



Environmental Stewardship Initiative Sustainability Definition July 2002

Environmental sustainability has been defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. For the purposes of the N.C. Environmental Stewardship Initiative, this definition is the guiding philosophy.

Organizations operate within an environmental, social and economic context. Environmental sustainability is a part of this operation and best achieved when integrated with other components.

An environmentally sustainable organization seeks to participate within its community and seeks to balance economy, society and environment within its operations. Through seeking balance, an organization may better steward natural and economic resources taking into account the needs of future generations.

In daily practice, many opportunities exist to consider environmental sustainability. The following demonstrates possible environmentally sustainable practices.

- **Manufacturing** can target the use of less toxic materials and use of recycled feedstock over virgin feedstock, implement pollution prevention practices in various processes, use reusable and recyclable transport packaging, and set energy and water efficiency goals.
- **Suppliers** can be targeted for assistance in reducing packaging of raw materials and in searching for less toxic supplies and processes, and provision of “greener” energy supplies.
- **Product Impact** can be examined for opportunities to increase end of life recycling or reuse, and to reduce overall environmental impact.
- **Office operations** can reduce paper usage through double-sided copying and printing, use of e-mail, beginning or expanding recycling programs for office discards, and buying recycled office supplies.
- **Purchasing** can seek to define and establish environmentally preferable purchasing, procuring supplies that are nontoxic and made with recycled content, specifying that purchased items be delivered in bulk or with minimal packaging, and establishing environmental screening for all new purchases.
- **Transportation** can include reducing employee car miles through teleconferencing and trip consolidation, encouraging the use of carpooling and mass transit by employees, considering alternative-fueled vehicles for motor pools, and maximizing routing of product and raw material supply to minimize trip miles.
- **Food Service** can include encouraging energy and water efficiency in cooking and water operations; providing washable, reusable dinnerware; implementing recycling programs for cans, bottles and other discards; donating excess food to



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area “food rescue” programs; and establishing composting programs for food wastes that cannot be donated.

- **Facility Management and Housekeeping** can include installing water-saving devices such as low-flow toilets and aerators on sink fixtures; maximizing energy efficiency in lighting, heating and cooling; using the least toxic cleaning materials; and employing green building techniques in maintenance and renovation practices.
- **Landscaping** can include evaluating the use/application of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides; reducing or eliminating building and grounds landscape to conserve water; monitor watering systems to use only when needed; and establishing composting programs for organic wastes.
- **Interactions with the public** can include informing the public and customers about sustainability efforts and encouraging them to participate.

It is expected that organizations that are recommended to become Environmental Stewards show leadership in this area, implementing and demonstrating examples of environmentally sustainable practices.