

County of Sonoma

Sustainable Policies and Practices Project

Resource Use Report Summary 1999-2000

Background

In 1998, the Sonoma County Economic Development Board (EDB) proposed the Sustainable Policies and Practices Project (SP3). This idea arose from the Business Environmental Alliance, the public-private effort to foster voluntary adoption of sound environmental practices that enhance financial performance. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of this group and directed the EDB to pursue the project through creation of an employee committee involving various departments. Through this program, the County pledged to conduct the County's business in a cost-effective manner within available resources to maximize environmental sustainability.

The SP-3 task force has reviewed sustainable practices already implemented in the County's internal operations, drafted an environmental policy statement, and devised an action plan to continue to implement sustainable practices. An important component of any environmental management system is the ability to measure progress made. Therefore, one of the first goals of the SP-3 task force has been to establish data collection methods to track resource use by the County.

Although the data collection system has not yet been finalized, the SP-3 task force has collected data, starting with a base year of 1997. This report contains a summary of the results. Please note that many of the numbers represent only the resources used on Administrative Center campus (such as utilities), while the number of employees includes all permanent employees in the County system.

County Sustainable Practices

The County of Sonoma has a history of working to minimize the impact its operations have on the environment. In 1989, the County adopted a Green Purchasing Policy, which directed the County to buy environmentally-friendly supplies whenever possible. In recent years, the County has installed flow restrictors on all toilets where applicable, and is in the process of replacing all other standard toilets with low-water use models. Most of the light fixtures now contain newer energy-efficient/low mercury fluorescent bulbs. In addition, the County has installed motion detectors in County-owned buildings, so that lights are not on unnecessarily. To lighten the burden on the electricity grid during peak use periods, the County utilizes a Thermal Energy Storage System (TES) which shifts the County's energy use to off peak hours, when demand and costs are lower. Finally, the County has replaced over 40% of its Transit busses to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), a cleaner fuel than diesel.

Resource Use Summary

In an organization as large and complex as the County of Sonoma, any number of variables can affect resource use, or the appearance of resource use. Regulatory changes, budgetary surpluses and deficits, staffing volumes and weather are all factors that come into play. In addition, at any given time, County departments may shift from on-campus (counted in the data) to leased buildings (not counted in several categories). The SP-3 Task Force is working on ways to minimize the effect these variables have on the data.

The following summary describes the County's resource use indicators to date:

- The number of people permanently employed by the County has increased by 5.5% from the base year of 97-98. The number of employees receiving transit passes from the County has decreased by 18% since the base year of 98-99. The number of employees driving alone to work has increased by 4% since the base year of 1992.
- The number of kilowatt-hours of electricity used on the County campus has decreased by 1.8% from the base year of 97-98, while therms of natural gas increased by 7.4% from 97-98. Gallons of potable water used increased by 2% from 97-98.
- The cubic yards of solid waste collected on the County campus has increased by 17% from the base year of 97-98, while the tons of paper recycled by the County has increased 85% from 97-98. Total reams of office paper purchased by the County has increased by 24% from 97-98, and 78% of that paper is purchased recycled (versus virgin), an increase of 4% from 97-98.

- The number of miles driven by the fleet vehicles increased by 2.6% from the base year of 97-98. The gallons of gas used by fleet increased by 2.2% over the same time period. The miles driven per gallon of gas remained the same. More detailed evaluation is underway of the County's light duty vehicles and heavy equipment.
- The gallons of pesticides used decreased 5% from the base year, while the pounds of pesticides increased less than 1% in the same time period. Over 61% of the pesticides used by the County are Tier 3 herbicides, which are classified as the safer pesticides on a three tier classification system.

2001-2003 Goals

1. Continue to streamline and improve the data collection process and refine the definitions of the data collected in order to make less work for affected departments and to ensure accuracy and consistency of data. Wherever possible, collect data electronically.
2. Decrease City water use by utilizing campus on-site wells for irrigation purposes.
3. Reduce fossil fuel use by using electrical energy at the Administration Center campus generated from renewable energy sources (energy produced from the County's Central Disposal Site).
4. Assess paper recycling and, where needed, establish additional recycling opportunities on the Administration Center campus.
5. Hold workshops to educate County employees regarding the techniques of Integrated Pest Management to reduce use of pesticides.
6. Certify Fleet and Reprographics as Sonoma Green Businesses.

Sonoma County Resource Use Indicators

<i>Measurement</i>	<i>FY 97-98</i>	<i>FY 98-99</i>	<i>FY 99-00</i>
<i>Staff</i>			
Number of permanent employees	4085	4190	4308
Percent employees driving alone to work	82% (1992)		86% (2000)
Employees participating in Transit Subsidy Program (ESP)	Not Available	2196	1798
<i>Utilities</i>			
Kilowatt-Hours electricity	18,540,021	18,435,552	18,212,092
Therms Natural Gas	817,283	1,015,451	877,430
Gallons water used	75,255,084	79,055,767	76,738,594
<i>Waste Management</i>			
Cubic yards collected	10,994	11,909	12,897
Reams office paper	83,500	111,300	103,850
Percent purchased recycled (vs. virgin)	74%	77%	78%
Tons shredded & recycled	97	134	179
<i>Vehicles</i>			
Miles driven by fleet vehicles (light equipment only)	7,936,053	7,967,467	8,142,751
Gallons gasoline used by fleet vehicles	542,147	532,452	554,074
Fleet miles per gallon	14.6	15.0	14.7
<i>Pesticides</i>			
Gallons of liquid	2825.08	2433.43	2677.9
Pounds of solid	Not Available	115.75	116.71