

How to be a DENR Sustainability Liaison, (And not lose any of your regular work time)

This brief “how-to” guide was developed for the 2003 DENR Sustainability Liaisons Team. It represents working methods the two previous sustainability teams found useful. Given the differences between DENR divisions sustainability liaisons may have to use different and/or multiple work methods until the most effective combination for their division is determined. This guide prepared November 2002.

TEAM MISSION STATEMENT

To raise employee awareness of the consequences of our actions and make DENR a model of sustainability by promoting the implementation of positive environmental stewardship initiatives in the Department and by encouraging employee involvement and recognition consistent with the State Government Sustainability Plan.

DENR SUSTAINABILITY DEFINITION

Environmental Sustainability “...meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Environmental sustainability is the act of working toward minimizing the unwanted environmental impacts of daily activities and projects. State Government and individual employees have many opportunities to implement sustainable practices, both at home and at work, that encourage wise use of resources and that reduce or eliminate pollution.

DENR SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its Divisions are expected to take real and permanent steps to reduce unwanted environmental impacts in their daily activities and projects. All DENR Divisions should implement their own sustainability projects and make sure that employees have access to environmental education resources and materials. (Effective December 1, 2001)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA REQUIREMENTS

Executive Order Number 156 – This NC Executive Order expands upon provisions originally outlined in **Executive Order Number 8**, requiring state agency participation in solid waste reduction, recycling, and buying recycled products. The revised Executive Order recognizes that the daily activities and routine operations of the State have a significant impact on environmental quality and use of natural resources. The Executive Order directs state agencies to develop and incorporate policies and practices into their daily operations that preserve natural resources, conserve energy, eliminate waste and emissions, and lessen overall environmental impact. **Executive Order Number 26** has requirements addressing state agency water conservation. **House Bill 1215** addresses water use conservation and reduction for all state government agencies. **House Bill 628** addresses energy use and performance contracting by state agencies. And, the Governor’s **Utility Savings Initiative (USI)** actively addresses state agency use of electric, gas, and water in response to utility budget cuts from the legislature.

SUSTAINABILITY LIAISONS TEAM ORGANIZATION

DENR is made up of 22 official divisions and major offices, including DENR’s Administration office. DENR’s Sustainability Team officially consists of one official liaison from each of the 22 divisions and major offices. The Team reports to an official sponsor from DENR administration. The current Sponsor is Mr. Jimmy Carter, who is based on the 14th floor of the Archdale Building. Unofficial liaisons are also encouraged especially for the larger divisions.

To accomplish their mission statement, liaisons have two main purposes. The main purpose is to gather, share, and/or develop, sustainability information, resources, and ideas for use by as many of their division, or major office, units and employees as possible. Information sharing is usually done at the 2 hour Team meetings held every other month and by the DENR Liaisons list serve. Team officials consist of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a meeting secretary and a meeting timekeeper. The liaison’s second main purpose is to be a representative so each division/major office can have a say in the implementation of 37 DENR wide sustainability projects, researched by the first Liaisons Team. The Team usually takes one or two projects at a time and has volunteer sub-teams work on them. Currently, eighteen of these DENR wide projects are completed, but should be maintained so DENR employees and units can still use them. The Second Team’s initially adopted meeting format starts with a welcome, an update of current activities, a report of NC Project Green activities, exchange of ideas/bragging, requests for assistance, planning and voting on new projects, and whenever possible a guest speaker. Modifications to the meeting format did happen as needed.

SUSTAINABILITY LIAISONS TEAM HISTORY

In February 1998, the Governor held an Emerging Issues Forum, which focused on sustainable development issues concerning the state. This conference inspired the Governor to address sustainability in state government. In August 1998, the Governor hosted a follow-up conference of state agencies to kick off a state government sustainability initiative. As part of this initiative each state agency, including DENR, developed departmental sustainability plans in the first quarter of 1999. In April 1999, the Governor's office worked with DENR's Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance to develop a State Government Environmental Sustainability Plan. In order to facilitate the implementation of the DENR plan, a Departmental Sustainability Team was created.

The First Sustainability Team (July 1999 to April 2000) finalized its charter, compiled the reports submitted by Division Directors, set up and managed an email address to receive employee suggestions, submitted a list of 37 projects to the Department to promote environmental sustainability, and began seven core initiatives to be implemented throughout the Department.

The Second Sustainability Team (September 2000 to December 2002) was directed to start working on the 37 DENR wide projects and use any other approaches it could think of to accomplish the mission statement. In just 23 meetings, the second team completed 18 DENR wide projects, and over a dozen smaller projects. To help the Teamwork better, it saw to it that DENR had an official DENR Sustainability Policy and Procedure, sustainability web site to educate DENR employees, and a sustainability liaisons list serve to communicate and ask questions.

DENR SUSTAINABILITY LIAISON TEAM GUIDELINES AND RULES

- Rule 1)** Do your regular job first.
- Rule 2)** Remember to send a substitute, if you cannot make it to a meeting.
- Rule 3)** Speak your mind at meetings and say what you think, because divisions have different needs.
- Rule 4)** Remember your division's regional offices and field offices.
- Rule 5)** Remember that in every DENR division/major office there are many professional people who will want to help, once they know how sustainability is defined.

Guideline 1) You should only spend 3 hours a month on sustainability work, including the 2 hours you spend at the Team meetings. A liaison's sustainability job is mostly getting out the information so others can take advantage of it. If you do all the sustainability in your division/major office there will be no time for your regular job. A liaison spreads sustainability information and ideas and keeps it in front of people until it finally gets noticed.

Guideline 2) Do some kind of regular sustainability status report to division management, but keep it brief and make it relevant to the division. Most divisions have a regular management team meeting for reports and updates. Managers at all levels are looking for easily doable ideas. Many managers never take time to read e-mails. Busy people resist new things so keep bringing the ideas up to catch their attention.

Guideline 3) Let people know if you need help on sustainability work. People love to help as long as they are not the ones committed to a project. Many people have ideas and suggestions but don't know whom to tell. Ask for information and ideas.

Guideline 4) Use the Team to network and learn new stuff. Very often contacts in other divisions have information and resources that can help you with regular work.

Guideline 5) Within your division or major office, ask for sustainability ideas. It works as an introduction to giving out sustainability ideas and brings in many ideas from the rank and file. Note, that it is often good for employee morale to have a venue for their ideas on how to do things better.

Guideline 6) The Team's DENR-wide Sustainability projects must take into account that all DENR divisions and major offices are different in their missions and often in their organizational structure. A sustainability project is usually considered complete when all DENR divisions/major offices have been informed of the opportunity and at least half are willing to do/use the project.

Guideline 7) A Liaison's job is mainly to inspire sustainable thinking in your fellow DENR

employees. This has involved establishing sustainability programs and projects to help educate and remind employees and management of sustainability procedures and opportunities. Professional DENR people will always do sustainable things, if they get information, access to resources, and ideas, especially if others are already using them.

TOP TEN SUSTAINABILITY LIASION METHODS FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN A DENR DIVISION OR MAJOR OFFICE

- 1. Let people know what sustainability is and ask them for sustainability ideas you can share with everyone else.** It is surprising how fast people want to help when someone finally gives them the definition of sustainability. E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily do this. Post your contact information and what you're looking for and your division/major office champions will find you. Professional DENR people always seem to jump at the chance to get their ideas used. Meeting announcements for smaller Divisions have been very effective. Where possible introduce yourself, or send a memo, to all section heads and middle managers to let them know you're the sustainability contact. An official representative makes sustainability more acceptable as something worth management's time. It gives you an opportunity to let them know how useful sustainability can be to them. This method should be done as often as possible without interference with your regular duties. Very often your regular work offers many opportunities to use this method to spread sustainable thinking.
- 2. Distribute sustainability information, resources, and ideas you receive.** E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily do this. Many people are so busy they need a little bit of reassurance before they jump in and start doing sustainable things in their areas. Sustainability information, resources and ideas coming in from a formal committee often provide this reassurance. This can be done easily and often, as it only takes a few minutes.
- 3. Carefully organize the sustainability information, resources, and ideas you distribute.** It is important that people know the information is useful to them and relevant to what they do. They also need to feel that this is not just a passing fad that will be gone next month. Carefully crafted E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily give them the reassurance they need. Please note that too much e-mail can turn people off. Meeting announcements for smaller Divisions have been very effective. People love example stories that show how sustainability is useful and productive, especially managers. When and where to use this method strongly depends on how the liaison reads the specific audience. – Simply figure out, what will get their attention?
- 4. People want to know how to be sustainable.** The DENR Sustainability Procedure is a very good listing of easily doable sustainability activities, which are typically needed in DENR units. Usually a liaison can simply ask around to see what people would like to know. The sustainability web site and your fellow liaisons can provide information, contacts, and materials you can use to educate people in your division/major office. Remember to provide the same questions and services to regional/field offices. This can often be done in tandem with regular work, and only takes a few minutes to reach distant offices as well as regional and field offices.
- 5. It is important to let division directors/major office managers and others know that DENR sustainability is a benefit that potentially can raise productivity and cut costs.** Nearly all managers will jump at the chance to lessen the negative environmental impact of work and projects. Unfortunately, they do not always have time to study how sustainability activities and method changes will do this. E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, example stories, and simple networking that are crafted to inform people of sustainability benefits can easily do this. How and when this can be done usually determined by asking the various managers how they would like it done.
- 6. Brag about sustainability accomplishments and stories from other DENR Divisions and NC Departments.** People feel better about trying sustainable ideas if they know the same idea is already working somewhere else. E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily do this. You can get stories and an accomplishment lists from the NC Project Green web site, your fellow DENR liaisons, the DENR sustainability manual, and the DENR sustainability committee web site. Enjoy doing this as often as you can.

7. **Look for your own division/major office sustainability activities, accomplishments, and stories so new employees can learn and old timers be reminded about sustainability.** People love to tell stories; so just ask around. This also gives you an opportunity to tell them about sustainability. Very often people do not realized their “common sense” changes and stories are sustainability. E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily get the stories distributed. Very often the sustainability history of your division is invisible, because successful sustainability blends in as common sense and becomes part of the every day office culture.
8. **It is important not to let sustainability work throw you behind in your regular work.** A lot of sustainability work can be done “on the fly”, ten minutes here twenty minutes there. A liaison’s sustainability job is mostly getting out the information so others can take advantage of it. Gathering information and analyzing needs is usually “on the fly” as well. Very often you will hear a sustainable story while talking about something else, or you notice one section is doing something that could be sustainable for other sections to do. In short, past liaisons have noticed that sustainability is often disguised as a part of regular work.
9. **There are ways to find time for sustainability work.** Get over thinking that sustainability is taking you away from getting other things done. Previous liaisons discovered that a several hours of the month are lost to waiting for something, or indecision by someone else, or just plain not enough time to start something new before you leave. In some cases sustainability work actually saves time and increases productivity. Find these “soft” minutes and use them. Set specific times during the week to do sustainability work. Past liaisons have noticed, that very often, regular work only takes a little effort to also be sustainability work. Opportunities always present themselves to talk, or ask, about sustainability in both social and professional conversations. And always remember, people are ready to help, at least a little bit, if you ask.
10. **Keep records of what you have done.** One of the biggest drawbacks of being a liaison is remembering all the different things you have done. You deserve to get credit for all your sustainability achievements. Also, managers often want you to show that sustainability is worth your time. Usually, a simple running list of the information you sent out and DENR projects you are associated with are all it takes. Extrapolation, perception, and plain guessing from past liaisons lists are where the DENR Team’s 3 hours per month average came from. The list of the 37 projects mandated by the DENR Secretary is available for the asking. A running list of other DENR liaison Team projects is kept on the DENR sustainability Committee web site.

TOP SEVEN LIAISON METHODS FOR WORKING ON DENR SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

1. **A liaison needs to network and have fun.** From a survey of middle managers one common expectation was for a liaison to make lots of connections and have opportunities to learn new stuff. Many past liaisons have appreciated getting away from the grindstone to learn how other divisions work. DENR Liaison Team meetings are one of the major networking venues. The Team list serve is an important means of networking as well, especially for Liaisons based in distant offices. Fellow liaisons are excellent connections to finding your way around another division. Observation over the past three year show that the most successful sustainability committees in State government tend to plan fun into their meetings, by having informative speakers, and doing interesting projects. It seems that when past DENR Liaisons Team meetings did this more information was exchanged and remembered than in the strictly business meetings.
2. **Small sub-teams work faster getting a project ready.** For most DENR-wide projects, small two or three person sub-teams have better chances to meet and plan, what must be done to get a project started in DENR divisions and offices. Often just the sub-team can install the project without the whole team getting involved. For larger projects the sub-team will usually have a package ready for the whole team to take back to their divisions and install. The best sub-teams will take advantage of different resources and services each division has available. Access to these services and resources is usually provided by that division’s sustainability liaison.
3. **Only take on one or two of the 37 DENR mandated projects at a time.** At their first meeting the second DENR liaisons team voted to start five projects. The result was a struggle for time and resources. Later when the team only chose two projects at a time things were smoother and projects were installed faster. It was also noticed that divisions were happier and more receptive about installing only one project every few months. The usual Team method is that members will nominate a number of projects. Then the team liaisons present will

multi vote on the list of nominated projects. The project with the most votes is chosen. Once a project is picked, a sub-team of volunteers is formed. If no one volunteers then, the second project on the list is chosen, and a sub-team of volunteers is formed. A project is usually considered complete when all divisions/major offices have been informed of the opportunity and at least half are willing to use/install the process the team put together.

4. **Always have a fun project going if you can.** Many liaisons will notice a sustainability need that may only touches a few DENR divisions. If there is interest in doing a sustainability project to meet this need it should be done. Normally a project is considered complete when all divisions/major offices have been informed of the opportunity and at least half are willing to use/install the process the team put together. Most non-mandated DENR projects have touched just a hand full of division offices. However, these types of projects seem to do a great deal more sustainability education of DENR employees. The usual Team method is that a member will explain the need for a “fun”, or non-mandated project, and nominate it as a Team project. Then the Team liaisons present will vote on the list of nominated project, and a sub-team of volunteers is formed.
5. **Brag about Team sustainability projects, accomplishments, and stories whenever it is possible..** DENR Administration, Division and major office directors and DENR professional seem feel more accepting of sustainability and sustainable ideas if they know that other sustainability idea are already working. E-mails, bulletin board postings, post signs, and simple networking can easily do this. You can get stories and an accomplishment lists from the NC Project Green web site. Your fellow DENR liaisons, the DENR sustainability manual, and the DENR sustainability committee web site.
6. **Many DENR managers will accept a sustainability project or activity if they are sure it is a “doable deliverable”.** Why should a Division/major office director or a section or a unit middle manger spend time and effort on a sustainability activity if its going to be gone a year from now? When the Sustainability Team runs into this kind of resistance it usually resorts to education tools that get their attention. NC Project Green is full of stories and examples on how other agencies have saved thousands or millions in money and productivity increases using sustainability. The Team can use State Sustainability Laws, and Executive Orders directing sustainability. Much of this information is available on the DENR sustainability web site or the NC Project Green web site. Most of the time it’s a mater of letting a manger know what sustainability can do for them and how easy it can be done. The DENR Sustainability Liaisons Team has upper management support from the DENR Secretary’s Office, and can call on their help from time to time.
7. **Many times several DENR divisions or offices will already be doing sustainability projects the Liaisons Team is working on.** This is a happy predicament in that it makes it easier to get other divisions and offices motivated. If one division is having success other divisions are more willing to do the same. The sub-team just has to get the details and the “how to” put together so that liaisons can show their people how those other divisions are doing it and profiting form it.

TOP TEN TOOLS A SUSTAINABILITY LIAISON CAN USE

1. **The best tool is a useful definition of sustainability.** Many DENR people have no idea of what sustainability is, or the wrong idea. Most of the time, when an individual gets a good definition of sustainability they become very supportive. Unfortunately, a useful definition is dependant on the individual’s frame of reference, making it necessary to have several definition variations, to explain this basic concept. This has been especially true with many DENR middle managers. Past liaisons have had good success using the several different definitions available in the sustainability manual.
2. **Other DENR sustainability liaisons and their contacts are excellent tools for finding information, resources, and ideas.** It is often surprising how much time you can save by asking what other divisions have done, such as signs and posters, budget savings on sustainable practices, and “how to” manuals.
3. **E-mails are very informative if they are short and relevant to the audience you are trying to educate.** E-mails should be used lightly so people will look forward to reading them. Check with your division PIO and get the contact information for managers and individuals in all areas, including field and regional offices. By understanding what these various offices do you will be able to send out effective e-mails on sustainability specific to their needs and interest.

4. **Signs and poster have an immediate effect but are two very different tools.** The rule of thumb is that, signs remind people about a sustainability practice they need to use, and posters inform and educate people about a sustainability practice they need to use. Both signs and posters will become invisible after a while as they blend into the everyday background. Sustainability signs would be used around work areas such as copiers, printers, light switches, dumpsters, recycle bins, and so on. Posters would be used in break areas, workstations, public areas, meeting rooms, hallways, or anywhere people would have a little time to study them.
5. **Networking is the longest lasting sustainability tool.** People seem to remember more about why a sustainability activity is needed when a human being tells the reasons why. Take advantage of opportunities tell people about sustainability, and/or ask them about sustainability ideas they have. One major networking tool is to take time to introduce yourself as the sustainability liaison, or send a memo, to your division's managers and administrative staff, including those in the regional and field offices. As a bonus, networking very often gives you contacts and connections for your regular work.
6. **Large numbers of web sites and documents are available to sustainability liaisons.** The DENR websites, listed below, have links to many other sustainability web sites. The DENR sustainability manual, and other DENR sustainability documents can provide much of the information you need to sell sustainability in your divisions, major offices, and/or regional and field offices.
7. **The NC Project Green Web Site is a major information source of what is going on in other departments and a good catalog of ideas and accomplishments DENR can use.** NC Project Green receives information and ideas from all state agencies and universities. The universities are extremely active with sustainability education, activities, and projects.
8. **State Executive Order 8, Executive Order 156, Executive Order 26, House Bill 1215, House Bill 628, the DENR Sustainability Policy, and Secretary Ross's mandate are all authority reasons sustainability actions are required.** Sustainability committees and teams all across state government and universities were put in place, in response, to meet the requirements of these and other environmentally related state mandates. The orders and house bills can be found on line. NC Project Green's web site should have links to most of these documents.
9. **The DENR library can do considerable amounts of research for projects and source references.** Normal library services and research help are ideal for finding sustainability answers to most project questions. The current DENR librarian is a former sustainability liaison.
10. **Repetition is an effective tool for sustainability training or just getting people to notice sustainable ideas.** It reminds people to do the sustainable activities they agreed with doing. Very often these same people are teaching others to do the same. Repetition is where a lot of signs can be used.

WEBSITES AVAILABLE FOR DENR SUSTAINABILITY

DENR Sustainability Liaisons Team <http://www.sustainablenc.org/DENR/>

NC Sustainability Web Site, "NC Project Green" <http://www.sustainablenc.org/>

NC DENR Library Services and information <http://www.ee.enr.state.nc.us/library/library.htm>

Div. Pollution Prevention & Environmental Assistance <http://www.p2pays.org/>

DENR's Sustainability Policy <http://www.enr.state.nc.us/admin/pdf/suspol.pdf>

DENR's Sustainability Procedure <http://www.enr.state.nc.us/admin/pdf/susproc.pdf>

Raleigh Area Agency Recycling Information <http://www.doa.state.nc.us/doa/facility/welcome.htm>