

# **Sustainable Practices Plan**

## **Office of the Forecast Council**

Agency Number 104

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## Section 1: Policy Statement and Long-Term Goal Focus

The Office of the Forecast Council is committed to protect the health and safety of its employees, reduce the agency's adverse impact on the environment, support local communities and contribute to a healthy Washington economy. The agency is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under Executive Order 02-03 and will strive to model the principles of sustainability in its operations, and procurement.

The Office of the Forecast Council is located in beautiful downtown Olympia in the Capitol Plaza building. Our agency leases 1,765 square feet from the Department of Revenue. This shared space is the first of our many opportunities to practice our sustainability plan by sharing many resources with another state agency.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers guidance with sustainability practices. Their guides suggest many different categories that we can review and change to help reduce and eliminate stresses in the environment: the reduction of use of natural resources; avoidance of biocumulative pollutants which cause both air and water pollution; and avoidance of human harmful supplies. The federal government has initiated steps to sustainability, yet it will take every state agency and every person to make policy effective and truly begin our steps towards sustainability: as an agency, as a state, and only then, as a nation.

As a nation we must reduce impacts and share limited resources. The Earth's atmosphere, for instance, is a global, open-access resource that no one owns, that everyone depends on, and that absorbs emissions from an enormous variety of natural and human activities. As such, it is vulnerable to overuse, a problem known as the tragedy of the commons. The atmosphere's global nature makes it very difficult for communities and nations to agree on and enforce individual rights to and responsibilities for its use. The bottom line is improved ability to maintain existing and create new environmental goals, regulations, and laws to improve worker health and safety, reduce operating and maintenance costs, reduce liabilities, and increase job satisfaction for employees. We look forward to putting our purchasing power to work to benefit human health and the environment.

This agency looks forward to the benefits of this statewide sustainability plan. We look forward to the potential new job growth in the clean energy industry over the next twenty years. We also recognize that this figure is likely to increase considerably with government and investor support. Our agency with five full-time employees is a small start to a bigger reaction that will initiate sustainable living here in Olympia and skyrocket to a global trend as support becomes stronger.

We know that recycling is not enough. Even as we increase recycling as a practice, we continue to dispose more. It is necessary to take an important look at the entire life of a purchase and this will help to eliminate excess waste.

With this sustainability plan we will be able to maximize beneficial attributes, such as recycled content and energy efficiency; and we can minimize adverse attributes like cancer causing materials. We will find that it is still possible to remain consistent with traditional purchasing factors, such as human health, safety, price and performance considerations without compromising our environment.

## Section 2: Assessment of Opportunities

Our agency is focused on implementing the operational and policy changes needed to achieve the sustainability vision and on helping state employees understand and adopt sustainability-based thinking, perspectives and behaviors. Both strategies should be integrated with each agency's daily work so those everyday and long-term decisions become consistent with the overall vision of sustainability.

We acknowledge that part of the problem undoubtedly relates to the budget crisis that has diverted attention. Initially the costs do appear higher (i.e. for supplies such as non-chlorinated 30% post-consumer recycled content paper) yet, this effort for sustainability has significant potential to save money and generate other benefits that could help reduce budget shortfalls. Achieving these outcomes will require strong committed leadership. Agency directors should set agency and program specific benchmarks and targets and demand accountability by requiring regular progress updates from their staff. This agency looks forward to the challenge in the upcoming years.

Research shows that the best way to develop a vision is to first ask what the *ideal* condition of sustainability would be, and then to move backwards to ask what the closest *quickly achievable approximation to the ideal* is. Achieving the closest approximation to the ideal vision of sustainability should be the first focus. A plan can then be made to close the gap that remains between the ideal and its nearest approximation. However, let us first take a look at the long-term goals before acknowledging what we already have as practice, and finally narrow our targets down to a set of goals for the biennium.

### Long Range Goals:

- ✿ Develop written procedures to ensure plan objectives are implemented
- ✿ Collaborate with other agencies to host sustainability workshop for interested staff
- ✿ Voluntary pledges from Employees that incorporate a response to their concerns and applying them to everyday work life
- ✿ Utilizes "green supplies" Agency cleaning products should all be biodegradable and phosphate-free. It is also important to look for low volatile organic compounds in the ingredients.
- ✿ Purchase "energy star" compliant electronics only
- ✿ Encourage efficient use of building resources by providing sustainable alternatives at the facility meetings
- ✿ Require requesting of alternate fuel vehicles when using motor pool or rental cars
- ✿ Require carpooling to all major meetings. As our standard is already high in this area, we should set our goal for 100% compliance by 2010 or earlier.

- ✿ Decrease energy use through efficiency improvements: conserve nonrenewable resources like coal and natural gas; decrease emissions associated with electricity generation; make energy options like solar, wind, or geothermal more viable.
- ✿ Increased water efficiency, reduce impacts to local water table levels; minimize disruptions to aquatic life; reduce the severity of periodic droughts
- ✿ When purchasing, it is necessary to consider the complete life cycle. This will help to not only sustain and create American jobs but also to increase national efficiency. The complete lifecycle includes:
  1. Design
  2. Raw materials used
  3. Manufacturing
  4. Packaging and distribution
  5. Use
  6. Disposition
- ✿ Also when purchasing we will take into consideration the EPAs guiding principles
  1. Individual environmental considerations as part of the normal purchasing process. Take into consideration safety, price, performance, availability and environmental performance (liability, disposal costs, and environmental damage).
  2. Emphasize pollution prevention early in purchasing process.
  3. Examine multiple environmental attributes throughout the products life cycle.
  4. Compare relevant environmental impacts when selecting products and services
  5. Collect accurate and meaningful information about environmental performance and use to make purchase decisions.
- ✿ Participate in an Interagency Sustainability Group with frequency. As a small agency we are best if we can coordinate with others in similar size to strengthen our purchasing power and to share resources
- ✿ Work with DOR to have facilities concerns addressed from a whole rather than to try to initiate change from one corner of the building.
- ✿ Rent or contract for products or services, instead of buying infrequently used equipment
- ✿ Standardize the use of online calendars instead of paper calendars
- ✿ Post signs in meeting rooms/supply closet to remind staff and visitors to turn out lights when rooms are not used by 2004
- ✿ Encourage vendors to work with manufacturers and suppliers to obtain environmental info; make it known that it is important to our agency. With more purchasers asking for this information it will become easier for everyone to obtain
- ✿ In-house furniture recycling
- ✿ Evaluate the number of printers and reduce where possible
- ✿ Encourage employees to take advantage of convenient downtown location for “walking” errands by providing break-time flexibility (length and time flexibility)

## Section 3. Action Plan

The first part of our action plan is to acknowledge the good things we already have in practice. This office is exceptional on knowing the signs of environmental strain and approaching use with sustainability in mind. Many of our goals listed are already in process of address or simply need encouragement for 100% compliance. Our agency acknowledges how rare it is to find such an environmentally conscientious staff. More often than not the practices listed are done by all in the agency rather than just one. Many of the ways that things have been done in this office have relatively been unchanged in the last fourteen years that ChangMook Sohn has directed the Office of the Forecast Council.

### ***Fleets and Transportation***

🌱 Telecommuting policy assists agencies in developing telecommuting programs to help reduce congestion and fuel consumption. A percentage of the workforce participates in telework/telecommuting to reduce petroleum consumption and air pollution. Our agency allows for flex hours for staff choosing to ride the bus; or facilitate a flexible schedule allowing employees a condensed schedule every other week. We encourage participation of state agency bike challenge for the number of people and miles community by bike. Department of Revenues CTR plan includes our agency

🌱 Staff members travel in one vehicle to off-site meetings. In addition, off-site meetings are kept to a minimum. It is our current practice that all of our large meetings are held on the Capitol Campus in order to make us more accessible to our Council members who are often members of the legislature. Although this practice was initiated for their convenience, it is also clear that this helps in the overall state goal of sustainability

🌱 We have reduced the in-person ‘Other Agency’ meetings and even have Department of Licensing sending information electronically rather than meeting at our offices. While in-person meetings are reduced whenever possible, however, they will not be eliminated entirely due to the value of face-to-face communication.

### ***Purchase of Goods and Services***

Listed below are things that our agency already does in order to be more sustainable. This list not only includes actual purchases made, but also ways to conserve, reuse, and reduce resources as a whole.

- 🌱 Agency utilizes shared printers instead of personal printers.
- 🌱 Agency uses a “draft” printer which reuses non-confidential paper
- 🌱 Agency updates computer systems by a rotation system instead of replacing all computers at once. In the system upgrade purchases of systems for the agency’s higher-level tasks are offset by matching surplus of the agency’s oldest computers and formerly highest-end systems are rotated downward into less computationally-

demanding tasks. In addition, the agency purchases equipment that provides for long-term maintenance and warranty coverage to sustain its usefulness for longer period

- ✿ Agency uses scanner to reduce unnecessary photo copy waste
- ✿ Upon renewal of copy machine lease, agency chose to expand versatility of copy machine to include scanning and faxing options. In addition, staff members now have the ability to print from their desktops directly to the copy machine, thus eliminating the need for a “hard-copy” printed on a Laser Printer or DeskJet as a master for duplication

- ✿ Agency uses forecasting methods to eliminate rush shipments, thus reducing dependency on jet fuel, and thus also avoids paying expensive shipping fees. (A forecast helps to allow the application of traditional materials resource-planning methods.)

- ✿ The agency’s copying standard is to make double sided copies, significantly reducing paper consumption

- ✿ OFC is making steps to provide frequently requested information available online rather than mailing/faxing hardcopies to fulfill requests. Also to be noted is our elimination of printing hardcopies of our five publications a year. These are all available by request (on CD), the most recent ones are available online

- ✿ OFC has begun to subscribe to newspapers and periodicals online rather than in hardcopy, i.e. the Wall Street Journal Online

- ✿ OFC provides self-stick fax addressing labels instead of printing full-size fax cover sheets

- ✿ OFC is successfully transitioning to the use electronic software presentations to reduce the use of transparencies; there remain some venues that do not have the AV equipment to meet our needs. When opportunity arises, our agency can provide the laptop and projector to meet these needs

- ✿ Agency uses one general-purpose cleaner for most applications, rather than several different ones. The standard is to always select pump spray containers instead of aerosols

- ✿ OFC supports the elimination of statewide paycheck mailings and inserts. While we are not doing this directly, we are participating with all state agencies in promoting and maintaining the communication channels and thus reducing as a state these mailings

- ✿ Although initially enacted as a cost savings, our agency eliminated hardcopies and switched to on-line distribution of documentation and publications

- ✿ We acknowledge that selecting recycled products keeps recycling programs going by supporting markets for the materials. OFC most often purchases recycled content over virgin

- ✿ Support state and federal laws that support environmentally preferable purchasing. This sustainability plan is only one piece of this overall goal.

- ✿ OFC attempts to find multiple uses for an item; reuse an item or container for other uses, also chooses repairable, refillable, and durable products over disposable. Reuse all file folders, binders, notebooks, and other office supplies. OFC encourages employees to return unused items to the supply room for use by another.

## ***Facility Construction, Operation and Maintenance***

- ✿ The Office of the Forecast Council is co-located in Olympia with the Department of Revenue to share resources, keep operating costs down and make more efficient use of energy, water, and economic resources
- ✿ Recycle paper, cardboard, bottles, batteries, cans, and toner cartridges. Toner cartridges are refurbished
- ✿ OFC sends all non-usable furniture and equipment to state surplus for potential reuse
- ✿ Most OFC employees turn off all office equipment every night, including desk computers. All desk computers use “hibernate” mode which reduces the electricity to a minimum. It is office policy to use automatic monitor powering-down instead of screen savers and use only Energy Star monitors that support this option
- ✿ Discontinued the use of personal heaters and fans whenever possible
- ✿ Provide window blinds to reduce energy loss in building and to maintain moderate temperature control
- ✿ Manages the use of lighting, both the quantity and quality. Makes good use of daylight in workspaces. OFC tries to allow the natural light to shine into building workspaces which reduces the dependency on artificial lighting. We believe it to help support worker productivity, as well.
- ✿ Agency promotes the use of electronic communication whenever possible. OFC continues to expand its electronic list serve service for state government. There are approximately 450 or more subscribers (state employees and others) now utilize this paperless communication system.
- ✿ We require the building lighting to have electronic ballasts with parabolic lenses for maximum energy conservation. We look for buildings with water conservative fixtures such as low-flow toilets. In accordance with the Governor’s Directive 01-01, we compile quarterly energy reports at nine of our facilities to monitor their usage of energy.

## ***Health and safety programs***

- ✿ Buying less-hazardous products improves worker safety, reduces regulatory liability, and lowers disposal costs. Products not known to be less toxic can cause: acute toxicity, carcinogenicity, developmental/reproductive toxicity, immunotoxicity (damage immune system) irritancy (temporary) neurotoxicity, and skin sensitization
- ✿ Lease office space locating employees within walking distance of downtown. We believe this should be under health programs because it allows the employee to run errands which they might ordinarily do in their car, but by foot it can give them the health benefits that walking provides as well as to reduce consumption of non-renewable resources
- ✿ Copy machine is kept away from work areas
- ✿ Practice non-pesticide methods to prevent pest problems. Apply pesticides only “as needed” helps reduce the use of toxic chemicals. Select the least hazardous pesticides effective for control of targeted pests

- ✿ Protect critical areas from pesticides where there are sensitive populations (employees.) Post information at least 48 hours before application. (When use is deemed absolutely necessary.)
- ✿ Practice following all MSDS handling and safety information and instruction. When using MSDS it is a good practice to consider MSDS that meets Pennsylvania or New Jersey requirements as they are stricter. As part of this, our agency avoids storing any corrosive, flammable, or reactive products together.

#### Section 4. Biennial Plan Objectives

- ✿ Provide employee outreach, training, and involvement in sustainability practices annually, post information in break room, email sustainability message or thought for the month, or continue to use staff meetings to educate
- ✿ Tell staff when they have done well- and how that translates into results
- ✿ Reach 90% of staff using reusable products for staff gatherings such as plates, silverware, glasses, and coffee cups by 2005
- ✿ Purchase chlorine free paper products only, preferably with 30% or more post-consumer waste content
- ✿ Reduce purchase of office paper containing virgin wood pulp from non-sustainably managed forests by 5%
- ✿ Find meeting locations requiring the least amount travel for a majority of attendees
- ✿ Work with Central Stores (GA) for good purchasing choices, always keep in mind sustainability practices: buy refillable pens, pencils, and tape dispensers for instance
- ✿ Use an excel spreadsheet to establish and keep track of environmentally preferable purchasing report card. This will help reduce quantity of unusable products and prevent over buying.
- ✿ Make grid that compares product to product using things like recycled content, energy efficiency, and reduced toxicity
- ✿ Include a “to reduce paper waste, don’t print this email” message on emails as a standard signature
- ✿ Replace current calculators with solar-powered calculators and other devices to eliminate the need for batteries, as necessary

#### Section 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Our agency Office Manager (Confidential Secretary) will be responsible for meeting our agency objectives. The Office Manager will promote the education and communication activities throughout the agency and will also be responsible for all reporting activities in conjunction with this plan. Again we emphasize how important it is that the Agency Director be involved and to support our sustainable initiatives.

## Section 6. Communication and Education

Special notices will be sent via email periodically to all employees pertaining to sustainability practices each person can do – for example, recycling and commute trip reduction strategies. Email will also be used to solicit ideas from staff and to distribute educational materials.

## Section 5. Annual Progress Report

The Department of Revenue, and on the behalf of our agency as well, will continue to monitor the monthly energy usage at each of our facilities to ensure our commitment to optimizing electrical and natural gas consumption.

The Department of General Administration records the purchasing practices of all state agencies on the purchase of recycled paper versus virgin paper. This information will keep us abreast of our accomplishments in this area.

The Office will report annually to the Office of Financial Management its progress on implementing the Sustainability Plan. The first annual report (October 2004) will provide baseline performance measurements and goals for success.

The agency will review and revise the initial Sustainability Plan and update by September 1, 2005.

Continuous improvement and progress will be made through the communication and education of staff and clients. New ideas and measures will be incorporated in the subsequent plans.