

More Recreation, Less Energy Cost

By Karl Munson

Consumers need to select recreation activities that are satisfying, without heavy use of scarce non-renewable resources. Governments and private suppliers of recreation must provide activities that require less energy.

Park planners should be aware of new energy sources that can be used in present and future building plans. The parks provide an opportunity for teaching awareness of the energy problems, and techniques for conserving energy in all phases of our lives. People retain knowledge they gain while enjoying leisure time.

Activities such as pleasure walking, tennis, bicycling, fishing, canoeing, picnicking, backpacking, golf (without cart) and low organized team sports not only consume less renewable energy, but also provide physical activities leading to more healthful bodies. They are good substitutes for some of the other popular activities such as pleasure driving, power boating, waterskiing, or resort vacations.

This means local communities need to provide two things. One is more opportunities for the low energy consuming activities that will allow their citizens to enjoy recreation close to home. The second is to provide skill training in the desirable kinds of activities and encourage all age groups to participate.

Some data collected for the Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan from 2,500 households indicates that people would stay home more and be satisfied with less energy expensive activities — if they were available.

Community leadership could conduct some local surveys of households to discover what additional facilities are needed. The change from a lot of travel to using facilities close to home could change the long range plans and needs of parks in the community.

The Department of energy has small grants available for communities for the development of energy

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A section of Beach Drive in Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park is closed to motor vehicles on Sundays during the summer. Many people in the Washington area use this close-to-home recreation area for bicycling, walking, and roller skating.



appropriate technology. Following are some examples of successful small grants that are ideas for communities to consider.

City Building 6 Windmills

The city of Bay St. Louis, Miss., is spending just under \$50,000 to build six windmills to provide electricity for lighting a large fishing pier and tennis courts.

A large private development has built a special solar heated and cooled recreation center. The \$538,000 unit supplies energy for an ice rink, gymnasium, game rooms, and exhibition theater. The solar unit, serving 54,000 square feet, saves \$70,000 a year in energy bills. The unit will pay for itself in less than eight years.

Much is going on in combining solutions for producing cheap energy and at the same time process large amounts of manure sewage produced at zoos and children's animal farms.

The Baltimore Zoo is developing a system integrating such technologies as anaerobic digestion, solar energy, and windpower to produce methane gas for supplementing the zoo's energy needs. This system will educate zoo visitors on use of an often untapped source of energy.

One of the problems for isolated outdoor recreation areas is sewage treatment. The Long Branch Environmental Education Center at Asheville, N.C., has installed a solar assisted composting toilet. This relatively maintenance free restroom produces much less odor, and the compost emptied every six months is used for fertilizer.

If you are a private recreation enterprise owner or manager, there are things you can do that will be cost effective and save scarce energy resources.

The Recreation Resources Center at the University of Wisconsin has developed management books on energy for resorts, restaurants, taverns, and motels.

Program goal in Wisconsin is to reduce energy consumption by 15 percent in the recreation, tavern, and motel-hotel-resort businesses. Forty percent of the energy used for heating in these businesses is estimated to be wasted. Thirty percent of the energy for cooling is wasted and 15 percent of energy used for lighting can be conserved.

Your first step is to conduct a survey of your operation. This may be a simple walkthrough of the entire operation, making notes as you go, or a detailed survey of all systems. Involving department heads or maintenance people in the survey is suggested.

Realistic Goals Urged

Next step is to set goals that are realistic for the individual operation. Make very specific goals as percentage reductions of your total electric usage, total natural gas usage, etc. A 15 to 20 percent reduction is a realistic starting goal for each of these areas. One example might be to reduce your hot water usage by 100 gallons a day.

After goals are established, specific tasks are determined and a timetable developed for implementing them. If the goal is saving 100 gallons of hot water a day, the tasks might include adjusting water temperature settings, installing flow restrictors, and installing self-closing faucets. Set a completion date for each task.

The next step is to train employees in results of the survey and to explain the role of each employee in the energy program.

Involve clientele of your program with announcements in the rooms and recreation facilities.

Develop a reporting system for your conservation efforts. Provide a continuous flow of information to employees. Reinforce employee habits that help the conservation effort. Finally, let people in the community and guests know the efforts and achievements in this area.

Turn down radiators in vestibules, lobbies, stairways. Much heat (or cooling) is wasted in these areas. Add thermostats to units without temperature controls. Corridors, vestibules and stairways are basically unoccupied areas, and need not be heated or cooled to the same comfort level as other areas.

Turn off gas pilots on heating equipment completely during non-heating months. This alone could save 4 million or more Btu's per year per unit.

Consolidate Use of Areas in Buildings

Try consolidating use of areas for meetings, conferences, and socializing to common heated or cooled areas. Reduce (or raise) the temperatures in other areas of the building that are not occupied.

Timeclocks on exhaust fans can save a lot of energy during off-hours.

In cooling, consider circulating cool night air through the building to help the cooling system the next day.

Maintenance time spent on cleaning of heating and cooling coils, and checking blower fan wheels and blades at least once a year, will save a great deal of energy.

The above are just a few details to illustrate what can be done to save energy.

To measure effectiveness of your program, establish a base such as the energy consumption for the past 12 months. This will provide an opportunity to monitor the energy conservation plan.

This kind of program is more than conservation of scarce energy. It is good enterprise management. It also is managing for profit or efficient use of the tax dollar.

You can do a monthly energy audit just as you do on monthly cash receipts. Then do yearly comparisons of energy consumption.

To conclude, don't forget that the recreation service is a good place to educate the public on energy conservation. If people could think about their energy use through a personal audit form or through a mini-computer game, it may get the point across and change consumer behavior.

For more information, contact the Cooperative Extension Service in your county, the parks service, or the Department of Energy.

Further Reading:

Appropriate Energy Technologies in Recreation and Parks — Ideas to Build Your Future On, Attention: Fred Boyles, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, S.E. Regional Office, Richard B. Russell Federal Building, 75 Spring Street, Atlanta, GA 30303. Free.