SAGE SPARK
fueling carbon negative culture

Fire fuels Burning Man culture; electric light is no substitute. Feeding those flames is fuel transported from afar, precluding carbon negativity. To reconcile this conflict of environment and culture, we propose a new tradition centered on energy crop permaculture and land attunement: the production of biomass fuel artifacts via a radically cooperative ritual.

SAGE SPARK proposes direct participation in energy production to serve two goals: carbon negative fire and an unforgettable, exportable experience with BM cultural practice. Physical and cooperative rather than thoughtless and solitary, energy production and consumption are unabstracted to becoming tangible points for reflection, discussion, and action.

Miscanthus giganteus, a perennial, non-invasive, sterile grass is an ideal energy crop that sequesters carbon and can grow on and improve marginal land. Visitors will journey across Fly Ranch, bringing harvested biomass from a verdant labyrinth into the playa. There it is transformed into fuel briquettes through cooperative interaction with an installation that serves both as a press and conduit of the elements.

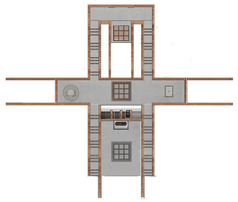
The artifacts created are used to light festivities, heat cold nights, and visualize progress towards sustainable habitation at Fly Ranch.

For every hectare of energy crop per year:

ELEMENTS

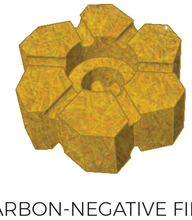
LABYRINTH

Miscanthus giganteus, a sterile and noninvasive grass grown for and in the likeness of BRC for Fly Ranch and its inhabitants.



FUEL PRODUCTION INSTALLATION

An interactive brick press on which visitors dance together to produce biomass briquettes and experience the elements of Fly Ranch in a new way.



CARBON-NEGATIVE FIRE

Biomass briquettes made from plant biomass on-site for use in lanterns, stoves, and artworks.

SUSTAINABILITY VISUALIZATION

Sculptural flame that reports and inspires progress via an interactive artwork.

REGENERATIVE CONSTRUCTION

Mycelium building materials produced using a biomass substrate.

FOOD CROP LAYERS

Replacement of partial areas of miscanthus giganteus crop as soil is rehabilitated and able to support food crop permaculture..

"The more digital we get, the more ritual we need"

-Chip Conley
Burning Man Project board member

SITE EVOLUTION

PHASE I

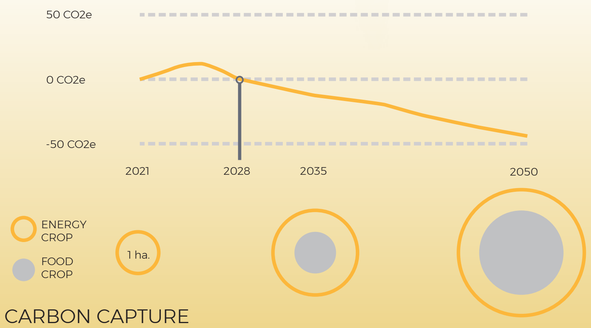
The energy crop is established and the biomass press is built. Relatively few people stay at Fly Ranch regularly.

PHASE II

The population of Fly Ranch has grown. Briquette production is in full swing and energy plots are expanded. Mycelium construction material production begins and seasonal structures are built.

PHASE III

Biomass production is now sufficient to supply Black Rock City's Lamplighters with carbon-negative fuel. Ash from the fires is combined with food waste to produce natural soaps. Temporary festival infrastructure is constructed from mycelium bricks.



CARBON CAPTURE

SAGE SPARK will be carbon negative in 7 years. Carbon costs stem primarily from the brick pressing pavilion construction materials. As marginal land improves, the initial miscanthus crop will be replaced with food for consumption at Fly Ranch.

BEYOND FLY RANCH

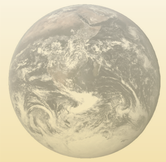
THE FESTIVAL

Sustainable burning at Fly Ranch is just the beginning. The lanterns, firepits, and art installations of Black Rock City can be lit with miscanthus biomass.

THE COMMUNITY

The citizens of Gerlach can and should benefit from activity at Fly Ranch. 20% of the fuel produced will be gifted to Gerlach, fulfilling an obligation to a central BM tenet and spreading the word about energy alternatives.

Each Spring, the public is invited to take part in a harvest celebration and audit of the initiative.



BEYOND

The experience of physical energy production has value beyond its immediate context and use case. Energy is currently consumed thoughtlessly and priced below its true cost.

In the spirit of radical accountability, virtual visitors can interact with a digital facsimile of the S.A.G.E visualization sculpture.