March 13, 2022

From: Ursula Curiosa (Lindsey Krantz)

To: Scott McKain

Re: Packet for Upcoming Meeting on Tuesday, 3-15-2022, about SARE Project FNC22-1337: "Inspirational Three Sisters Sunshine Experiment with Sunflowers and Community Seed Distribution in Evansville, Indiana"

Dear Scott,

Thank you for making time in your schedule to meet with me this week. I put together this backgrounder packet so that we can understand each other as well as possible.

I have a Certificate of Achievement for FFA participants and other community members to come out to my farm to do days of hands-on learning. I budgeted for paper for 100 Certificates and would like to give them all away (repeat visitors welcome). This is a two-year project, including building three 24ft-wide crop circles with 7 mounds each, 5 field days, and 2 Harvest Celebrations. There is a lot to be learned, especially from the Farm Manager, who is an Indigenous expert on Indigenous agriculture. Contained in this packet is a draft of the Certificate of Achievement, which will have a 2inch border designed from Indigenous motifs.

I particularly enjoy the natural geometry of the plantings, so I made three drawings of them (contained in this packet). The diagrams help me to understand and I hope they make sense to you, too.

Below is a bit more about the project, too.

Sincerely,

Ursula Curiosa
510-478-6615
Evansville, IN 47714

(my legal name is Lindsey, but I go by Ursula now)

Project abstract:

In this project, "Inspirational Three Sisters Mounds Sunshine Experiment with Sunflowers and Community Seed Distribution in Evansville, Indiana," we will grow three spectacular 24ft-wide formations of seven 4ft-wide mounds each. We will grow specialty/ancient varieties of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers that are native to America.

This project is ecologically sound, because 3 Sisters (corn, beans, and squash) naturally enrich the soil and help each other grow. A 4th Sister of sunflowers enriches the fabric of the plantings, too, and will be planted on the North side of the formations to avoid shading the 3 Sisters.

This project is social responsible, because it is a type of intercropping / symbiotic planting practiced in Indiana since time immemorial, but has died out almost completely (in Evansville, IN, at least). Much respect goes to Indigenous peoples' planting techniques which inspire this project. The community seed distribution will cause 3 Sisters plus sunflowers plantings to proliferate across Evansville, IN.

This project is economically viable, because it changes lawn into productive cultivated land that can be cultivated over and over during and after this project. It pays decent compensation to the three socially disadvantaged people working on it and will sell well.

The grant proposal asked about me and my farmstead:

My name is Lindsey E. Krantz and I gardened while growing up in town and at my family farm near Boonville, IN. I have profited from urban agriculture in Detroit, MI, as an independent spearmint farmer. I also enjoyed community garden projects in Ypsilanti and Detroit, MI; Berkeley and Oakland, CA; and Evansville, IN. My B.A. from Indiana University Bloomington in Spanish, Criminal Justice, and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures equipped me with an glimpse of how food justice can be in the future.

I used to work as a Customer Service Representative for the U.S. Department of State at the National Passport Information Center, which developed the professionalism needed to spearhead this project. At my farm, I grow mulberries, elderbushes, daffodils, spearmint, tulips, crocus, hyacinths, pecan saplings, goumiberry bushes, lavender, iris, hostas, a magnolia tree, and there are mature trees in the back yard. The fence with trees and vines in it that runs East-West on the South border of the farm provides shade for this experiment. Its address is 1168 South Dexter Avenue, Evansville, IN 47714. Evansville today has a population of about 117,000 people (U.S. Census). My farm is 0.49 acres including my 1,200sqft home.

Nowadays, I am totally and permanently disabled from working, thus I collect SSDI. There are some things that I can do for the project, like maintain its accounting, but since I am disabled I must have able-bodied help on my farm. Working a day job is not something that I am capable of anymore. However, I am more than able to execute this project, if provided funding from SARE.

The grant proposal included a section entitled "Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture." Here is my response to how this project facilitates the sustainability of agriculture in Evansville and beyond:

My project will make a meaningful contribution to sustainable agriculture by popularizing and honoring the growing of the ancient Indigenous technique of 3 Sisters intercropping (pole beans, corn, squash) with sunflowers, by paying 2 part-time socially-disadvantaged contractors decent compensation, by analyzing the variance in crop production under experimental conditions, and by distributing seed packet kits into the Evansville, Indiana, community with education about how to replicate and/or innovate upon this project.

Funding noted in SARE's project database in 2019, 2020, and 2021 for four 3 Sisters-related projects was $565,066, with 0% awarded to projects in Indiana and with 4.7% for SARE Farmer Rancher grants ($27,000 for Project FNC20-1212). It appears that SARE has never funded a 3 Sisters-related project in Indiana. Evansville has a population of about 117,000 in 2021 (U.S. Census).

The closest grocery store to my farm is a Neighborhood Walmart (5 minute drive), which does not serve the community with the value nor the selection that we deserve and can provide for ourselves. Given some inspiration, education, and seeds from this project, it makes sense that folks can explore 3 Sisters plus sunflowers plantings for themselves for fun, nutrition, agricultural heritage, and profit.

"The culinary uses of Jimmy Red in South Carolina are exciting and expanding," (Ark of Taste, Fondazione Slow Food for Biodiversity, Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche [University of the Study of Gastronomic Science], Pollenzo, Italy): this project uses Jimmy Red Corn. In 2018, National Public Radio profiled Jimmy Red Corn as a sweet, beautiful, delicious, "foodie" corn hunted to near-extinction by bootleggers after its high sugar content, but quite fortunately brought back and succeeding at farm-to-table introduction. Its seeds are available online now.

This project is economically viable, because it pays decent compensation to 3 socially disadvantaged women (Farmer is Disabled, Farm Manager is Indigenous). Additionally, it opens up possibilities for community members to grow their own crops to eat, trade, and sell.

In "Alternative Pollinators: Native Bees" by Mader et al., published by ATTRA (2010), the squash and sunflowers we will grow are noted as crops which benefit highly from and provide habitat/food for native bees, so this project supports native bee life and biodiversity; the plantings will be an oasis for pollinators in the city. The plantings symbiotically interact chemically and structurally; eating a 3 Sisters diet provides humans complete nutrition ("The Agricultural Engineering of the 3 Sisters." Vanier College, Quebec, Canada, 2019).

Less fertilizer is needed for the corn, for example, because the beans fix nitrogen from the air into the soil where the corn can consume it. Findings from this project bear upon North Central and Southern regions (my farm is in far South of North Central region). The variance within and between sunny and shady patches' crop production, as measured by total weight of crop produced, will be analyzed over 2 years. The approach of this project affects fellow Evansville farmers since we will give out seeds to the community.

Ancient/heirloom varieties have been selected for the plantings. Arikara sunflower, 1,500-Year-Old New Mexican Cave Bean, Jimmy Red Corn, & Gete Okosomin squash are examples of chosen plants. We will distribute as much for that amount as possible, given changes in prices. For the future of biodiversity's sake, this project uses the ancient/heirloom seeds so the plants do not go extinct.

Food from the harvest will mostly be consumed/distributed at our field days and annual Harvest Celebrations, which will provide excellent nutrition and a taste of what they themselves could grow from the seeds this project distributes.

Certificate of Achievement

This document certifies that on _____,

_____

successfully completed a day of hands-on learning about USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program Project #FNC22-1337, entitled “Inspirational Three Sisters Sunshine Experiment with Sunflowers and Community Seed Distribution in Evansville, Indiana.”

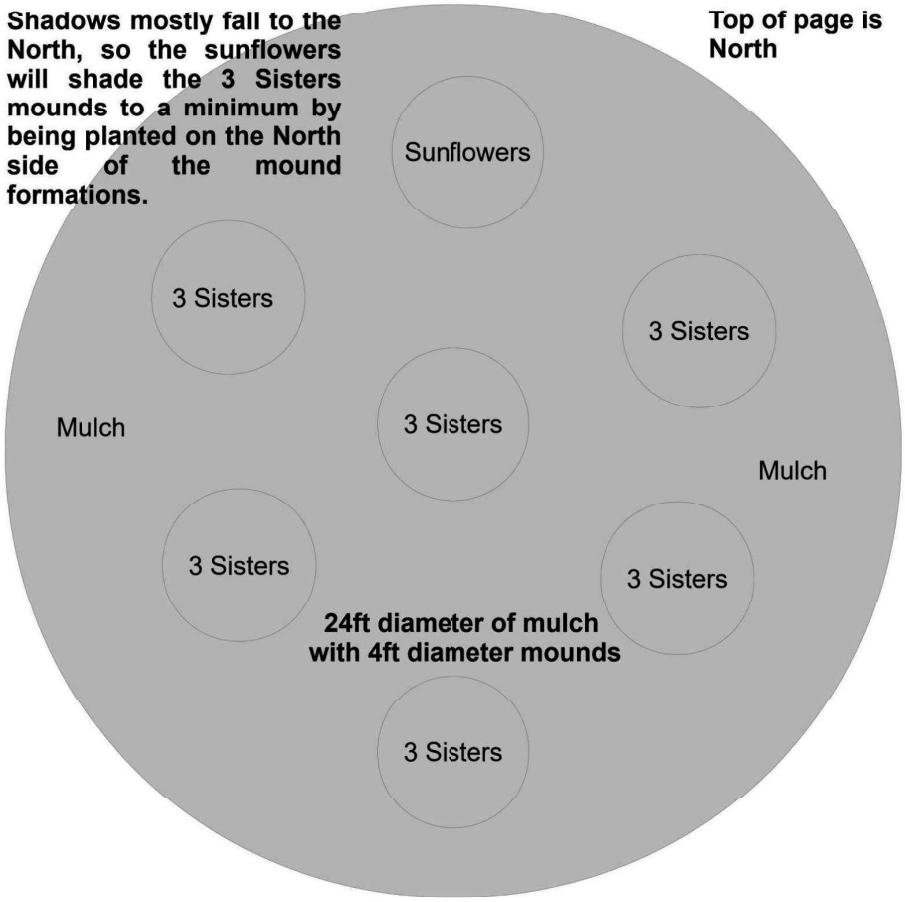
We thank you for learning about the ancient Indigenous practice of Three Sisters intercropping and ancient/rare/heirloom squash, corn, beans, and sunflowers, so that the techniques and plants can live on into the future of sustainable agriculture through you and through those you teach in the future.

Sincerely,

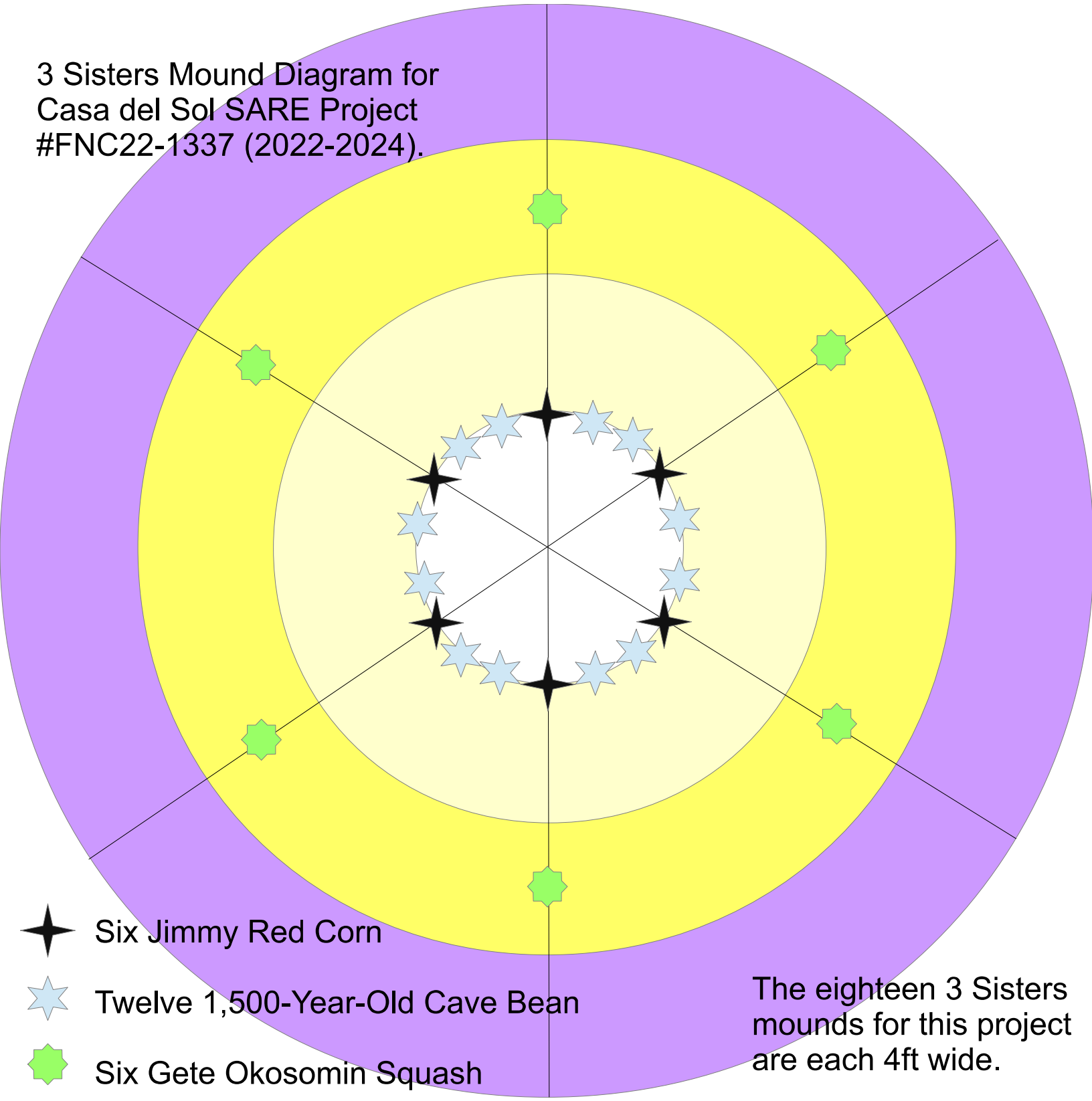
Lindsey Krantz
Farmer, Casa Del Sol Farm
President, Catalpa Tree Publishing LLC
Fellow, On-Ramp 2021 Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program
Grantee, USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Project #FNC22-1337

1168 South Dexter Avenue
Evansville, Indiana 47714
(510) 478-6615

Graphic for "Inspirational Three Sisters Sunshine Experiment with Sunflowers and Community Seed Distribution in Evansville, Indiana" by Lindsey Krantz (2021).



3 Sisters Mound Diagram for
Casa del Sol SARE Project
#FNC22-1337 (2022-2024).



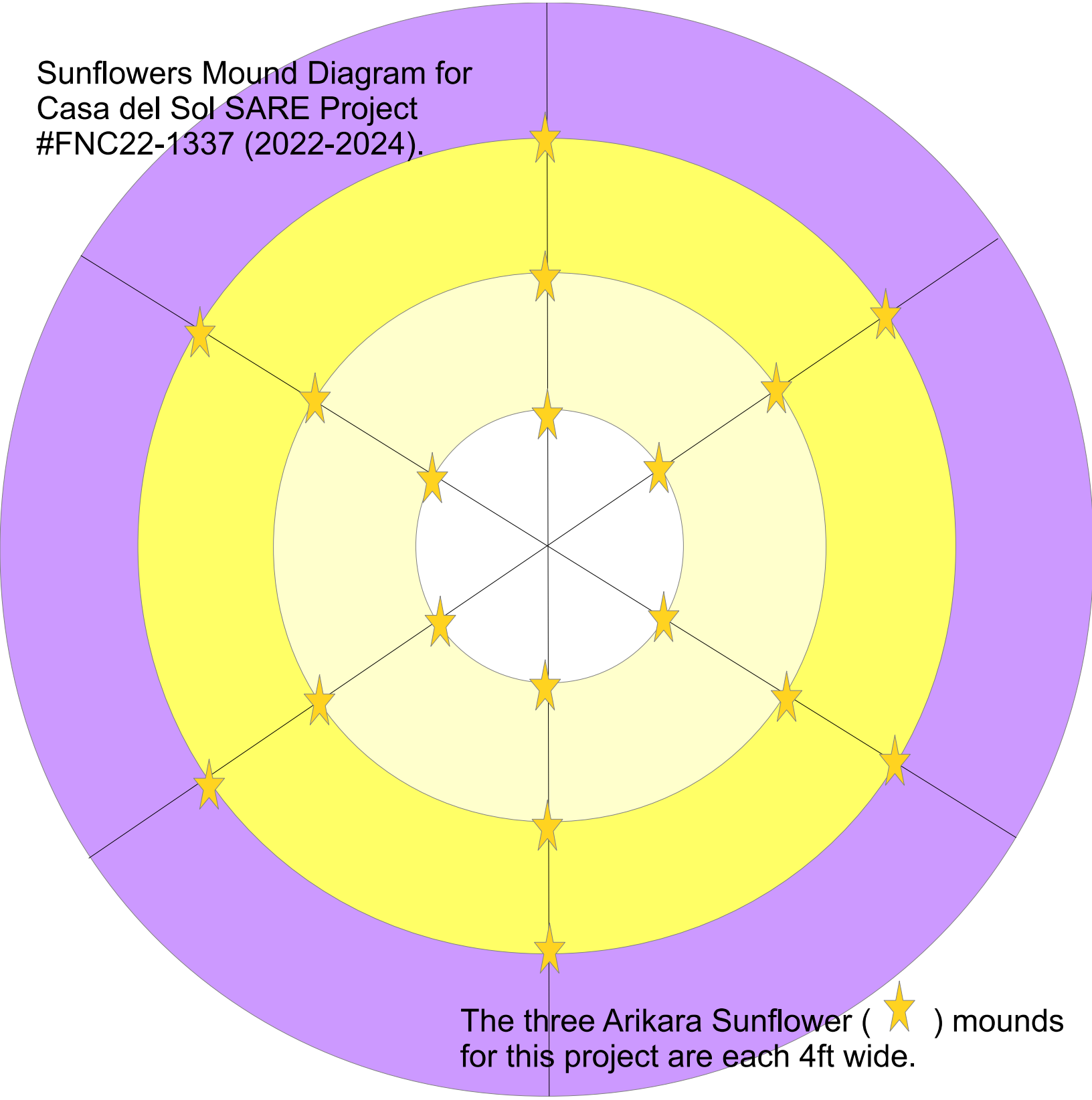
Six Jimmy Red Corn

Twelve 1,500-Year-Old Cave Bean

Six Gete Okosomin Squash

The eighteen 3 Sisters mounds for this project are each 4ft wide.

Sunflowers Mound Diagram for
Casa del Sol SARE Project
#FNC22-1337 (2022-2024).



The three Arikara Sunflower (★) mounds
for this project are each 4ft wide.