



# Finding Common Ground

## February 2026

### Up Front

February opens in the grip of a Winter storm cycle. Though under cover of ice and snow, we are now planning several outdoor events to process felled trees set aside for various uses—building a solar kiln to dry wood, stripping bark from logs, mulching the Grand Oaks with wood chips, milling and stacking lumber, and inoculating logs for mushroom production. Many hands will be needed for these satisfying tasks listed in the Events Section, and we hope you'll feel inspired to participate.

The Conservation Easement we've worked to establish for nearly three years is now a reality! **On February 14, our Eno River Association partners will come and help us understand how to relate to this**



*Snow dusting on Loblolly Pine boughs (Photo: Hope)*



*Top: Winter sunset illumines the woods*

*Above: Goni strips bark so that this log can serve as a pillar in our future Common House—see Events Section for more details*

**protected land.** We'll take a walk into the Easement area to get to know the boundaries and sense for ourselves what this new partnership means for this land and community.

Our Wheel of the Year gathering for Imbolc is postponed until February 6<sup>th</sup> due to the weather. We look forward to a cozy time to dwell together in this shifting season between Winter and Spring.

Infrastructure construction and community building continue apace. Excitement and challenges abound, and we're coming together to go deeper, listen for, and discern the emerging nature and shape of this agrarian ecovillage. Read on and come along!

## Circle News column

### Land Stewardship

January was a quieter month on the land in many respects. Of course, folks still chipped away at some of the projects this infrastructure construction has kicked off: saving felled trees for mushroom inoculation, lumber, and biochar; moving topsoil from disturbed areas, and caring for the elder oak trees. But the weather did not smile upon the pre-scheduled work days. Multiple events were cancelled due to cold temperatures and the threat of storm.

The storm!!! Ohh they took it easy on us here, we are grateful. If we had lost power it would have been a totally different story with protecting veggies and infrastructure. Instead, all the preparations held up and there was even time to walk to the wetlands and follow the tracks of roaming deer and other critters.

A highlight on the land this month was Songs for the Long Dark, organized and led by a friend of the community, EO. Over 25 people showed up to sing together around a roaring fire tended by Lucas. The mix of starry sky, warm light from the flame, and the blend of melodies from the songs folks brought created a palatable magic, stretching sensation to both touch our ancestors and many descendants to come. Even in the slow, dark, more inward times, we are tending living culture here. See you on the land in February!



### FARM HIGHLIGHTS

☁ **January Storm Weathered:** We're relieved and grateful that all farm infrastructure survived the storm. We're crossing fingers that our crops will survive the many days of super low temps to come.

## Meetings & Events column

- ♦ **All gatherings are in Eastern Time** and open to everyone unless otherwise stated.
- ♦ **You must RSVP** for details and last-minute changes.
- ♦ **COVID Policy:** For your safety and others', bring a mask in case it is needed. At CGEV, we protect those most vulnerable.
- ♦ **Accessibility:** At this stage, terrain is unpaved and uneven, and restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.
- ♦ **Google Calendar Link:** To subscribe to the CGEV Calendar, add or change an event, email Ren at [calendar@commonground.eco](mailto:calendar@commonground.eco)
- ♦ **Members Only Discourse Forum Link:** <https://discourse.commonground.eco/>



### Circle Meetings

#### **Planning & Development \*Change\***

Wednesdays, February 4 & 18, 4-5:30pm, hybrid  
[RSVP to Anthony](#) with subject "P&D"

#### **Membership**

Thursdays, 5:15-7:15pm, Zoom and at the home of Amy H. Task meetings, as needed, are on alternate weeks, same time.

[RSVP to Lisa](#) with subject "Membership Circle"

#### **Land Stewardship**

Tuesday, February 10, 7-8:30pm, on the land at the barn (hybrid if needed).

Contact [Doug](#) or [Lucas](#) with subject "LSC" for details

#### **General Circle**

Sundays, February 8 & 22, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom

[RSVP to Hope](#) with subject "GC" 2 days in advance

#### **Governance & Communication**

Tuesday, February 17, 7-9pm, Zoom

[RSVP to Quai](#) with subject "G&CC"



# **Budget Celebrations:** 2025 numbers are in, and the Farm came in EXACTLY on budget for the year. 🎉 We also completed our milestone task of creating our business budget for 2026--using our income-sharing, worker co-operative, bravely-transparent, collaborative community approach to setting salaries.

🌱 **Farmer Goni Expands:** We're thrilled that we get to increase Goni's hours by 3x on the farm this year! And that one of his big projects is adding flowers to the CSA!

🍅 **Warm Season Opens Soon:** Enrollment for Warm Season 2026 (April-November) opens in February. Start dreaming about your glorious Full Table tomatoes, watermelon, green beans, and okra to come!

## Governance & Communications

### Compassion Corner: Making Life More Wonderful Governance & Communications Circle

#### Focus: Dancing with Impacts

In NVC, we understand that everyone is doing the best they can to meet their needs with the resources they have, and that engaging with people in any context means engaging with their strategies to meet those needs. These strategies (words or behaviors) may be effective or ineffective and stimulate connection or disconnection. No matter the intention, we are always in the dance of engaging with impacts.

**Practice Invitation:** When experiencing an impact, try to imagine what their resources are and what needs they were attempting to meet. What might they request if they had the capacity to? These three questions can help us remember their humanity, melt resentment, and trigger curiosity. It's easy to forget that someone has a sick kid or chronic pain, and really needs to feel competency, accomplishment, belonging, or ease. They may be trying hard to meet obligations when they are beyond capacity. Shifting into empathy is often all that is needed to move from alienation to connection. Bonus tips: 1. Give yourself empathy first and fill your own tank. You both matter. 2. Not all impacts are painful! Some are pleasant or joyful, so notice and celebrate those as well!



*EO leads this Songs for the Long Dark circle around a warming fire tended by Lucas (Photo: Hope)*

## All About Events

### Tours of the Land

Membership Circle

*Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining? Email [Lisa](#) or text at 919-619-2979 and put "Request for Tour" in the subject line. We usually have a tour each month at 1:30pm on the same day as the Community on the Ground (COG) meeting and Potluck.*

### Making Posts from Pines

Land Stewardship

#### Ongoing throughout the month

Contact [Anthony](#) or [Goni](#) for details

*Many logs have been set aside to become posts in our new Common House and other buildings. The bark needs to be removed before the beetles move in! Come help hand-shave logs with a special tool that that really works —we'll show you how.*

### Drying Our New Lumber

Land Stewardship

#### Ongoing throughout the month

Contact [Paul](#) or [Randy](#) for details

*The hand-felled trees sent to a local sawmill for milling are soon to return to the land. We'll need help completing the solar kiln (see Feb. 8 event) and stacking several thousand board feet of new lumber slated for many building opportunities. Watch for announcements related to these tasks.*



Giant wood chip piles, steaming on the way to becoming rich mulch. [Click here](#) to see a short video by Anthony

## Many Turtles Learning Collaborative

In January, the Board (Amy H, Lucas, Lisa B, Krystal) covered some important business basics. We created the first iteration of our website (ManyTurtlesLearning.org), acquired PayPal and Venmo accounts (surprisingly not easy), and began organizing for the extensive financial documentation that will be needed. It has been very exciting to watch the enormous enthusiasm within CGEV and Many Turtles for various campaigns, including developing our educational mission through Learning Cohorts and Woofers.

Fundraising efforts have been very rewarding (*get the pun?*). Watch for these February activities: Chari Smith's offering of a workshop "Fundraising 102", Christian Stalberg's improvements of our website, a general invitation to members to propose educational workshops, and updates on various fundraising activities.

**Donations are very welcome to** <https://givebutter.com/manyturtles> or via Venmo by typing in Many Turtles in the charity section or @MTLC1 (which is our initials). For the PayPal link, contact Lisa B. Please continue to spread the word to others to give generously to this important charitable adventure and ask us about how you can help too! With gratitude, we are: President Amy H, Secretary Lucas, Treasurer Lisa B, and Asst Treasurer, Krystal.

## Planning & Development

Big news! Our \$700,000 short-term infrastructure construction short-term loan from the Housing Assistance Council (HAC) finally closed on January 20<sup>th</sup>! We can now

## Racial Awareness Book Group

Membership Circle

**Every Monday, 7-8 p.m., Zoom**

**Contact Lisa to Join with subject "Racial Awareness Book Group":** [lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:lberley@yahoo.com)

*The book group is for CGEV members and the larger community. We read our books aloud and break between paragraphs to share personal reflections, questions, and ideas. People attend as often as they can. **We are starting a new book on Feb. 9th:** What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker: a memoir in essays, by Damon Young.*

## Wheel of the Year: Imbolc

Land Stewardship Circle

**Friday, February 6, 4pm, at the Nest in Mebane**

No RSVP is needed; contact [Kai](#) for details

*Imbolc marks this quiet moment in the Wheel of the Year—not the arrival of spring, but its slow unfolding. A time when life hasn't yet emerged, but is asking for warmth, shelter, patience, and care so it can continue. Come enjoy and potluck supper and gather around the fireplace for stories and songs to mark this seasonal passage.*

## Let's Build a Solar Kiln!

Land Stewardship

**Sunday, February 8, 9:30 am, meet at the Barn**

**[RSVP to Paul](#)**

*This structure will enable us to cure milled wood taken from trees on our land. In December, we got a great start by laying and leveling the concrete block foundation and getting the floor frame and top in place. Next, we'll be "going vertical" with wall construction on the agenda. Lots to be done, so please consider this a hearty invitation to join us. We hope the weather will cooperate for a change!*

## Mulching Party for the Grand Oaks

Land Stewardship

**Sunday, February 8, noon-5pm, on the Land**

**Text Lucas for info & to RSVP: 301-767-6720**

*Come on out for any amount of time to mulch the root zones of the two eldest Oak trees at Common Ground. We'll use the wood chips made from downed trees due to road construction. Bring gloves, a water bottles, and wear layers to stay warm/cool.*





Our new road is nearly complete (Photo: Hope)

draw upon this fund as needed to continue paying for infrastructure development. This will be quickly repaid when we can finally plat out the land so that residents can purchase leaseholds on specific lots – mid-March, we hope. It's a big milestone! Huge credit especially to Theresa, Becky, and Robyn Heeks, our professional development manager, for bringing us to this point. Anthony got to finally ink the documents for CGEV.

Meanwhile, infrastructure construction has continued at full pace on the land. Though the deep freeze has temporarily put a hold on things, road construction is nearly done (check out our new entrance!). The septic system is nearly complete (we're down to the last tank!). MEC, our main site contractor, is about to turn to utility installation, including septic lines from homesites to the new buried collection tanks, potable water lines and an auxiliary non-potable waterline for plant watering). Electrical service work with Duke Energy continues.



Excavators dredge and shape the pond bottom (Photo: Hope)

Reach out to Lucas to let him know you're coming or to ask questions.

## Onsite Milling with a Portable Sawmill

Land Stewardship

**Tuesday, February 10, time TBD**

Contact [Jacob](#) for details

*We need many hands to move lumber around! The bulk of our logs went to an offsite sawmill, but there are still hundreds of board feet of lumber to be milled by a portable mill. Details to come by email.*

## Conservation Easement Orientation with Eno River Association Partners

General Circle

Saturday, February 14, 1-4pm, at the Nest and Land

[RSVP to Hope](#) for details

*Now that we have a Conservation Easement, what does this mean? Join in for a crucial conversation with Chris Dreps and Reema Garabaldy from the Eno River Association. They will talk to us about—and help us to navigate—this new relationship with our land. Weather permitting, we'll take a walk within the Easement borders and experience for ourselves how it feels to be committed to conservation in perpetuity on this land.*



Randy and Hope with our Eno River Association partners at the closing to establish a Conservation Easement

## Mushroom Log Inoculation

Land Stewardship

**Sunday, February 15, 10am-5pm**

**RSVP to [Doug](#)**

*This will be the first round of inoculation, preparing*



Work on the pond is resuming. The dam has been cleared and the exposed pond bottom is in the process of being dredged and sculpted to provide varied ecosystems for all manner of pond life. The removed soils will be used to fertilize the land and bolster dam reconstruction. Randy and Anthony, with Doug's able support, continue intensive on-site management for CGEV, acknowledging always the distressing impact on the farmers and farm operations from constant machine noise and major changes to the land. Fortunately, we are mostly past the heavy machinery phase, though some big projects—chiefly moving and spreading stockpiled topsoil and massive piles of woodchips—do remain.



[Robby Robbins offers this drone video](#) to track the construction process. It starts at the farm, follows our new entrance road past the stacks of wood chips toward Frazier Rd., shows road work at the entrance, returns to the farm, traces the farm road in progress towards the pond, past the erosion control basin, and ends at the drained pond. Find more videos under Member Offerings at the bottom of the right column. Thank you, Robby!

On the landscaping front, we are planning major DIY efforts for wildflower and meadow seeding and tree planting which will save us thousands of dollars. **Come join us on March 7 & 8 to help beautify our roadsides with new trees!**

**Many hands are needed to do justice to the trees that have been sacrificed for this development project.** Downed pines and hardwoods, remember, are in the process of being milled and will shortly be returned to the land. We will need help to stack all the wood. Winter storms have delayed solar kiln construction. **We hope for an all-out effort on February 8<sup>th</sup> to get it ready to receive lumber—see the Events section and plan to be there!** Other straight and strong trunks are being debarked to surround and support the central circular meeting and activity space planned for the Common House. **Help with this effort is ongoing—contact [Anthony](#) or [Goni](#) if you can pitch in.** Thanks to Jacob and a miller he knows, still more will be milled on site and

*the site and rehearsing methods for the next event on March 1.*

## Monthly HeartShare

Membership Circle

**Friday, February 20, 7-9pm, Zoom**

**[RSVP to Heart Share@commonground.eco](mailto:Share@commonground.eco).**

**Theme: TBD.** Watch for an email with more details and a Zoom link. Facilitators needed—we'll support you and you can choose the theme!

## Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communication Circle

**Saturday, February 28, 2-5pm, hybrid at the Nest**

**RSVP to [Theresa](#), subject "COG."**

*Community In the Round is a monthly forum for ALL MEMBERS to help you:*

- *Get more connected with each other*
- *Hear updates and information from Circles*
- *Explore hot topics, inspire ideas, and hear feedback from members*
- *Discover how to become more involved in winning ways*

*We'll have in-person conversations and a zoom link for folks to call into for **audio only**. Watch your email for details about this month's event!*



*Jacq tends to the children at the COG meeting (Photo: Hope)*

## Community Potluck

Membership Circle

**Saturday, February 28, 5:30-7:30pm, after**

**Community on the Ground, location TBD**

**RSVP is helpful for set-up and location.**

**Email [Lisa](#) or text 919 619 2979**



*For Goni, all the world's a stage (Photo: Kai)*

stored and covered for construction use—yet another opportunity to honor the life of our bygone trees.

Turning to the residential side of things, we've been working with multiple lawyers to prepare leases as well as draft various policies and conditions for the prospective Property Owners Association. From cat policy to the structure of the 99-year leases and equity appreciation sharing, we've got our hands full with fascinating and important work. A few small groups of members are working on policies with the aim of bringing back drafts to the community for input in early February.

Though still down the road, we are beginning to seriously think about residence and Common House design and building. Members shared designs and builder information, at a recent Zoom session. We're so looking forward to the next phase of things to bring many more of us onto the land!

## Membership

### January Retreat

The weather was touch-and-go, but we were at last able to come together for this long-anticipated event. The Membership Circle was grateful for the opportunity to lead a portion of the Retreat. We engaged around how we each are experiencing the radical changes on the land; what caring for each other and the land means; and feelings and values that are tender in this moment. We had a chance to witness the farmers express what

*Potlucks are our time to break bread together and socialize, play, and sometimes chew over the Community on the Ground meeting content. Please bring something to share. Vegetable dishes typically predominate, but all sorts of food and drink are welcome. Just bring a list of ingredients or jot them down when you come.*

## LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH

### Mushroom Log Inoculation Workshop

Land Stewardship

**Sunday, March 1, 10am-4pm**

RSVP to [Doug](#)

*This is an opportunity to learn, help, and take home a couple of logs!*

### Tree Planting Workdays!

**March 7 & 8, 9am-5pm, on the land**

[RSVP to Randy ASAP](#), subject "Tree Planting" to help gauge capacity. Stay tuned for details via email.

*You don't need to come all day, and if physical work isn't possible, help with coordination, lunch, snacks, set up, clean up, etc. will also be appreciated.*

### New Member Coffee Meet Up

Membership Circle

**Date TBD**

**Contact [Lisa](#) for more info or to sign up:**

[Lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:Lberley@yahoo.com) or 919 619 2979

*This is a great opportunity, for those who are curious about CGEV, to ask questions and make connections with other members.*

## Member Offerings

**From Hope and Goni:** *Join Singers of New and Ancient Music (SONAM) for our winter concert featuring music of light and love in support of the hungry. It's going to be a treat to hear Goni solo on the jazz standard, I see the Light in You! To see the full program, [visit our upcoming concerts page](#).*

**From Robby Robbins:** These periodic drone video recordings of infrastructure construction provide a record of progress. Click on these links to take a tour and see for yourself what's happening.





*The farm, sugar coated with snow and ice (Photo: Lucas)*

it's been like for them to live in an infrastructure construction zone. Overall, we learned a lot about each other and unearthed significant questions to address as a community.

#### **Bio section on the Website**

This is very likely one of the best-read sections of our website. New people searching for community learn a lot from the pictures and the life stories. The problem is we don't have all Exploratory and Engaged members represented! **This is a wonderful time for someone to step up and become the "Membership Bios Specialist"**. That person would encourage members to write their bios, provide guidance on style and content And help move bios and photos onto the website.

**Contact Lisa if you are interested in helping or submitting a Bio: [Lberley@yahoo.com](mailto:Lberley@yahoo.com)**

#### **Membership Business**

Congratulations to Jacq for becoming an Engaged Member and to Jacob and Aria for advancing to the Exploratory Level! Thanks to Amy H, our revised Exit Policy is nearly final. A new JOIN form and automated Welcome Email are up and running. The Welcome Email to Visiting Members now includes more information about getting involved. Gonzalo follows up with those visiting members who seem like a good fit.



*One of several stacks of felled logs awaiting processing (Photo: Hope)*

#### **Drone Video 1**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/19ShF7D5enkhc71PA>

*Starting at the parking lot, panning the farm, showing the farm road in progress, tracing the new entrance road past the stacks of wood chips over the erosion control basin and past the drained pond, returning to the farm road, ending at the farm.*

#### **Drone Video 2**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/4HxwRrND9k49zzAW7>

*Starting at the farm, following our new entrance road past the stacks of wood chips toward Frazier Rd., showing road work at the entrance, returning to the farm, tracing the farm road path towards the pond, passing and erosion control basin, ending at the drained pond.*

#### **Drone Video 3**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/9ys3BSKwu6LmNL1z9>

*Starting at the drained pond, following our new entrance road back to Frazier Rd., returning towards the farm, past the stacks of wood chips, over to the new village road construction between the Grand Oaks.*

#### **Drone Video 4**

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HkTqQEYxeE3k67is8>

*That's me and my 19-month-old baby boy and buddy D'Oreo, a 75lb Bernadoodle who is helping me with this endeavor, walking around Grandmother Oak, to give the current orientation toward the parking area.*

## **Outside Happenings of Interest (Not Sponsored by CGEV)**

**Coming in March:** [Melanie Yukov](#) of Root 2 Rise Wellness is offering an in-person herbalism course at Fire Fly Earth Haven Farm with limited spots! This is an intentional community 14-acre farm in Hillsborough. We will make herbal medicine to take home, taste wild treats, and learn all about the wild plants! We will also have a virtual herbalism course that takes you through the plants growing at Common Ground throughout the seasons. [Click here](#) to get the dates, learn more, and grab your spot before it's too late!





