SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATOR

Izaak Walton League of America Sustainability Education Program News

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Sustainability Communicator is a quarterly publication about population, consumption, and conservation issues. Its purpose is to promote dialogue and action among League members and others interested in building a sustainable future.

Ten Ideas for an Earth-Friendly Holiday Season

1. Instead of wrapping paper, use gift bags. They are just as festive and can be used many times over. Or, try making the "wrapping" part of the gift by using baskets, jars, fabric, or reusable shopping bags.

2. Opt for a locally grown Christmas tree. Artificial trees can be reused, but are material intensive and difficult to recycle once they need replacing. Ultimately, trees from a farm are a renewable resource. Many communities now have composting or wood chipping programs for Christmas trees. Call your local parks department or recycling center to learn more. You can also buy a live Christmas tree, but, before choosing this option, think about where you'll plant the tree after the holidays are over.

3. Try thrift shops like Goodwill and the Salvation Army for holiday decorations instead of raiding the local craft store. Get creative and find items that you can clean up or repurpose for creating a holiday atmosphere.

4. Use natural items for decorating—popcorn garland instead of tinsel, cinnamon sticks instead of plastic air fresheners. Use real pine boughs, pinecones, holly, ivy, cranberries, etc. Check out your own yard as well as local garden shops. When the holidays are over, everything can be composted.

5. If you're hosting a holiday party, ask your guests to bring a donation for your favorite environmental group in lieu of a host/hostess present. You'll support good work and won't have to re-gift that fruitcake.

6. Shop with the environment in mind. Look for items that have recycled content and limited packaging. How about rechargeable batteries for those toys or electronics? Consider eco-friendly products: clothing made with organic cotton, chemical free beauty products, locally produced food, handmade items, etc.

7. Buy used. It may not be shiny and packaged in plastic, but you can save things from heading to the trash and save money. Check out the many online options for free-cycling and buying used items. As a bonus, you won't have to fight the crowds.

8. Cut back on the light display. Be conservative with those strings of lights and ten-foot-tall lawn ornaments. Replace old light strands with newer, more energy-efficient versions—miniature bulbs and LED lights tend to use less energy. Use a timer to shut lights on and off automatically, and don't keep the lights on all night long.

9. Carefully plan out meals and portions for your holiday company to minimize leftovers. Don't overcook, and send any extras home with guests. If you do end up with leftovers, compost them.

10. Cut back in general on all the shopping and the "stuff." Instead, focus on family, friends and quality time. Make the holidays about making memories and enjoying the natural beauty of the season.

More Ideas on Sustainable Living

This issue of *Sustainability Communicator* is the second of two special issues featuring letters from our readers answering the questions, "What does sustainability mean to you?" and "What are you doing in your community, workplace, chapter, or home to live a mores sustainable lifestyle?"

Last quarter, we featured letters that concentrated on sustainability in our homes and communities. This issue, we highlight ways that readers are following sustainable practices on their land, in their volunteer work, and in their careers and workplaces.

We appreciate all the creative and thoughtful responses you've sent. It's clear our readers are dedicated to living in ways that reduce their impact on the earth's resources. Thank you very much for sharing your ideas!

Sustainability on Our Land

My main effort toward sustainability had been in developing habitat in and around the places I have lived over the years. Having a large tract of land isn't necessary. Any flowerpot or patch of yard can be developed as habitat. Micro-climates are created by having lush plantings in flower pots and perennial beds giving year-round benefits to insects, birds, and small animals. Start small and design your favorite plants to fill existing space.

My wife and I have spent the last ten years taking action against our number one enemy—grass. We spend time developing our half-acre property with pathways connecting a large water garden to flower beds and hedgerows. A geothermal heating/cooling unit for my woodshop provides a steady source of recycled water to our bioswale. There is a large grape arbor, fruit trees and vegetable garden that provide part of our food needs. Birds and rabbits are comfortable in the shelter of trees and low shrubs. We don't have a "bug" problem because of natural pest control. Extra produce is shared with neighbors and family.

Many of our techniques can be used on a small scale in a variety of applications. The biggest lesson we've learned is the better habitat we develop, the greater enjoyment we can share with our many visitors.

Dwight A. Fish
Elkhart, IN

We are raising bison and free-range turkeys on a family ranch in SW Wyoming. We're also starting a non-profit Wild Bison Restoration Foundation to return bison to at least some of their former range.

Michele Sherwood
Green River, WY

Sustainability in Our Volunteer Activities

Sustainability is a personal thing. I am a grandmother and to me, sustainability means, among other things, the preservation of my grandchildren's health at optimum levels.

Last year I became a Head Start volunteer. At that time, I also joined Head Start's Health Services Advisory Committee, which has about a dozen groups under this umbrella. This is in White Plains, New York.

I've been asked to speak at the next meeting about children's environmental health. The basic challenge is dealing with about 80,000 chemicals that have been introduced into our environment since World War II. And not surprisingly, as of nine years ago, only a dozen have been tested for developmental toxicity. The most vulnerable people are women of childbearing age, infants and children 14 years old or younger.

I hope to be a catalyst to energize Head Start and its constituent community organization members to educate themselves and then lobby for more adequate protections of the public's health—particularly my grandchildren. I believe I can keep myself motivated to work for the public good if I also have a private reason: my family.

Paula De Caro
New Rochelle, NY

The South Dakota Division participates whenever possible in all meetings and legislation to protect the values of the Prairie Pothole Region. We have joined the prairie partners program of the USFWS to restore wetlands and native grassland. We are represented on the Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Advisory Committee to protect environmental resources in the rush to ethanol. We have formed the South Dakota Conservation Alliance with other NGOs to give a stronger voice to conservation positions in South Dakota.

Mike Williams
National President,
Izaak Walton League of America
Watertown, SD

"Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." *—Aldo Leopold*

Sustainability in Our Careers and Workplaces

In my work with my business, The Wild Institute, offering wilderness trips for women, custom trips, professional speaking, and "wild" coaching, I have always strived to live and promote sustainable practices. We use recycled products, use produce from our organic gardens, encourage carpooling for trips, and, above all, run canoe, hike, sea kayak, and dogsled trips as a way to connect with the natural world. My belief is that, one person at a time, falling in love with the natural world, we will protect that which we love.

The Wild Institute is in the process of taking a new step in sustainability. I am building a yurt for the office, heated by wood, powered by solar panels, totally off the grid even though I am based just 30 miles from Minneapolis, with an abun-

dance of "cheap" power all around. It is a step I've wanted to take for a long time and am thrilled it is finally coming to pass.

Chris Heeter
The Wild Institute
Loretto, MN

Recently, at a presentation of my speech, "One Billion Americans," a town councilwoman who has been exceptionally active in county sustainability issues, appeared to agree with everything I said during my talk. However, after my close, she came to me and said, "Ed, we are so concerned about what to do with the next 10,000 people added to our town's population, we don't have time to think about the next 100 million people added to America's population."

Unfortunately, that is how many people think about their towns . . . and their streams and their woods. So, here is a quick "math lesson" in how the world of sustainability really works:

If America adds 100 million people, as it will do in the next 30 years (3.3 million per year x 30 years), approximately 12.5 million will come to California, approximately one million will come to our county, and approximately 10,000 will come to this councilwoman's town. The numbers will be different for your town, your stream, your woods—but the math is the same. If America adds 100 million people, your town will add their share, and your quality of life will be proportionately lessened.

Therefore, we cannot allow America to double and redouble its population generation after generation (from 125 million to 300 million during my lifetime) and expect to sustain the quality of life we want for our descendants. If you want sustainability at your local level, you need to think about working toward a sustainable population at the national level.

Edward C. Hartman
Author of *The Population Fix: Breaking America's Addiction To Population Growth*
Moraga, CA

What is so green on top of that building? Greenroofs are sprouting up all over. There are two types of greenroofs: intensive and extensive. Intensive greenroofs have deep soil where you can plant trees, shrubs, and other plants that require deep soil to grow. Extensive greenroofs only have 3-4 inches of soil in which to grow the plants. The plant choices for extensive greenroofs in the Northern Hemisphere are generally succulent or cactus-like plants. They are very drought tolerant and once established require no maintenance.

Greenroofs replicate Mother Nature in slowing down runoff and are used to reduce stormwater runoff from urban areas. They cool the rooftop easing the urban heat island effect as they cleanse the air of CO_2, sulfur and carbon monoxide as well as reducing the energy needed to cool and heat the building.

The Greenroof industry is in its infancy but you can check out the industry trade portal at www.greenroofs.org for more information.

Wayne Mills
IWLA Arlington/Fairfax Chapter
Fairfax, VA

Additional Actions

You've shared your thoughts and ideas about practicing sustainability in your homes and communities. So, we thought we'd share a few more ideas with you. Here are some things you can do to promote healthy relationships between people and our environment—on an individual, community, national, and global level. Be sure to check out the Izaak Walton League's Web site for more information and resources: www.iwla.org.

At the individual level

- Continue to educate yourself and others about sustainability—including how population growth and resource consumption interrelate.
- Find ways in your own life to reduce your consumption of natural resources through recycling, decreased water use, and energy conservation.
- Consider making your next gift for a friend or family member a donation in their name. Find a charity that provides services and programs that fit your individual beliefs and concerns. You'll not only support their work, you'll spread the word and save resources from going into a more material gift.
- Write an opinion piece in your local newspaper. Let others know why you feel these issues are important and make suggestions for taking action.

At the community level

- Continue the dialogue about sustainability at your IWLA chapter, social club, or religious group. Invite local leaders or experts to speak on the topic. Let the media and others know when, where, and why you are discussing these topics.
- Work with others in your community to bring education on population growth, conservation, and sustainability into local classrooms.
- Many schools require their students to volunteer. Consider working with local schools to engage youth in local sustainability projects.
- Work within your state and community to support comprehensive and coordinated community-based planning that balances environmental protection, population growth and economic opportunities.

At the policy level

- Keep on top of important policy developments. Go to the advocacy section of the League's Web site to see what's happening at the federal level, and for easy ways to write to your elected officials. You can also get tips on making phone calls or scheduling a face-to-face meeting.
- Let your Senators and Representative know you support development programs that integrate environmental protection, health, education and women's equity. These programs help address multiple issues, like poverty and population growth, that prevent communities from achieving sustainability.
- Go to a town hall meeting or fundraiser and ask political candidates what they are doing to support sustainability.
- Contact us at sep@iwla.org to find out about policy workshops in your area. If your community is not already in our travel plans, we can help you organize a workshop.

Environmental Excellence Awards

An important key to sustainability is the involvement of the next generation. To help foster a conservation ethic in our youth, the League recently sponsored a student team in the 2007 SeaWorld/Busch Gardens/Fujifilm Environmental Excellence Awards (EEA).

EEA recognizes the outstanding efforts of K-12 students and teachers as well as community groups across the country who are working to protect and preserve the environment. This year, eight teams each received a $10,000 prize for their winning efforts and were flown to the San Diego, CA, SeaWorld amusement park to present their projects and attend an awards banquet.

The League sponsored the Westerly Innovations Network (WIN) student team from Westerly, Rhode Island, which tackled the problem of "e-waste." The students explored what happens to computers, cell phones, rechargeable batteries—basically anything electronic—when these items are thrown out. WIN then organized a program to refurbish this e-waste for others to use, only recycling when an item can't be revamped. The students also advocated for an ordinance in their hometown requiring the recycling of e-waste, then lobbied the Rhode Island legislature for passage of a statewide law banning the dumping of e-waste.

For more about WIN's winning project, see the team's Web site at http://www.w-i-n.ws/Project%202005%20index.htm.

To learn more about the SeaWorld/Busch Gardens/Fujifilm Environmental Excellence Awards, including how your community or school group can enter, visit www.seaworld.org/conservation-matters/eea/index.htm.

Our e-mail has changed! You can now contact us at sep@iwla.org.

Founded in 1922, the Izaak Walton League of America is dedicated to common sense conservation that protects America's hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage relying on solution-oriented conservation, education, and the promotion of outdoor recreation for the benefit of our citizens. The League has more than 40,000 members and supporters in 21 state divisions and more than 300 local chapters in 32 states.

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