



Greening Headquarters Update

JULY 23, 2012

Greening Updates:

Office of Operations

Contents:

- **Waste Minimization & Recycling Updates**
- **Energy Updates**
- **Food Service Updates**
- **Green Buildings**
- **USDA People's Garden Pavilion at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival**



Waste Minimization & Recycling updates:

One requirement of Executive Order (E.O.) 13514 is that every federal agency achieves 50% waste diversion by FY15. USDA is well on its way toward attaining that goal. In FY11 USDA had a waste diversion rate of 45% for the sampling of some 20 USDA buildings surveyed nationwide. However, some individual buildings have already exceeded the 50% diversion rate goal; for instance, the USDA Headquarters Complex went from a 58% diversion rate in FY2010 to a 60% rate in FY11, using FY08 as a baseline. The USDA Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan projects that the Department will meet the 50% goal by FY2013 and exceed it in FY2014.

Energy Updates:

We are sprucing up the Ag Promenade! Part of that effort includes new energy efficient lights. Not only will the new lighting enhance the Promenade, but it also saves energy, labor, and money. The new lights use light emitting diode (LED) technologies. Not only do these lights reduce our energy use, they also last much longer than fluorescent lights. With tens of thousands of fluorescent lamps in the Headquarters Complex, changing out burnt out fluorescent lamps is a significant labor cost.





Barber Shop's new lighting. The new lights are bright and efficient, so the numbers of light fixtures were reduced.

Overall energy use was reduced in the Headquarters Complex. In part, the reduction was due to the unusually warm winter. Now, as the unusually warm weather continues, our cooling costs are going up compared to last year. A simple way you can help us reduce energy costs during the summer while improving the comfort in your office is to properly set your window blinds during the summer. Angle the slates up to direct sunlight to the ceiling; angle slates down to direct sunlight to your work surface.



**One type of
LED light bulb**

Food Service Updates:

The USDA Headquarters Food Operations are a high profile opportunity to demonstrate USDA's commitment to USDA mission and initiatives. In addition to the many USDA employees who come to our cafeterias, thousands of tourists and visitors also come to our cafeterias each month. Currently, a Selection Panel is reviewing food service contractor submissions. Once the review is completed, the panel will make a recommendation to the Source Selection

Authority that will make the final decision. The new contract, which should be awarded later this year, calls for our cafeterias to become models for healthy eating and "sustainable" operations. The new Food Service Contract encouraged the use of food and beverage items that are fresh and locally grown or otherwise made or procured in the

closest possible proximity to Washington D.C., and the preparation of meals that contribute to a balanced diet and contain the fewest possible additives. By sourcing locally and sustainably grown food, our program will help support sustainable food systems as a way of contributing to the vitality, environmental sustainability, and quality of life in the region. In addition to the food and beverages, the “back of the house” operations will also support USDA missions, including waste reduction programs (conservation of natural resources) and the use of environmentally preferable products including products that are certified BioPreferred (<http://www.biopreferred.gov>). So soon, you should be seeing some interesting changes in our cafeterias!



Look for the new BioPreferred label. For more information, go to the biopreferred website.

One simple way to reduce your environmental impact while dining at our cafeterias is to participate in the “Meatless Monday” initiative <http://www.meatlessmonday.com/>. This international effort, as the name implies, encourages people not to eat meat on Mondays. Meatless Monday is an initiative of The Monday Campaign Inc. in association with the John Hopkins School of Public Health.

How will going meatless one day of the week help the environment? The production of meat, especially beef (and dairy as well), has a large environmental impact. According to the U.N., animal agriculture is a major source of greenhouse gases and climate change. It also wastes resources. It takes 7,000 kg of grain to make 1,000 kg of beef. In addition, beef production requires a lot of water, fertilizer, fossil fuels, and pesticides. In addition there are many health concerns related to the excessive consumption of meat. While a vegetarian diet could have a beneficial impact on a person’s health and the environment, many people are not ready to make that commitment. Because Meatless Monday involves only one day a week, it is a small change that could produce big results.

Did you notice that our cafeterias have tasty meatless options? So you can really help yourself and the environment while having a good vegetarian meal!

Did you know that the cafeterias use local honey? It is wild-flower honey from Shipman, VA. Some people believe that local honey can help reduce your allergies. Because honey contains a variety of the same pollen spores that give allergy sufferers so much trouble when flowers and grasses are in bloom, people speculate that, eaten regularly, the honey gradually vaccinates the body against allergens.



Locally grown fruits and vegetables are currently available at the USDA Cafeterias.

Green Buildings

If your office overlooks Court 2 in the South Building, you noticed a lot of roofing work over the South Cafeteria. The South Cafeteria Waterproofing project is now nearing completion. The Office of Operations Engineers Staff is using this project to install a “cool” roofing system. You may recall that last year, the OO engineers installed “cool” roofs over the two arches over Independence Ave. Cool roofs save energy by using a light colored coating while keeping the roof watertight. Light colored roofs save energy by reflecting solar energy from the roof thus keeping it cooler. Like the arches, this cool roofing is also made from biobased materials, helping demonstrate our commitment to the USDA BioPreferred Program.



**Cool roofs
coming soon to
Court 2 in the
South Building!**



Court 2 in the South Building Waterproofing

USDA People's Garden Pavilion at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival:



Containers gardens were one of five different types of gardens highlighted in the USDA Peoples Garden display on the Mall at the Folklife Festival.



Come visit the People's Garden at the west end of the Whiten Building.

The People's Garden Pavilion at this year's Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall highlighted sustainable landscaping practices, all of which were being used at the Headquarters grounds. There were informational displays about greenroofs and rain barrels (stormwater management). There were also displays about gardening with native plants and edible gardens. There were knowledgeable USDA Executive Master Gardener volunteers at the pavilion to talk about these sustainability features.

The National Mall is located within D.C.'s combined sewer overflow zone, so the stormwater displays were very relevant. If we are ever going to see the water quality in our waterways improve, we will need to see way more of these types of stormwater systems in our urban areas. The demonstration shed exterior is made from reclaimed wood

(this shed is scheduled to be moved to the Headquarters grounds). There was also a compost demonstration area. Nearby, the USDA Bee Lab had a lot of interesting information about pollinators. The station was staff with USDA staff and knowledgeable local beekeepers. Over the course of the Festival, thousands of visitors stopped by our pavilion and displayed a lot of interest in the USDA garden exhibit.

