



CRC's GREEN SCENE

A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College

Cafeteria Begins Composting Program

A term project involving five students in Prof. Debra Sharkey's Environmental Studies & Sustainability class provided the catalyst for CRC's new cafeteria composting program, which we believe is the first of its kind in the district. The project's goal – to help the campus operate more sustainably – led student team members Sonya Marshall-Bruner, Sushmil Datt, Keith Gorospe, Luis Hernandez, and Colby Wilmer to research how to start a composting program at CRC. When they interviewed horticulture professor Dave Andrews during the course of their research, the students learned that he plans to start a composting operation once the new greenhouse and the garden area for his program are completed. Prof. Andrews told them he is willing to accept food waste from the Rio Bistro for composting but likely could not handle all of the food waste generated.

One student, Sonya Marshall-Bruner, was ready with a solution, having already contacted Atlas Disposal (CRC's contracted hauler of trash/waste) to inquire about getting their help in establishing a composting program. Sonya learned that Atlas would provide free training for kitchen and custodial staff, signage, and a large collection bin outside the cafeteria for food waste. Atlas charges \$80/month to pick up the food



waste, but CRC is expected to save more than this in reduced trash pickup fees.

After Sonya instigated a series of meetings involving Rio Bistro manager Jeff Caponera, Head Custodian Tony Cartright, VP Don Wallace, and Atlas Disposal staff, the composting program is up and running. Temporary small blue bins for post-consumer food waste (food scraps and other compostable items, such as paper products generated by cafeteria customers) are now in place in the cafeteria.

As Jeff Caponera put it, "We can thank CRC students for lighting the fire underneath us in getting us motivated to get this program running."

At present, the final destination for the cafeteria's food waste is Northern Recycling's compost facility in Zamora, CA, where it is put through a high tech negative aeration process that produces certified organic compost.

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Now at CRC: Compost Your Cafeteria Leftovers

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According to NR's Operations Manager, Grant Ingalls, this nutrient-rich material is then sold by the facility's 'compost broker' to farms within a 50-mile radius for \$18 per ton.

The Sustainability Committee hopes that some day soon a portion of the cafeteria's food waste can be diverted to Prof. Andrews' composting operation, which in turn can be used to produce organically grown fruits and vegetables in a

campus community garden. If some of this fresh produce should then find its way back into the cafeteria, we will have successfully 'closed a loop' in terms of producing sustainable locally-grown food for the Rio Bistro, nurturing healthy soil on campus, and simultaneously reducing the carbon emissions associated with trucking our food waste elsewhere for composting— or for that least desirable of alternatives, dumping into a landfill.



Students Visit Farms to Learn Sustainable Ag Practices

Debra Sharkey reports...

On a sunny day in mid-October, a group of students in Prof. Debra Sharkey's Environmental Studies & Sustainability class visited SCC's new experimental garden, City Farm, where students listened to a talk on pest management and were given a personal tour of the garden by advisor Prof. Robyn Waxman.

Next stop was Soil Born Farms (SBF), an urban agriculture and education project located in Rancho Cordova, where farm manager Simon Farmer (yes, that really is his last name) and SBF student intern, Sara Barnes (also aptly named), gave students an information-packed, 90-minute tour of the



Simon Farmer, farm manager at Soil Born Farms, describes to CRC students how a CSA operates.

farm. Students learned how stone fruit trees must be grafted to produce fruit successfully, how crucial it is for an organic farmer to manage soil to ensure its longevity and productivity, and how SBF markets its produce directly to local consumers at a stand on the farm and through a community-supported agriculture (CSA)

program [see *Green Scene* Jan/Feb 2010], for which customers sign up to get a box of fresh organically-grown produce delivered weekly to set locations around Sacramento.

For more information, check: www.soilborn.org/ and www.saccity-online.org/cityfarm/



Reduce Your Electric/Gas Bill – While Greening the Planet

Jorge Baca (mathematics) and Susie Solano-Baca report...

When we moved to a two-story house in West Sacramento several years ago, we noticed that our gas/electric bills were running up to \$274 per month. By taking the steps below, we reduced our monthly bill to around \$65 – a 76 percent savings! We found that simple steps go a long way, and every little bit counts.

Keep the heater off. During the winter, turn off the heater and wear warm clothes. If you are relaxing and feel chilly, use a thick warm blanket. If this does not suffice, a small electric heater is great for warming small spaces, and your family can hang out in one area to make the best use of it (but close the doors of the room you are in to prevent the heat from escaping).

During hot weather, do the opposite: wear light clothes and use a ceiling or portable fan. To cool the inside of the house, open windows during the coolest times of the day (and night) and close them up as the temperature outside

approaches the temperature inside.

Turn the lights off. We love a well-lit home, but making your house into a lighthouse increases your energy use significantly. Turn the lights off as you exit each room. Keep the lights on only in the room you are in.

Use a power strip. Unplug appliances or electronic devices when not in use. Using a power strip allows you to plug in and turn off several items at once. Don't forget to unplug laptops or cell phone chargers when not in use since these too can consume energy in large amounts.

Use energy efficient bulbs. If you are not already using CFLs, now is the time to switch. Fluorescent light bulbs cost a bit more but last a lot longer, so the cost in the long run is less.

If any of these actions sound like a hassle, persevere; all it takes is some discipline to turn your actions into good habits – and big energy savings!

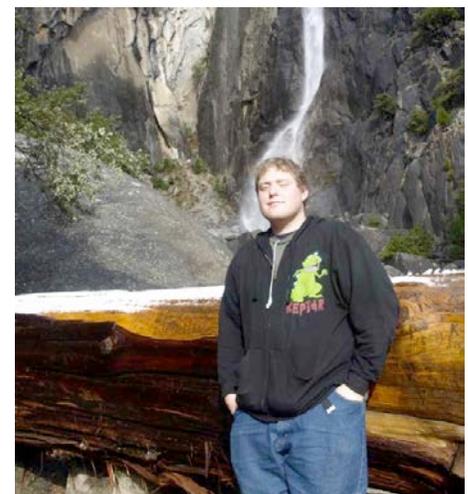
Nick Fox Gets Involved in Sustainability at CRC

Editor's Note: In this series, we spotlight CRC students with an interest in sustainability issues.

Originally a biology major, Nick Fox, 21, switched to geography after taking Prof. Debra Sharkey's World Regional Geography class during his first semester at CRC. His interest in environmental issues dates back to an enviroscapes class he took his senior year at Monterey Trail High School, which led to him representing his school in the 2009 California Envirothon, an outdoor natural resource program and competition for teams of high school students.

In Spring 2010, Nick took Geog 302, Environmental Studies and Sustainability, where he gained a greater understanding of current issues. At that time, he was unaware that some of his classmates were working with Prof. Sharkey to create an environmentally conscious campus club. By the next semester, though, Nick had joined the newly formed Students for a Sustainable Future (SSF), and this fall became the club's secretary, treasurer, and ICC representative. He is now running for SSF president.

Nick plans to transfer to Humboldt State in Fall 2012 to study geography.



Nick Fox stands in front of Yosemite Falls spring 2010 during a CRC Field Course: Geog390, Exploring Yosemite on Snowshoe.

Caring for Our World: Wangari Maathai's Life of Activism

Lizz Gaylord reports...

Born in Nyeri, Kenya in 1940, Wangari Maathai (pronounced Wan-gar-ee Muh-thigh) did not let her place of birth slow her down. The first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate, Maathai went on to head the Veterinary Anatomy Department at the University of Nairobi.

In 1976, Maathai decided to start planting trees, welcoming all who would help her, thus beginning the 'Green Belt Movement.' To date, over 40 countries have joined the movement, and several million trees have been planted.

Of Maathai's many awards, the most memorable are perhaps her 1991 Goldman Environmental Prize and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. In 2002, she

was elected by an overwhelming majority to the Kenyan Parliament and appointed by the President of Kenya as Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources, and Wildlife.

Arguably, Maathai's best known act of environmental activism came in 1989 in defense of Uhuru Park, in Nairobi, Kenya, which was set to be demolished to make way for a major high-end development. She was arrested – but then freed under pressure from the United States. In spite of several attempts made on her life, she continued to fight for the environment and for democracy.

Maathai died September 25, 2011, a loss felt around the



world. To learn more about this great environmental champion, go to www.nobelprize.org, one of numerous sites dedicated to Maathai.



CRV Collection Underway at CRC

Donna Leiva reports...

After learning about successful and lucrative recycling programs implemented by Orange County Community College and Santa Rosa Junior College at a sustainability conference in July, I returned to CRC determined to start a program here.

During Phase I of the project, we have been dealing with safety and liability issues, developing training guidelines for volunteers, and establishing a process for how funds will be disbursed – amongst other things. The good news is that Phase I is near completion, and as of the last week of November, approximately 640 containers had been collected and diverted from the landfill!

Next semester, I hope to move to Phase II. We will be looking for volunteers to collect on a regular basis as well as at campus events. We will also seek donations of containers and plastic rolling carts, vests or hats to identify volunteers, and a designated storage/staging area (preferably close to somewhere with running water).

Future recycling efforts will include used battery and e-waste collection (and anything else with cash value), and increased PR for the 3-R concept of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. In addition, we hope to improve signage on trash receptacles around campus to help with the separation of trash from recyclable and compostable materials.

Want to volunteer or donate? Email crv4crc@yahoo.com.



Reader Reviews

Green Screen Film Series Opens with *Bag It*

The 2011 Green Screen series opened to a great turnout on Thursday, September 29, with *Bag It*, a documentary addressing a wide spectrum of problems with plastic bags and plastic in general.



Negative impacts revealed in the film include the devastation of marine life, human absorption of toxins from everyday items such as personal care products and plastic eating utensils, and the disingenuous agenda of corporate-sponsored entities, like the American Chemical Association, that promote plastic as safe and sustainable. The film was humorous and informative while providing useful solutions to what can be frightening issues.

Lizz Gaylord hosted a lively Q & A afterwards, during which attendees offered their own practical solutions:

- invest in a reusable bag for store purchases and a reusable drinking container;

- consider buying groceries from local vendors that minimize packaging;
- email the campus cafeteria and request compostable single-use products;
- read the Green Scene to learn more ways to incorporate sustainable practices into daily life.

Donna Leiva gave away three reusable shopping bags, generously donated by Sprouts (formerly Henry's) market.

Find more ways to take action at the movie's website: <http://www.bagitmovie.com/>

-- Donna Leiva



Green-washing!

While we cannot shop our way out of climate change, we can at least buy green versions of products that we normally use, such as dishwasher detergent. I decided to 'test drive' a few of these green detergents. Over a few months, I have used the following brands: Nellie's, Ecover, Seventh Generation, and GrabGreen.

Using the same dishwasher, I tested each brand in a series of five washes, each load

consisting of rinsed dishes with at least one load containing a top rack filled with delicate stemmed glasses.

Here are my rankings (which came as a surprise to me):

1. *GrabGreen*: Available in two scents and made from all-natural ingredients, it comes in a pack that dissolves in the wash.
2. *Ecover*: I use this detergent regularly myself and am very happy with it. However, Ecover is a German company, so of course shipping the detergent overseas does emit pollution.
3. *Nellie's*: hard-working for the most part. However, after washing the glasses, I still had to pick off a few dried-on food particles.
4. *Seventh Generation*: I had to rewash a load twice, and after the second time, I just used another detergent. (I was surprised at this ranking because I use, and am happy with, many of their other products.)

According to other reviews on line, *Method's Squeaky Clean* tabs also rank highly, so I think I will try them next. Happy dishwashing!

-- Lizz Gaylord



TREE Tips by Ann Rothschild

Do those Biodegradable Forks Really Decompose?

Editor's Note: Retired English Prof. Ann Rothschild shares tips for living sustainably, originally printed in her church's e-newsletter. TREE, Trinity Respecting Earth and Environment, is Trinity Episcopal Cathedral's environmental ministry group.

Recently, I came upon a blog by Beth Terry, who is trying to live plastic free and has researched whether 'compostable' utensils are really compostable.

<http://myplasticfreelife.com/2010/03/are-compostable-utensils-really-compostable/>

Unfortunately, she found they are not. The manager of San Francisco's Golden Gate Disposal and Recycling sent her photos of allegedly compostable forks after being in the industrial

strength composter for 60-90 days at high heat (see the photos on the website above). They were unscathed, strong and durable as ever. What a disappointment!

Digging a bit further, I listened to an interview with Charles Moore, who describes the huge Pacific Ocean garbage patch that is killing all levels of sea life. He found the plastic garbage patch in the ocean in 1997, but it has taken over ten years for the public to take notice. Meanwhile garbage is pouring into the ocean from all over the world – a footprint worse, Moore says, than our carbon footprint.

We have to stop being a throw-away society. Can we become leaders in stopping this tide? Perhaps we can start living plastic free by making a list of all the throw-away plastic we use. Then, we can begin cutting back on it by refusing to buy all that packaging. Maybe we can write a few letters to congresspersons and manufacturers. And we can carry our own reusable utensils: attractive utensil sets are available online from www.togoware.com and make adorable gifts at a cost of \$12.95 (with chopsticks, \$16.95). Pricy, but a positive act to conserve the ocean.

<http://www.good.is/post/talking-with-plastic-pollution-fighting-rockstar-charles-moore/>



Green Sleuths: Field Trip Surprises Faculty

Andi Salmi and Debra Sharkey report...

Editors' note: On a recent field trip with students to the Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station, two faculty were surprised by what they learned.

Did you know that about 1000 tons of trash and 400 tons of recyclables are taken to the Sacramento Recycling and Transfer Station (SRTS) each day? Unfortunately though, much of the paper and cardboard that should be recycled ends up being landfilled because it has been contaminated by trash.

These are some of the interesting facts I learned recently when accompanying Debra Sharkey's Environmental Studies and Sustainability class

for a tour of the SRTS. By joining a tour in the spring, you can see for yourself the informative (and appalling) mounds of trash and recyclables spilling along the concrete floors or being hand-sorted as they pass by on a conveyor belt. Look for the announcement in Spring 2012 of a Sustainability Committee sponsored tour. I can promise you an eye-opening, and perhaps behavior-altering, experience.

-- Andi Salmi



Did you know that plastic bags are *not* recycled *at all* by the SRTS? Considered a major

nuisance in the recycling stream because they get caught up in the machinery, they are instead added to the pile that is destined for the landfill. Perhaps more significantly, there is practically no value to plastic bags – a mere 3¢ or so per *ton* on the open market, I believe our guide said.

What to do then? The best solution is to avoid using them in the first place, but if you do accumulate some, take them to a grocery store recycling center – from where they should find their way to one of the specialized facilities that *do* recycle plastic bags.

-- Debra Sharkey



Cosumnes River College Sustainability Committee

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We're on the Web!

*Look for archived issues
of the
GREEN SCENE
on the CRC homepage.*

News In Brief...

CRC's New Winn Center and Parking Garage are Sustainable Models

November 7th was a great day for celebrating sustainability at CRC. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for two new structures that will redefine the east entrance to the CRC campus: the parking structure serving the future CRC Light Rail Station and the Winn Center for Construction and Architecture.

The Winn Center will house educational programs related to construction, architecture, photography, and pharmacy and will serve as a community center and gathering place where the professions can meet and interact with each other and with students aspiring to join them in the industry. In addition to classroom space, computer labs, faculty offices, and studio space, the facility will house a gallery and community room.

The center will be a 'living laboratory' and a model in green technology, projected to earn the status of LEED® Platinum certified, one of the few instructional buildings on any California community college campus to do so.

"We are very excited to break ground on this iconic building," said CRC President Deborah Travis, who praised the facility as "a state-of-the-art learning environment" for our students.

A new multi-level parking structure at the east entrance to the college comes courtesy of a

partnership between the Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) and CRC. The \$31.5 million, five-level structure consists of 2,000 spaces that will serve both students of CRC and RT light rail passengers when the Blue Line light rail extension is completed in June 2015. CRC will become a transportation hub, and, even better, the building will become a solar photovoltaic generator of electrical power.

"In addition to the benefits for students and RT passengers, the parking structure will also create approximately 100 jobs in the Sacramento region," said Mike Wiley, RT General Manager/CEO.

The Blue Line to CRC is one of the highest priority transit projects in the region and, once complete, will extend light rail 4.3 miles south from the existing terminus at Meadowview Road.



New on Facebook: Sustainable Los Rios

In October, CRC's Sustainability Committee launched a Facebook page, **Sustainable Los Rios**, to help people across the Los Rios District learn more about sustainable practices in higher education and to provide a forum for sustainability news.

To meet (virtually) others who share an interest in sustainability and in taking action, check out our new page: <http://www.facebook.com/SustLosRios>. For non-Facebook users, stay tuned: Sustainable Los Rios will have a companion website/blog in the coming semester.