

# Sustainability Notes

RE SOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

FALL 2009

**It's the Economy, Silly.** In my travels about town these days, I'm struck by the number of times I'm asked, "How's The RE Store doing in this economy?", or "How is RE Sources faring the downturn?" When this occurred recently, I was reminded that in years past, people used to ask me about an environmental issue or my opinion on some local political matter. This phenomenon got me thinking about the economy: what is it, what's it for, and how do we interact with it?

So, back to the Greek we go, to dig into the true meaning of the word: Oikonomos, the original form of economics, meant the management of the hearth and home. Wow! I love this word—it captures not only our transactional economy, but how we think about and manage our systems, and our relationship with the natural world (our home).

So, when people ask me: "How is RE Sources faring the current economy," I could interpret this question in several ways. Certainly, there is the question about how are we doing vis a vis our financial statements and cash flow. But then there is the question about how we are navigating a system that is managing our home in a fashion that is clearly unsustainable.

The answer to that first question about our cash flow? That's easy: We are doing okay, not fabulous, but okay. And frankly, in a time when cash is short all over, I'll take okay. People are still shopping at The RE Store, hoping to save a little money on their projects while feeling good about their participation in a fun and funky recycling system. Some foundations and donors are not giving as much, but our members—folks like you—are still renewing their membership and giving what they can. And, even in this tough year, we are able to launch new projects, such as the Cliffside Beach restoration project, and take our successful *be cool* program to the faith community.

As far as that other question, the one about how we are managing our home, well, that one's a little tougher. We at RE Sources think everyone could do a better job at managing that economy. That means that we must not lose sight of how to sustainably manage our home in our zest to "fix" the economy.

There are a lot of fancy schemes being floated in the name of "fixing our economy." Some of these schemes are just that—schemes dreamt up by people looking to see how they can make a profit by exploiting our fear. These schemes can be exposed for the chimera that they are if we apply the same thinking to them that we apply to questions of how do we really want to manage our home. Does this project/idea/scheme nourish community? Does it have a positive effect on the natural world or a negative one? Will it help address *global climate change* or add to the problem? Is it sustainable over the long run?

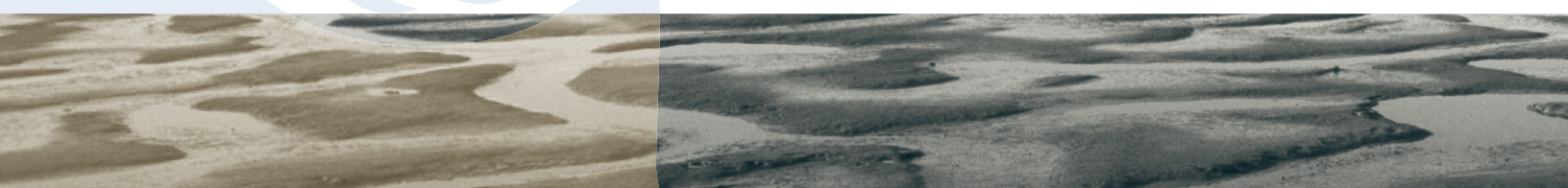
Imagine how the world would be if we asked these questions when making decisions rather than simply, will it create jobs or will it add to our GDP. The mechanisms that we use to gauge our economy's health are fundamentally flawed (the GDP goes up when there is an oil spill or a cancer diagnosis) and so narrowly focused that we have long since stopped framing our decisions within terms that most of us can intuitively understand: Is this helping me and my community to thrive and continue to thrive over generations?

So, how is RE Sources faring that economy? Well, we are taking some time, in the midst of a storm of crises of both the money economy and the big system economy to plan. Yep, I said plan. Are we crazy? Well maybe...but that's beside the point. Right now, we want to step back and ask some questions—questions similar to those that I discussed above: How do we add value to and nourish our community? What is our role in promoting decisions that are sustainable in the long run? How do we best use today's tools to approach the problems of today?

We see that the world is changing, and we want to make sure that we are applying new thinking to new problems. RE Sources is undertaking an ambitious strategic planning process to assess how we can best serve the community in its movement toward sustainability. We are taking a hard look at everything that we do, looking around at what's happening in our community and in the world at large and thinking about what we ought to do (and how we ought to do it), now and five years from now.

If you have not already participated in our on-line survey, simply go to [www.re-sources.org](http://www.re-sources.org) and sign up for our monthly e-news. Not only will we send you updates on RE Sources' programs, but you will also have the chance to weigh in about how you view community sustainability and how you view RE Sources' role. Help us think about the big economy and shape how we all manage our home and hearth.

*By Robyn du Pré, Executive Director*





## Changes to the Baykeeper Program

To honor her desire to spend more time with her young family, Baykeeper Wendy Steffensen is changing jobs! Luckily, she is not leaving the program, moving instead into a newly created position that will take advantage of her deep scientific expertise. Wendy will soon become the new Science Coordinator for the Baykeeper Program. In this role, she will continue to provide expert scientific review of cleanup documents, pollution permits, environmental impact statements, and other regulatory documents, participate in technical working groups, and guide our field investigation program. Wendy will also be an invaluable ally for our new North Sound Baykeeper, who we hope to have on-board sometime in September. Watch the website for an announcement!

## The RE Store Gets Lit

By Kurt Gisclair, The RE Store Director

As part of our ongoing effort to “green” our operations, The Bellingham RE Store recently completed a lighting upgrade. This project, which focused primarily on our fluorescent lights, will increase energy efficiency and reduce our energy costs; a win-win! The helpful crews from Energy Conservation Service and All Fields Electric, converted our old, T12 florescent lighting fixtures to accept T8 bulbs. (T12 and T8 refer to diameters of lamp tubes. Thus a T12 lamp has a diameter of twelve eighths of an inch.) A narrower lamp is more energy-efficient. Top-quality T8 lamps also function with reduced mercury, a potentially harmful substance used in many lighting fixtures.

We also removed and properly disposed of all magnetic ballasts containing PCB’s. The existing magnetic PCB ballasts were replaced by more energy efficient electronic non-PCB ballasts. The new ballasts offer better lighting without flicker and generate much less heat.

This project would not have been possible without support from Puget Sound Energy. Their generous rebate program for businesses funded 83% of this upgrade. The upgrade took our previous lighting system, which was consuming 60,557 kilowatt hours per year, down to 27,643 kilowatt hours per year. Our annual savings will be 32,914 kilowatt hours. This equates to a carbon emission reduction of 36,205 pounds per year! The simple payback on the project for The RE Store will be 1.30 years for a 77% return on our investment. Cutting our carbon footprint means saving money. Now that’s a win-win!

## The Seattle RE Store Turns 10



By Sarah Krueger, Seattle Outreach and Marketing Manager

When it comes to building salvage, sometimes you have to travel to get the best materials. In the mid 90s, Bellingham’s RE Store field crew traveled to Seattle several times a week to harvest the abundant material made available by the city’s booming growth. Seattle’s neighborhoods, rich in well-built, quality structures, were changing quickly, and salvage and deconstruction projects provided a windfall of excellent material.

In 1999 The RE Store finally settled down in Seattle and opened a satellite store. Surplus material from Bellingham stocked the shelves, and the fledgling field crew made its rounds in a black ‘78 flatbed Ford named Clyde. Originally, the iconic truck hauled any and all material offered - operating under the mandate “no cabinet left behind.” As relationships with customers and contractors grew, the quality of jobs increased and the crew became more selective, hand picking quality materials best suited for reuse. Supply and demand grew hand in hand and the store slowly expanded. Eventually, Seattle reciprocated by sending its surplus north to Bellingham. Over the years, the Seattle field crew

dismantled or salvaged several Seattle icons including the Camlin Hotel, the Seattle Opera House, and First Christian Church on Capital Hill. Some of the more unique projects included the Woodland Park Zoo’s monkey house, the set from Stephen King’s mini series Rose Red, and the Western State Mental Hospital (Yes, there were brains in jars. No, we didn’t take them).

Originally a good idea in Bellingham, The RE Store is now firmly rooted in Seattle’s vibrant community. Banding together with other local salvage stores to form the Northwest Building Salvage Network, The RE Store played a major role in lobbying the city to establish an expedited permit for deconstruction permits. In partnership with the Seattle Public Utilities, The RE Store pioneered a program to help divert reusable materials from transfer stations during busy weekends. Thanks to a good relationship with local government, contractors, and happy customers, the Seattle RE Store is well positioned for many more decades of good work.

# RE Sources Leads Local Beach Restoration

By Todd Eastman, Restoration Coordinator



Photo: Todd Eastman

*Cliffside Beach, just north of Little Squalicum park, is the site of RE Sources' habitat restoration project.*

**R**eports of Lummi fishing nets choked with “sawdust” and recollections of children coming out of the water at Cliffside Beach covered with fine woody debris during the 1960s and 1970s offer clues about the origins of the sawdust-like material that persists along the beaches at the northern tip of Bellingham Bay. While pinpointing the sources of the fine woody debris (FWD) is difficult and the subject of historical debate, removing the debris from the local shorelines is now a reality.

Restoration of forage fish spawning habitat on this important beach has been a long-held goal of staff at RE Sources and the local Department of Ecology field office. Now, thanks to funding support from Ecology, RE Sources is leading the fine woody debris (FWD) removal and habitat restoration project.

The FWD is composed mostly of sawdust from local industry that predates the implementation of the federal Clean Water Act of 1972.

The presence of “sawdust” had been noted at the northern end of Bellingham Bay since the late 1960s by local residents, but it was heightened awareness of the importance of clean gravel beaches for forage fish spawning habitat that encouraged action.

In December 2008, RE Sources received funding for this exciting project through the Department of Ecology. This environmental restoration project is utilizing low-impact methods to remove the FWD and improve upland habitat at the nine-acre site. The project is a relatively low-cost way to restore natural biological functions along the 2,000 ft public beach and, by removing the existing FWD from Cliffside and nearby shorelines, discover if more FWD will be washed out of the Bay. Monitoring of the site is being conducted by the Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee and Western Washington University.

In addition to the removal of the FWD, RE Sources is working to control invasive and noxious plants on the site. The DNR-Cliffside site has large patches of Himalayan blackberry and Japanese/hybrid knotweed. To date, almost 16,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of blackberries have been cut, grubbed (rootballs removed), and mulched on-site. Careful cutting and grubbing allowed us to retain most native plants in the work area. In addition, 1,780 lbs of trash including a television and several boat hulls, and 1,420 lbs of treated lumber from docks and floats were removed from the beach and backshore sections of the site.

Though work crews will occasionally be hired for specific tasks, volunteers will also be needed for this project. Consider helping RE Sources restore this large stretch of public beach and uplands located just west of Bellingham. Whether you choose to help by keeping an eye out for when the “sawdust” gets deep enough to be removed or help with its removal, restore native plants, or collect rubbish, your efforts will make a difference for this lovely beach near the Nooksack delta. Watch our website for opportunities.

RE Sources would like to thank the Cliffside Community for its longtime support of this project and The Department of Ecology and Hart Crowser for funding support and project assistance.



Photo: Todd Eastman

*Crews remove blackberries and other invasives as part of restoration efforts.*



# Hand Deconstruction Meets Machine

By Sarah Krueger, Seattle Outreach and Marketing Manager

“The faster you can move debris from a demolition site, the more profitable your operation will be,”

explains Caterpillar Corporation’s online catalog of building demolition machines. Indeed, a crew of two people equipped

with the right machines can take down a building in a day or two – leaving nothing but a hole once filled by foundation. When a building is slated for destruction, The RE Store Field Crews often bid alongside traditional demolition companies for the opportunity to dismantle and salvage the structure. Until now, the bidding process could be described as Man vs. Machine.

Standard demolition is 100% mechanical – a machine crunches the building, sprays to keep down dust, and deposits the pulverized remains in dumpsters to be taken to the landfill or sorted at a recycling facility. Conversely, The RE Store’s deconstruction process has been almost exclusively manual. Skilled crews worked diligently to disassemble buildings piece-by-piece – starting at the roof and leaving nothing behind but the concrete foundation. This process is effective – hand deconstruction ensures that materials are salvaged in good condition for reuse – but the time-consuming nature limits the amount of projects that the field crew can tackle and sometimes deters customers who are on a fast-track to rebuild.



Photo: Joshua Haupt

The machine operator carefully removes siding materials from a house during a hybrid deconstruction project.

The RE Store deconstruction crew removes nails from lumber at a job in West Seattle.

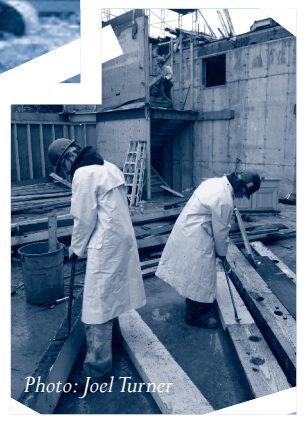


Photo: Joel Turner

Today the Man vs. Machine dynamic is shifting, thanks to a new recruit to The RE Store’s deconstruction crew – an industrial excavator manned by a skilled machine operator. The addition of a machine operator to a deconstruction jobsite enhances the performance of our field crew and increases competitiveness during bidding. “We’ve expanded our potential to dismantle a building both quickly and efficiently,” explains Noel Stout, Seattle’s Deconstruction Manager, “We will be able to deconstruct a lot more buildings each year and make a bigger impact in the end.”

The Seattle Field Crew recruited an accomplished machine operator for its first “hybrid deconstruction” project in early June. The 4,600 sq. ft. Bainbridge Island home would have taken five people three weeks to manually deconstruct. Alongside the excavator, a crew of only three people dismantled the structure and salvaged 14 tons of material in a quick two weeks.

The machine operator works hand-in-hand with the field crew to expedite the deconstruction project. Just like a traditional manual deconstruction, the process begins at the top of the building. The excavator exposes the roof rafters so that the crew can pick out the salvageable beams. While the machine is at work, the crew can sort through materials and load metal and reusable lumber to be processed off site. In the past, the building’s foundation was the only thing left behind on site. Now the RE Store offers to remove the foundation and prep for new construction – a more complete service.

If you have ever witnessed a building demolition, you might imagine that a machine onsite is the equivalent of a bull in a china cabinet – clumsily plowing through otherwise salvageable material. On the contrary, the machine operator is precise, calculated, and careful. “The loss of reusable material due to the use of machine-assisted versus hand deconstruction is negligible,” explains Noel, “we will actually divert more material from landfills each year by increasing the number of jobs we can complete.” With the boost of machine assistance, the Seattle Field Crew expects its capacity to increase from nine deconstruction projects annually to over 20. This new alliance – man and machine – equates to many thousands of tons of would-be waste diverted from landfills each year.

For more information about The RE Store, visit [www.re-store.org](http://www.re-store.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](http://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.

## RE Sources Hosts *Green Drinks Bellingham*

By Megan Artz , Membership/Outreach Coordinator

**A**bout two years ago, RE Sources joined other groups around the world to host monthly get-togethers called Green Drinks. Every first Wednesday of the month, we convene 50-100 green movers-and-shakers at a local bar or here at our Sustainable Living Center. During each of these 2-hour get-togethers, eco-conscious folks network, chat, and meet other like-minded individuals in the community. The great thing about these gatherings is that there is no agenda or goal, yet amazing connections seem to happen. Attendees find jobs, share ideas, collaborate on projects and have fun with friends.

Duane Jager, Executive Director of Appliance Depot states, "Not only do I get a regular opportunity to hob-knob with my green friends over green beers, but I've made some great new connections that have become both friends and supporters of our nonprofit, Appliance Depot. I look forward to the first Wednesday of every month."

The concept of Green Drinks started twenty years ago in London, England, when two separate parties joined tables at a pub and exchanged green ideas; and so a movement was born. Now Green Drinks has caught fire around the world from Denmark to Hong Kong. Green Drinks Bellingham meets every first Wednesday of the month from 5-7pm at a roving location. To get on the Green Drinks Bellingham email list, contact Megan Artz at [MeganA@re-sources.org](mailto:MeganA@re-sources.org) or visit the RE Sources website for more information.

### Sign up for our E-Newsletter!

As part of our ongoing effort to communicate with members and reduce waste, we now have an e-newsletter. Sent monthly, it contains information about upcoming events, programs and volunteer opportunities for RE Sources and The RE Store. To receive the monthly e-newsletter, visit our website and enter your email address in the space provided (lower left corner). Once registered, you'll be given the opportunity to sign-up for our other, targeted e-news as well including the Baykeeper's News, Events and Opportunities, Green Drinks Bellingham, and The RE Store's Salvage Times.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information, visit our website at [www.re-sources.org](http://www.re-sources.org)

## Thanks to the following:

41 pounds.org  
Alpine Ponds and Water Gardens  
Appliance Depot  
Applied Research Northwest, LLC  
Bellingham Community Food Co-op  
Coffey Construction  
Convivium LLC  
Doug Robertson  
JAS Design Build  
Kulshan Cycles  
Members of the Legal Committee  
Nia Sayers / Summerland Style  
Northstone Stone and  
Landscape Supply  
Puget Sound Energy  
Recovery 1, Inc.  
The Markets LLC  
The Minneapolis Foundation

The Russell Family Foundation, Horizons Foundation,  
New Belgium Brewery for their generous support grant to  
the Baykeeper program.

Whatcom Community Foundation for a grant to expand  
the *be cool* program into the local faith community.

The Mountaineers Foundation for a grant to support a  
monofilament fishing line recycling program.

The Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee  
for contracts to deliver tide flat tours in Birch Bay and  
Chuckanut Bay.

Washington State Department of Ecology for a contract to  
conduct the Cliffside Beach restoration project.

**Green Drinks:**  
Every first Wednesday  
from 5-7pm:  
September 2nd  
October 7th  
November 4th  
For more info visit  
[www.re-sources.org](http://www.re-sources.org)

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1.95 trees for the future, saved 828  
gallons of wastewater, prevented 180 lbs  
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