Report 05 — SRIP:

The Steward's Journey

Steward Regenerative Integration Protocol · v0.1 · March 2026

Part of Series III — Applied Protocols · Green Papers: Notes Toward Planetary Guardianship
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Function of this report

This report describes how an individual steward enters the Spiralweb protocol architecture, deepens their practice over time, reads their own conditions honestly, and eventually contributes to a shared evidence commons.

The four preceding Applied Protocol Reports describe the system from above — its governance logic, economic flows, dashboard instruments, and field architecture. This report describes it from below: how a person with a piece of land actually begins, what the practice looks and feels like, and how individual observation becomes part of something larger without consuming the person who holds it.

SRIP is the human-scale entry membrane of the Spiralweb governance stack. It links body, pixel, steward circle, evidence commons, and bioregional coordination. It is where the whole system becomes livable and actionable. It does not replace the reports that precede it. It makes them real at the scale of a person with a piece of land and a capacity to notice.

Genealogy — where this protocol stands

SRIP is not improvised. It stands in the lineage of polycentric governance theory developed by Elinor and Vincent Ostrom and their colleagues over several decades. That lineage demonstrated, through empirical study of commons governance across the world, that locally-grounded, self-organised institutions can govern shared resources with greater effectiveness, justice, and ecological durability than either centralised state control or unregulated market allocation.

The Ostrom design principles that inform SRIP include: clearly defined boundaries, rules shaped by local conditions, participation of those affected in rule modification, effective monitoring by those closest to the field, graduated responses to rule violation, accessible conflict resolution, and nested governance structures that connect local action arenas to wider institutional layers without collapsing local autonomy.

SRIP translates these principles into a practical entry protocol for regenerative stewardship. The pixel is a governance-relevant unit of situated observation — not merely a plot of land but an action arena where a steward, in relationship with their community, makes decisions that are documented, traceable, and connected to a wider commons of evidence. The AnchorPoint is a relational governance bridge. The Circle of 13 is the primary human-scale governance form. The three-stream dashboard is the monitoring instrument. The wider network is nested and non-centralised.

The system is diagnostic, not doctrinaire. No single land practice is mandated. No single cultural tradition is privileged. The protocol asks only that what is done is observed, that what is observed is recorded, and that what is recorded can be shared, corrected, and built upon. That is the Ostrom insight applied to the planetary scale: polycentric, locally-held, evidence-bound, and correctable.

Preamble — what you bring

You bring a piece of land, a body, and a capacity to notice. That is enough to begin.

The land may be a garden, a courtyard, a shared community plot, a school field, or a food forest in formation. It may be ten square metres or eighty hectares. The entry point is always the same: one pixel, one defined piece of ground, one honest observation.

No expertise is required. No internet connection is required for the field work itself. No particular school of land practice is required. Syntropic agroforestry, traditional stewardship, indigenous ecological knowledge, permaculture, food forest design, row cropping, dryland agroforestry, and local regenerative methods developed over generations — all are legitimate entry points. The protocol provides a shared observation structure. The practice belongs to the place and the people who hold it.

The steward is not a saviour. The protocol is not a hero's journey. The point is not to become indispensable, to achieve mastery, or to carry the field alone. Good stewardship distributes care, builds continuity beyond the self, and protects against the over-identification that leads to depletion. The system is designed to remain holdable by ordinary people in ordinary conditions — including conditions of fatigue, disruption, and incompletion.

What is required is honesty. The system is only as good as the observations that enter it. An honest gap is more valuable than a fabricated green.

I. The pixel — where it begins

The base unit is 10 m². Not as a metaphor — as a measurement. A steward begins with one defined piece of ground, one documented intervention, and one honest observation cycle.

What that intervention looks like depends entirely on the place, the climate, the existing conditions, and the knowledge of the people who hold the land. In Kitgum, Uganda, a community node uses a spiral guild design adapted from syntropic agroforestry, with Moringa as the central keystone tree and a structured rhythm involving elders and children together. In Sous Valley, Morocco, the entry point is an existing pomegranate plantation being transitioned toward a multi-layer food forest using a succession-based row system — with biomass trees pruned for mulch, swales for water retention, and consortia designed across succession stages. In a temperate community garden, the pixel might begin with an apple tree, companion herbs, and ground cover plants chosen from local knowledge.

These are examples, not models. The design is local. The observation is shared.

What to observe — eight categories

Across all practices and all bioregions, the following eight categories form the minimum shared observation structure. They are not indicators of any single school of practice. They are what any attentive steward can observe on any piece of land, with any tools, at any skill level. The purpose of observation is not documentation for its own sake — it is truthful orientation toward life-giving action. The decisive question behind every category is simple: is this practice giving to life, or is it taking from life?

1. Soil cover. Is the surface covered or bare? Is organic matter present — mulch, leaf litter, ground cover plants? Bare soil is the primary signal of a system under stress. Covered soil is the first signal of a system beginning to hold itself.

2. Vegetation layering. Are multiple layers present — ground cover, shrubs, mid-layer trees, canopy? Or is the system flat and monocultural? Layering is the structural signature of ecological complexity and resilience. It does not require a specific design — it can emerge from any practice that allows diverse vegetation to coexist.

3. Water behaviour. Does water infiltrate into the soil or run off? Is moisture retained between rainfall events? Are water retention features present — swales, mulch, ground cover, tree roots? Water behaviour is a direct measure of soil health and system maturity.

4. Succession signals. Is the system becoming more complex over time, or is it being reset? Are pioneer species giving way to longer-lived vegetation? Are there signs of natural regeneration — self-seeded trees, returning species, increasing canopy cover? Succession is nature's direction of travel. The steward's role is to observe whether the system is moving with it or against it.

5. Biodiversity presence. What species are present — plants, insects, birds, fungi, soil organisms? Are pollinators visiting? Are birds returning? Are there signs of mycorrhizal activity in the soil? Biodiversity is not an aesthetic preference. It is the functional measure of a living system's resilience and fertility.

6. Soil health signals. What does the soil smell like — alive and earthy, or flat and dead? What is its texture — loose and crumbly, or compacted and hard? Are earthworms present? Is there visible

fungal activity? Soil health can be assessed with hands and nose before any laboratory test.

7. Biomass cycle. Is organic material being returned to the system — through pruning, composting, chop-and-drop, animal manure, or leaf litter? Or is it being removed or burned? The biomass cycle is the engine of soil fertility. A system that exports all its organic matter will deplete. A system that returns it will build.

8. Human rhythm. What is the actual time and energy invested? Is the work sustainable for the people doing it? Can the rhythm be held over seasons, not just weeks? Human carrying capacity is not separate from ecological observation — it is part of the same system. A steward who is depleted cannot observe accurately and cannot make good decisions. The human rhythm is an ecological variable.

The observation record — a governance ledger

These eight categories are recorded at the pixel level in a simple running table. The table does not require digital tools — a printed sheet, a notebook, a pencil. It is filled weekly or after significant events: rainfall, drought, pruning, planting, disease, harvest, or any other change that shifts what can be observed.

This record is not merely documentation. It is entry into a governance ledger of living evidence — cumulative, auditable, shareable when appropriate, correctable, and governance-relevant. The ledger holds field evidence across time, makes patterns visible across nodes, supports truthful coordination, and helps prevent the drift, inflation, and narrative fantasy that emerge when governance loses contact with ground truth. The ledger is not just for recording what happened. It is for improving judgment.

Alongside the ecological record sits a Moral Biology reflection — a short set of questions drawn from the conceptual foundation of the series: How does your body feel today? What is the soil telling you through touch and smell? What is the energy of the plants — vigorous, stressed, recovering? What is the mood of the community? What does the place need from you right now?

This is not soft decoration. The steward's body and nervous system are part of the measurement instrument. A person who is depleted cannot read the land accurately. A community under stress cannot observe honestly. Moral Biology grounds observation in the full reality of the person doing the observing.

Local data belongs first to the steward and their local circle. Sharing with the wider network is consensual. Participation in network legibility is invited, not extracted. There are conditional layers of openness — what is visible locally, what is shared with partner networks, what enters the public evidence commons. Privacy, dignity, and local control are structural commitments, not afterthoughts.

II. The Circle of 13 — the human-scale governance form

A steward does not carry the field alone. The primary human-scale governance form in the Spiralweb architecture is the Circle of 13 — a bounded steward circle large enough for diversity of roles, small enough for trust and shared rhythm.

Thirteen is not an arbitrary number. It is a practical upper scale for a circle that can hold: shared observation, monthly review, role rotation, honest correction, and the relational continuity that makes governance real rather than formal. Below this scale, the circle may lack sufficient diversity. Above it, the circle begins to require bureaucratic coordination that distances governance from the field.

A Circle of 13 may include: growers and land stewards, elders holding long temporal memory of the place, youth and children in age-appropriate forms, local knowledge holders, documenters and note-keepers, water observers, species observers, coordination stewards, and hospitality or learning stewards who hold the connection between the field and visiting practitioners or students. Not all roles need to be filled at once. The circle grows into its form through practice.

Children are not symbolic add-ons. They bring attentional freshness, future continuity, pedagogical depth, and civic formation — the re-rooting of learning in habitat that most institutional education has abandoned. Elders are not heritage decoration. They bring memory of place, long temporal comparison, pattern recognition across decades, and intergenerational accountability. Both are structurally important to regeneration. A circle that includes only working-age adults is missing two of its most important governance capacities.

The Circle of 13 is a membrane against both isolation and bureaucratic sprawl. It holds the steward's practice within a social container that can absorb difficulty, distribute responsibility, and maintain continuity when any one member needs to rest, withdraw, or step back.

III. Food sovereignty — land as nourishment

Regenerative stewardship is not only ecological restoration. It is also, in its most grounded form, the restoration of the relationship between land and nourishment.

Food-producing fields are key governance fields. Stewardship becomes socially real when people are fed. Food sovereignty does not mean isolation from markets or from wider food systems — it means meaningful local influence over the conditions of production, the choice of what grows, and the distribution of what is harvested.

Food is not only yield, not only nutrition, and not only market output. It is also dignity, relation, local agency, ecological belonging, and practical autonomy. A field that feeds its stewards is a field that has governance relevance in daily life — not only in reports, protocols, and dashboards.

The pixel is therefore not only a measurement unit. For many stewards, it is also a food unit — the beginning of a food forest, a vegetable garden, a medicinal herb bed, a fruit tree that will feed children. This dimension of the protocol should never be abstracted away by governance language.

IV. The 13×13 sensing field

Behind the pixel observation table sits a wider sensing architecture: 13 domains, 13 observations each, 169 categories in total.

The domains are: Earth Systems Sensing, Body as Sensor, Water Guardianship, Food and Soil Commons, Human Ecology, Built Environment, Energy and Flow, Climate Emotion, Learning and Knowledge, Technology and AI, Governance and Power, Health and Care, and Meaning, Spirit and Future.

This range is deliberate. Soil vitality and water clarity sit alongside community trust levels and loneliness signals. Biodiversity presence logs sit alongside climate grief and hope signals. Governance legitimacy sits alongside sense of purpose, prayer and silence, and commitment to life.

The framework is intentionally qualitative, relational, and slow. Data here is not extracted but offered. Meaning arises through patterning across bodies, places, and times. Participation is voluntary, sovereign, and grounded in care.

A participant does not complete this framework — they move through it over time, noticing what they notice. The pattern emerges from accumulation. No single observation is too small. No domain is more important than another. The 169 categories are a map of what is possible to notice — not a checklist of what must be reported.

The closing note of the framework states: *Gaia is not measured; she is met*. This is the epistemological foundation of the citizen science layer. The observer is not outside the system being observed. They are part of it. Their attentiveness is itself an act of stewardship.

V. The role of AI — and its limits

AI is part of the governance membrane in this protocol — not as a neutral tool, but as an active participant whose role must be clearly bounded. The ordering matters and must be stated plainly.

Field observation comes first. The steward's direct, embodied encounter with the land is the primary source of truth. No AI output overrides what the steward actually observes in the field. If AI pattern recognition contradicts field truth, field truth takes precedence. The last impulse — the final decision about what is real, what is ready, and what should happen next — remains with the steward and their circle. Always.

Within these limits, AI may assist with: pattern recognition across datasets and observation records, species identification support, translation between languages, summarisation of field notes, comparison of observations across sites and time periods, memory support for long documentation trails, and protocol compliance checking.

AI does not authorise ecological readiness. AI does not determine when a field is ready to advance from one phase to another. AI does not replace local judgment, local knowledge, or the relational discernment of the Circle. AI does not interpret the meaning of what is observed — that remains with the steward, the circle, and the place. AI remains corrigible: it must be correctable, and the humans working with it retain full responsibility for all substantive claims and decisions.

This is not a limitation of AI's capability. It is a structural protection for the integrity of the governance ledger. Evidence that passes through uncritical AI interpretation before reaching the ledger is no longer field evidence — it is AI-mediated narrative. The distinction matters.

VI. Reading your own practice — three streams

The Penguin Dashboard, introduced in Report 04, applies at the individual steward level as much as at the field node or institutional level. Three streams are read monthly. These streams are structurally distinct, not interchangeable, and intentionally protected from being collapsed into one another.

This separation is one of the deepest features of the governance architecture. Many systems allow one apparently healthy metric to conceal another failing condition: ecological recovery hiding steward burnout; apparent social cohesion hiding habitat decline; governance neatness hiding empty soil; climate gains hiding biodiversity simplification. The three streams are separated precisely so that reality cannot be faked by aggregation. Genuine regeneration requires all three to remain readable.

Stream A — Land and Ecology. Is the place regenerating? Are soil cover, moisture, and organic matter holding stable? Are biodiversity signals — birds, insects, pollinators — present and increasing? Are planned interventions being carried out at the pixel level? Are observations being recorded honestly and revisitably?

Stream B — Steward Viability. Can the steward team carry the work without hidden depletion? Is time, energy, and attention realistically distributed? Are basic livelihood needs sufficiently met? Are roles and responsibilities legible day to day? Is there any load, conflict, or exhaustion being concealed? Can a trustworthy 30-day rhythm be held?

Stream C — Coordination and Governance. Are agreements and responsibilities known and understood? Are decisions being logged and traceable? Are external relationships and expectations aligned? Are funds, purpose, and decision trails kept separate? Is the next 30 days clearly decided?

Stream A cannot compensate for Stream B collapse. Stream B cannot compensate for Stream C confusion. Stream C cannot compensate for ecological decline. Each stream is a separate reality that must be read on its own terms.

Each stream is read as green, yellow, or red. The guardrails are structural:

If Stream B goes yellow — slow Stream A. Protect rest, clarify roles, reduce ambition.
If Stream B goes red — pause Stream A entirely. Stabilise the steward before expanding the land work.
If Stream C goes red — pause new commitments. Clarify roles, decision trails, and expectations before taking on anything more.
If Stream A goes red — stop escalation. Focus only on soil, water, and minimum care.

The guardrail principle is not punitive. It is protective. Ecological ambition must not be financed by human depletion. The carrying capacity of the steward is not a personal matter — it is a governance condition.

VII. The AnchorPoint relationship

Every steward who connects to the wider network does so through an AnchorPoint — a relational and place-based threshold where the local practice meets the shared architecture.

The AnchorPoint contact is not an administrator. They are a human bridge. They hold the relationship between the local steward and the wider system. They know the place, know the people, and can translate between the lived reality of the field and the documentation layer of the network.

An AnchorPoint is constituted by: a real person or group rooted in place, a local context that can meaningfully receive protocol work, enough continuity to carry next steps, and a bridge between the public architecture and the lived place.

Some AnchorPoints already support active field practice — Kitgum, Uganda (Akena Patrick and village elders) is the most mature in the current system. Others are preparatory tracks, renewed invitations, or exploratory place references still waiting for the right local constellation.

A steward who does not yet have an AnchorPoint contact can begin their pixel practice independently. Connection to the network follows relationship — and relationship follows time, trust, and verified continuity. It cannot be rushed.

VIII. From pixel to bioregion — the scale ladder

Small units are not small because the vision is small. They are small because truthful scale begins there. The pixel is the minimum truth unit — the smallest piece of ground that can be honestly observed, documented, and governed. From there, scale builds through accumulation and comparison, not through narrative inflation or centralised ambition.

The scale ladder moves as follows:

10 m² pixel — the minimum truth unit. One steward, one observation cycle, one entry into the governance ledger.
Steward practice cluster — several pixels held by one steward or family, observed together as a developing system.
Circle of 13 — the primary human-scale governance form. Multiple stewards, shared observation, monthly review, role distribution.
Field node — a verified, documented, institutionally held practice site with its own AnchorPoint relationship, protocol alignment, and phase development.
Multi-node pattern — two or more field nodes in a shared bioregional context, whose combined observations begin to reveal patterns that no single node can show.
Corridor and watershed reading — ecological connectivity across nodes, water system observations, habitat corridor patterns emerging from multiple sites.
Bioregional governance surface — the level at which the Penguin Dashboard and the evidence commons become legible as a governance instrument for landscape-scale ecological and social coordination.

The wider pattern is emergent, not centrally invented. No one designs the bioregional reading from above. It becomes visible through the accumulation of honest local observations made by many stewards, circles, and nodes over time.

Carbon, biomass, and climate — placed within the wider field

SRIP is not a carbon protocol. But because it operates inside a larger conversation about climate, it should be explicit about how carbon and climate relate to the work.

Carbon capture is relevant. Biomass accumulation matters. Soil carbon measured over time is a meaningful indicator of system development. Carbon credit documentation, where it becomes possible, provides an economic foundation that supports long-term stewardship viability. Documentation from Phase 0 — soil baselines, biomass measurements, species records — is the evidence base that makes future carbon claims credible.

But carbon does not override biodiversity, water, steward viability, or local truth. A system that sequesters carbon while depleting its stewards is not a healthy system. A monoculture plantation that accumulates biomass while eliminating biodiversity is not regeneration. SRIP is climate-relevant, but not carbon-sovereign. The decisive question remains the same: is this giving to life?

IX. From pixel to field node — the PG-RAPID logic

A serious field node develops over years, not weeks. The PG-RAPID protocol describes the phased path from a single pixel to a verified, documented, and institutionally held field node. The phases below describe the logic, not a fixed timetable. Each field moves at its own pace, determined by soil conditions, social readiness, governance capacity, and available resources.

Phase 0 — Registration and baseline. Map existing assets: land, water, vegetation, soil, social relationships. Establish the group governance structure. Document everything from the start — a photograph from a fixed point each week is more valuable than a sophisticated data system started late. Identify the succession stage of the land: is it degraded and in need of pioneer restoration, or does it already carry secondary or climax vegetation that can be worked with?

Phase 1 — Pilot. Begin on a defined and manageable area — 2 hectares or less is recommended. Implement the chosen land practice. Build the observation rhythm. Hold regular group meetings with simple written records. The documentation discipline established in Phase 1 is the foundation of everything that follows. It cannot be retrofitted.

Phase 2 — Expansion and governance consolidation. Expand the area under management. Integrate partner plots or parcels into the shared governance structure. The guest or learning centre, where planned, begins to take form — not as luxury infrastructure but as the economic engine that makes the land practice viable over time without dependence on external grants.

Phase 3 — Activation. The field node is operational, generating its own continuity. First harvests, first market connections, first income from the land itself. The documentation layer is rich enough to tell a credible story about what the land was and what it is becoming.

Phase 4 — Full potential. The land is producing at or near its regenerative capacity. Carbon credit documentation is mature enough for third-party verification. The field node can serve as a reference and learning site for other bioregions.

Carbon credit documentation begins from Phase 0 — not because credits arrive early, but because the evidence base that makes them credible is built through continuous, honest observation from the start. A soil baseline taken in year zero, compared to a soil test in year three and year six, is the foundation of any future carbon claim. Start now, even if the credits come a decade later.

X. What the network receives

When a steward chooses to connect their observation to the shared network, several things become possible that are not possible from a single pixel alone.

Pattern recognition across sites. A soil health signal observed in Kitgum, a water retention pattern in Sous Valley, and a biodiversity recovery signal in Casablanca — read together across the 13×13 framework — begin to reveal something about regenerative processes in different bioregions that no single site can show alone. The eight observation categories provide a common language across different practices, climates, and cultures.

Protocol verification and correction. The kernel protocols — PG-Syntropy, PG-EleCorridors, PG-Water-Core, PG-AvianCorridors — are only as reliable as the field evidence that tests them. Each honest observation from each pixel contributes to the evidence layer that either confirms, challenges, or refines the protocol. Protocols are provisional. Field evidence may refine them. Correction is built into the architecture. No protocol outranks honest field contradiction. Learning moves both upward and downward through the system. A protocol that cannot be challenged by field evidence is not a protocol — it is a dogma. The system is designed to remain correctable.

Governance legibility. When multiple stewards across multiple sites read their three streams monthly and report their red/yellow/green conditions honestly, the Penguin Dashboard becomes genuinely legible at the network level. Patterns of steward depletion become visible before they become crises. Ecological stress in one bioregion can be read alongside governance stress in another. The system can respond rather than react.

The network is not a hierarchy. No single node reports to a centre. The architecture is polycentric — each node is autonomous, each AnchorPoint is locally held, each steward retains unconditional withdrawal rights. What the network offers is not control. It is legibility, solidarity, and the slow accumulation of shared evidence across time and place.

Pause, withdrawal, and dignified incompletion

A steward can pause. A steward can withdraw. A steward can reduce scope, step back from network participation, or remain incomplete without failure.

Honest incompletion is better than false green. A field that is honestly at rest is more valuable to the governance ledger than a field that reports green while its stewards are depleting. Pause is sometimes wisdom. The field may rest. The steward may rest. Continuity matters more than escalation.

The withdrawal right is unconditional. Any steward or field node has the right to withdraw from the network if conditions on the ground make continued participation unsafe, unjust, or ecologically harmful. This right is not an emergency clause. It is a design principle. A system that cannot be exited safely cannot be trusted.

This applies at every scale — from an individual steward stepping back from their pixel practice during a difficult season, to a field node suspending operations during a climate event, to a Circle of 13 pausing its governance rhythm while internal conflict is resolved. The protocol accommodates all of these. Gaps are recorded as context, not as failure.

Closing note — one day at a time

The system described in this report is ambitious in its architecture and modest in its entry conditions. A person with a 10 m² plot and a notebook can begin today. The observation practice does not require a grant, a platform, or an institutional affiliation. It requires presence, honesty, and the willingness to record what is actually there.

From that beginning, everything else follows — in time, at the pace of soil, trust, and verification. Not faster.

The protocol does not promise transformation. It offers structure for care. Whether the care transforms anything depends on the place, the people, the climate, the season, and ten thousand other conditions that no protocol can fully anticipate. What the protocol can do is make sure that whatever happens is observed, recorded, and held with honesty.

The decisive question is always the same. Is this giving to life? That question does not require expertise, credentials, or institutional backing. It requires presence, attention, and the courage to answer honestly — even when the answer is not yet green.

Begin with one pixel. One honest observation. The pattern will emerge from accumulation.

Related documents

This report draws on and should be read alongside:

Report 01 — Kommunalt Arbejde som Natur: governance as living practice, the Sophia Lumen Protocol, Flow·Friction·Sensitivity.
Report 02 — The Correction Loop: AI governance, the Last Impulse, the 13×13 framework as epistemological foundation.
Report 03 — Water Into Dry Riverbeds: flow architecture, Penguin Economics, bioregional budgets, three-stream value ecology.
Report 04 — Penguin Dashboard: legibility as governance, G0–G6 capital gates, steward rotation, three-stream reading.
Kitgum Village PG Node Starter Manual: a field-ready 10 m² starter kit for community-scale practice in Uganda.
Gaia GoldBloom Citizen Science Framework: the full 13×13 sensing architecture.
PG-RAPID Protocol — Badaoui Food Forest Initiative: the 80 ha Morocco field protocol, illustrating Phase 0–4 implementation in a MENA dryland context.
Syntropic Farming Guidebook (Gietzen): the principles of Ernst Götsch's succession-based agroforestry system, which informs PG-Syntropy v1.
Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons*. Cambridge University Press. The foundational text for polycentric governance theory that underlies the institutional design of the Spiralweb protocol architecture.

Status and next steps

This is a first text — v0.1, March 2026. It will be revised as field experience accumulates across active nodes. The protocol file (SRIP-1.0.json), which will provide the machine-readable, schema-validated version of this document, is in formation and will follow when this text is stable.

Feedback and field corrections are welcomed and will be incorporated in subsequent versions. Contact: engberg@planetaryguardians.global