

Exploring a Sense of Place Weekend Workshop Overview

Tunitas Creek Ranch

June 19th-21st, 2009

Exploring a Sense of Place is a program that gives people an opportunity to do something constructive about today's environmental challenges, while both enriching their own lives and the life of their community. This project is a part of the nonprofit organization, *Conexions: Partnerships for a Sustainable Future*, and fits into the *Conexions'* mission by providing participants with direct experiences in learning from Earth's systems in this bioregion. Our training program and our guidebook are designed to extend our course so that its content is available to many more people, giving them knowledge, experiences and skills in order to relate authentically in what has become a threatened, out-of-balance world. Program Director Karen Harwell and co-Director Joanna Reynolds co-authored the guidebook that will serve as the training manual for our weekend-long course at Tunitas Creek Ranch.

By providing tools, support, and inspiration, this three-day workshop will enable a diverse group of proactive individuals to create their own versions of our *Exploring a Sense of Place* course in their own bioregions. Through a concentrated weekend of first hand experience with local guides, participants will learn how to read the landscape of place through its deep time geologic story, weather and climate, plant and animal communities, and learning from the ways of the indigenous people. They will learn strategies for teaching nature awareness through a series of experiences with themes as fine-tuned as the relationship between our food and our place and as broad as where we are in the cosmos. Throughout the weekend participants will be relating these experiences to how they apply in their own watershed or bioregion. By the final morning, working with the *Exploring a Sense of Place* guidebook and notebook materials, they will develop initial plans for their own local expressions and exchange ideas on how to implement these plans.

This "train the trainer" approach will include a diverse group of people who want to explore, expand and share a sense of place with their own community, organization, school, neighborhood, or family. We will follow-up this workshop with an online support system to encourage networking and to provide a platform for sharing thoughts and giving mutual support. Expansion of this program will create a wider circle of engaged citizens and teachers who contribute to the environmental health of our community and in turn entice and inspire others to protect the places they treasure.