



## permEzone Newsletter – November 2016

### *Working in Zone E*

The 'E' in permEzone refers to the electronic landscape, the space where so much of our communications and information gathering will take place.

Throughout the [pilot program](#) we will be developing our skills in the electronic landscape, finding effective ways to communicate with farmers using cell phones as the most widely available technology. We'll be experimenting with what works to support information exchange: between the farmers themselves, between the farmers and their support/training centers, and through those centers with the wider world of permaculture activity and experience.

There is another dimension to our work in Zone E. Because we are an international startup that depends on people donating time, resources and experience from all over the world, we will of necessity be working together in Zone E. This presents many challenges, especially to those of us more used to workplaces that involve constant human contact. Chance encounters and unexpected conversations by the water cooler aren't going to be a feature of this workspace.

Crowd-sourcing the skills needed to run an experiment on this scale is not just about creating a great team, but also about making it as easy as possible for team members to work together effectively. We need a virtual team workspace that makes it easy to keep track of who's doing what, what we are learning, how we are innovating, where we're heading... a database of information gathered from the pilot, a document-management system, a knowledgebase of organizational learning, a flexible messaging and information-sharing service. All this in a format that works intuitively, and becomes the easiest way to get things done.

Just like the rest of the pilot, we know that we face a steep learning curve in zone E during the early stages of experimentation. Last month we introduced you to the MEL Team, which stretches from California, to London, to Kenya (so far). This month we thought we'd introduce the Project Board, which (so far) only faces the challenge of communicating from one coast of the US to the other! I say 'so far' because we are hoping to see more people come forward to join our team. If you have skills and experience that could help us achieve our goals, for example in the management of rural development programs, then we would surely love to talk to you!

We asked each member of the Project Board to answer a few questions about their involvement in the pilot program... you can read their biographies on our [website](#).

## Hugh Kelly



**What is your role at permEzone?** I'm the Founder and Project Director. My initial role was to do everything, but thankfully now I have wonderful colleagues who are bringing their specialist skills and life experience to the program, and I can focus on my strengths in project management and team facilitation.

**How did you become involved?** I came to development from the perspective of environmental justice, and I came to permaculture through my involvement in initiatives to improve the local food system in my community in California. When I started to understand that permaculture and agroecology have the potential to solve many issues related to food sovereignty and environmental justice, I decided to try and do something about it.

**What does your vision of success look like for permEzone?** Our intention is to trial the program with farmers in four diverse communities. By the end of this pilot we will have developed an effective program, and amassed a credible body of evidence about the potential of this approach. We hope to demonstrate that a flexible program of training and support that empowers impoverished rural communities to create resilient local food systems that can bring lasting change that improves local economies and ecosystems in tandem. We will use that evidence to secure the funding needed to scale up the use of permaculture as a core part of rural development programs.

## Vicki Halpern



**What is your role at permEzone?** I'm the Coordinator for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). As board members, we share responsibility for implementing the pilot program and for helping permEzone accomplish its stated mission. I work to further its cause and provide support to the Project Director and augment his efforts to achieve permEzone's goals. I will be leading the MEL team in defining the framework that we will use to measure the impact of the pilot by bringing

together all surveys, assessments, consultations and monitoring which our collaborators in E. Africa will undertake. I will also work with the Project Director to ensure this data is used for decision making and program development.

**How did you become involved?** I became involved after meeting Hugh Kelly at Mesa Harmony Garden, a non-profit community garden at which he is president. After a few months of volunteering at MHG, Hugh began talking to me about his other project, permEzone. I took an interest in the project and asked if I could be of assistance in any way with the development of the pilot program. Following a few more conversations, Hugh proposed I become a board member and a member of the MEL Team, which I gladly accepted.

**What does your vision of success look like for permEzone?** That permEzone will create positive, lasting change for local communities and that the permEzone concept will help disseminate the much-needed knowledge about the Permaculture Principles throughout the world.

## Sabre Mrkva



**What is your role at permEzone?** I am responsible for design and communication. I help with putting together the face of permEzone and spreading the word.

**How did you become involved?** I met Hugh at a permaculture conference. I was impressed with how logical and pragmatic Hugh's approach to development is, using existing successful organizations, and not starting a fresh organization from scratch. permEzone is poised to get a lot of leverage by connecting local farmers to these permaculture centers that already have been established, have local sensitivity and rapport, and have expertise about a very specific bioregion/landscape. Adding on the

layer of support with the ubiquitous cell phone also makes so much sense. I was hooked!

**What does your vision of success look like for permEzone?** As I see it, the biggest success will be through the power of peer-to-peer training. By having a chance to practice permaculture on their own farms for 2 peak growing seasons, the participants of the permEzone program are poised to feel a real mastery of permaculture techniques and principles. My hope is that once farmers experience success, they will feel compelled to spread the word and the training to their neighbors and on and on -- creating a solid foundation for fundamental lasting change.

## Sri Subramanian



**What is your role at permEzone?** My role at permEzone in addition to being a member of the board, is to plan and implement the mobile platform. The purpose of this platform is to enable communication among the various types of stakeholders so that we can both implement the various stages of the programs and measure how well permaculture principles can be a force for positive change.

**How did you become involved?** Hugh and I met at a dinner hosted by a mutual friend. It was a surprise to me that the arcs of our vocations were so similar, how we both started working on software but that somewhere down the line, we got thinking that there should be more to life than that, and that perhaps we could make contributions which involve more direct human interaction. It was from that shared place we started talking about Kenya and Permaculture.

**What does your vision of success look like for permEzone?** I hope that we will be able to create a template for how to spread the knowledge and techniques of Permaculture to the developing world so that people experience abundance instead of famine and poverty.

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We are very happy to see people step up and claim a piece of this project. We are in an exploratory stage now. The shape of this program will ultimately form around the resources, people and expertise that we are able to gather. We still have many questions and we need to find many answers.

If you have anything that you would like to share - ideas, contacts, resources - please do! We welcome all input with open arms.

Thank you for your continued support, for sharing this program with your network, and for reaching out and sharing your valuable information with us!

NEXT Month – more about Mobile...

The *permEzone* Team

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*We are now fundraising to meet the costs of trialing the mobile phone platform that will form a critical component of the permEzone service. Please consider making a [contribution](#) if you can.*

*Your donations will be used to run a pilot of the permEzone program, training and supporting farmers in East Africa, developing the mobile phone platform and collecting and evaluating data to demonstrate the impact of the program. This is a chance to make a real difference by empowering people in impoverished rural communities to work together to build resilience and improve the lives of current and future generations.*

*Any further help you can give to [spread the word](#) will be hugely appreciated.*

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*permEzone is a project of [Empowerment Works](#), a 501(c)3 non-profit, and an international project of the [Permaculture Association](#) (Britain).*

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