



Fall Sustainability Newsletter

December 2014

New Solar Project at USDA's George Washington Carver Center

On September 23 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Operations held a groundbreaking event announcing it will install USDA's first solar array project in the National Capital Region. This solar array project demonstrates the Office of Operations' commitment to environmental sustainability and innovative approaches to the current challenges in energy conservation.

The project includes design and construction of a multi-phased 1.5-megawatt photovoltaic array at the George Washington Carver Center (GWCC), located in Beltsville, Maryland. The first phase of the project has already started and the installation of 200 kilowatts of on-site solar power is anticipated for completion by January 2015. 200 kW will generate approximately 275 MWh

per year; which is enough to power approximately 25 homes.

This project is part of a larger energy management and sustainability program for the Office of Operations. In FY 2014, the Office of Operations purchased more than half of Headquarters' energy in Renewable Energy Credits (RECs).

Also in FY 2014, the Office of Operations installed new LED lighting in the GWCC parking lots. This project replaced existing 400-watt parking lot lights with energy-saving LED fixtures that use 150-watts. The new LED lighting helps reduce electric costs and use at night.

In addition to increasing Office of Operations green energy portfolio, the solar project will help the department meet Executive Order 13514, "Federal Leadership in

In this issue:

- USDA Agency Green Team Initiatives
- Pollinator Friendly Gardens
- US Forest Service Power-IT-Down
- EPA and USDA Food Waste Challenge
- USDA Headquarters Waste Reduction

Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance" and the President's Capital Solar Challenge.

Agency Green Team Initiatives

USDA agencies in Patriots Plaza III, a leased facility in Washington DC, have joined forces to form a Green Team and participate in the EPA's [Federal Green Challenge](#). The challenge is a nationwide effort that challenges federal agencies to lead by example in reducing the Federal Government's environmental impact. The Patriots Plaza III Green Team pledged to reduce its energy use and waste generation by at least 5% over the next fiscal year.

In response to last fiscal year's Patriots Plaza III recycling (diversion) rate of 25%, the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) are adding desk-side recycling bins to each workstation to encourage recycling. The roll-out of the new additional bins will be accompanied by an information campaign to increase awareness and let employees know which items are recyclable. Building management is actively encouraging these initiatives, for example, with an event observing America Recycles Day in mid-November and placing informational posters in the building's entrance.

FSIS and ERS have also adjusted light sensors in the conference, pantry, and file/copy rooms to optimize energy conservation, started recycling batteries, and are recruiting other Green Team members to help with these projects and to conduct recycling and energy audits.

Pollinator Friendly Gardens

The next time you find yourself on the grounds of the Jamie L. Whitten Building of USDA Headquarters (HQ) check out the pollinator gardens, integrated into the demonstration organic vegetable garden. These pollinator gardens feature several native flowering plants, including swamp milkweed and purple coneflowers. The pollinator gardens allow pollinators to search for food, mates, shelter, and nest building material.

It may be to your surprise that the Whitten Building is home to approximately 40,000 Italian honey bees. The honey bees provide pollination to the USDA HQ gardens and other local gardens.



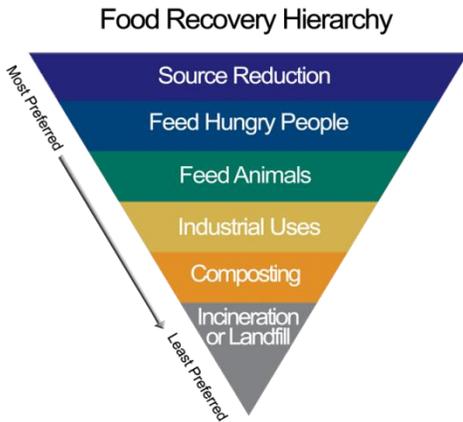
This initiative demonstrates Headquarter's commitment to USDA's mission and aligns with the President Obama's June 2014 memorandum, *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*. The 2014 Memo directs federal agencies to protect and restore domestic populations of pollinators. On the new master landscaping plan, USDA HQ outlined steps to incorporate additional pollinator gardens on its grounds.

US Forest Service Power - IT - Down

The US Forest Service Sustainable Operations Collective, in collaboration with the Chief Information Office, have successfully implemented the Power-IT-Down (PID) initiative. The PID initiative is a low-cost effort strongly encouraging employees to power down electronic devices and IT peripherals unless there is an explicit, business-related reason not to do so. The first two phases (launched in December 2013 and May 2014, respectively) promoted weekend only shutdown of computers and IT peripherals at regional offices, research stations, supervisor's offices, Energy Independence and Security Act - covered facilities and high performance sustainable buildings. The implementation of the first two phases saved the Forest Service 502,265 kilowatt hours (kWh) and \$46,072 in energy costs.

The observed cost-savings and environmental benefits have positioned the Forest Service to expand PID implementation in Fiscal Year 2015 through an additional two phases. By the conclusion of PID Phase 4, all agency employees will be strongly encouraged to power down at the end of each work day. The long-term vision is for the Forest Service to become one of the first federal agencies to comprehensively implement Power-IT-Down. More information about the Forest Service's National PID initiative is available on the [National PID SharePoint Site](#).

U.S. Food Waste Challenge



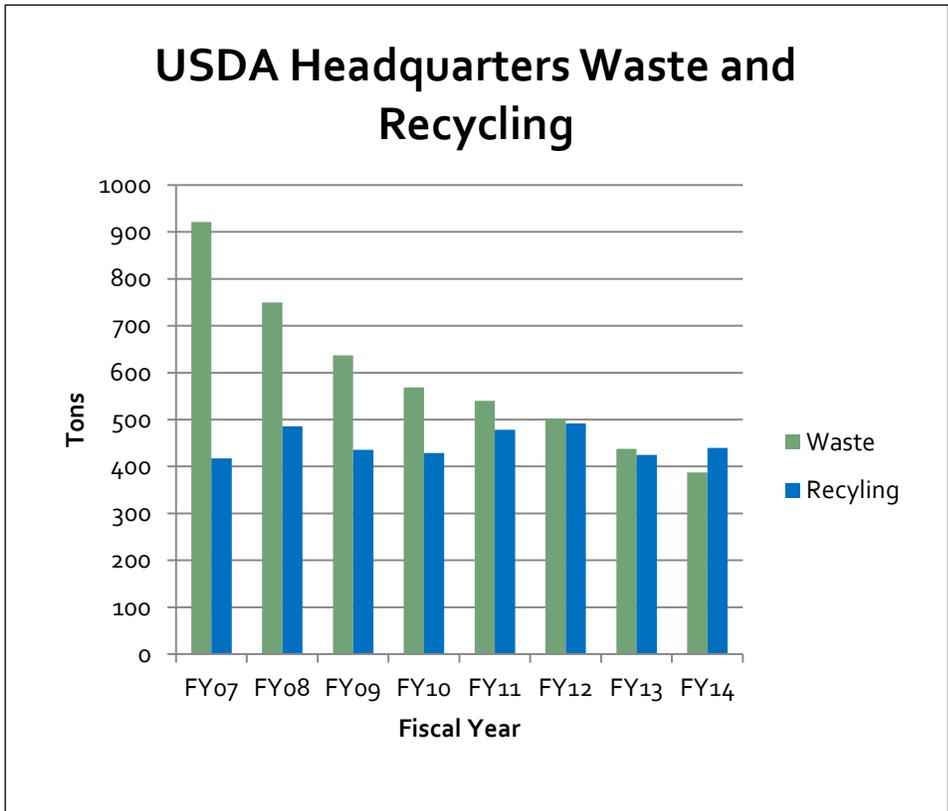
The U.S. Food Waste Challenge is initiative is headed by USDA and EPA. It challenges schools, grocery stores, businesses, NGO’s, state, county and city governments, and Federal agencies to reduce, reuse, and recycle the food waste they produce. To join the challenge, organizations must provide infor-

mation on the activities that will completed within the next year to reduce, reuse, and recycle their food waste. To learn more about the challenge and to see a video on how USDA HQ is reducing, reusing and recycling its food waste, visit the USDA Office of the Chief Economist website available at: [U.S. Food Waste Challenge](#).

USDA Headquarters Waste Reduction

In support of the US Food Waste Challenge, USDA HQ has taken aggressive steps to reduce the waste generated by the South and Whitten buildings. In FY 2014, USDA HQ produced less than 400 tons of waste. Compared to FY 2007, USDA HQ reduced its waste by more than 50 percent. In FY 2014, USDA HQ reached a diversion rate of 56 % percent. The waste diversion rate is the fraction of the total waste stream by weigh that is diverted from the landfill to reuse, recycling, and composting in a given year.

USDA HQ operations staff is providing employees and visitors the opportunity to divert waste by placing recyclables, compostables, and waste collection stations throughout the facilities. Furthermore, new containers to recycle batteries, cell phones, and other small electronics were installed last fiscal year. On the exteriors, conventional trash containers were replaced with BigBelly Solar trash and recy-



cling containers. Once full, a signal is sent to Operations staff notifying them the containers are ready for emptying. With BigBellies, tourists are also given the opportunity to recycle.

WASTE DIVERSION RATE

56%