

MARCH 5, 2009

Greening Updates:

Sustainability
Operations Council

Green Team

Office of Operations

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Energy and Water Management

Did you know it cost us over \$1,000 per hour to heat the South and Whitten Buildings in the winter? The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct 2005) has mandated that USDA significantly reduce energy and water usage over the next 10 years. To meet those energy reduction requirements, we are increasing our efforts to reduce our energy and water use in the Headquarters Complex. As many of you are probably aware, the construction phase of the Utility Energy Services Contract (UESC) with Washington Gas began this winter. Electricians are going in many of the offices at night to retro-fit office lights to energy efficient 25 watt T-8 florescent lamps. Work has begun in Wing 1



New Cooking Kettles in the South Kitchen,

Upgrades in the South Building Kitchen and weather stripping projects are also occurring.. To reduce water usage, water efficient flush valves are being installed. In addition to the UESC, the South Building Modernization is gearing back up and includes modernizing our heating and air conditioning systems with energy efficient systems. So far this fiscal year, we are using significantly less energy compared to previous years thus greatly reducing our environmental impact. Our electrical and steam usage has been reduced by well over 10% compared to a couple of years ago. Enough energy has been saved to power hundreds of homes.

South Building Modernization

The South Building Modernization, the main vehicle in greening our complex, is back on track. Wing 5 is the next wing to be modernized. Each phase of the modernization increases the number of sustainable practices being utilized. The South Building Modernization is being designed to meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Standards. LEEDs was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. New high performance energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems will replace the current under capacity and inefficient units. Energy efficient lighting systems are also specified for Wing 5. In addition “green” materials and construction practices will be used. Details about the green features will be included in future updates.



*Remember to
recycle your office
waste!*



System Furniture installed in Phase 3 of the South Building Modernization that uses biobased fabric.

Waste Minimization and Recycling Updates

Our Recycling Rate for December and January is averaging about 40%, up significantly from the just a few years ago. Green Team members recently sorted through nearly 800 pounds of trash from the complex. The objective was to document the effectiveness of our Waste Minimization and Recycling Program and to determine where we can improve. We found that we are capturing most of the high grade office paper, mixed papers, newspapers, and cardboard. We are capturing only about 50% of the aluminum cans and bottles. In fact we estimate that about 4 tons of aluminum cans are still being thrown in the trash annually. This represents a big loss of natural resources and a big



*Junk Mail Item:
Did you know that
U.S. companies sent
100 billion pieces of
direct postal mail in
2005? That's more
than 300 pieces of
bulk mail for every
man, woman and
child! (U.S. Postal
Service) – support
efforts to reduce
waste, get off
unwanted mailing
lists!*



USDA Trash Sort

As part of our “Reuse” effort, hundreds of lightly used three ring binders have been recovered and donated to the D.C. Public Schools over the past year. In February several more boxes of binders were sent over to the schools for reuse.

Green Tip Reducing Junk Mail

Several organizations and environmental groups have expressed concern about the environmental impact generated by junk mail. In the US, the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) estimates that 44% of junk mail is discarded without being opened or read, equaling four million tons of waste annually, with 32% recovered for recycling. One easy way to reduce your environmental impact is to have your name removed from mailing lists of companies whose products and services do not interest you. [Reduce.org](http://www.reduce.org) <http://www.reduce.org/> can help homeowners get off mailing list such as Pre-Approved Credit Cards, catalogs, and national mailers. For unwanted office mail (including mail to employees no longer at USDA), simply place the unwanted mail in the Unwanted Mail Boxes at the first floors of Wing 1 and 3 and the Basement of the Jamie L. Whitten Building.

Reminder of What to Recycle

Do you remember what you can recycle? The USDA recycling boxes can now accept computer and office paper, newspapers, mixed paper and colored paper, telephone books, paperback and hardcover books, staples and paper clips, magazines and catalogues, shredded paper, envelopes, boxes with plastic

windows, and all other clean and dry paper. Remember recycling means that there is another useful life for many of our waste items. The only unacceptable items are waxed paper, plastic-coated paper, paper or cardboard boxes contaminated with food, and heavy metal fasteners.

Sustainable Landscaping

Our Sustainable Landscape Plan for the Whitten Building is slowly becoming reality. The abandoned asphalt driveway on the Whitten is being removed in March and replaced with grass and an enlarged vegetable garden. The long range plan calls for increasing the landscaped areas (reducing the grassy areas) in the Whitten grounds using landscaping that absorbs stormwater and provides habitat with native plants. Demonstration rain gardens and tree plantings are planned for this year.



Please remember to close all your windows when leaving after your working day.



Secretary Vilsack at a “Breaking Pavement” ceremony at the East Lawn for the People’s Garden. For more information on this effort, go to http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=PEOPLES_GARDEN.



Reminder you should shut off your lights when not in your office.



An Andrew Jackson Magnolia tree was donated to USDA by First Lady Michelle Obama during her visit to USDA in February. Later this year the tree will be planted on the Whitten Building grounds.



The asphalt pavement being removed from the Whitten East Lawn. The asphalt was sent to a nearby firm for recycling.