

USDA HQ FY2014 Waste Reduction and Recycling Report

Introduction

In FY14 the USDA Headquarters Complex in Washington, DC achieved a 53% recycling rate and a 71% waste diversion rate. USDA increased the tonnage recycled by continually conducting awareness campaigns, providing additional recycling containers and holding annual janitorial staff training. USDA HQ is documenting its waste minimization and recycling practices so that these become part of Office of Operations sustainable operations practices and so that other USDA agencies can emulate.

Waste and Recycling Profile

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Headquarters (HQ) complex managed by the Office of Operations consists of the South and Whitten Buildings in Southwest Washington DC, across the street from the Washington Monument. The HQ complex has a square footage of 2.55 million and a population of approximately 7000 employees. In FY 2014 USDA HQ achieved a 53% recycling rate by collecting 386 tons of paper, cans, bottles, used printer cartridges, universal waste, and another 54 tons of cafeteria waste for composting. Through a U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) contract, USDA received \$36,000 for the recyclables. Moreover, the HQ Complex attained a 71% waste diversion rate for FY 2014. The below tables demonstrate how the percentages were derived as well as the types of recyclables that are collected.

Waste Category	Amount (Tons)	FY14 Recycling = Rate	$\frac{\text{Recyclables} + \text{Compost}}{\text{Total Waste}}$
Waste Disposed (FY14)	388		$\frac{388+54}{828}$
Waste Recycled (FY14)	386		53%
Waste Composted (FY14)	54	FY14 Waste Diversion = Rate	$\frac{\text{FY14 Recyclables} + \text{FY14 Compost} + (\text{Baseline TWS}-\text{FY14 TWS})}{\text{Baseline TWS}}$
TOTAL Generated (FY14)	828		$\frac{386+54+(1338-828)}{1338}$
(FY07 Baseline Yr.)	1338		71%

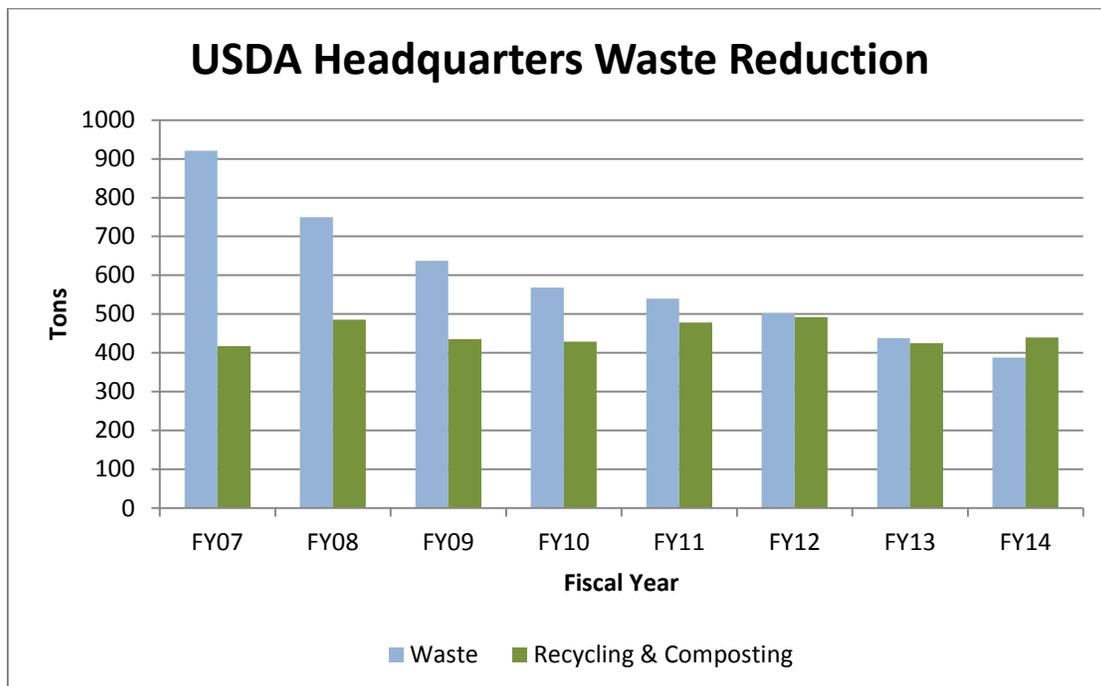
FY14 USDA HQ Tonnage Collected for Recycling and Composting

PAPER				Cans & Bottles	Universal Waste	Compost	Total Tons
High	Mixed	News	Cardboard				
138	154	14	40	29	11	54	440

While these figures represent a substantial improvement over prior fiscal years, USDA HQ will continue to improve the waste minimization and recycling efforts through continued occupant awareness campaigns, enhanced recycling container signage, and continuous janitorial staff training. USDA continues to expand its waste minimization, recycling and composting program into an official sustainable operations practice not only so that continual improvement is integral to the process but also in order to serve as a model program for other USDA facilities.

Recycling Program Improvements

USDA has significantly improved its recycling tonnage over the years while reducing its waste, as the chart below shows (scrap metal and yard waste isn't included on the below graph). USDA HQ has had a recycling program involving all building occupants since 1989, the year the District of Columbia recycling law went into effect. The program has evolved from one that focused on high grade paper and aluminum cans to the present day arrangement that includes mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard, plastic and glass bottles, used printer cartridges, compostables, portable electronics, and batteries.



Throughout numerous locations across the South and Whitten Buildings' new stations of containers for waste, bottles & cans, paper and compostables have been installed. These stations have allowed the compost program to expand from just the cafeterias to the entire headquarters. Furthermore, employees are given the option to collect compostable waste in their office by using small compost bins. In addition to these containers, there also are new battery containers. As more batteries are recycled, the small white cardboard boxes that were used to collect the batteries were replaced by new heavy duty battery and portable electronic waste containers.



Waste Minimization Efforts

USDA has made it a priority to not produce waste in the first place, in keeping with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's waste management hierarchy of reducing and reusing prior to recycling. USDA has prevented waste in a variety of ways, including removing subscribers from catalog mailing lists, reusing shipment pallets, and not using as much paper.

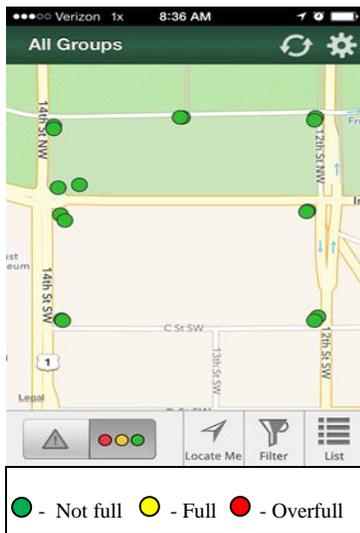
USDA HQ also has a long and continuing practice of reusing personal property, through its Centralized Excess Property Operation (CEPO) in Beltsville, Maryland. CEPO picks up excess furniture, machinery, and electronics from USDA offices throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan region, and provides the used personal property to requesting USDA offices. Because of this efficient excess property system, USDA HQ not only has continually practiced reuse, but also is in compliance with the Electronics Stewardship (ES) goal of using computers for at least four years, as promulgated by Executive Order (E.O.) 13423, Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management and EO15314, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance. Additionally, to comply with the ES goal of handling electronics in an environmentally-sound manner at the end of their useful life, whatever excess electronics CEPO doesn't transfer to other agencies or sell at auction, CEPO sends to the UNICOR recycling business group, which has a "no landfill" policy.

Awareness and Outreach

Vital to the recycling and waste minimization program's improvement is the internal awareness campaigns and continually updating data on the greening.usda.gov website. USDA holds annual events focusing on recycling and composting. In CY 2013, USDA held America Recycles Day (November 15, 2013). At the event, HQs staff passed out desk-side recycling containers, *How to Compost* flyers, Recycling Program tri-folds and 100% recycled content pencils with

sustainability messages. These outreach events are useful ways to engage and educate employees about reducing waste.

Solar Trash Compactors



By virtue of being located on the National Mall, as well adjacent to the Smithsonian Metro subway stop, USDA HQ gets a lot of tourist traffic year round. To give the tourists an opportunity to recycle, USDA has been replacing the conventional trash containers with “BigBelly” trash and recycling receptacles that compact the refuse using solar power. Another feature of these receptacles is the technology that allows facility managers to receive notifications on their capacity status. Once full, facility managers can request to have the janitorial staff remove the recyclables and waste. Besides generating goodwill among visitors to the nation’s capital, the exterior recycle collection containers has helped USDA achieve over an increase in commingled (cans and bottles) tonnage collected in FY 2014 compared to FY 2007, from 8 to 29 tons.

Recycling/Waste Minimization Tied into Overall Sustainability Efforts

USDA HQ has a Green Teams initiative that focuses on recycling and waste minimization, as well as sustainable landscaping, reduction in energy use and general sustainability efforts. The goal of this initiative is to provide support to USDA agencies that are located in Headquarters in their sustainability efforts. Furthermore, each agency has the option to tailor their project, activities and events to the agency’s needs and mission. Green teams are composed of groups of volunteers that include environmental, mechanical, and civil engineers; facility management specialists; program analysts and janitorial staff.

Conclusion

In FY 2014 USDA HQ achieved a 53 % recycling rate and attained a 71% waste diversion rate. In addition to reducing waste and reaching over 50% recycling rate, USDA HQ also receives financial benefits from recycling. Improvements in the waste and recycling program are due to the incorporation of new technology, continuous janitorial staff training, and awareness and outreach events. The Green Teams initiative will further improve sustainability efforts in HQ by allowing USDA agencies to play a crucial role in the waste and recycling efforts.