



GREEN LINK

Sustainable Business Program E-Newsletter
November 2009



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Program Highlights

Making a Difference - One Business at a Time!

The Steamboat Sustainable Business Program, in its third year, has had 68 businesses enroll.

Businesses that are currently certified:

Marabou, GOLD
BAP and Big Agnes, GOLD
Moots Cycles, GOLD
Pet Kare Clinic, GOLD
Black Tie Ski Rentals, GOLD
Smartwool, GOLD and working towards Platinum!
Moving Mountains Chalets, Inc., GOLD
Drexel Barrell & Co. GOLD
Air Quality Systems, GOLD
Kelly & Stone Architects, GOLD
Prudential Steamboat Realty, GOLD
Fox Construction, GOLD
Horizons - GOLD
PostNet - GOLD
Colorado Group Realty - GOLD
Big House Burgers - GOLD
Simply Steamboat Property Management - GOLD
City of Steamboat Springs - Centennial Hall - BRONZE
City of Steamboat Springs - City Hall - SILVER
ResortQuest Steamboat - GOLD
Steamboat Springs Chamber - BRONZE
Central Park Management - GOLD
CMC - GOLD

Life Essential Wellness Spa - GOLD
Rex's American Grill & Bar - SILVER
Mazzolas Restaurant - GOLD
Mountain Valley Bank - BRONZE
TouchStone Promotions - GOLD
GO Alpine - GOLD
Ore House Restaurant - GOLD
Alpine Bank - GOLD
Native Excavating - GOLD
Steamboat Pilot and Today - GOLD
Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp. Administrative Offices - SILVER
Sheraton Steamboat Resort-GOLD

Businesses on their way to achieving certification:

Drahota Construction Co.
Resort Group
Computer Cures
Dovetail Designs
Mountain Home Stove & Fireplace
Landmark Consultants
Irene Nelson Interiors
Pinnacle Resort Management
NRC Broadcasting
Catamount Ranch & Club
Light Works of Steamboat
Lowell Whiteman School
Aspire Osteopathy
Rio Grande Restaurante
Alpine Insurance
Steamboat Motors
Mountain Firehouse - City of Steamboat Springs
Mountain West Environments
Northwest Data Services

Congratulations to the following business who received certification this past quarter:

-Steamboat Pilot and Today for achieving GOLD certification!
-Steamboat Ski Resort Administrative Offices for achieving SILVER Certification!
-Sheraton Steamboat Resort for achieving GOLD certification!

WELCOME to our newly enrolled Businesses!

-Mountain Firehouse - City of SS
-Mountain West Environments
-Northwest Data Services

Are you following the Sustainable Business Program on Twitter?

Find us at www.twitter.com/sustainableboat! Up to date tips and reminders.



Lyn's Lines

For the third year, the Sustainable Business of the Year was awarded at the annual Steamboat Springs Chamber luncheon on October 30th. This year the nominees were PostNet, BAP/Big Agnes, and Black Tie Ski Rentals. The Winner was Black Tie Ski Rentals! CONGRATULATIONS on all of your sustainability achievements!

Previous year's winners were Marabou and Smartwool.



What's Coming Up?

SAVE THE DATE!

For our seventh Quarterly Networking Luncheon:

Green Products Available Locally - a Continuation of our Series

Thursday, November 19th

11:30am - 1:00 pm

Olympian Hall, Howelsen Ski Area

Our speakers will be Jim Barker and Ashley VanNess from Steve Green Company in Steamboat Springs.

Lunch will be provided for \$5 for businesses enrolled in the Sustainable Business program and \$15 for non-members. All are welcome! Space is limited. RSVP by November 17th to Paulette at 875.7000 or at rsvp@steamboatchamber.com. We hope to see you there!

Thanks to the City of Steamboat Springs for hosting the event and to Rex's for providing lunch.



Sustainable Business Theme of the Month-Bioplastics, Where Do I Begin?

Bioplastics Everywhere - Now What?

Although books could be written, and entire conferences have been devoted to the relatively new technological advances in bioplastics (plastics derived from organic sources such as corn starch and cane sugar as opposed to petroleum-based plastics), there is no shortage of confusion on the subject when it comes down to the consumer. If you are not an expert on polymers, but devoted to recycling and/or composting as much of your waste as possible, you are now faced with a new set of decisions with plastics - do I recycle it? do I compost it? which type is the best to buy from a sustainability perspective?

There are a variety of sometimes competing goals and objectives relative to how plastics measure up on the sustainability meter. Some include 1) the carbon footprint of the life cycle of the product, 2) whether the resources used to make the product are renewable, 3) if the product is reusable, recyclable, or biodegradable.

Bioplastics have caused confusion in all of these categories. For one, there are a number of different types of bioplastics and each of them have different pros and cons from a sustainability perspective.

The carbon footprint resulting from manufacturing of each variety of bioplastic is different and many argue that using organic resources such as corn starch or sugar cane is superior to petroleum products. However, there are also those who argue that crop-based plastic production competes with growing crops for food, driving up the price and using valuable farmland. This may or may not be the case, depending again on the type of bioplastic being made, for example some are made from the fibrous part of the corn plant, not the kernel. There is also the consideration of how much water and energy is used to grow the crop in the first place.

And then there is the question of what is biodegradable or compostable? Many bioplastics touted as being compostable will not break down in a home composting unit or a landfill, they will require grinding and the rigidity of commercial-scale composting temperatures and controls. When bioplastics end up in a landfill, related methane gas emissions have the potential to create an even worse greenhouse gas scenario. Similarly, confusing is the term "biodegradable", which is a relative one. Everything eventually will biodegrade, but within what time frame? Thousands of years? Most plastics, whether petro or bio, do not readily break down in a landfill or in a compost bin.

Have you wondered how to determine which bioplastics are recyclable and whether your local recycling facility can accommodate them? As recyclers, we need to get this right, since once a load of co-mingled recyclables is contaminated, it is usually landfilled. Some bioplastic packaging display the numbers 1 through 7 in the recycle triangle, and even though our regional recycling outfit accepts these plastic 1-7, certain of them cannot be co-mingled due to their impact on the sorting facility. Perhaps bioplastics are just ahead of their time, and time is needed for the recyclers to catch up.

So what is a business to do?

Here are some suggested guidelines:

Carbon footprint

Fossil fuels are non-renewable and relying on them exclusively has created a negative impact on international security as well as the environment. Bioplastics made from renewable resources versus from petroleum have definite advantages. Using bioplastics made from crops that are less energy and water intensive would be preferable, such as from switchgrass.

Biodegradable versus Recyclable

Most bioplastics do not break down in the landfill or the compost bin within a desirable time frame. Until we have a commercial-scale composting facility in our area that uses continuously monitored tight controls for grinding, temperature, moisture, mixing, etc., purchasing bioplastics that are recyclable is the better option. Waste Management currently accepts plastics 1-7 with the exception of soft plastics such as bags and tubes that clog the recycling facility sorters. Look on the bottom of the container for the arrow triangle which has a number in the middle to determine if it is a 1-7 plastic.

Alternatives to Plastic

Sometimes you have a choice over plastic altogether, such as recyclable paper-based packaging (think electronics packaging that is molded and brown in color), or cardboard containers. These, and reusable items such as for cutlery, china, glassware, and beverage containers might be a safer bet for now, until the technologies catch up and match up to each other. And of course, an alternative to plastic bags is reusable totes. Make sure you have a collection of them handy for any shopping excursion!



About the Program

To date, 68 businesses have participated in the Sustainable Business Program, one of the most accredited, diverse and encompassing programs of its kind in Colorado. Established in March of 2007 as a collaborative effort between the Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association and Environmental Solutions Unltd, the Sustainable Business Program has been changing the nature of business in the Yampa Valley. The program focuses on sustainability and the Triple Bottom Line - a new way to define business success. The Triple Bottom Line includes: financial success, social responsibility, proactive environmental management, and the inter-relationships between them. Our goal is to leave our planet in as good or better shape for future generations.

As part of the program, the Chamber program provides professional sustainable business coaching as well as a format for networking, sharing of ideas and practices, and for channeling collective energies amongst the business community that further the goal of achieving sustainability and a vibrant, economically sound community.

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