

Introduction

In dramatic contrast with our now socially fragmented and alienated society, as the perfect storm of global-scale collapse processes continue it seems certain that over time people will increasingly find it crucially important to work together in small, mutually supportive groups. For this reason, some readers of this blog may have an interest in this Friendship Agreement, which people can customize for their particular situation. This example Agreement focuses on sharing land between friends and should seem self-explanatory to the reader. Given time and stress, conflict will always occur within groups. The motive for the Agreement involves minimizing conflict to the greatest extent possible and, when it occurs, using the conflict creatively to strengthen the group not weaken it. If anyone would like an M.S. Word copy of this file to customize for their use, I will send you one by email. As always, I remain open to others telling me about any errors they find and making suggestions for improvements.

---Bud Nye

Unincorporated Non-profit Association Friendship Agreement

By Bud Nye, Tacoma, WA, February, 2014.

We make this Friendship Agreement this _____ day of _____. 20____, by and between _____, _____, _____, and _____ whereby we agree as follows:

1. **Property description.** The purpose of this Friendship Agreement involves specifying the rights and obligations of the undersigned Friends with regard to that certain real property situated in the County of _____, State of _____, described as:
2. **Agreement purpose.** The purpose of this Agreement further involves specifying the rules and regulations regarding the use and enjoyment of said property by the Friends and Friend-sponsored visitors. The Friends acknowledge that they cannot foresee and avoid all potential conflicts, but wish proactively to minimize conflict to the greatest extent reasonably possible. In this agreement, the term "Friend" includes couples, whether married or not, or same gender or not. The Friends agree to ensure that any visitors they may sponsor have awareness of and agree to behave in accordance with these agreements.

Word meanings. "Friend" refers to those who sign this Agreement. Though we do not believe that humans "own" any part of Earth, here "Owner" refers to the legal owner of the property as designated by our society: _____.

3. **Association purpose and vision.** Recognizing that all individuals have different strengths, weaknesses, background knowledge, skills, and interests, and that groups that cooperate effectively with each other by pooling their various knowledge, skills and strengths have a greater probability of adapting, surviving, and thriving, the Friends have formed this association for five main reasons: (1) to provide them with a landbase rich in fauna, flora, and water that gives a location for developing and practicing knowledge and skills related to natural building, permaculture, and rewilding activities, (2) to provide a rural place to live during the rapidly unfolding economic, social, global warming, ecological, peak oil, and nuclear collapses now globally well underway, hopefully softening the shock of the transition away from high-energy, industrial civilization, (3) to provide a means whereby group members can support one another with various friendship strengths counterbalancing other's weaknesses, (4) to develop and practice the small group interpersonal, living, and working

skills and knowledge that will become ever more critically important as the social, ecological, and energy collapses continue posing their life or death stresses and struggles, and (5) eventually to practice rewilding skills in a nomadic way in other locations, such as

Global warming and Near Term Extinction (NTE). Especially given the near certainty of NTE within about the next 25 years, we feel a longing to down-scale our lives to the minimum within the limits of daily sunlight. We do not do this with a survivalist mentality because we think that few, if any, humans will survive the accelerating global changes now well underway, and we do not wish to survive in order to return to this insane Culture of Death. Instead, our motives lie more in what feels like a deep, biological need to reconnect with Earth in important ways before we die while also minimizing the harm that we do to Earth through our high-energy, industrial lifestyle. We consider life on Earth the ultimate moral value—*all* life, not only or mainly human life. We do not consider humans superior, dominant, nor at the top of an alleged Great Chain of Being, but instead an integral part of an infinitely complex, self-organizing network of life driven by the sun's energy flow. Thus, minimizing our negative impact on the planet supports our fundamental moral values.

4. **Shared property expenses.** The Friends agree to pay an equal, proportional amount of the annual expenses related to the property, including potential taxes, assessments, fees, liability and other insurance, maintenance, road repair, and other possible annual property-related costs. The Owner will pay these expenses as they occur and inform the Friends of the expense. The Friends will reimburse the Owner their portions of the expenses in a timely way, normally within 30 days of receipt of notification.
7. **Friendship changes.** Based on the decision making processes described below, new Friends may join the Association at any time, or a Friend may leave it.
8. **Shelter.** This Agreement may secure for each Friend the right to construct a small habitation on said property, but does not guarantee it, if the habitation consists of a tent or involves natural building principles and uses locally available materials to the greatest extent practical while using a minimum of conventional, manufactured, high embodied energy materials and tools, and all Friends agree on the location and construction materials and methods. Tents of various kinds will probably provide the first shelter(s). All building requires consensus approval with regard to the exercise of said right to the extent that the Friends may consider aesthetic, environmental, and other considerations relevant to the location and construction of said structures. The Friends foresee a “tent-based, nomadic, rewilding camp” in the short term with the possibility of eventually constructing one or more communal and/or separate permanent buildings for habitation and storage similar to those presently found at Cob Cottage Company near Coquille, Oregon, while keeping size and count to a minimum, minimizing ecological impact on the area, and minimizing the use of high embodied energy materials such as steel, aluminum, plastics, concrete, rubber, manufactured wood products, and so on. The Friends intend to emphasize shared, communal living, but do not rule out individual habitation. The Friends agree that all permanent or semi-permanent buildings, tents, storage sheds, or other structures will have a color and finish that blends into the surroundings as naturally as possible, not clashing. They further agree that to the greatest extent practical, all construction will make maximum use of locally available, low embodied energy, natural materials. Thus, the mode of construction might include Paul Wheaton's “Wofati” and similar earthen berm structures, but probably not an “Earthship” design because of its liberal use of high embodied energy materials such as steel, rubber, concrete, plastics and so on with their high energy use transportation costs. Earthships fall near the fuzzy border of the definition of “natural building”—but clearly outside of a definition based on locally available, natural materials. The Friends agree to

discourage the use of brightly colored temporary tents, but do not rule them out for occasional, short-term use.

9. **Non-natural material temporary shelter.** The Friends agree that based on consensus a Friend may reside on the property for some period of time in a temporary, movable structure such as a small bus or van. In this case, the Friend of said movable structure agrees completely to remove the structure and all related equipment and supplies within two weeks of the other Friendship request that they remove it.
10. **Cleanliness and safety.** The Friends agree to keep all common areas neat and clean with clothing, tools, food, eating utensils, cookware, books, blankets, pillows, firewood, and other items replenished and/or repaired as appropriate, and stored in their designated locations ready for next use. The Friends agree to keep floors broom-clean and to remove shoes before entering living areas. The Friends agree to fix any unsafe situation or condition inside or outside of buildings on the spot, or to call the situation to the attention of others as soon as practical for group discussion and further action.
11. **Physical alteration.** “Physical alterations” of the land shall include, among other things, the construction of any structures, such as houses, barns, garages, greenhouses, roads, dams, wells, water tanks, electric systems, and other forms of land development, cutting any trees or other vegetation, clearing any part of said property, digging trenches or holes, and hauling material onto or off of the property. The Friends agree that any physical alteration of the land will occur based on the decision making processes described below.
12. **Utilities.** The Friends must give their written approval before installation occurs of any gas, water or sewer pipes, or electric lines on the land from outside sources, based on the decision making processes.
13. **Poisons.** The Friends agree that no use of pesticides, herbicides or other poisons shall occur at any time or any place on the land without the approval through the decision making process.
14. **Firearms and bows.** The Friends agree that discharge of firearms or bows shall occur in a safe manner with regard to people and property on and off of said premises, with appropriate warnings given to all people present on the land prior to use. This includes the use of firearms or bows for target or practice shooting.
15. **Hunting and fishing.** The Friends agree that rewilding-based hunting and killing wildlife, including fauna and flora, shall occur subject to principles and rules developed by the decision making process described below. In order to avoid conflicts with legal authorities, taking any wildlife or fish from the river or creeks on said property shall occur in accordance with state and local regulations.
16. **Domestic animals.** The Friends agree that keeping domestic and farm animals shall occur subject to approval by the decision making process. In making these decisions, Friends will carefully consider the impact on the local land and water.
17. **Diet.** The Friends agree that they do not have any dietary requirements of others around them. The Friends agree to respect the rights of all individuals to eat the foods they wish.
18. **Drugs.** In order to avoid conflicts with legal authorities the Friends agree that no one will keep or use any illegal drugs on said property.
19. **Music and noise.** The Friends agree to respect the rights of all to listen, or not listen, to any music, news programs, television, computer programs, conversations, and so on, and to quiet time and quiet rest. Anyone playing music or musical instruments, whether electronically or naturally, radios, computers, talking, or singing will adjust the volume to a level acceptable to those around them.

20. **Religion.** The Friends agree to respect the rights of all people, individually or within their voluntary groups, to have and practice their own religious beliefs.
21. **Community sharing.** Sharing relates to clothing, shelter, food, tools, and so on. The Friends believe that we have the luxury of our “independence” and individuality only temporarily because of the continuing easy availability of clothing, shelter, water, food, and other life necessities almost all based on and totally dependent on cheap fossil fuels and a continuing stable climate. The Friends think that sharing will become ever more important as the global-scale economic, social, ecological, peak oil, global warming, and nuclear collapses continue and worsen in our local area, and commit to helping each other and sharing with each other of our time, effort, and things when needed to the greatest extent we reasonably can. Even so, the Friends agree always to respect other’s property and will ask permission before using anything that belongs to others, unless the Friend gives their permission for free sharing of an item. **Personal space.** Within any communal living and storage areas, the Friends agree to designate two kinds of space as needed: Individual personal spaces and communally shared spaces. The Friends agree to respect the rights of others to access to and private use of any other person’s private space, and to maintain free and clear access to any communal spaces. As needed and agreed in order to avoid confusion or conflict, the Friends agree clearly to mark spaces and items with their names. **Tools and material.** Here, “tools and material” include kitchen equipment, supplies, ingredients, and other materials. To the greatest extent practical, the Friends agree to use tools and material already in possession of the individual Friends, thus minimizing buying more. The Friends may share their individual tools and, if doing so, will clearly mark them with their name. When breakage or loss occurs, or the tool gets “used up”, as inevitably will happen over time, depending on the situation either the individual responsible for the loss or breakage, or the group as a whole, will in a timely way repair the tool or replace it with an equivalent or better quality tool, as the tool Friend wishes. Tools designated as “Property Tools” will remain on the property and thus available to people for work at the property; to remove a property tool could cause much wasted time, effort, and expense for others.
22. **Decision making and work projects.** Because of the small size of the Association, the Friends agree to emphasize using a “modified consensus” decision making process in making decisions regarding said property or any condition specified in this Agreement. On one hand, the Friends strongly prefer and work at **avoiding** centralized power. On the other hand, with this modified consensus process it does **default to** increasingly centralized power upon the group’s failing to make needed, practical decisions and taking needed actions in a timely way as required by some situations. For practical reasons, by “modified consensus” we mean that: (1) At the beginning of a meeting we will clearly set a specific, concrete goal or goals for the meeting, as well as a time frame for reaching them. (2) The time frame will have a “cut-off” point for having reached important goals while using consensus. (3) If the group has not reached its goal(s) using consensus by the cutoff time, the group will use a voting process for making the needed decision(s) related to that goal. (4) If, for practical reasons related to timeliness issues, neither consensus nor voting work well, the Owner will make the relevant decision(s). (5) A designated Time Keeper, will notify the group of their time frame progress. The person keeping time will rotate between meetings. In using consensus, the Friends agree to read and use the principles and processes described by Starhawk in her book *The Empowerment Manual*, as well as those described by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler in their books *Crucial Conversations, Tools for talking when stakes are high* and *Crucial Confrontations, Tools for resolving broken promises, violated expectations, and bad behavior*.

Designating workers. Discussions with other associations make it clear that getting needed work done involves two important separate but interrelated processes: **decision making**, and

implementation. As difficult as decision making often proves, especially in larger groups, experience shows that a good bit more often than not implementation proves the more difficult of these two processes. These difficulties often revolve around some variation on the theme of people not doing what they say they will do. Because different people have different interests, skills, and physical strength, the Friends agree on using three ways for designating workers for construction, maintenance, cooking, animal care, hunting, gathering, processing animals and foods, making things, and so on: (1) one or more individuals immediately do the work needed, (2) call for volunteers, (3) when necessary, discuss with others the nature of the work needed and as a group decide on who will do it. When necessary, the Friends will use the principle of divide and conquer by breaking the project down into smaller, more manageable steps.

Assuring implementation. The Friends agree that **it proves extremely important for people to do what they say they will do, when they say they will do it.** A person's failing to do this will cause many practical and social problems. For this reason, **the Friends agree and commit to doing what they say they will do, when and as they say they will do it.** The Friends further agree that if they say they will do something and then cannot do it due to changed circumstances or unforeseen circumstances beyond their control, they will proactively communicate this to others in a timely manner so as to minimize the negative impacts on others. The Friends agree that this should happen only rarely. **For especially important work needed, or work that no one wishes to do, after agreeing on the designated worker(s) in order to help assure implementation the Friends agree to decide on what positive consequences will occur when the work gets done as agreed, and what negative consequences will occur if it does not.** Insofar as possible, the Friends agree that work will occur on a pre-planned, regularly scheduled basis.

23. **Communication.** The Friends agree that communicating openly, honestly, and in a timely way, as well as keeping others informed about the status of various projects and situations, proves extremely important. In the event that an Friend needs to make an emergency decision that would ultimately affect others in the Association or the property, this Friend agrees to contact and inform others as soon as practical. **Communication mechanics.** In order to communicate relevant information to others not present at the property concerning important information about the land, buildings, equipment, supplies, and so on, the Friends agree to post information prominently on a centrally located Notice Board. When timeliness proves important, the Friends agree proactively to contact the relevant others using other methods, such as telephone, email, texting, U.S. postal service, radio, and so on, as appropriate for the situation. Given the unreliable nature of much high technology communication, as needed, appropriate, and practical the Friends agree to make a good faith effort to confirm that the other(s) received this information.
24. **Conflict management.** The Friends realistically acknowledge that issues such as mate switching, vegetarian versus a meat eating diet, whether to hunt or not, nudity versus modesty, land use disagreements, religious fervor versus atheism, work arrangements, or various personality clashes inevitably result in conflicts among people over time as changes and stress occur. These conflicts can potentially disrupt group associations due to anger, resentment, and revenge-seeking behaviors, and this proves especially true in crowded, high-anxiety, physically uncomfortable, stressful situations that continue for long periods of time—conditions that will surely occur with ever greater frequency as the presently occurring collapses continue. **Management processes.** The Friends commit to minimizing the potential damage done to social relations from conflicts by: (1) frequently talking face-to-face, openly and honestly while exchanging a Talking Stick to eliminate interruptions; (2) making liberal use of written agreements in order to promote clear thinking and communication; and (3) reading, learning about, and practicing the processes developed by

Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler as described in their books *Crucial Conversations, Tools for talking when stakes are high* and *Crucial Confrontations, Tools for resolving broken promises, violated expectations, and bad behavior*, as well as *The Empowerment Manual* by Starhawk. If necessary, the Friends agree to hire a consultant for help managing conflicts, and to seriously consider making use of a mediator. **Complaining.** To minimize conflict, the Friends agree not to complain or whine about physically or emotionally uncomfortable conditions or situations. When painful or uncomfortable conditions or situations occur, as they inevitably do and will with increasing frequency in the future, the Friends agree to deal with it directly as soon and as effectively as they can in both practical and emotionally supportive ways, both individually and as a mutually supportive group. The Friends understand that some of these situations will occur as longer term processes, not as instantaneous events, and will require time to process and manage both individually and as a group. Whether short term or longer term, the Friends agree not to complain or whine about these unfortunate and painful situations. **Leaving the Association.** The Friends agree that if a conflict occurs that the Association cannot manage in an acceptable way, and the group decides that a Friend would best leave the Association, the Friend asked to leave will do so in a timely way, including removing any personal items they own from the property that they wish to keep within 30 days of the date of a written request to leave.

25. **Interactions with neighbors.** The Friends agree that relationships with the surrounding neighbors and community will prove especially important in the coming stressful times. For this reason, they agree to behave in respectful, friendly, helpful ways insofar as possible. Should any disagreements or conflicts with neighbors occur, the Friends agree that, except in an emergency situation they will **not** act by themselves **and most especially not immediately in anger**. Instead, prior to acting they agree in a timely way to call the situation to the attention of the other Friends for careful consideration of the potential short- and long-term consequences of various actions, decision making, and appropriate follow-through. The Friends agree to work at building mutually supportive community relationships among themselves and with all neighbors over time.
26. **Eating utensils and clean-up.** The Friends agree that all individuals will have, use, and clean their own eating and drinking utensils. If kept in a common area, the Friends agree to clearly identify their items. The Friends agree that if anyone uses community cookware or other equipment, after using it they will immediately clean it and return it to its designated storage area for use by others. The Friends agree that they will clean up their own messes in a timely way so that others will not have to cope with or clean up in order to make use of an area or equipment. The Friends agree to set up one or more wash areas for washing dishes, clothing, food, and bathing that drain into an appropriate grey water system.
27. **Transportation.** In order to minimize waste and carbon footprint, the Friends agree that any time someone plans to drive to the property, or to make trips off of the property for various reasons, they will ask others in a timely way whether they would like to go, thus carpooling to the greatest extent practical. In general, when carpooling, the Friends agree to share the travel expenses equally among those traveling in a vehicle.
28. **Visitors.** The Friends agree to inform visitors of these UNA Agreements and to ensure that any visitors they sponsor agree to them. **[How and to what extent will we accept other friends and relatives in the short term? In the longer term? Where will they stay? Will we allow groups of visitors unrelated to the Friends to use the property for meetings, for example, Deep Green Resistance?]**
29. **Nudity.** The Friends respect the right of each individual to choose nudity, or not, in various situations without any peer pressure or teasing.

30. **Human waste.** The Friends agree to set up and use one or more humanure composting systems as described in *The Humanure Handbook* by Jenkins in order safely to recycle human waste into the local ecosystem. Prior to constructing this system, the Friends will urinate randomly around the property and will bury their feces at random locations at least six inches under the surface of the soil.
31. **Trash and garbage.** The Friends agree to make a conscientious effort to minimize buying and bringing synthetic and high embodied energy materials onto said property. They agree to reuse, repair, and recycle all things to the greatest extent practical, and to compost all organic materials after use. If they do bring in things like food wrappers or plastic packaging, they will carry these out and appropriately dispose of them. The Friends agree always to clean up after themselves within and outside of buildings, including any “microtrash” such as small pieces of synthetic rope or string, rubber bands, or wrappers of various kinds, to the greatest extent practical while minimizing all traces of their activities. The Friends agree not to leave any old equipment or cars on the property.
32. **Questionable situations.** If a questionable situation arises that might affect the land, buildings, personal property, or someone’s safety, insofar as possible the Friend who becomes aware of this situation will proactively contact as many other Friends as practical in order to consult regarding the best course of action to take. In an emergency the Friends agree to use their best judgment in coping with the situation in order best to protect health, life, and property, and then fully to inform others of the situation as soon as safety and practicality allow doing so.
33. **Caretakers.** If, at any time, none of the Friends feel willing or able to live on said property, then the Friends will allow one or more persons to act as caretakers of said property, if necessary. A consensus of said Friends must approve the caretaker(s). If any caretaker operates to the dissatisfaction of the consensus of Friends the Friends shall ask them to leave. Under no circumstances may an Friend permit a non-Friend to live on said property without the prior approval of all Friends living on said property.
34. **Contacting absentee Friends.** In exercising the approval rule of this Agreement based on consensus, the Friends shall make all reasonable efforts to contact and consult with an absentee Friend and accord to them the right to exercise their consensus-based input whenever any matter subject to approval should arise. “Reasonable efforts” shall include express mail and telegrams, if necessary. Should the absentee Friend remain unavailable after the expenditure of a reasonable amount of time and effort to locate him or her, then the remaining Friends shall proceed with granting or denying approval.
35. **Injury liability.** The Friends agree to release the Owner(s) of all liability for injury to or death of themselves or their children by signing a Release and Waiver of Liability Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement, and to pay a proportional amount for liability insurance to help protect the Owner.
36. **Amendments.** Based on consensus, the Friends of said property may approve any amendments or additions to this Agreement at any time.
37. **Severability.** Should any part or parts of this Agreement prove not legally binding in a court of law this will not affect the binding effects of the other parts.
38. **Fairness.** The Friends have written this Agreement and approved it in the spirit of respect and fairness to all in the hope that no Friend shall derive any benefit at the unfair expense of any other Friend.

_____ (Friendship Signature), _____ (Date)

_____ (Friendship Signature), _____ (Date)

_____ (Friendship Signature), _____ (Date)

_____ (Friendship Signature), _____ (Date)