



Greening Headquarters Update

APRIL 4, 2011

Greening Updates:

Office of Operations

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Greening the Federal Government Updates

President Obama signed a new law in January that will require USDA and other federal agencies to pay stormwater fees set by local governments. The fees are to be used to manage stormwater runoff from federal facilities. Polluted and excessive stormwater runoff in urban areas is a growing problem for the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways. During the past several years, USDA Headquarters has worked on reducing its environmental impact by retaining and cleansing stormwater at our site. Though we have much more to accomplish, we are making progress; for example, we installed a new green roof in Court 5 last fall. In 2011 we are hoping to install a demonstration rain garden to capture runoff from one of our parking areas.



Greening Throughout USDA

Nearby in Beltsville Maryland, USDA has been working to protect the Chesapeake Bay through its stewardship of over 6,600 acres of federal land. BARC switched to more sustainable farm-operations in the 1990s and voluntarily implemented a nutrient-management plan. These changes are important if we are ever going to see the Chesapeake Bay and the Anacostia River restored. More information on BARCs efforts can be found on the February 2011 issue of Agricultural Record. See <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/feb11/forests0211.htm>

USDA Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan (SSPP) Update

It is that time of year for the annual update of the USDA Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan (SSPP). Executive Order 13514: *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*, Section 8: Agency SSPP, requires an annual update. The SSPP is USDA's commitment to operating in a sustainable manner in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders. The SSPP update is due to the Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality on June 3, 2011. The 2010 USDA SSPP can be found on the following website: www.greening.usda.gov



**South Building
Modernization
Wing 5
is nearing
Completion!**

South Building Modernization Updates

The construction phase of the Wing 5 Modernization is wrapping up. Construction engineers are now commissioning the new mechanical and electrical systems.

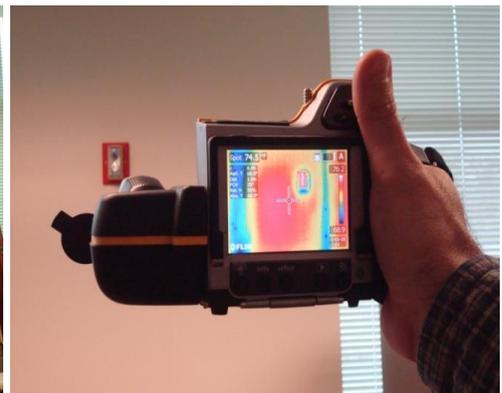
Visioning Session for the new South Building Cafeteria.



Employees will start moving into the Wing 5 offices in the next few months. As part of the commissioning process, the new furnishings were aired out over two weeks. The next phase of the modernization is the South Cafeteria. The Kick Off for the Design portion of the Modernization of the South Cafeteria occurred in March. A team of architectural and engineering firms were hired to design and create construction documents. The team has experience with sustainable design practices. The intent is for the new food service operations to reflect USDA missions and initiatives.

Energy Management Updates

Steam and electrical usage continue to modestly decline over the winter. Each year, USDA is mandated to reduce energy usage by 3%. USDA Headquarters remains on track to reducing our energy use by over 3% in FY 2011. This winter, contractors surveyed the Carver Center for energy saving opportunities. One opportunity included an infrared survey of the building envelope. A special camera that can detect heat loss was used to pinpoint where there are infiltration problems in the building. Infiltration not only wastes energy, but results in complaints about office temperatures.



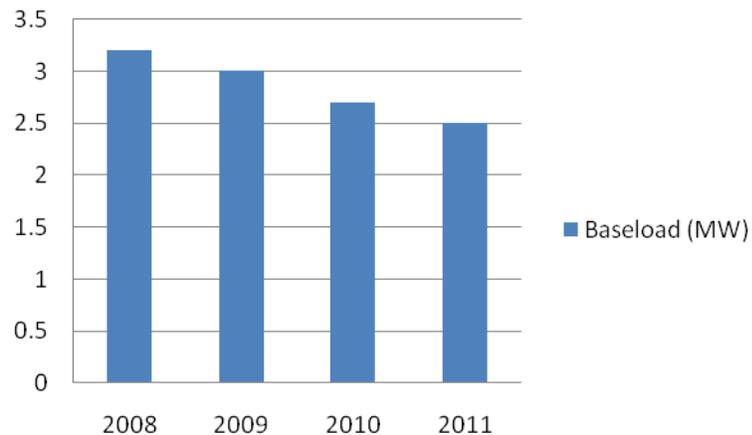
USDA Headquarters Energy team tours of the NIH Central Plant



Members of the OO Energy Team visited the NIH co-gen plant yesterday. We met with the operators to discuss their experiences with their co-gen plant. The co-gen plant produces electricity and steam. Co-gen plants can significantly reduce operating cost and energy usage because of their inherent efficiencies. We are considering a similar installation at headquarters.

A lot has happened since USDA Unplugged occurred at Headquarters in October 2007. For those of you who were not here in 2007, USDA Unplugged was a Headquarters-wide event used to help understand our "after-hours" electrical usage and to demonstrate the role office employees can play in reducing our energy usage. USDA Unplugged was the first of many actions that has resulted in significant electrical usage reductions. Thanks to the efforts of the OCIO staffs, Building Operations Staff and many USDA employees we have seen our after-hours base-load drop from 3.2 Megawatts to just under 2.5 Megawatts.

After Hour Baseloads (MW)



Inside the NIH

Co-gen Plant

Did you know that 50% of the electricity we use at Headquarters is from renewable sources?

Waste Minimization & Recycling



We are now collecting CDs, VHF's, computer cables and other techno waste and recycling it. We have been distributing special collection containers to offices that dispose of significant quantities of techno-trash. The techno-waste may be recycled, or reusable components recovered where possible. If your office has techno-trash that you would like recycled, contact me at: (ed.murtagh@dm.usda.gov)



**Remember to
recycle your
old, used
batteries!**

Annual Trash Sort



On February 28, Green Team members conducted a sort of over 400 pounds of office trash for the USDA Headquarters. As a Department whose mission includes resource conservation, the results were not very encouraging. Over a third of the trash sample was recyclable. While there was not a lot of office paper or cardboard in the trash, there was a lot of mixed paper (like catalogues and magazines) and plastic bottles and aluminum cans. A lot more outreach to educate employees on what can and cannot be recycled is required.

This year we also sorted out the amount of compostable materials that were in the trash. Approximately 10% of the office trash by weight was compostable. Speaking of compostable waste, if you stop by the South Cafeteria Wing 2 entrance by the cashiers, you will see our first compost collection containers. If our

compost collection efforts go well, additional stations will be installed. We are currently diverting over 2,000 pounds per week of compostable materials from the trash compactor.



USDA Cafeteria Compostable Items Sorting Station



***Perennial
Strawberries
planted in
compost-
filled mesh
socks***

A simple way to help us reduce waste is to use one of our high performance hand dryers found in many of the restrooms. Each year we must purchase and dispose of many, many pallets of paper hand towels. By using the newer high performance hand dryers, you can greatly reduce the environmental impact caused by using paper towels.



Just recently, six more Xlertor hand dryers with the farm images were installed in restrooms.

Sustainable Landscaping



USDA Staff Tending USDA People's Garden



**Growing plants can
be fun!**

Not only are USDA employees working to transform the landscaping at headquarters to reflect USDA missions and initiatives, we have been working to create People's Gardens around the country. Locally, last month USDA facilitated a school garden design session, and since that time, landscape architects Matt Arnn (FS) and Bob Snieckus (NRCS) have been working hard to incorporate parent, teacher and student ideas into an ideal plan that would transform the large expanse of asphalt at Powell Elementary School in Washington, DC into a People's Garden. Replacing the asphalt expanse will not only help retain stormwater and create habitat, but it will also help beautify the grounds.



Did you know that a newly planted tree needs about 25 gallons of water per week if it is likely to survive? Washington D.C.'s Casey Trees recommends installing slow release watering bags around your newly planted trees. They call it **Practice 25 to Stay Alive** - giving trees that have been in the ground fewer than three years 25 gallons, equal to 1.5 inches of rain, a week. After three years the tree's roots should be established enough to thrive on the water obtained from rain.



Spring is coming!



Bee Beautiful!

It's spring. Remember to come out to visit us in the People's Garden at the east end of USDA's Whitten Building in Washington, DC. The location is right next to the Washington DC National Mall.