

# BERKS COUNTY GREEN TEAM



## ACTION PLAN – 2009

June 2009

## **Berks County Green Team**

### **2008/2009 Action Plan**

Draft 6/15/2009

In March of 2008, the Berks County Commissioners' through Resolution No. 68-08, established the Berks County Green Team Task Force to review three primary areas of County Government including Purchasing, Facilities and Operations. The Committee would identify actions that if implemented would create a more energy efficient, environmentally responsible and conservation-minded county government. The following members were appointed to this Committee:

Jane Meeks, Chair  
Christian Leinbach, Commissioner  
Robert Carl, Facilities  
Cathy Wegener, Parks  
Kelly Laubach, Purchasing  
Terry Styer, Chief Clerk

It was anticipated that the term of the Task force will conclude with a final report to the Commissioners' in November of 2008. On March 5, 2009, the Purchasing and IS policies were submitted and approved by the County Commissioners. See Exhibit B and C. During the development of these policies it was determined by the committee that this group should continue to meet periodically to review the existing policies and discuss new environmental programs that could allow the County to expand our green procedures.

#### **What we are already doing:**

As we began to look at expanding our green focus, it was determined that most county Departments in their own ways and on their own schedules have been thinking and acting "green" for some time. They have already identified and implemented energy efficient and waste reduction projects that have saved money while helping the environment.

During the initial meetings the Committee evaluated our purchasing and operational policies. The Committee looked at the way the County is operating, our purchasing and disposal practices, and energy conservation practices. The Committee compiled a list of ongoing projects that enhance the environment, projects that are currently being implemented, projects that are planned and/or are part of future Capital Budget discussions and new project ideas. We looked at Green Electronics, Green Initiatives, Green Building Initiatives and Green Purchasing.

The County has hired NORESO to complete our "Guaranteed Energy Savings Project", which will allow for facility improvements to be paid out of guaranteed energy savings. NORESO will look at the following projects for energy savings: Lighting, Water, Windows, HVAC, Central Plant Upgrades, Building Automation systems and Miscellaneous Improvements. The contractor will evaluate the County Services Center and Courthouse, as well as the North

Campus. Energy services performance contracting is a common way to implement energy efficiency improvements and frequently covers financing for the needed equipment. With increasing energy prices, a good energy efficiency policy is a necessity. Accelerating the installation of energy efficiency equipment will improve not only our facilities but also our financial statement. In addition, this decision will demonstrate that our government is acting responsibly in conserving our natural resources and the environment.

### **Facility management/Building Operations**

Facility management practices can significantly improve a buildings performance by increasing the value of the building while decreasing the operating costs; and conserving natural resources such as natural gas, oil and water.

See **Exhibit A** – Performance Contracting – Facility Improvements through Wasted Energy Savings – WITHOUT Capital Dollars “March 2007”.

In addition, the County will be going out for competitive bid for our electric needs in 2009, in an effort to greatly decrease our operating costs.

### **Grounds and Site Maintenance**

After reviewing the current operating procedures regarding grounds and site maintenance, the Committee recommended that the County investigate the following options for improving their operating costs while decreasing our impact on the environment:

- Reduce mowing along roadsides by replacing turf with tall grass areas and more native plantings.
- Improve storm water management practices to reduce runoff, increase infiltration, improve water quality and protect natural resources.
- Use green products when constructing or renovating facilities.
- Use energy and water conservative fixtures in new and renovated facilities.
- Work with Soil Conservation on warm weather grasses for North Campus, Grings Mill and Heritage Center.

*Some examples of what the Parks Department is already doing include renovations at Stone Cliff, which DCNR requires you to look at green initiatives such as electric and water conservation. At Antietam Lake the County will look at green structures to replace old buildings and restrooms.*

## **Employee Transportation:**

The County should continue to explore alternatives for providing the most cost effective and environmentally friendly transportation alternatives to their employees. Such policies could include transportation practices that reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses; practices that reduce the use and waste of fossil fuels by providing alternative modes of transportation; and practices that minimize the environmental impacts, health hazards and overall cost of transportation.

The Committee discussed the following alternatives that could be investigated by the County:

- Encourage carpooling; use GIS technology to coordinate.
- Provide incentives to use alternate transportation.
- Promote subsidized bus passes.
- Promote biking/walking to work through our Wellness Center.

## **Recycling and Solid Waste**

The Committee discussed in detail the importance of developing a recycling program throughout all County owned buildings and promote waste reduction and recycling to all County employees.

The following is a list of options that could be evaluated to encourage the reduction of Solid waste through increased reuse and recycling:

- The County should evaluate the collection process of all recyclable materials from County buildings and make recommendations for improvements. In 2008, the County expanded the paper recycling program in the Courthouse and Services center and realized an 8% increase in the program over the first three months of 2009. A baler was installed in the services center which greatly improved the economics of the program, in addition to decreasing our carbon footprint.
- The Berks County Solid Waste Authority should continue to develop new collection programs for County residents and businesses to properly dispose of difficult wastes.

### Reduce Office Paper Use:

- Continue to educate employees on the available methods of reducing the amount of paper use, such as the use of electronic files rather than printing, use e-mail whenever possible, set duplex on all printers and copiers, use second chance paper for drafts and internal communications, print selectively and use shared electronic file folders.

### Conserve Employee's Use of Energy and Water

- Educate employees on methods of energy and water conservation such as turning off lights, office equipment and faucets when not in use and explain the individual impact of each.

## **Purchasing**

### Purchasing Issues:

The Purchasing Department has developed a Green Procurement and Sustainable Practices Policy and will continue to investigate environmentally preferable purchasing of Green Electronics. Exhibit B.

The County should investigate the development a Green Fleet policy which could investigate the following issues:

- Identify vehicle types in the county fleet that can be targeted for alternative fuel use (bio-diesel, hybrids).
- Monitor performance, mileage, etc. of the alternatively fueled vehicles and compare to fossil fuel equivalents.
- Explore vehicle-sharing options

The County will investigate increasing the percentage of recycled content when purchasing office paper. Currently 10% recycled content is \$30.08 per case or \$24.70 per truck. To increase this to 35% would increase our, per case cost by \$8,241 per year or \$3,480 per truck load. Storage is a large issue in the County Courthouse and Services Center so paper is currently purchased by the case.

The County over the past couple years has been evaluating and installing multifunction units in departments/agencies as existing copiers and printers fail. Such units have been networked as such whenever possible printers are eliminated and they are redirected to utilized the multifunction networked copier. Such units also include scanning capabilities to further minimize the need for multiple paper copies.

The County currently looks for environmentally friendly products when making purchases whenever practical, such as:

Cleaning equipment that is chemical free

Paint products that are low VOC. 0 VOC product is \$81.05 / 5 gallons vs. \$84.25 for premium.

Copiers that are energy efficient

Computers that rate very high by EPEAT

Prison is currently using environmentally friendly cleaners,

The County is currently investigating recycling options when purchasing new carpeting.

The County is currently investigating converting the boiler at North Campus to use gas.

## **Education:**

Education is critical to the success of all of our environmental programs. Information has been included in Employee newsletter on the use of PDF files, encourage double sided printing and the upcoming recycling program for office paper, cardboard and commingled materials, which will be available throughout all County buildings. Employees continue to receive information on the County Green Initiatives through their Employee Newsletter.

The Committee reviewed the “Ten ways to Green Your County”:

- **Create a Green Team – Completed March 2008**
- **Improve Energy Use – Currently underway**
- Commit to Climate Protection – Not included in original mission
- **Conserve and Protect Land and Water – Ongoing whenever practical**
- Support Renewable and Alternative Energy - Not included in original mission
- **Implement Clean/Green Fleet Policies - underway**
- Plan for sustainable communities and transit-oriented development - Not included in original mission
- **Make informed Environmental Purchase – New purchasing policy**
- **Reduce, Reuse and Recycle – Implementation of new programming**
- **Educate, Communicate and Celebrate – Expanding current education program**
  - Participate in NACo County Government Week “Greening Our County” on WEEU and BCTV

After meeting for fourteen months, it was recommended by the Committee that now that the Action Plan is complete, the Green Team Task Force should continue to meet periodically to assist with the implementation of the policies established in the Plan. Goals and policies may have to be adjusted periodically based on progress towards achieving those goals. Periodic reports should be prepared to summarize the County’s progress and presented to the County Commissioners’.

## **Recommendations received:**

The following recommendations were made to the Committee on going Green within our County Government:

- Develop a comprehensive recycling program throughout all County buildings and provide adequate containers.
- Develop a compost location at Ag Center.
- Install occupancy sensors on lights
- Install green roof on Ag Center
- Install low flow fixtures.
- Replanting of trees using volunteer groups
- Reduce amount of grass cutting
- Encourage car pooling, public transportation and biking to work.

- Install solar lighting at parks.
- Participate in the EPEAT program for the purchase of computer equipment.