

What It Means to Be Green

Exploring Hosts' Green Initiatives



Kermit is right; it's not that easy being green. Sesame Street's favorite frog may well be referring to preservation of the lush foliage that surrounds his pond of residence. The same applies to all of us – advocating and acting on behalf of preservation, restoration and conservation efforts that help us sustain and improve the natural environment – is a global effort in which we all play a vital part. In a series of three articles, MissionControl will explore “What It Means to Be Green.”

In Part I of the series, we'll introduce the concept of Being Green – what it means, why it matters and why Host Hotels & Resorts (Host) has made Being Green a corporate initiative. Part II will explore the specific tactics Host departments and associates are developing and implementing within our properties and our own building as well as their efforts to determine and advance green standards in the hospitality industry. Part III focuses on what we as individuals can do at Host and at home to impact and influence our own global environmental prospects.

At the end of the series, you'll know what the Muppet and millions of others know – while it may not be easy being green, it is certainly worth the effort.

Part I: Being Green – What It Means and Why It Matters

Before the United States even became a nation, environmental concerns were being raised by enlightened citizens. In 1739, Benjamin Franklin and his Philadelphia neighbors petitioned the Pennsylvania Assembly to stop waste dumping and remove tanneries from Philadelphia's commercial district. In more recent times, the early warnings of environmental pioneers like [Rachel Carson](#) and her seminal 1962 work “Silent Spring,” led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Currently, Al Gore's Nobel lauded efforts in “[An Inconvenient Truth](#),” have raised awareness of the ravages of global warming. Today, we are all aware that being green has become a fight to save our planet.

Being green or the more traditional term, environmentalism, is the hands-on global effort to preserve, restore and conserve the natural resources that sustain life on our planet – air, water, land, sea and wildlife. There is no single source or authority for the green or environmental movement. It is a growing collective of large and small; social, government and civic; industry and non-profit organizations that are working to call attention to the current and degrading state of the planet – attempting to set standards and advance practices that positively impact the environment and help global citizens become more environmentally responsible.

A host of entities and organizations – from [Greenpeace](#) and [The Sierra Club](#) to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), the [Cousteau Society](#), [EarthEcho International](#) and even “[Living with Ed](#),” television's first green reality show, advance the message that our natural resources are finite and the quantity and quality of our usable resources is diminishing. How and how much we consume, contaminate or compromise has and will continue to have a direct and potentially devastating affect on our own quality of life.

These are pretty compelling reasons to change our collective behavior and for Host, being green is good for business and good for the bottom line. In Part II of “What it Means to Be Green,” MissionControl will explore Host's green accomplishments, practices and future plans while staying true to our mission, vision, EPIC values and commitment to being Best in Class™.

Part II: Host's Green Initiative

Turning Green into Gold



Host Hotels & Resorts (Host) is cutting a verdant swath through the hospitality industry. Already a leader in energy conservation, Host has embarked on an initiative to ensure that Host meets or exceeds green engineering and operation standards for the hospitality industry while satisfying the business and leisure travelers increasing demand for environmentally conscious accommodations.

In October 2007, members of Host's "Green Team" — including Randy Gaines and Bill Timberlake in development, design and construction and Jeanne Varney in asset management — presented senior management with an overview of Host's accomplishments in the areas of energy conservation, innovative environmental projects, facility optimization and green building and design. The presentation also laid out a preliminary plan for the future that included gathering green information that pertains to the hospitality business, taking the lead in environmental practices and, perhaps, developing a new green standard for our industry. However, more work needs to be done to formalize our 2008 strategy.

For the hospitality industry, the potent combination of guest demands for a greener experience, government legislation and new and developing industry green standards demand that green practices be integrated into Host's existing business model. It is not just environmentally and socially responsible but it also can be profitable now and in the future.

What We Have Done

In the areas of energy generation and water conservation, Host boasts aggressive use of green tactics including a "two-step" approach of tracking commodity energy usage for all brands and reducing overall energy consumption and investing in facility optimization. Here's a sampling of some of our innovative environmental projects.

- Upgrading to energy efficient lighting in over 100 properties.
- Installing [fuel cells](#) in three properties. (In fact, we have the largest fuel cell in North America!)
- Setting up [cogeneration plants](#) at two properties. (We were the first to use these plants in the U.S.)
- Installing aqua recycling in 12 properties, which produced a combined saving of \$108,000 per month.
- Replacing sliding glass balcony doors at nine properties realizing energy savings of 30 percent.
- Converting 35 swimming pools from a chlorine based disinfection system to a salt water based system.
- Installing recyclable carpet tiles.

On the hotel operations side, our efforts have included:

- Recycling carpet as well as plastics, paper, cans, bottles, cardboard and other recyclables, which reduces the amount of waste in our landfills and the removal costs.
- Reusing linens in most guestrooms for multi-night visits.
- Training associates on energy conservation (e.g., turning off lights, standard thermostat settings).
- Using organic menus, especially in spa settings and "green" cities.

Another important Host green initiative is to continue to reduce the carbon footprint of all Host properties year after year. A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide and measured over a period of one year. We aim to accomplish this reduction of greenhouse gases with the efficient generation of energy and the reduction of waste for each hotel and resort. By collecting, contrasting and comparing one property's usage against another, energy efficiency can be identified and implemented across properties.

What Is on the Green Horizon

While our current efforts are impressive, it is just the beginning for Host's green initiative. Here are a few operational tactics that we will consider in the future.

- Using more organic, locally grown and ocean friendly products in Host property restaurants, thereby reducing transportation waste.
- Offering guest and meeting room recycling bins.
- Using green cleaning products.
- Purchasing recyclable materials (e.g., paper, containers, office products).
- Buying green energy – wind, solar and hydroelectric.
- Improving the air quality by converting all spaces to non-smoking, improving air quality systems and equipment and offering more outdoor activity and dining experiences.
- Engaging in community wide green practices (e.g., employee mass transit subsidies, planting trees, community clean-up days).
- Packaging green meetings.

A Green Partnership

Host recently joined the [International Tourism Partnership](#) (ITP). Founded 15 years ago by Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, the goal of ITP is "Responsible Tourism through Responsible Leadership." We are the first hotel owner and domestic company to join.

The ITP website quotes an Asian proverb that says, "Tourism is like a fire, you can use it to cook your soup, but it can also burn down your house." They go on to make the case that if undertaken responsibly, tourism can be a positive force for sustainable development, conservation and environmental protection – but if unplanned, tourism can be socially, culturally and economically disruptive, and have a devastating effect on fragile environments. By encouraging and supporting a holistic approach to hotel operation, serving as a forum and a clearing house for environmentally sound best practices for the hotel and tourism industries, ITP and its partners seek to help the industry to become a truly positive force for sustainable development with warm soup and no burnt houses.

Because manager and associate training is key to the success of Host's green initiative, the asset management group has invited Lyndall De Marco, executive director of the International Tourism Partnership and an international expert on environmental issues in the hospitality and tourism industries, to be the keynote speaker at the business meeting of the *2007 Best in Class Awards* event. In addition, every effort is being made to make this a green meeting from paperless registration to energy efficient transportation to use of recyclable materials.

By plan and by action, Host is demonstrating that Being Green is not just an idea – it is a company commitment that requires the time, attention and involvement of all Host associates. So, what can individual associates do to advance Host's green initiative? In the next and last installment of Being Green, MissionControl will show how green practices at the individual level can impact and improve the environment as well as our collective effort to be green.

[Read Part I](#) of our Green Series: What It Means to Be Green.

Part III: Host's Green Initiative

What You Can Do to Be Green

**"Nature provides a free lunch,
but only if we control our
appetites."**

**-William Ruckelshaus, first
Environmental Protection
Agency Administrator, (1970 –
1974 and 1983 – 1985) from
Business Week, June 18, 1990**



In reference to William Ruckelshaus' 1990 warning, the current state of the environment demonstrates that we've all been binging far too long on nature's free lunch. Just like a weight loss diet, it is going to take individual action to ensure effective environmental reaction. And just like a diet, there are no short cuts or easy fixes to cleaning up the mess we've made of the planet. Only consistent, prolonged interest and effort will have any impact at all. The good news is that we can compound our individual efforts at work. Lisa Whittington, Host's vice president of human resources, and Eric Mendez, senior manager of offices services and facilities, are researching and identifying ways to reduce waste and increase efficiency in the way associates function at work. They are also reaching out to other local companies to see what they are doing to lessen their environmental impact.

"Reduce, reuse and recycle is what we are trying to accomplish here at Host," says Whittington. "At our headquarters, all of our shredded paper is recycled and we recycle all printer cartridges. We also have distributed blue recycle bins to each associate and are evaluating other opportunities including using vegetable instead of oil based inks, dishwashers versus individual hand washing and replacing our paper and plastic eating utensils with more environmentally friendly options."

We can't stop here. Here are ways you can help our efforts:

- Bring a mug for your coffee or tea and use a reusable water bottle instead of plastic, disposable cups.
- Pay attention to our various recycle bins around the office (especially in our pantries for plastic and glass bottles and cans) and use them.
- Use the small blue recycling wastebaskets in your office space for white paper recycling and remember to empty it into the large white cardboard box recycling receptacles on each floor. Housekeeping does not empty the recycling wastebaskets. If you don't have a blue recycling wastebasket, contact office services at ext. 5195.
- Set your printer so you are printing on both sides of a sheet of paper. You can do this by selecting start, settings, printers and faxes (then right click on your default printer), properties, finishing and double sided.
- Print in black and white instead of color. It costs five to 10 times more to print in color.
- Edit documents online instead of printing drafts.
- Turn off your monitor when you go to lunch or a meeting, take a break or leave for the day – in standby mode your monitor still uses energy.
- When you leave an office, conference room or work room, turn off the lights. Better yet, if there is a window and the room is bright enough, don't use the lights at all.
- Consider mass transportation options. ([View information on our commuter savings plan.](#))

It really doesn't take much effort to make these minor changes in the office but the collective effect can be significant.

Outside of the office, there is even more you can do. Calculate your individual impact on our environment by using the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Individual Emissions Calculator](#) or visit www.carbonfund.org. The EPA also offers easy to implement [action steps](#) to making green a part of your life at home, on the road, at the office and in school.

Look into the local and national and even international green initiatives. Support them in the best way you can with your time, your interest and your money and be sure to share your opinion with your local officials.

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

-Benjamin Franklin, (1706 – 1790) Poor Richard's Almanac

As far back as the 1700's, Benjamin Franklin warned of environmental indifference. We know that it's not easy being green but we also know our planet is well worth the effort. As a Host associate and citizen of the world, you can choose to be part of the environmental solution instead of part of the problem.

[Share a personal conservation story or idea with us for a new green section on MissionControl.](#)

[Read Part II](#) of our Green Series: Host's Green Initiative – Turning Green into Gold

[Read Part I](#) of our Green Series: What It Means to Be Green.