



Striving for Sustainability

To achieve lasting marine conservation outcomes, we're committed to an ongoing program of improvement that includes adopting sustainable business practices and encouraging others to do the same. Operating a large public aquarium requires substantial resources and a large staff, and we recognize that our environmental footprint is likewise substantial. We remain deeply committed to minimizing our environmental impact and to conducting our business operations in ways that reflect and advance our conservation mission. We are continually challenging ourselves to improve as we incorporate environmentally sensitive business practices into our everyday operations, and we encourage our aquarium and zoo colleagues to do the same.

Staff Conservation Committee

Our cross-divisional Conservation Committee plays a key role in championing our green business philosophy. It draws representatives from throughout the Aquarium, and from all levels of the organization. The committee identifies and promotes steps to improve the environmental sensitivity of our business practices, supports and rewards staff for environmental leadership in their personal and professional lives, and shares information and progress with staff. The committee meets monthly to suggest goals and oversee grassroots conservation programs.

- **Staff Conservation Awards.** Each year the Conservation Committee presents Green Tree Awards to individual employees or work groups for their consistent, committed conservation efforts at work, in the community and in their personal lives. Staff and volunteers can also be awarded EcoDollars, an on-the-spot award to recognize smaller conservation-minded behaviors. EcoDollars are redeemable for lunch in our restaurant.
- **Conservation Action Fund.** The Conservation Action Fund was created by our staff to help finance small-scale habitat restoration projects in the Monterey Bay region. Funded through voluntary payroll deductions from staff at the Aquarium and at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI), the fund provides grants up to \$3,000 to non-profit organizations and to schools for regional coastal habitat restoration projects. Staff also volunteer time toward the projects. Since its inception in 1997, the Conservation Action Fund has made grants totaling \$125,000 to a wide range of organizations around Monterey Bay.

Seawater, Wastewater and Stormwater Discharge Practices

Over the years we have pioneered many best management practices for our seawater, wastewater and stormwater discharges. Increasingly, these practices are becoming required by agencies such as the State Water Quality Control Board (through its 2006 adoption of the California Ocean Plan), which will monitor our discharges and require others to follow these discharge practices as well. Because we are a point-source discharger for seawater, we route all seawater exposed to birds and mammals through ultraviolet sterilization before it leaves our building. In that way, we eliminate bacteria and other microbes from the birds and mammals in our living collection, so that our outgoing seawater meets recreational water quality standards. Some seawater is also routed through ozone treatment, which is effective in preventing the introduction and spread of exotic species into local waters. We're working together with our neighbor, Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station, on a seawater discharge monitoring program.

Our stormwater and wastewater practices have been developed to prevent flows to storm drains during the dry season. Water from all outside washing projects (decks, sidewalks, building, parking lot, equipment) is contained to avoid flows to storm drains. By putting booms in place to redirect the water to the sewer, or by using a cleaning station that holds washwater, we are able to assure that all wastewater flows to a sanitary sewer line for treatment prior to discharge. Inside or outside, floors are cleaned using

equipment that recirculates washwater, and dirty water is then discharged to sewer drains. We also secure fuel and chemicals in containment lockers; are creating dams that redirect dry-weather flow or accidental spills away from storm drains; and lining rain gutters to prevent copper and other metals from contaminating stormwater that drains into the ocean. By following good outdoor washing practices year-round, we reduce the contaminants that would end up in stormwater that washes off our buildings, sidewalks and parking areas during the rainy season.

Green Building Efforts

In 2010, we opened a new animal holding facility in the nearby community of Marina. This new building incorporates energy and lighting efficiency; minimizes heat gain that would require cooling systems for the comfort of people inside the building; uses steel building materials that include recycled content and are themselves recyclable; uses high-volume fly ash concrete that reduces carbon emissions from curing concrete; is landscaped with drought-tolerant native plants; and employs energy-efficient pumps and machine cooling systems to reduce energy use as well as demands on the sewer system. Many standards adopted for the new building are now standard practice for other Aquarium construction projects.

Sustainable Business Practices Group

We are a member of the Sustainable Business Practices Group, a multi-institutional organization including staff at the David and Lucile Packard

Foundation, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This group is committed to organizational assessment of carbon footprint, and advancing sustainable building and operating practices. It meets quarterly—in person or by videoconference—to discuss energy efficient building practices, sustainable business operations and best practices for communicating conservation priorities to staff and external audiences.

Other Green Business Practices

In addition to the facilities and operations initiatives described above our environmental ethic is reflected in our everyday business operations.

- **Graphic Design Department.** The Graphic Design Department requires environmental audits from all its vendors. Much of the paper we use is manufactured to environmental specifications set by the department (100 percent post-consumer waste, chlorine free). We support new technologies in paper manufacturing and calculate resources used in the process, including virgin products (if any), water, electricity, solid waste by-products and greenhouse gases. Vegetable-based printing inks are required.
- **Paper Reduction.** Wherever possible we try to minimize our use of paper. Our member newsletter is published online. Our resource book for students and teachers is only available as a PDF file on our web site. Our news releases and press kits are distributed by e-mail and posted online. We record field data digitally for our Sea Otter Research and Conservation program with personal digital assistants (PDAs) rather than paper

data sheets. Our Finance operations have moved toward paperless forms for expense reports, purchase orders and other routine documentation.

- **Battery and Electronics Recycling.** Using outside battery and electronics recycling programs, we make it easy for staff to recycle all kinds of batteries and battery-powered devices including cellular telephones, pagers, cameras, calculators, digital audio devices, chargers, portable tools, laptops and personal digital assistants.
- **Food Service and Sustainable Seafood Purchasing.** We serve only sustainable seafood in our restaurant and our food service provider, Bon Appétit Management Company, is now serving sustainable seafood in all its venues nationwide. Bon Appétit is a national leader in sustainable food service operations through its Low Carbon Diet commitment. This three-year program's goal is to reduce the carbon footprint of its national food service operations, and to raise public awareness about the impact our food choices have on global climate change.

We also use sustainable seafood guidelines in purchasing seafood to feed our living collection.



- **Retail Operations.** Our retail vendor, Service Systems Associates (SSA), will not sell any products produced from living creatures if those products send an inappropriate message about the conservation of wildlife and ecosystems. This includes, but is not limited to, shells, coral, dried sea animals, driftwood and wood from threatened ecosystems. We offer more products in our stores that are manufactured with recycled, biodegradable, organic and recyclable contents. Our vendor seeks out pieces created by hand, locally, from sustainable materials and designed to be energy efficient and educational. They are working to bring these principles to their corporate parent, and to influence other vendors to change their manufacturing processes to address our conservation goals.

Close-up: Jim Ales



For Jim Ales, art director with our graphic design team, successful publications are more than effective communication pieces. They're also eco-friendly.

For example, Jim and our Education team embraced a whole new approach to distributing materials to thousands of school groups that visit the Aquarium each year. Rather than print and mail out Sea Searchers Handbooks and registration packets, they've made them available via CD-ROM and through our web site. This saves in printing and mailing expenses, plus enough paper—around 400,000 sheets each year—to stretch almost from Monterey to San Jose.

Jim championed the creation of an electronic version of our Shorelines member newsletter, and of our Seafood Watch pocket guides,

which are being downloaded by the thousands from our web site.

“Our design approach embraces a ‘do more with less’ philosophy,” he says. “We’ve taken an early leadership role in using alternative resources—from paper, to inks, to printing processes and consider the entire environmental impact of our publications. We see these challenges not as limits, but as new design possibilities.”

More than embracing good design with a light environmental footprint, “The work we produce can have a powerful effect on influencing social change,” Jim says. “That’s the real juice. Each day, I have the opportunity to make a positive impact through design. There is much joy in this job.”

It’s a joy he shares as he spreads the word with colleagues through membership on the national board of directors for The American Institute of Graphic Arts, the professional design association, through writings for design publications and as a founding advisor for the National Center for Sustainable Design.

“A new generation of designers is entering the field,” Jim says. “Our responsibilities are shifting from commercial persuasion to meaningful endeavors. From now on, our success will be measured in social progress, and rewards we can’t imagine will follow.

“As designers, we have the power to make a difference—to be the light in the room. It’s a great feeling.”



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