

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

Green Practices Overview

The Aquarium is committed to educating the public about the marine environment and inspiring conservation of wildlife and wild places. Our Green Team promotes environmentally responsible and sustainable operations, and awareness in the community about green resources and practices, in support of the Aquarium's conservation mission. The Aquarium has received numerous awards for its sustainability efforts and green programs and projects have received grant funding from Keep Virginia Beautiful, Virginia Beach Clean Community Commission, Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Green Practices Overview:

- Recycling and Re-use
 - a. Recycling receptacles in all personal work spaces
 - b. Recycling receptacles available to guests inside Aquarium
 - i. National Geographic 3D theater
 - ii. Food service areas
 - iii. General areas
 - iv. Special events, including facility rentals
 - c. Recycling instituted on all Aquarium boat trips
 - d. Highly visible signage/messaging promoting recycling and bins
 - i. Sandy Recycles campaign
 - large decals on bins
 - large window decals for entry areas of both buildings and for food service areas
 - ii. Recycling messaging presented in National Geographic 3D Theater
 - iii. Recycling messaging in all food service areas
 - e. Promotion in newsletters
 - f. Products being recycled/re-used
 - i. Aluminum cans
 - ii. Glass
 - iii. Steel cans
 - iv. Plastic bottles
 - v. Bottle caps
 - vi. Office paper
 - vii. Newspaper
 - viii. Cardboard
 - ix. Chip bags, cheese wrappers, energy bar wrappers
 - x. Packing supplies, including peanuts
 - Packing supplies that are reused are accompanied by a form letter stating that the Aquarium recycles by reusing materials
 - xi. Re-use gift boxes
 - xii. Toner cartridges

- xiii. Cooking grease
 - xiv. Batteries
 - xv. Electronics equipment
 - xvi. Building materials
 - g. Hazardous materials – safe disposal
 - i. Paint Waste
 - ii. CFLs
- Waste Reduction
 - a. Tracking waste bills and quantities
 - b. Effectively use cups to promote/allow minimal waste and recycling
 - c. Sodexo – green food service and catering provider
 - i. Food inventory control to minimize wastes
 - ii. Locally grown produce and other foods
 - iii. Bulk purchasing to minimize waste packaging
 - iv. Filtering/recycling of cooking grease and oil
 - v. Organic and "sustainably-grown or harvested" foods
 - vi. Bio-compostable table-ware, cups and straws
 - vii. Non-bleached napkins and coffee filters
 - viii. Promotion of "green event" facility rentals
 - ix. Provide zero waste-to-landfill event options
 - x. Bulk water distribution to reduce one-time-use plastic bottles
 - xi. Bulk cleaning solutions with refillable dispensers and laundered cleaning towels
 - d. Composting program
 - i. EPA funded pilot study started the program
 - ii. Aquarium café working with other VB restaurants
 - iii. Composting all back-of-house operational wastes
 - e. Office waste reduction
 - i. 2-sided copies
 - ii. Electronic correspondence and forms replacing paper
 - iii. 100% post-consumer recycled content in office paper
 - f. Using "green" housekeeping practices
 - i. Green cleaning supplies
 - Star Spray glass cleaner
 - Ram cleaner and de-greaser
 - Automated dispensing system saves water and time
 - ii. Recycled content paper towels and toilet paper
 - g. Purchase of durable equipment and furniture
 - h. Specified use of latex or low VOC paint
 - i. Specified use of less toxic materials
 - j. Specified use of building materials from sustainable sources
 - k. Preventative maintenance of all vehicles and equipment
 - l. Cigarette Butt Litter Prevention Program
 - i. Installed specialized butt litter disposal tanks and educational signage at all public entrances

- ii. Volunteers and Mentoring Young Scientists group conduct regular clean-ups and tally the number of cigarette butts found
- Water
 - a. Tracking overall water usage and wastewater
 - b. Preventative maintenance of drips and leaks
 - c. Water flow metering to discover leaks and areas of high use
 - d. Low flow fixtures – toilets, shower heads, faucets
 - e. Effective landscape management plan which utilizes drought tolerant species and other techniques
 - f. Cisterns and drip-line irrigation
 - g. Vegetative buffers around streams and ponds
 - h. Well water use when possible
 - i. Virginia DEQ-approved water quality lab for Citizen Science water monitoring groups
- Energy
 - a. Tracking overall energy bills
 - b. High efficiency HVAC
 - c. Recommissioning of HVAC systems – installation of variable frequency drives on motors
 - d. Control of HVAC through building automation system
 - e. Use of natural lighting
 - f. Lighting sensors
 - g. High efficiency fluorescent ballasts and lamps
 - h. Retrofitting fixtures with high efficiency LEDs
 - i. Specification to purchase EnergyStar computers, appliances, etc.
 - j. Energy audit of all facilities (completed in 2010)
 - k. In-house Energy Conservation Team
 - l. Premier parking for energy efficient vehicles
- Activities
 - a. Parking lot recycling and cigarette butt litter project – Conducted over a summer with data and survey responses collected
 - b. Golf Tournaments (Aquarium Golf Classic, Clubbin' with the Ladies)
 - i. Re-usable bags for goody bags
 - ii. Recycling bins for beverage containers
 - c. Environmental Actions and Education
 - i. "Trash Bash" annual public awareness event
 - ii. Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge beach clean-ups
 - iii. Fishermen Island beach clean-ups
 - iv. Clean the Bay Day
 - v. International Coastal Cleanup
 - vi. Owls Creek "Adopt-A-Waterway" Program
 - vii. Dune Restoration Project with National Aquarium in Baltimore and U.S. Navy
 - viii. "Carbon Offset" programs associated with hosted meetings
 - ix. Sensible Seafood Fest: A Celebration of Sustainable Foods – week of events focused on sustainable, local seafood
 - x. The Aquarium was a flagship co-sponsor of NuRide, which encourages the use of alternative transportation

- xi. Participate annually in the Virginia Beach Sustainable Living Expo
- xii. Collaborating to have a waste pump-out facility for vessels in Rudee Inlet established adjacent to Aquarium site and on the ocean side of the Rudee Inlet bridge (for larger vessels)
- xiii. Hosted Virginia Marine Debris Summit in 2013
- xiv. Hosted inaugural Virginia Green Conference in 2014
- xv. NOAA and Virginia CZM Program Marine Debris Reduction Grant in collaboration with Clean Virginia Waterways at Longwood University
- xvi. Serve on leadership team to develop and implement Virginia's Marine Debris Reduction Plan
- d. E-Cycling Events
 - i. Partner with Goodwill and TFC Recycling
 - ii. Annual events initiated in 2009
 - iii. Have recycled more than 250 tons of electronic waste
 - iv. E-Cycling event structure serves as a model for other groups
- e. Outreach Programs
 - i. Stranding Response Outreach Team
 - ii. Trash Talking Turtles marine debris education program
 - iii. Boat Safely ~ Respect Wildlife Program
 - iv. Sensible Seafood Program
 - v. Presented Sensible Seafood Program at Association of Zoos & Aquariums national conference in 2013 and 2014, and multiple regional and local events
- f. Retail Stores
 - i. Recycled and Fair Trade merchandise in stores is more than 5% of inventory.
 - ii. No plastic bags distributed in retail stores for purchases made.
 - iii. Reusable bags and paper bags are available in retail stores.
- g. Green Team meets monthly and acts daily
- Awards
 - a. Named First "Virginia Green" Attraction in 2008
 - b. Annually recognized as a Virginia Green Travel Leader since 2009
 - c. Virginia Green Travel Stars Award – "Most Innovative Green Project" for the Aquarium's E-Cycling Program in 2011
 - d. 2012 Award for Excellence in Recycling as "Outstanding Non-Profit" from the Virginia Recycling Association
 - e. Aquarium staff received the 2012 National Tourism Week "Corporate Social Responsibility Award" from the City of Virginia Beach
 - f. Virginia Green Travel Stars Award – "Green Attraction of the Year" in 2013
 - g. Virginia Beach Clean Community Commission "Certificate of Commendation" awards for Owls Creek/Rudee Inlet clean-up efforts in 2013, 2014