

**Connected to Place: Regenerating Nature, Community, and Local Economies
Through Systems Change****August 6, 2026****Link to the recording:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhyX24Njv_M**eePRO post:**eeepro.naaee.org/learning/connected-place-regenerating-nature-community-and-local-economies-through-systems-change**Speaker:** Join Matt Biggar, Ph.D.**Presenter Resources:**

- * Primers on [Place-Based Systems Change](#) and [Place-Based Collaboration](#) (one of the four systems change catalysts)

- * Matt's book can be ordered through [Cornell University Press](#)

Highlights of the chat transcript:**00:14:08 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali):** Hi, welcome everyone!**00:14:37 Kathryn Reis:** Kathryn Reis here from Randolph Soil and Water Conservation District in North Carolina. I am an environmental educator and wildlife biologist.**00:14:51 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali):** I'm part of the NAAEE team, joining you all from Wilmington, NC!**00:14:53 Adrienne Rajna:** Eastern PA, Delaware Appalachian Edge Bioregioning group.**00:14:57 Mabel Rivera:** Mabel- Tucson, Arizona, Environmental Education Program Coordinator**00:15:03 Sarah Bennett:** Sarah Bennett, Executive Director, Asbury Woods in Erie, PA**00:15:05 Jess Armstrong:** Jess, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, in Ohio Educator on the Visitor Engagement team**00:15:12 Erin Rosolina:** Hi! Erin Rosolina from Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont in east TN**00:15:24 Caleb Nyatuame:** Caleb, Gainesville Florida**00:15:25 Vanessa Uhls:** Vanessa, IL, Environmental Educator**00:15:34 Matthew Flynn:** University of Derby, England.**00:15:41 Johanna Hill:** Hi, I'm Jo from St. Louis, MO at the Missouri Botanical Garden. I coordinate a teen environmental leadership program called Eco-Act :)

00:15:44 Meredith McCool: Meredith, Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia

00:16:03 Tory Nau: Tory from Colorado

00:16:20 amy neblett: Amy Neblett, Artist Boat Operations Director in Galveston Texas.

00:16:38 Basundhara Maji: Hi from Germany

00:16:50 Teresa Greely: Teresa Greely, USF Marine Science, St Petersburg florida

00:16:50 Perry Thomas: Hello from Kentucky

00:17:01 Celeste Royer: Celeste Royer, Consultant w/Ten Strands, participating from CA Central Coast

00:17:08 Laura Berrier: Virginia

00:17:09 Sara Sweetman: Sara From Rhode Island

00:17:20 Elaina Zachos: Zooming in from the White Mountains in New Hampshire!

00:17:21 Samantha Sueiro: Sam from NY

00:17:22 Kelsey Scholer: Virginia!

00:17:26 Dana Ripper: Hi from rural Missouri

00:17:29 Sam Hoffman: Indiana

00:17:31 Rebecca Kauten: Rebecca in Iowa

00:17:31 Preethi Mony: Preethi from Columbus, OH

00:17:31 Nicole Berg: Nicole from Michigan!

00:17:32 Stacy Rebich Hespanha: Stacy from Santa Barbara

00:17:37 Stuart Franklin: I'm Stuart from Falls Village, CT

00:18:00 Anna Paddock: Anna from New Hampshire

00:18:10 Emma Carey: Emma from New Hampshire

00:18:27 Alexandra Paulino: Hi, my name is Alexandra from NYC

00:19:01 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali): The term "systems" gets used in a lot of different ways. How do you think about systems?

00:19:28 Rebecca Kauten: Interconnectedness. The dynamic calculus of things that interact but also operate independently at different rates, frequencies, etc. Like gears in a machine.

00:19:28 Meredith McCool: Various components that are interrelated and interconnected. A change in one component affects all the other components.

00:19:32 Sam Hoffman: I think of systems as how parts of a whole connect and interact

00:19:36 Laura Stevens: integrated webs of a of process

00:19:36 Emma Carey: Systems are ways that things are connected to accomplish goals

00:19:54 Ashley Kale: A group of connected parts.

00:20:00 Joellen Lampman: Considering related complexities and building them into the plan.

00:20:02 Jess Armstrong: Interconnected processes with multiple players.

00:20:04 Laura Lytle: It's how multiple variables and stakeholders are interconnected

00:20:05 Anna Paddock: I think of systems as processes, but also infrastructure that supports the processes

00:20:08 Teresa Greely: One way is multiple things - in nature, people, technology, working together to keep something going creatively, efficiently, hopefully...

00:20:32 Adrienne Rajna: Systems as being nested in other systems and other systems as nested within these: Holons

00:20:33 Kathryn Reis: For me, "systems" means how biotic and abiotic resources interact with one another. It's about connections, not just among natural resources but within human communities ... there is a sociological-ecological-economic relationship.

00:20:35 Megan Fink: Systems are interconnected. Individual parts or players working in tandem.

00:20:35 Sara Sweetman: Connected parts that make the whole more are different than the total value of each part

00:21:08 Stacy Rebich Hespanha: A set of interconnected elements and processes that produce outcomes that are different from what might be expected if considering each element/process individually. Emergent phenomena

00:21:24 Laura Stevens: 350

00:21:26 Rebecca Kauten: 720

00:21:26 Sam Hoffman: 52

00:21:26 Sarah Bennett: 100

00:21:27 Kathryn Reis: 100

00:21:27 Libby McCann: too much

00:21:28 Kelsey Scholer: 300

00:21:29 Erika Hopkins: 3,000

00:21:30 Emma Carey: 300 times a day

00:21:31 Jill Hollowell: 40

00:21:31 Johanna Hill: 100

00:21:32 Megan Fink: 500

00:21:32 Eugene Cordero: 100

00:21:32 Joellen Lampman: 750

00:21:32 Cristina Vieira: Too many times!

00:21:33 Kelly Steffen: 250

00:21:33 Preethi Mony: gazillion times

00:21:33 Teresa Greely: 400

00:21:34 amy neblett: 4157

00:21:34 Sara Sweetman: 1234

00:21:35 Meredith McCool: 2,400

00:21:35 Nicole Berg: 200

00:21:36 Jess Armstrong: 700

00:21:36 Vanessa Uhls: 500

00:21:37 Alexandra Paulino: 1000

00:21:37 Darcy Celletti: 29

00:21:37 Anna Paddock: 700

00:21:37 Dana Ripper: 1200

00:21:38 Vanessa Morrison: 2500

00:21:42 Laura Lytle: 450

00:21:43 Leah Francis: 100

00:21:45 Celeste Royer: 200

00:21:47 Laura Stevens: 275
00:21:47 Kathryn Reis: 11
00:21:48 Meredith McCool: 327
00:21:48 Teresa Greely: 26
00:21:49 Jill Hollowell: 2000
00:21:49 amy neblett: 211
00:21:51 Sarah Bennett: 200
00:21:51 Erika Hopkins: 1,100
00:21:51 Laura Stevens: 275
00:21:53 Laura Lytle: 50
00:21:53 Megan Fink: 250
00:21:54 Jess Armstrong: 70
00:21:54 Johanna Hill: 50
00:21:54 Vanessa Uhls: 50
00:21:54 Joellen Lampman: 120
00:21:55 Kristen Crawley: 222
00:21:56 Kelsey Scholer: 75
00:21:56 Sara Sweetman: 99
00:21:56 Preethi Mony: 150
00:21:56 Dana Ripper: 325
00:21:57 Perry Thomas: 100
00:21:57 Rebecca Kauten: 400
00:21:58 Nicole Berg: 275
00:21:58 Anna Paddock: 300
00:22:00 Sam Hoffman: 125 farms
00:22:00 Alexandra Paulino: 25 block
00:22:00 Emma Carey: 50
00:22:02 Eugene Cordero: 50
00:22:02 Kelly Steffen: 50

00:22:05 Leah Francis: vacant lots: 40

00:23:50 Vanessa Morrison: Oklahoma! 🤘

00:27:54 Leah Francis: 100

00:34:50 Leah Francis: Solarpunk lifestyle!

00:39:12 Judy Braus: a practical and creative way of living that blends human needs with nature. It focuses on green energy, community sharing, growing your own food, and fixing things instead of buying new ones. It turns climate worry into hopeful, local action.

00:39:44 Ashley Kale: Go Blue!

00:45:11 Kathryn Reis: Is my presumption correct ... nations that rely less on capitalism have more citizens connected to their environment, neighbors, etc.?

00:46:03 Samantha Sueiro: The lack of sidewalks is a huge part too at least over by me

00:46:30 Judy Braus: Thanks for the questions! Keep the questions coming, and Matt will address as many as possible!

00:49:51 Judy Braus: Great examples, Matt!

00:50:10 Vanessa Morrison: OKC! ⚡️❤️💙

00:53:03 Judy Braus: Even more reason to go to Paris! :-)

00:53:10 Meredith McCool: These are great urban examples. I'm curious to hear ideas for rural communities, too.

00:53:32 Meredith Dash: Did they use money from the Olympics?

00:54:52 Adrienne Rajna: Interesting that these examples are urban examples.

00:55:22 Alexandra Paulino: We have some closed to cars areas in Queens, NY after the pandemic

00:55:43 Megan Fink: Yes, please! To all of these place-based systems!!

00:55:52 Leah Francis: I wonder how these improvements tie in with affordability in living close to these new and improved systems.

00:57:36 Preethi Mony: individual townships and neighborhoods are so different. 10 mil south of me, there the whole town is connected by bike paths, here, there aren't any sidewalks or bike path connecting neighborhoods.

01:01:13 Kathryn Reis: environmental applied civics (EarthForce.org) is a great way to promote place based learning that helps students also learn about systems.

01:02:30 Meredith Dash: In Richmond, we have a school that has a "bike bus" where one parents rides with their child, then they meet up and pick up others until a big caravan of bikes is riding to school together. I do love that example.

01:02:30 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali): Please share examples of place-based or environmental education programs that you think might serve as systems change catalysts.

01:02:43 Libby McCann: So fun to see how your good works complement the entirely off line (no screens!) weeklong summer graduate course I co-taught this summer in VT, "Environmental Leadership & Community Resilience"--your framing reinforces the importance of such learning opportunities, thank you!

01:02:55 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali): We have a bike bus in our neighborhood too! Love seeing it bike by!

01:03:01 Rebecca Kauten: Citizen science efforts like pollinators/monarchs/bumble bee monitoring

01:03:09 David Kline: Stream studies and Watershed Education with MWEEs

01:03:25 amy neblett: I love MWEEs!

01:03:26 Vanessa Morrison: Cultural tourism!

01:03:45 Cristina Vieira: Eci-schools

01:03:46 INGRID HARRALD: we grow orchids in the classroom and have students learn about peatlands and conservation of peatlands through field trips and classroom lessons.

01:03:58 Perry Thomas: Green School programs like PLT's and Kentucky Green Schools

01:04:26 Sam Hoffman: I've helped start after-school nature clubs at local parks where kids were mostly staying inside the gym. We explored the local plants, ponds, etc.

01:05:03 Mabel Rivera: Make kids part of the data collection and solutions

01:05:31 Adrienne Rajna: What if area groups / schools each grow produce that grows best at their site, and then exchange with each other... hence making it a 'systems' experience. One grows the 3 sisters, another campus grows the fruit and nut trees etc...

01:05:47 Sam Hoffman: There's an urban farm near me that does a youth program each spring to fall, where they work on the farm and learn about nature and food systems

01:06:39 Erika Hopkins: Trout in the Classroom

01:06:54 NAAEE Staff (Anne Umali): So many great examples of EE!

01:07:08 Jill Hollowell: What are MWEES?

01:07:29 David Kline: citizen science monitoring...

01:07:31 Gloria Kim: I work at a zoo in our city and we partner with health organizations to connect children to nature and learn about wellbeing in nature and school spaces!

01:07:32 David Kline: Road Salt and Fresh Water

<https://share.google/uMglAsahH3T1ozjwM>

Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences:

<https://eepro.naaee.org/learning/eelearn/eelearn-6-mwee-101>

01:08:09 Judy Braus: Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences (MWEES)

<https://eepro.naaee.org/learning/mwee-101-introduction-meaningful-watershed-educational-experience>

01:08:52 Libby McCann: A rural example: Over 15+ years, we've built 80 raised garden beds in collaboration with local social service agencies plus stewarded a 1.5 acre giving garden--more than 15 tons of local produce donated locally through Community Garden Connections (Keene NH); enhanced social capital and meaningful personal experiences for all engaged.

01:09:30 Adrienne Rajna: Children learn from models, but since we don't have models, children can and are participating in creating the models.

01:10:18 Meredith McCool: Through my sister's work to develop HomeGrown Augusta (<https://www.homegrownaugusta.com/>) as part of our small business's outreach, we've learned that the vast majority of farms in our rural, agricultural community are producing commodity crops.

01:10:21 Vanessa Morrison: Great webinar! Thank you Matt and team!