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Ten Ways to Green Your County

The NACo Green Government Initiative serves as the center of information for all things green, including model plans and programs from across the country. The goal is to assist counties with efforts to protect and improve the environment, especially through emissions reductions, while saving tax money and improving services. Fact sheets and publications are developed on an ongoing basis for a multitude of green issues, including how to create a green team, green county plans, energy, air quality, green building, water quality, land use, transportation, recycling and more.

The following is a list of ten ways you can begin to green your county today. Greening of a county is an incremental process and each small step taken can contribute to the broader green goal.

- **Create a Green Team:**

The county board or executive can assign a staff member or team of staff members to inventory your county's current programs and policies related to green government, develop a comprehensive green county action plan and organize county green events for employees and citizens such as "Bike to Work Days." Incorporate triple-bottom line analysis (a balance of economic, social, and environmental considerations). Ensure that regular meetings occur among the county board members and team to help synthesize your efforts countywide. Identify relevant external stakeholders, create public-private partnerships, and promote regional collaboration.



- **Improve Energy Use and Practice Integrated Environmental Design:**

Address indoor air quality, land use, energy, and conservation to optimize overall environmentally-sound design in new and existing buildings using green building standards, certifications or guidelines, and ensuring energy efficiency. Address new and existing county facilities and consider setting policies for new construction of commercial, residential (including affordable housing), and/or school buildings. Make necessary upgrades and improvements to increase energy efficiency of county buildings and operations (i.e. traffic signals) by 10% or more. Consider entering into a performance contract to let short-term pay-backs help fund long-term projects. Encourage other sectors of your community through your participation in the ENERGY STAR Challenge, and the "Change the World, Start with ENERGY STAR Campaign" to get residents to change the light bulbs in their homes to energy efficient ones.

- **Committee to Climate Protection:**

Participate in NACo's climate protection program to improve air quality and reduce emissions. Select a baseline, and conduct an emissions inventory utilizing a tool of your choice, such as those offered

through ICLEI (International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives). Define a quantifiable target and timeline for your emissions reduction plan, for your county operations, your community, or both.

- **4. Support Renewable and Alternative Energies:**

Buy and support renewable and alternative energies for your county buildings, fleets, and community, to work towards energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Consider on-site renewable energy sources such as geothermal, solar or wind-power, for county facilities. Support research and development for new green technologies.



- **Conserve and Protect Land and Water Resources:**

Develop policies and programs to help conserve your county's natural resources. Consider actions to preserve open space, preserve critical habitat and productive farmland, restore and protect wetlands, create buffers around water bodies, protect drinking water and limit impervious surfaces. Implement stormwater best management practices such as Low Impact Development, tree planting, and more. Apply for a County Leadership in Conservation Award and/or Five Star Restoration Program grant.

- **Implement Clean/Green Fleet Policies:**

Improve the performance of your county fleets and reduce air pollution by instituting fleet management best practices and policies. Inventory the status of your current county fleet to increase fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. Refuel the vehicles with cleaner diesel, select retrofit technologies for cleaner diesel vehicles and equipment, and/or purchase new hybrid, flex-fuel, or other alternative fuel vehicles. Further promote alternatively fueled mass transit and clean vehicles as a regional effort to reduce emissions.

- **Plan for Sustainable Communities and Transit-Orientated Development:** Incorporate smart growth principles into your land use and development plans that will lead to economic enhancement, environmental stewardship and social well being for all areas of the community, including vulnerable populations. This includes transit-oriented development, pedestrian-friendly streets, bicycle paths and lanes, and infill and brown-fields redevelopment projects. Utilize NACo's Green Government Initiative staff for technical assistance, resources and award program.

- **Make Informed Environmental Purchases:**

Formalize a green purchasing and procurement policy within your government structure with strategies ranging from fleets to office products to compact fluorescent lightbulbs. Consider using performance contracting and pay for capital improvements from operation budget savings. Sign on to the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance.

- **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle:**

Boost your county's targets for recycling in county facilities and among your residents and businesses. Pay particular attention to methods that enhance recycling and waste disposal programs through the recycling of electronics, and the proper disposal of household hazardous materials. Set a target to reduce the total waste (recyclables plus garbage) generated in your community.

- **Educate, Communicate, Celebrate:**

Through websites, public events and other information campaigns, teach county employees and citizens about the social, environmental and financial benefits of sustainability – both for the county and for individuals. Hold a press conference, tour, party, or other recognition event to highlight your efforts and encourage your private sector to follow in your footsteps. Reward local businesses, community organizations, and residents for their efforts. Share your best practices with other counties through NACo's peer-to-peer networking opportunities.

From the National Association of Counties.

THURSTON COUNTY AWARDED \$450,000 CONSERVATION PLANNING GRANT



OLYMPIA - Thurston County will use a \$450,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect prairie species and habitat. The grant was one of three awarded in Washington State for projects related to conservation planning or land acquisition. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the awards on Wednesday, August 24.

Thurston County will use its grant to work on a regional habitat conservation plan that addresses listed and candidate prairie species. A habitat conservation plan is an agreement between federal and local governments for rules and regulations that protect sensitive species and manage land use. The plan provides certainty in regulation by establishing agreed-upon conditions with the federal government under which a local government can issue permits for development. Under a regional approach, Thurston County and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife would supply a habitat conservation plan to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval.

"Our goal is to ultimately create a plan that will take a big-picture approach toward managing impacts to sensitive species, rather than putting the burden on each and every permit-applicant to come up with a plan," said Thurston County Commissioner Karen Valenzuela.

Commissioner Sandra Romero said, "The permitting process would be less time consuming and costly, and property owners would have a more certain understanding of the conditions they'll have to meet before a project even starts."

"We're thrilled to get this grant," said Commissioner Cathy Wolfe. "It's going to help the county respond to some of the requests we hear most often: take a landscape approach to conservation, and make the permitting process simpler."

Thurston County is home to several prairie species that are candidates for protection under the Endangered Species Act. To learn more about prairie habitat in Thurston County, please visit www.thurstonplanning.org and click on the "Prairie" photobox. For more information on the Endangered Species Act and habitat conservation planning, please visit the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's website, www.fws.gov.

From the Thurston County website.

Small Wind Turbines and Your Community Is your community prepared for the small wind Revolution?

According to the 2008 Small Wind Report by the American Wind Energy Association, small wind turbines are experiencing unprecedented growth across the US. A 30% federal tax credit and many local rebates will continue to drive this demand for on-site renewable energy generation.

The best way to prepare your community for small wind power is by adopting a small wind ordinance that clearly sets guidelines for your community while allowing you to support a clean energy future that is important to so many of your residents and local businesses.

A small wind ordinance helps to promote consistency among fees, requirements, and procedures. Doing so reduces complications and inefficiencies for installers and applicants. A small wind ordinance covers many things, including the issues important to most communities – sound and height.

SOUND ISSUES

Sound from turbines is rarely an issue, but this ordinance can help set sound restrictions that fall under current noise ordinance guidelines. This will help take the guesswork out of what to expect from these clean energy generators.





HEIGHT ISSUES

The ordinance can also help you manage the issue of turbine height to mitigate visual impacts while maximizing a wind turbine's productivity.

The following counties have successfully created and adopted Small Wind Ordinances:

San Bernadino County, CA
Clarke County, VA
Currituck County, NC
Kern County, CA
Rockingham County, VA
Henry County, GA
Tippecanoe County, IN
Filmore County, MN

Reprinted from the American Wind Energy Association.

From the Director . . .



Executive Director Peg Reagan

I've only heard good comments about our new monthly newsletter. Let me know what you think—is it easier to read, is it more useful than the longer, quarterly version?

As Executive Director, this month I've been focused on our major donor campaign and am pleased to report we've had pledges from \$250 to \$2,000, all of which combine to ensure solid footing for the Conservation Leaders Network.

A major effort for the next several months will be our Clean Water work. We will be contacting pro-environment county commissioners to encourage them to join the National Association of Counties' Environment, Energy and Land Use Committee (to reverse their recent opposition to clean water). We will also be working with members of Local Officials for Clean Water to up their game.

We are currently awaiting further action from the Obama Administration on the Environmental Protection Agency's clean water guidance. You will recall there was a lengthy public comment period earlier this spring/summer. All those comments have to be sorted and taken into account as the Administration decides what to do. We are cautiously optimistic that they will see sufficient support for moving to the next, regulatory, step.

Next month our members will receive our Annual Stewardship Letter; I hope you will be pleased with the work and accomplishments your support has helped us achieve.

\$\$ for Counties

1. Fish and Wildlife Service: Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program

Deadline: November 1, 2011

Description: This program provides support to public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean that promote the long-term conservation of Neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. Focus areas include perpetuating healthy populations of these birds, providing financial resources for bird conservation initiatives, and fostering international cooperation for such initiatives.

For more information go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/index.shtm>