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OMEGA CONVENES ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS TO EXPLORE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL ISSUES

*Van Jones, Jeremy Rifkin, Janine Benyus, Bob Berkebile &
Other Leading Voices Join Omega's Design by Nature Conference*

RHINEBECK, NY – Today, Omega Institute, a nationally recognized environmental steward in New York's Hudson Valley, announced [Design by Nature: A Conference on Sustainable Design for a New Earth](#), will be held on its Rhinebeck, New York campus, from October 19–21, 2012, and will feature inspiring stories from extraordinary people working to build a more sustainable and just world for everybody.

“Responding to the challenges of our time calls for creative new ways of observing, planning, designing, and collaborating. Omega's annual sustainable design conference explores the principles of nature-based, whole systems thinking and innovative planning strategies that can be applied to a wide scale of projects, addressing some of the most pressing issues of the day,” said Robert “Skip” Backus, chief executive officer at Omega.

Omega's own campus planning process provides positive examples of whole systems thinking and new green technologies, including the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL), a state-of-the-art water reclamation facility and the first green building in America to achieve both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certification. Backus, the visionary behind the creation of the OCSL, will lead conference participants on a tour.

Backus opens the weekend event on Friday, October 19 at 8:00 p.m., and will be followed by [Jeremy Rifkin](#). Rifkin, founder and president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, is one of the world's leading authorities on economic sustainability and a sought-after thought leader by governments around the world. Through a discussion of his work consulting for various governments, Rifkin will share his unique perspective on how our society is transitioning into a Third Industrial Revolution, and how we can create a long-term economic sustainability plan to address the triple challenge of the global economic crisis, energy security, and climate change.

Saturday, conference participants will hear keynotes from extraordinary leaders in the field of sustainable design and environmental advocacy, including architect [Bob Berkebile](#), renowned for rebuilding communities that have faced environmental devastation. Berkebile helped introduce LEED® standards for green building in the United States, working on projects such as the Greening of the White House, Greening of the Pentagon, Greening of the Grand Canyon, and the creation of the OCSL. Green economy pioneer, [Van Jones](#), will share his insights from being a grassroots outsider, to a White House insider, to an author and engaged citizen working toward a blueprint to reinvent the American Dream.

Additional Saturday keynotes include esteemed biologist, author, and cofounder of the Biomimicry Institute, [Janine M. Benyus](#); microbiologist, environmental health ecologist, author, and vertical farming expert, [Dickson Despommier](#); and artist, engineer, director of the xDesign Environmental Health Clinic, and New York University professor, [Natalie Jeremijenko](#).

Omega will also present its First Annual Leadership in Sustainable Education Award to [Hudson River Sloop Clearwater](#), a nonprofit peer who exemplifies leadership in sustainable education. As part of the award process, Omega granted Clearwater a \$10,000 cash award and free planning retreat, earlier this year.

The final portion of the conference ending at noon on Sunday, October 21 includes a panel discussion on Systems & Solutions. Throughout the weekend, Sobonfu Somé, an author and expert in the deep-rooted tradition of African Elders, will help create community by weaving song and music into the conference program.

This conference is open to anyone interested in learning how everyday choices—from supporting local agriculture to protecting natural resources—can change the world. Whether you are a green builder, architect, educator, activist, student, or business leader, this conference will provide information about important developments in sustainable design, and steps we can all make to ensure a better future.

Tuition for the full weekend conference is \$195 and does not include accommodations. Omega is offering a number of tuition scholarships. For detailed information, including scholarship application guidelines, presenter biographies, or to register, please visit eOmega.org/design or call 800.944.1001.

A limited number of media passes are available. Photography restrictions may apply. To apply for a media pass, visit eOmega.org/press.

To connect via social media, follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/eOmega.org and on Twitter at [@omega_institute](https://twitter.com/omega_institute). Use #DesignByNature, #nature, and #biomimicry when referencing the event.

About Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

Founded in 1977, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is the nation's most trusted source for wellness and personal growth. As a nonprofit organization, Omega offers diverse and innovative educational experiences that inspire an integrated approach to personal and social change. Located on 195 acres in the beautiful Hudson Valley, Omega welcomes more than 23,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York, and at exceptional locations around the world. eOmega.org

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