Regenerative
Activism

BY BLAIR NELSEN

Regeneration is renewal. Our actions are regenerative when they restore and refresh us, leaving us in a better state than we had been in before.

Regeneration, in the context of agriculture, refers to farming and grazing practices that build up the soil and draw down carbon. These practices stand in contrast with many farming practices, particularly those employed by industrial agriculture, that can be harmfully exploitative.

Regenerative agriculture takes a step beyond sustainability or stewardship, actively engaging in improving conditions rather than sustaining or maintaining them.

What might our environmentalism look like if we could confidently describe all of our actions as regenerative? In posing this question, I am not only thinking about the actions we take, but also the ways in which we act. There is an anecdotally high rate of burnout among environmental activists, meaning that engaged and passionate environmental advocates often find themselves experiencing enough detrimental impacts to their well-being that they have to step back.

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from action altogether for a while. Many experience eco-anxiety or climate grief. The urgency of the climate emergency can exacerbate the speed of burnout—there is much to do and the stakes are high, so caring individuals might succumb to the temptation to extend themselves beyond their reasonable capacity for action.

Burnout should not be the norm. We need people to stay engaged in environmental action for the long haul. We have to find non-exploitative, regenerative ways of making a difference. I suggest we lean into regenerative activism.

Our actions will be regenerative when they allow us to use our unique gifts, when they strengthen our community ties, and when they allow space for rest and contemplation. Activism is not rigidly limited to marching in protests or writing letters to your representatives. Activism could be strengthening networks of mutual aid in your community. It could be getting children involved in a beach cleanup. It could be learning enough about a new issue to hold perspective-altering conversations with the people close to you. There is room for everyone’s talents in this movement.

Our moments of contemplation, particularly in nature, can feed into our regenerative activism. Without direct contact with nature’s healing and love, we might quickly lose touch with the heart of our struggles. Waterspirit’s Meditation for Earth and Seasonal Celebrations promote regular moments of connecting with nature’s rhythms in order to renew us inwardly, preparing us for outward action. Our eco-anxiety support groups encourage participants to explore their climate feelings while developing tools for resilience and thoughtfully determining what meaningful action looks like for them.

Taking action in community can both amplify your impact and improve your sense of well-being. Waterspirit’s bi-monthly advocacy community meetings are a wonderful way to meet like-hearted people, learn more about an issue, and take meaningful action together.

We need periodic renewal and action that is personally empowering and meaningful in order to stay engaged with this movement for the long haul. What regenerates you? How can you make your earth-honoring actions truly regenerative?

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**DROPLETS**

- Better water, sanitation, and hygiene could save the lives of 297,000 children under the age of 5 each year. ([water.org](http://water.org))

- It’s now possible for the United States to reliably deliver 90% clean electricity nationwide by 2035, and 80% by 2030, at no additional cost to consumers, according to analysis from researchers at UC Berkeley and Energy Innovation. ([Climate Nexus](https://climate nexus.org))

- Groundwater accounts for 99% of liquid freshwater on Earth and is the source of one quarter of all the water used by humans. ([UNESCO](https://unesco.org))

- There are 771 million people in the world who lack access to safe water, and of them, women are generally tasked with water collection. They spend hours, multiple times per day, waiting in long lines at community water kiosks or walking to distant sources like rivers and ponds to find it. This is time spent, and income not earned. An estimated $260 billion is lost globally each year due to lack of basic water and sanitation. ([water.org](http://water.org))

- In an increase of 500%, there are now as many as 6% of American consumers that report that they now follow a totally vegan diet. As much as 18% of greenhouse gas emissions can be linked to animal agriculture; the rise in veganism is certainly going to impact this percentage in a very positive way. ([Truly Experiences](https://trulyexperiences.com))
United Nations Updates

Waterspirit’s Executive Director, Blair Nelsen, represents the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace at the United Nations. She is active in conferences and coalitions where faith-based organizations can advocate for clean water and protections against climate change. These collaborations allowed us space at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021 to highlight the ways in which we are helping achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals through Waterspirit’s ministry work and other eco-friendly actions throughout the Congregation’s three regions.

Blair is active in the Faith + Biodiversity UN Coordination Group. After attending the Open-Ended Working Group meetings on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in late 2021, she joined with a core group of other representatives of faith-based organizations to draft an international, multi-faith response to that working document.

This response offered specific edits that would strengthen the biodiversity targets set forth therein, encouraging nations to increase their ambition around protecting biodiversity and preventing species loss. She argued particularly strongly for ambitious carbon emission reductions within this Framework, since we cannot solve the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis separately. Our approach to both must be integrated. This faith response also called out language in the Framework that treats living members of the Earth community as inert resources that are only valuable insofar as humans can consume them. This faith-based response was signed by 28 organizations and presented to country representatives in advance of the second working group meetings in Geneva in March.

In late June, Blair will be traveling to Lisbon, Portugal for the UN Ocean Conference. She will use her time there to speak out against harmful deep sea mining practices, building upon work she is already doing in the NGO Mining Working Group. Stay tuned for updates from Lisbon!

“Spiritual life is like living water that springs up from the very depths of our own spiritual experience. In spiritual life everyone has to drink from his or her own well.”

-- BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

"Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us.”

-- ROBIN WALL KIMMERER
Seasonal Reflections

BY: RACHEL DAWN DAVIS

Spring is a time of renewal. When spring begins to blossom, all around us we bear witness to the natural world waking up from the slumber of the cold, dark winter. Slowly at first, and then the great show of biological emergence takes hold. Consider spending time to apply each sense as we observe the fertile ground teeming with life again, we fully experience this transition of seasons. Slowly and carefully listening to the birds, bugs, and amphibians, observing squirrels and deer eat and play, smelling the flowers, touching moss, and tasting vegetables or herbs—perhaps from your garden or a local farmer—we may recall the wholly awesome abundance that spring reliably provides. Spring cleaning is a phrase and act meant to instill preparation for the warmer weather soon to be brought by summer and balance in life. Spring helps us regain footing on ground anew. Perhaps we have shed what no longer serves us during the winter and created space for new: new goals, people, animals, hobbies, experiences, growth. It is a good reminder that reflection of the seasons breeds resilience in ourselves. Taking time to reflect—especially through writing—helps us to focus mindfully on what we might consider as we inevitably approach future decisions.

Welcome, Arianne!

In February, Waterspirit was pleased to welcome our newest staff member, grant writer Arianne Hegeman. Arianne has extensive experience in social service, healthcare, and arts nonprofits. An American Grant Writer’s Association Certified Grant Writer, Arianne is highly skilled in identifying applicable grants and crafting quality applications for any nonprofit service area. She is Benevon trained and brings varied development experience to every setting. Arianne has worked on the program, development, and community engagement sides of the house. Whether she's spending time with her husband, family and friends in Salem County, or starting her own family foundation to benefit families affected by Congenital Heart Disease, Arianne enjoys being with people and watching them achieve success. We are so glad that you have joined this team, Arianne!

Honor and Memory

Waterspirit offers honor and memory cards to help you honor your loved ones’ dedication to Mother Earth with a donation to Waterspirit. Each set includes a card for notifying your loved ones of your gift and a response envelope. If you would like us to send you honor and/or memory cards, please contact us.

In Memory Of:
Ann O’Connell, SC from Gail DeMaria, CSJP
Jim Shannon
Michael Martin
Amerigo Pate
Jorge Rivera
from Patricia Wall, CSJP
Volunteers from Waterspirit and Save Coastal Wildlife clean up Cedar St. Park beach in Keyport, NJ. February 2022.

Our virtual hike-a-thon got volunteers outside for a good cause throughout the month of April.

Rachel and coalition partners give a presentation to students in Old Bridge, NJ on World Water Day.

Celebrating the spring equinox with a hybrid ceremony, featuring beautiful live music by Andreea Fegan.
Incoming Tide

LEARN MORE AT HTTPS://WWW.WATERSPIRIT.ORG/EVENTS-CALENDAR

**Joys of the Sea** - June 8 from 4-7 p.m. - $85 per person
Join Waterspirit for our annual benefit! This outdoor summer event will feature delicious plant-based food & wine, beautiful music, good conversation, a silent auction, and the awarding of the Suzanne Golas CSJP Award to Maria Lopez-Nuñez of the Ironbound Community Corporation.

**Summer Solstice Celebration** - June 21 at 7 p.m.
Dive into the deeper meaning of the summer season with prayers, reflections, and performances by Core of Fire Interfaith Dance Ministry. In-person; please check website for updates.

**Advocacy Community Meeting** - June 2 at 11 a.m.
Join this bi-monthly in-person meeting of like-hearted earth advocates to learn about a new issue and take action together. Check our website for more information about this month’s topic and to RSVP.

**Meditation for Earth** - Tuesdays at 12:15 p.m.
Take the time to intentionally connect with nature every week. Meditate with us in-person at the time listed, or at your convenience on our YouTube channel.

ABOUT US
Waterspirit is a nonprofit center for spiritual ecology sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace.

CONTACT US
4 E. River Rd.
Rumson, NJ 07760
(732) 923-9788
www.waterspirit.org
water@waterspirit.org

DONATE
http://waterspirit.kindful.com