's poems called for us to recognize and be a part of the "place" where we live. Peter Berg suggested that it might be time to "re-inhabit" the "bioregions" where we chose to live*.

50 years later, bioregionalism has spread around the globe as a practice and throughout academia as a pretty non-political movement. Recently bioregionalism is finding new support in Europe, especially France. And in the US there is new energy in the movement. This may be partially due** to a newly flourishing organization called R3-o.orgbioregioning which has developed a global network that carefully includes bioregional groups, groups that are bioregional in practice, as well as indigenous groups. In one of the early R3-o Confluences a wonderful presentation by Lyla June finally taken a huge step toward bringing together the formerly mostly white bioregional community with indigenous peoples by expressing that indigenous peoples were the first bioregionalists. [R3-o](https://R3-o.org) bioregioning has a great internet presence, and it is planning another global [Bioregional Gathering](#) this time in the Cascade Peninsula of Washington State in September of 2026 in the town of Port Townsend, a temperate rain forest where you will find some of the best oysters in the world.

Let us pray that as our first global culture de-centralizes/localizes more of the groups leaving declining urban centers will participate in bioregional localization, and that communities we are in coalitions with are invited to participate in heretofore unrelated communities - like land back natives, van culture people, RV networks, off-the-gridgers, the homeless, dot-com-ers and rural traditional communities who are learning to enjoy re-inhabiting and living in mother nature's balanced life. It should also be noted here that back-to-the-land communities also cross political lines like RVCC (Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition) which was significantly influenced by the well remembered and respected Jonny Sundstrum(1). Also, and in this same vein, survivalist (see *The Survivor* magazines of Kurt Saxon) groups and communities - viz., [Communities](#) - are at least cousins of the back to the land movement. We of the BTL Project hope that the first person stories and archives we present will support the transition to localization from the lessons learned following the 60s, and that back to nature is common enough ground that will allow diversities among groups and communities to be respected as we build a new and natural bioregional unity.

Something that seems to have received little recognition as a result of the social changes of the 60s Counterculture and the 70s Back to the Land Movement is that the Western world view of exploiting and attempting to control Mother Nature is witnessing a 180 degree turn around. World views of cultures may be the souls of cultures. They usually evolve from precedence. The world views of hunting and gathering bands saw little change for hundreds of thousands of years. The world views of tribes and tribal nations evolved slowly and orderly over millennia, based greatly on climate change, whereas cultural change for civilizations/nation-states transpire geometrically faster. This change in world view which is as sure as the seasons, the tides and birth itself, is taking place most directly from the CounterCulture movement of the 1960s in all its ramifications and the Back to the Land movement of the 70s and following. And it seems that part of the new perspective (or new paradigm, if a worn *cliché* can help) is that we are in the process of beginning to understand how spontaneity and spirit combine with science and the material world - we are as, the first literate, global culture, and we may be becoming conscious of our spiritual spontaneity, perhaps.

The first civilizations began rising and falling about 14k years ago, however, many of their cultural innovations were carried on to developing cultures. For example, in a few hundred years the Egyptian culture spread to Europe through Greece. Mayan and Incan civilizations followed similar paths in the Americas, and now empires begin and end in decades - look at Japan and now Korea. Each succeeding civilization/empire seems to rise and fall faster than the one preceding it. To further complicate this progression, now, one civilization, the Western civilization, even if China or India is running it, is the civilization that rose from Europe with roots to Egypt (and perhaps to India), achieved global dominance with the US and is now being carried on by China and soon India.

If we trace the stages of human cultural evolution through their various phases, i.e., kin related *bands* of extended families, next the well integrated group of kin groups called *tribes* and *tribal nations*, although nowadays “*communities*” is the name preferred by many family based societies, and the now global *nation state* which is no longer family based, but rather is class based and hierarchical, usually male dominated, although some countries still have a token mother such as the queen of England. Perhaps the central distinction between nation state and tribes and bands is that nation states are class based and have exploitative world views, whereas tribes and bands have reciprocal world views and are family based. But it should also be noted that the ruling classes of nation states are very often family based which allow powerful families to remain in control of the lower classes whose families have contracted to man and woman nuclear families and even single parent families which are dominated by hierarchically competitive social classes. Could it be that one of the great social impetuses for the world shaking social movements of the 60s and 70s was the almost complete contraction of the family in Western culture? Most marriages today end in divorce and have done so for about the last of a half century. Individualism seems to be our dominant form of social life today. Few would argue that our culture is not broken and crashing. Anthropologists and sociologists say the societies and cultures cannot exist without families - we are almost there.

Marx in the mid 1800s said that the revolution against capitalism will be world wide. Marshall McLuhan (a way under-appreciated social scientist) said that media would ultimately democratize the world because the truth will be known. One of McLuhan's students, L. Clark Stevens has a short book called *EST* (Electronic Social Transformation and the Latin verb 'to be') which nicely summarizes McLuhan. When Tom Wolfe in *Acid Test* asked Ken Kesey why he and the Pranksters were doing psychedelics so much he said, 'because we are trying to live in the now, but we can't quite get there". In other words, the Pranksters and for that matter the psychedelic movement was living in the past and future, but not the *now*. Could the 60s have been a preview for what is happening today? Thanks to Trump for doing such a good job of destroying a crashing empire, so that the real envisioned *now* that Ken Kesey envisioned can happen. It might also be recalled that Sartre, probably in *Being and Nothingness*, said that history and the future would be dissolved into an eternal present. This seems like a good summary of what at least some Existentialists envisioned. Like, because there is no place on earth that is not colonized by the Monopoly capitalism, there is no place for a new empire. And, particularly, there is no time left between the rise and fall of civilizations, look at China and India. There's no more time, we've run out of time, there's no more history nor future. A new concept of time is immanent, and that is the new world view portrayed by the 60s. Existence is the new perspective. The new world view might be a reset of previous world views all the way back to when farming was developed, mostly by women, but then men took over and made towns, cities, and social classes while family based cultures shrank until today when we end up with a, male dominated monocultural world of individuals. So of course we need a reset, and of course, the Great Mother should bear it as she did during the archeological formative periods following

the Würm Deglaciation, when beautiful women like the "pretty ladies" of the Tlatilco period in Mesoamerica (Google; "Tlatilco figurines 1500-800 BC") created perhaps a very, very happy matrifocal time in the human cultural story.

Will Kesey's *now* be the first pan-global crash of civilization. Let's hope it can be a transition carried by the media - like, "this revolution will be live-streamed". Hopefully it will usher in a heavily feminized sea of change.

What do you think of women as vital stewards of the reintroductions of spiritual life during this immediate post imperial epoch? After 14k years of male dominance a feminine balance seems certainly to be in order. And don't you think that pantheism should rule so we can learn to appreciate our total biodiversity?

The CounterCulture and BTL brought to the table a whole new agenda for culture change, one never seen before - without precedence. The world view of Western civilization was spun like Timothy Leary's LSD roulette wheel, and it stopped 180 degrees opposite of where it was spun from. Instead of increasing attempts to control and dominate nature, the psychedelic communities that have continued since the 60s have instead completely turned around and looked to the First Peoples for guidance, and they have seen nature (and women) not as a material resources to be conquered, controlled and exploited, but rather we see the Great Mother as the provider of all life, and some of us, particularly men, are beginning to accept our mission here on earth as being that of stewards of nature, to care for her and serve her needs for health and happiness. Let us pray that the new stage of human cultural evolution will be where the Great Mother will guide humans' return to a future of globally unified bioregional life in which we achieve harmony with the natural world again, where bands, tribes and reconfigured nation states, e.g., tribal nation states, become one with the natural and spiritual Great Mother who gives life to our world powered by the Sun.

Spirit has begun to recover from its psychotic schizophrenia of market capitalism, and it is now even becoming a therapy for the PTSD of crushed souls for the family-less class hierarchy of material competition run mostly by men of too little social grace and who care only for material self-aggrandizement. The newly emerging culture, seems to have begun to understand that the Great Mother has been assaulted and wounded by the religion of science, and that the turn around that was born of the 60s can indeed offer new hope for the future by combining the wisdom and knowledge of the First Peoples, understanding the needs of Mother Earth and using the powerful technologies developed by Western culture to serve, instead of to exploit, and to regenerate the Great Mother, beholder of the greatest wealth of all, world health(2).

* Gary Snyder, about 40 years ago, said in one of the Planet drum flyers (nd) that, "I work with a group called Planet Drum that has a magazine called 'Raise the Stakes' and it's one *the* centers of the emerging planetary ecological

movement.” And on the same flyer *bioregion* is defined as “(life region), a part of the earth with similar patterns of plant and animal life, and similar climatic and geological characteristics.” *Reinhabitation*, also on the same flyer is said to be, “learning how to live-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation”.

**. It is also due to the great job Trump is doing at abruptly and unceremoniously tearing down the final stages of our corrupt and dying empire. He is sparing at least the US from a violent revolution, or so it seems.

1. <https://rewildingwonder.substack.com/p/people-at-home-in-a-place>

2. Ranil Senanayake’s Earth Restoration forum has taken the first steps toward making health our greatest value. See the PDF *Realizing the Value of Photosynthetic Biomass: The Role of Analog Forestry*, available upon request.

Brian Hill



Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, CA, Summer 2025 (©Kate Harnedy)

Denny Stories: From Manhattan to the New River

Born in and growing up around “the Big Apple”, Manhattan, I transferred to Chico State at age of 21. Hitch hiking, I was picked up by a handsome hippie cowboy in an old panel truck, who’d just purchased a mining claim of the New

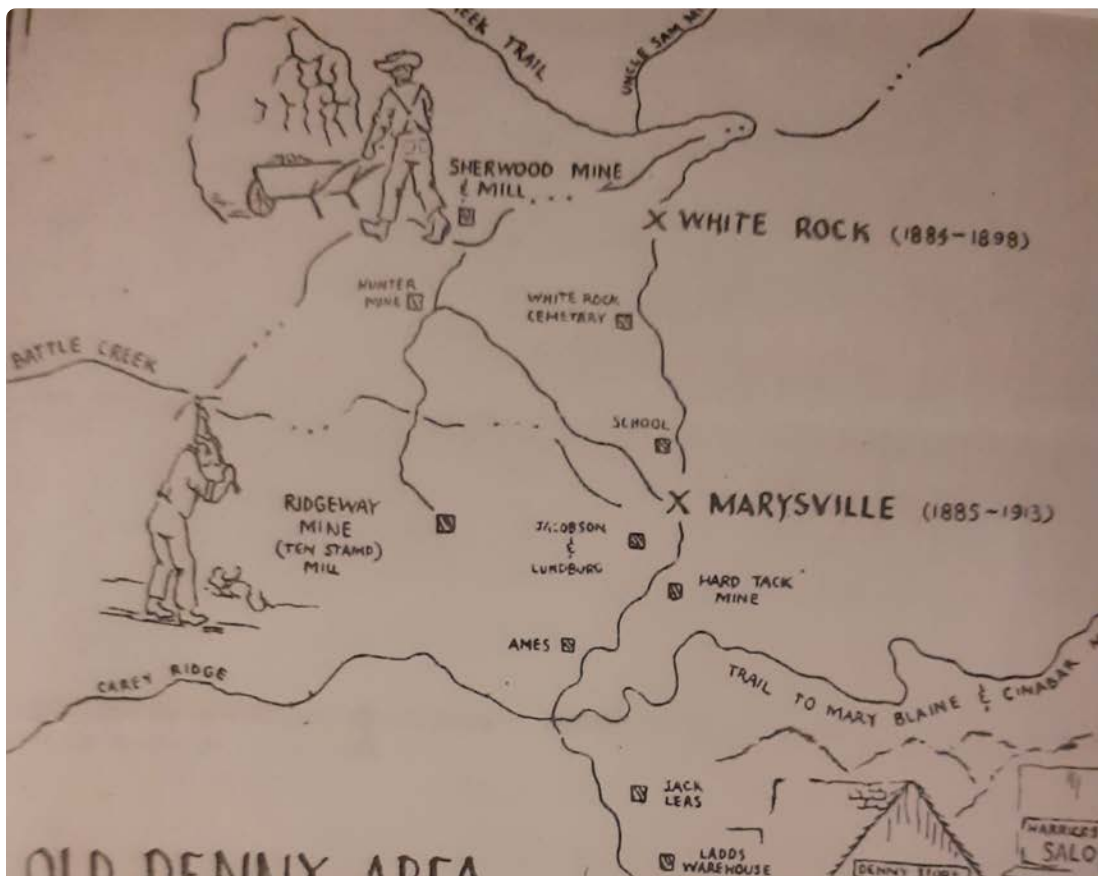
River. We moved up there into a tiny tool shed on Dyer Creek claim in late December 1970, and were given a small wood cookstove by the previous owners, just before the first snowfall in January. I learned to cook on this tiny stove for myself and 3 men with commodities- government food- Bulgar, oats, processed cheese, peanut butter, etc. While they discussed hunting, guns and small town sports, I cooked, colored pictures, embroidered and played my violin.

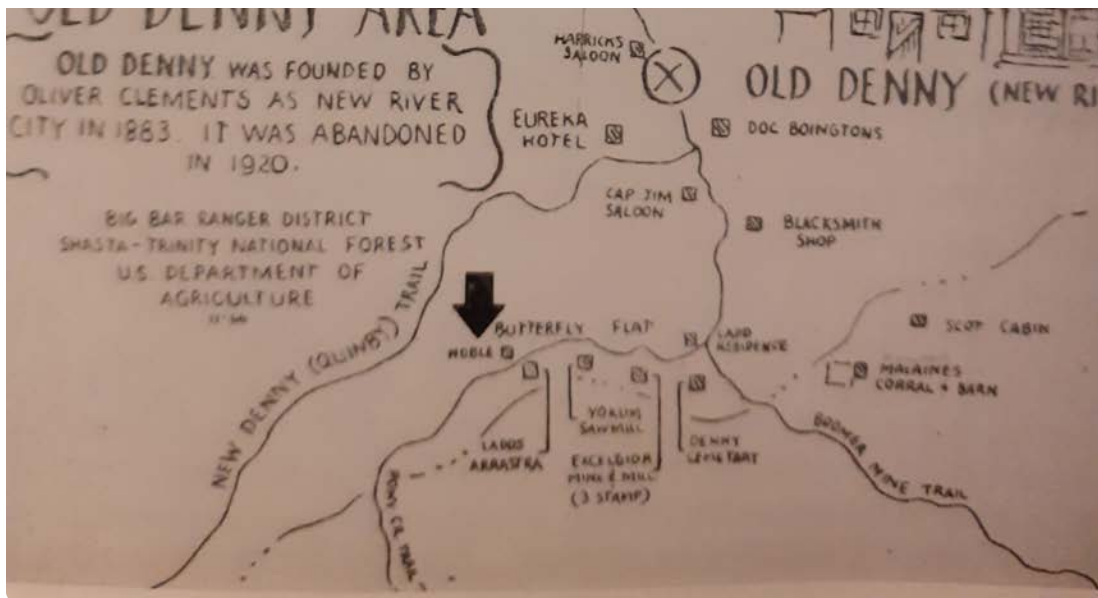
There was an old, heavy plywood trolly to cross over the river, just above the start of "the gorge ", which powerfully raged in winter, 5 miles down to the larger Trinity River. We pulled ourselves across and uphill to a huge Doug fir on the other side and hiked a short and lovely green trail to Dixie Creek claim, where we'd relocate in springtime. (I recall the difficulty and strength it took to "land" that trolly, carrying all our goods, especially our very pregnant goat, Sarah Jane, across the river, to wheelbarrow them to our new cabin- a funky converted chicken coup next to a 100 year old crumbling log cabin.)

Our home was rich with pure fresh flowing water, abundant firewood,(lots of sawing, chopping, splitting, carrying), wildlife, wild plants and fungi to forage, and miles of gorgeous river and sacred forests. Blessedly, there was on old orchard planted by Bob Robards, who originally found and staked that gold mining claim, when helping build Hwy. 299. He was an avid homesteader, and gold miner, particularly upriver at Lonesome Coyote. It's said that he put his nieces and nephews through college during the Great Depression with his nuggets. The lure of gold was a large for the men. I was always more interested in Nature and the land, with very little interest in mining.

Thank you,

Susan Oneglia





1966 Denny Map, retrieved from a local book, 2021 (© Paolo Stuppia)

Links section

Two recent pieces highlight both the historical impact and the contemporary relevance of countercultural worldviews.

A post recalling Timothy Leary evokes [the countercultural “explosion” of the late 1960s and early 1970s](#), a moment that helped shift Western perspectives away from domination and exploitation toward ideals of harmony, love, and expanded consciousness—arguably one of the most significant global worldview transformations of the modern era, whose full implications are still unfolding.

A related [Guardian article](#) examines a case in Italy involving a family living in the woods, framed by authorities as “kidnapping.” Read through the lens of the Back-to-the-Land movement, it underscores how alternative, ecologically oriented ways of life continue to clash with state institutions, reminding us that countercultural aspirations remain living—and contested—practices.

How to find our Previous Newsletters

You can find them either on our "X" (Twitter) account ([here](#)) or by clicking on the following links:

[Newsletter #1](#) - January 2020

[Newsletter #2](#) - February 2020

[Newsletter #3](#) - March/April 2020

[Newsletter #4](#) - May/June/July 2020

[Newsletter #5](#) - September/October 2020
[Newsletter #6](#) - November/December 2020
[Newsletter #7](#) - First semester 2021
[Newsletter #8](#) - Second semester 2021
[Newsletter #9](#) - First semester 2022
[Newsletter #10](#) - Second semester 2022
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[Newsletter #14](#) - Second semester 2024

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**Brian Hill, Project Director, Trinity
County, CA**

Brian Hill, all but dissertation for PhD in Cultural Anthropology, New School for Social Research, NY, MA Archeology in Mexico, BA Sociology. He has had the good fortune to be a participant of the birth of BTL homegrown movement in Northern California and be present through its 50+ years of struggle to legalization.

[Write to Brian Hill](#)



**Paolo Stuppia, Cal Poly Humboldt &
University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne,
CESSP**

Paolo Stuppia, Ph.D. in Political Science from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, sociologist and anthropologist, associate researcher at CESSP and Cal Poly Humboldt, has worked for 15 years with the French back-to-the-landers in the Pyrenees.

[Visit his homepage](#) and/or [write to Paolo Stuppia](#)



**Kate Harnedy, Photographer and
Community Archivist, Lane County, OR**

Kate Harnedy, photographer and community archivist, has worked over 15 years on communal living, the counterculture and social justice in the Pacific Northwest Coastal Range.

Visit her [homepage](#) and/or [write to Kate Harnedy](#)





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<https://chcoalition.org>

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