

Sustainability Notes

RE SOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

FALL 2008

It is November 3, the day before the election and as usual, I'm late getting my newsletter article to layout. I finally have time to think about what I might say to you, and I'm distracted with thoughts of the election. By the time you receive this newsletter, we will all know the results of what is viewed by many as one of the most critical elections of a generation.

But today, on this blustery November afternoon, I am filled with curiosity, anticipation and a little bit of dread—what if the candidates that I support don't win? What if our new president is "tested" with an act of aggression? What if the economy really falls apart? What if food prices continue to rise? But rather than get trapped in fear about uncertainty, I pause to think about what I can do to build a positive future. I think about the notion of resilience.

I have come to think that a sustainable community is a resilient community. To satisfy my inner nerd, I went to my trusty dictionary (yep—an actual printed volume, an old O.E.D., complete with magnifying glass) to learn about resilience. The earliest uses of the word resilient were in old French and Latin: resiler: to spring back; to return to the original position. The word reliant, as in self-reliant, also stems from the old French, meaning to bind together. And of course, the word community comes from the Latin, communis, meaning fellowship.

So, a resilient community is a fellowship, bound together and able spring back. Moving these words out of their etymological origins and into this present day, I think that a community that will, in its individual citizens and institutional infrastructures, have created the tools it needs to take care of itself, whatever the world throws its way. Because they know how to spring back, resilient communities endure in the face of enormous challenges.

So what does all this have to do with RE Sources and my thoughts on the eve of this momentous election? Well, it helps me to remember our role in creating a community that is resilient. By creating a culture of re-use, we help community members remember what it means to conserve, re-use, and recycle—and we save precious natural assets for the future. By working for clean air and water, we ensure that our children can breathe deep, take a drink, and stay healthy. By promoting green building and energy conservation, we encourage homes that are healthy and less impactful. And by educating about climate change, we remind ourselves that even a resilient community must mobilize to avoid the worst outcomes. Resilient communities also hang onto their art, culture and sense of place. By launching community projects such as place-making at the Fountain Plaza or saving the Caretaker's House at Fairhaven Park, we help stitch together the fabric of community into something beautiful and strong.

In these times of economic challenge and fear of the future, I want to remind us all to hold a positive vision for our future. If we run from what we fear, we might need to throw down that which we value in order to run faster. If we walk, hand-in-hand toward a commonly held vision, we can gather up those things we value and carry them along with us into the always uncertain future. We can spring back, and in doing so, we might learn from one another, and feel secure in knowing that we are a community that can take care of itself, its people and its natural assets. And perhaps, in the springing back, we can create a little beauty on our path toward resilience.

By Robyn du Pré, Executive Director



The Sustainable Living Center Makes a Debut

By Crina Hoyer, Program Director

We're finally finished with the remodel of our Sustainable Living Center! Located above the Bellingham RE Store, this space features a large educational room, a library and a small conference room.



The Main Room

In the main room we're installing rotating educational displays with information about sustainable issues/practices. The first series focuses on *be cool*, an innovative campaign that urges Whatcom County residents to personally combat climate change. Displays illustrate the basics of global warming, discuss local impacts and offer countless ways for individuals to reduce their carbon footprints. Interactive displays are also under development. Keep an eye out for these in the winter.



The Library

We're also working to fill our library with books, magazines and reference guides on a wide variety of subjects. Your donations of books, DVDs and periodicals are always welcome. Topics we're hoping to cover include green building, energy efficiency, community activism, green gardening and landscaping, water efficiency and more.



The Conference Room

In addition, the rooms at the SLC are available for rent to community members, businesses and nonprofits. We'd love to have you host a meeting, gathering, discussion group, film or speaker series. Our rates are highly-competitive and the money generated from rentals helps us continue to do great work in the community.

Please feel free to stop by to peruse our displays, visit the library (more and more books are arriving every day), or reserve the space for your next event. We're excited to have finally finished this space and we love sharing it with our friends and supporters.

**To rent any of the rooms at
the SLC, contact
Megan Artz at**

MeganA@re-sources.org

**Visit our website at
www.re-sources.org
to see a rate sheet
and more great photos of
the space.**

Closing in on Marine Litter from Two Sides

Picking up Beach Plastic While Working to Prevent It

By Lisa Friend
Recycling Outreach Coordinator



During September's "International Coastal Cleanup," a project of the Ocean Conservancy, RE Sources worked with volunteers in three counties to document the types of plastic found on local beaches.

a half. In the first phase, we're focusing on tarps, which are used to prevent water pollution at many boat-repair centers, and the common plastic bottle, both of which are easy to recycle in most of the nine target counties. During the following months, we'll focus on nylon net and fishing line, plastic rope and "boat wrap." We've chosen these items because they are unsightly, potentially hazardous to us and marine life and are commonly found on beaches around the Sound.

In order to measure our success, we'll be counting the tons of plastic that ports and shellfish growers recycle, but we'll also be counting the amount of plastic that ends up on the beaches of Puget Sound. For more than 20 years, the Ocean Conservancy has organized an international coastal cleanup (ICC). During the same weekend in September, participants around the world collect garbage and document what they find.

This historical data has given us a baseline on which to test our success. For the next two years, we'll be participating in this cleanup, measuring our numbers against historical data from the area.

To kick-off our program, RE Sources worked with ICC volunteers in September to collect 500 pounds of beach litter in three different counties. In the coming two years, we plan to expand this partnership in other counties that border Puget Sound.

If you'd like to volunteer to support this marine initiative, please call RE Sources at 360-733-8307 and ask for the Marine Plastics project. This effort is funded by a contract with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Debris Program and is a partnership with the Pacific Shellfish Institute and the Washington Public Ports Association.

This summer, RE Sources began a new project that joins our recycling and marine waters programs: We're trying to see whether recycling more marine-based plastic prevents plastic beach litter. To do this, we've teamed with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide Puget Sound ports, port tenants, marinas and shellfish growers with technical assistance to implement or improve their recycling systems. We're very excited about this program, because we can help develop markets for many common and hard-to-recycle items while protecting our marine waters.

The ambitious program aims to document recycling of 25 tons or more of marine plastics over the next year and



Fishing nets and rope create environmental hazards in the Sound and on local beaches.

Stormwater in the News and on the Streets: It's Back

By Wendy Steffensen, North Sound Baykeeper

We've written much about stormwater in the last few years, but there's more and more to report!

With the rainy season upon us, we've just released a comprehensive stormwater report: "Stormwater in the North Sound and Straits: Assessing the impacts and taking action." In this report, we've detailed the findings of our stormwater inspections, calling to light the fact that government leaders are not acting adequately to prevent stormwater pollution. Local governments and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) are all guilty of turning a blind eye to sources that they're already supposed to be regulating; those of construction and industry.

Over the past four years, we have visited thousands of construction sites across Whatcom County, finding that approximately 18% of them were actively polluting or at high risk to pollute a nearby water body.

In order to better protect our streams and wetlands from construction site pollution, the following is needed:

- Government inspectors need to conduct frequent inspections of construction sites;
- In addition to requiring contractors to obtain a stormwater permit, they need to implement it by maintaining best management practices at the site, thereby keeping sediment on site, and conducting water sampling;

Why is sediment from construction sites bad?

Sediment released into a water body reduces visibility needed for fish to see and capture prey, can clog fish gills, and can suffocate fish eggs. In addition, sediment can also carry with it other harmful substances, such as excess phosphorus, fecal coliforms, oil and grease, and pesticides.

- Inspectors need to use fines, instead of verbal warnings and education sessions, after a contractor has already been warned once about poor practices.

In a survey of industrial sites, we found that hundreds of industrial facilities in Whatcom and Skagit Counties need industrial stormwater general permits (ISGP), but do not possess them. Further, a separate study showed that many businesses that possessed an ISGP were not compliant with it.

To ensure that industrial stormwater is well regulated and not contributing to pollution, Ecology needs to:

- undertake an educational campaign to ensure that businesses subject to the ISGP are aware of the process;
- conduct routine file reviews and inspections of permit holders to ensure they are compliant with the permits;
- fine business who refuse to get a permit or who are not compliant.

Furthermore, municipalities should work to educate businesses who need the permit and alert Ecology about which businesses fail to get the needed permit.



Lee First, Field Investigator inspects a construction site for stormwater violations.

We have shown that industries often do not know about their stormwater responsibilities, and that contractors and industries that do know about their responsibilities often shirk them. But we also believe that the permit and regulations are not stringent enough. This latter point, however, will remain a matter of contention until regulations are adequately enforced.

In order to remedy many of these issues, the Baykeeper team is visiting city and county councils and staff to present our report and make recommendations. These discussions, happening in the midst of our rainy season, also intersect with our City's and County's attempts to come into compliance with the Phase II Municipal Stormwater permit issued by Ecology.

As we present our findings to Phase II jurisdictions in Whatcom and Skagit counties, we hope that you will make your voice heard, speaking up for enforcement of stormwater regulations.

To get information about our speaking schedule, please contact me at waters@re-sources.org.

YES ! I'D LIKE TO DONATE TO RE SOURCES

Please select the amount you would like to give: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other _____

This donation is for: ☐ General membership support ☐ Sustainable Living Center

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Save paper and a stamp! Visit www.re-sources.org/join-donate.htm and click on the "donate now" button to make a gift with your debit/credit card via our secure online website.

A sound financial investment

By Bernadette Castner, Development Director

Every day, the media report changes in the stock market; and every day, millions, perhaps billions of dollars trade hands. As an investor, you have control over what shares you hold, but not necessarily over what those shares do. If the shares do well, you make money, and if not...well, you lose it.

As a society, we are experiencing history in the making. The mortgage banks are feeling the backlash of bad choices, the stock market is a roller coaster of points, and some folks seem to be losing a lot of money. The domino effect of a shaky stock market, coupled with higher fuel costs and, consequently, food prices, is causing people to cinch their budget belts. Unfortunately, cutting budgets sometimes leads to cutting charitable giving. But this is not the time to stop supporting organizations that serve your community. In fact, times like this inspire these organizations to best serve their purpose.

Invest in your community and watch your investment grow. RE Sources for Sustainable Communities is helping the people of Whatcom County

and the Puget Sound area build sustainable and resilient communities through education, advocacy and the conservation of natural resources. Observe one of our programs in action when you read about the cleanup of Bellingham Bay, visit The RE Store to buy affordable building materials or pledge to *be cool* and start riding your bike, conserving energy and buying, eating, and spending locally.

A donation to RE Sources serves many beneficial purposes. It supports our current community programs and allows the organization to remain innovative and forward-thinking. Supporting RE Sources keeps thousands of tons of usable building materials, marine and agricultural plastics and e-waste out of the landfill. Your donation dollars go towards continuing educational displays, workshops and events at the Sustainable Living Center in Bellingham. And, ultimately, your gift to RE Sources goes back to you, the community member, as you are able to enjoy this beautiful place we call home. Make a sound investment in RE Sources by making a donation today!



RE Sources

for Sustainable Communities

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Are you a Thrivent Financial member?

We need your name to complete a grant. Contact Bernadette Castner at BernadetteC@re-sources.org or (360) 733-8307.

Farewell to Dean Fearing, beloved RE Store Director.

Welcome to Kurt Gisclair, the new RE Store Director and **Beth Walsh**, Financial Manager.

UPCOMING EVENTS

RE Sources' Wish List:

- Office Supplies
- Books, DVDs and periodicals for our new library

Environmental Heroes Nominations due January 16th

Visit www.re-sources.org for details and nomination form.

Green Drinks:

Every first Wednesday from 5-7pm:
December 3rd
January 7th
February 4th
Check our website for location:
www.re-sources.org

Thanks to the following:

Cornerstone Strategies, Inc.
Lummi Nation and Silver Reef Casino
Pacific Trim and Floor Supply
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solid waste from disposal.