

A Timeline of Sustainable Development Initiatives at Western Washington University & Whatcom County

1962

Institute for Freshwater Studies & Institute for Watershed Studies (1982)

An institute devoted to a wide variety of watershed-related projects is started. The institute uses staff, faculty, & students to perform research or environmental education projects, & has been a vital resource to test & study the state of local waters.

1969

Huxley College of the Environment

WWU starts Huxley College, one of the first & oldest colleges in the nation devoted exclusively to the study of the environment. Since its establishment, Huxley has added several programs & departments, including the combined majors of Environmental Studies/Journalism (1987) & Environmental Studies/Economics (1991).

1970

Huxley Environmental Reference Bureau (HERB) & AS Environmental Center (1979)

HERB begins as a college-sponsored, student-run group dedicated to organizing events, & making resource materials & staff available for involvement with environmental topics.

Huxley Humus Newsletter & The Planet Magazine (1979)

The Huxley Humus, a student-run & written newsletter publication, is started as the voice of HERB. Later, the Planet magazine continues the tradition of “being dedicated to environmental advocacy & awareness.”

1972

Department of Engineering Technology, Vehicle Research Institute

The Department of Engineering Technology develops the Vehicle Research Institute to provide sustainable vehicle design, prototype construction, & consultation for government & private industry. VRI has produced dozens of innovative, fuel-efficient cars that have won many awards & captured the attention of automobile manufacturers.

Outback Farm & Outdoor Experiential Learning Site (1999)

In coordination with Fairhaven College, a five-acre student-run site is initiated to teach, develop & implement sustainable growing & land use methods in order to enrich student learning, university, & community.

HERB Recycle Center & AS Recycle Center (1979)

WWU becomes one of the first universities in the U.S. to have a campus-recycling program. Beginning as an HERB program, the AS continues the program. Years later, several other programs & organizations in Whatcom County are modeled & inspired by the program.

1982

Bellingham Community Recycling (BCR), Environmental Resource Services (1989), & RE Sources (1993)

Using WWU as an inspiration & model, BCR researches, organizes, & lobbies the local government to offer curbside recycling to all city residents. With their success, they transition into being an advocate for sustainable communities as RE Sources & expand this message by creating a business called Re Store in 1993.

1983

Fairhaven Students Develop Organic Gardening Course & Applied Human Ecology: Sustainable Systems Course (1996)

Building upon the Outback Farm, Fairhaven students develop & begin teaching a course, offered every quarter, on organic gardening & sustainable living. The course becomes Applied Human Ecology: Sustainable Systems in 1996, & remains a popular student-led peer-education effort.

1989

City of Bellingham contracts Sanitary Services Company (SSC) for Curbside Recycling

Modeled off of WWU & motivated by the non-profit Bellingham Community Recycling, the City of Bellingham begins offering residents curbside recycling as a third party contract to SSC.

1991

Whatcom County contracts Private Companies for Curbside Recycling

Motivated by the City of Bellingham's actions, Whatcom County becomes the first county in Washington State to offer curbside recycling as a third party contract to private companies.

1992

Residence Hall EcoReps Program

The AS Recycle Center's Educator starts the EcoReps program in the resident halls. A hall council position educates & promotes more sustainable living to fellow residents.

1993

Learning, Environment, Action, Discovery (LEAD)

Student initiated & led, with sponsorship by Huxley College, LEAD creates a link between WWU, Whatcom County schools, environmental organizations, & government agencies to encourage community-based environmental restoration education & service learning for the benefit of the community.

1994

Whatcom Human Rights Task Force

The task force is established to protect & promote human rights through marches & vigils, community workshops, & other educational events.

1995

Transportation Management Program & Sustainable Transportation Office (2007)

As a major part of WWU's commitment in the Institutional Master Plan, the university creates an office to encourage & respond to the needs for alternative transportation information & options for the WWU community, & fulfills the requirements of the Washington State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Act.

1996

Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities

Developed to promote a healthy community by addressing issues such as safety, education, the environment, economy, healthier lifestyles, & access to health care. WWU helps to support & fund Coalition programs like Whatcom Counts.

1998

Academic Custodial Services Department Environmental Preferable Practices

Custodial Services wins recognition & awards by using green cleaning products & practices, increased staff training, & continually developing better environmentally preferable strategies.

Whatcom County EnviroStars Program

Motivated by RE Sources & begun as a non-profit in King County, EnviroStars expands to Whatcom County. The program uses a rating system to help businesses communicate their commitment of environmental protection to their customers.

Whatcom Watershed Pledge Program

Motivated by RE Sources in collaboration with City of Bellingham & Department of Ecology, the Pledge Program provides citizens & businesses with information & services about how they can protect & improve rivers, lakes, streams & groundwater.

1999

Institutional Master Plan (IMP)

WWU revises its IMP in accordance with the mandated Washington Growth Management Act. Huxley's Campus Planning Studio course participates in the revision process, helping to ensure general sustainability language & specific provisions in the final IMP.

2000

Student Recreation Fee for LEED Certified Recreation Center

An overwhelming vote by the student body to assess themselves a fee provides the university with the funding to construct the nation's first Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certified recreation center with a pool. The Wade King Student Recreation Center was completed in 2003 & received LEED "Silver" rating in 2007.

Green Landscaping Practices

WWU outdoor maintenance begins practices to end the use of all insecticides, use of alternative weed reduction techniques, composting of debris & lawn mulching, use of organic fertilizers, & continually expanding methods to reduce their environmental impact.

2001

Energy Conservation Taskforce, Watt Watchers Program

WWU president, in coordination with faculty, staff, & students, creates a taskforce to evaluate energy consumption & look for ways to conserve energy.

2002

City of Bellingham Endorsed the Earth Charter Resolution

Bellingham endorses Earth Charter Resolution, a framework for sustainable development with guidelines for achieving it. Drafted by thousands throughout the world, the resolution aims to assure a healthy future for the community & the Earth.

Sustainable Connections

A non-profit collaboration of Whatcom businesses owner's forms a network with a vision to create a sustainable local economy through various programs serving locally owned businesses. The organization has various program areas: green building; food & farming; sustainable business development; think local campaigning; & energy. Western is a charter member & provides education & professional support of many of their initiatives.

2004

Sustainable Design Minor

Huxley & Fairhaven College & the College of Engineering Technology offers a minor in Sustainable Design, emphasizing planning & design that promotes long-term economic, social, & ecological values & equity. The program enables students to gain complementary skills in environmental studies, urban planning, & design in order to pursue sustainable design careers.

2005

WWU 100% Renewable Energy Fee

The AS club Students for Renewable Energy (SRE) receives an overwhelming vote in support of the Green Power Initiative. With the Board of Trustee support, facilities management & SRE negotiates a contract to purchase Green Tags, offsetting the campus electricity by 100%.

Sustainability Committee

WWU convenes a committee to promote the collaboration of students, staff, & administration to increase sustainability. Through this collaboration, the committee creates the Office of Sustainability & organizes sustainability-oriented actions in coordination with the office.

City of Bellingham Participation in the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Initiative

As a participant, the city pledges to take a leadership role in promoting public awareness about the causes & impacts of climate change. Action is taken through the five milestones of the CCP.

City of Bellingham Construction & Renovation of Public Buildings Using LEED Standards

Where feasible, the city commits to meet the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) “Silver” rating for the construction of all new & renovated city buildings over 5,000 square feet where the City provides the majority of funding. This resolution also aims to promote these practices in the private sector.

2006

Woodring College of Education, Teaching for a Positive Future

Premised on the belief that K-12 teachers will be instrumental in helping to bring about the social, political, economic, & environmental conditions necessary to create a positive & just future. The program aims to have all teachers become “sustainability literate.”

WWU Office of Sustainability

WWU establishes an office to help it achieve its strategic goal of sustainability & to promote & coordinate with campus sustainability initiatives. The office becomes a resource & outlet for organizations, projects, & the ideals of having sustainable practices. The office develops the Campus Sustainability Report, Resident Resource Awareness Program (ResRAP), building assessment studies, & other projects.

Whatcom Smart Trips

Precursor to Smart Trips, the smart commuter program fulfills the Commute Trip Reduction Act of Washington. This web-based program encourages people in the county to use alternative forms of transportation with the incentive of discounts & prizes. WWU’s universal bus pass contract paves the way for buying bulk-discounted bus passes for city & county workers, & private businesses.

2007

Signing of WWU President’s Climate Commitment

President Morse commits the campus to a path toward climate-neutrality. As a part of this commitment, a greenhouse gas inventory is implemented & the university begins development of a climate-neutral action plan

Alternative Transportation Fee

An overwhelming vote by the student body in favor of the fee, puts a quarterly Viking Xpress Bus Pass in the hands of every student with more than six credits, creates the Western Student Transportation office, & provided for a WWU Late Night Shuttle Service.

City of Bellingham Environmental Preferable Purchasing Program

A resolution passes to promote the purchase of recycled, PBT free & other environmentally preferable products.

Growing Whatcom Community Supported Agriculture Project

Growing Washington & a dozen Whatcom County farmers join together to form a multiple-farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) system. Through this program, people in Whatcom County invest in a share of the harvests from over a dozen local small farms.

100% Renewable Energy For All City & County Operations

Motivated by WWU's commitment to 100% renewable energy, both the City of Bellingham & Whatcom County begin using 100% green energy for city operations. A push by Sustainable Connections gets over 50 businesses & 1,000 residents to purchase renewable energy as well.

2008

Go For The Green Residence Hall Energy Program

The Office of Sustainability establishes a program to promote action & awareness at campus resident halls, by challenging them to reduce their consumption of energy, water, & waste.

Sustainability Academy

Faculty & staff convene to voluntarily affiliate in order to foster sustainability education at WWU. The academy develops an inventory of existing sustainability classes; consolidates WWU's library resources on the topic; host's bi-monthly brownbag discussions; & designs curriculum proposals towards expanded interdisciplinary studies in sustainability.

Woodring College of Education Prioritizes Sustainability Literacy

Sustainability identified for education as a priority in long term planning & fund development. Teacher education courses begin to include sustainability literacy as a learning outcome. The college establishes the University's first college level sustainability committee: Woodring Initiative for Sustainability Education (WISE). A number of faculty establish sustainability related research programs.