



## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



### PURPOSE

It is the intent of the Skokie Park District to encourage its employees to set a high standard of leadership and competency in the promotion of sound environmental practices and lifestyles. Park and recreation employees, by the very nature of their chosen careers, have an obligation to set an example and assume a leadership position in the development and use of policies, practices and environmental opportunities which promote a healthy environment.

To meet this end, the Skokie Park District has drafted this Environmental Policy to confirm the District's commitment to the environment and to provide a tool for staff use when carrying out this commitment. This Environmental Policy compliments the Mission Statement of the Skokie Park District and is intended to help the District achieve excellence in programming and operations.

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY GOALS

#### **Purchase and Use of Environmentally Safe and Sensitive Products**

Purchase products for use in facility and park operations which minimize negative environmental impacts, taking into consideration the effects of product production, use, safety, storage, disposal and cost.

#### **Wise Use and Protection of Air, Water, Soil and Wildlife**

Actively seek and implement ways to conserve and protect water and soil, enhance air quality, limit the production and release of damaging pollutants, and protect plant and animal life.

#### **Wise Use of Energy Resources**

Actively seek and implement ways to conserve energy resources and investigate methods of applying alternative energy technologies.

#### **Reduction and Handling of Waste**

Reduce waste production, reuse and recycle materials from facility and park operations, and handle hazardous and all other wastes according to lawful and safe procedures.

#### **Open Space Planning and Preservation**

Protect and restore indigenous natural communities such as grasslands, woodlands and wetlands, and promote the reclamation, acquisition, preservation and management of other

open space areas, including natural corridors, waterways, greenways and trails.

### **Environmental Education and Interpretation**

Provide education and interpretation opportunities for staff and the public which increase appreciation for the natural world and promote environmentally conscious lifestyles, emphasizing selective consumption and low-impact resource use.

## **ACTION PLAN**

The Environmental Action Team (E.A.T.) consists of:

- A Coordinating Crew which coordinates activities related to the implementation and monitoring of the policy and includes representative staff members from each Division.
- Any Skokie Park District full and part-time staff who participate in one of the crews listed below.

Environmental Action Team Crews:

- Coordinating Crew
- Purchasing Crew
- Landscaping & Turf Management Crew
- Fleet Maintenance Crew
- Facility Operations Crew
- Facility Development Crew
- Office Operations Crew
- Park Operations (Hard Surfaces) Crew
- Waste Handling & Recycling Crew
- Open Space Planning & Preservation Crew
- Publicity & Marketing Crew
- Environmental Education & Programming Crew
- Vendors & Concessions Crew

The crews research each project area, recommend policy objectives, and suggest ways to monitor these objectives. Crew Chiefs present the recommended actions and implementation timelines to the Coordinating Crew quarterly for review and approval.

The Coordinating Crew reports quarterly to the Park District Board regarding the status of the Environmental Policy, implemented objectives, and employee participation.

All new staff are educated regarding the Environmental Policy, particularly with respect to objectives pertinent to their areas of responsibility.

The E.A.T. Crews are charged with the responsibility of continually evaluating the success of the Environmental Policy, soliciting input from all levels of staff and incorporating new information and technologies as they become available.

## **RESOLUTION**

Whereas this park and recreation agency is concerned about the environmental issues and problems facing our community,

Whereas this park and recreation agency recognizes increasing public awareness and concern about environmental issues within and beyond the scope of our community,

Whereas it is our intent to assume a leadership role in the development and use of sound environmental policies, practices, opportunities, and

Now, therefore, this park and recreation agency adopts this Environmental Policy and will use it to guide our decisions as we begin and/or continue to develop environmental action plans for the future.

## **SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS**

### **Purchase and Use of Environmentally Safe and Sensitive Products**

*The production, use and disposal of many office, recreation and maintenance products contributes significantly to the pollution of the air, water and soil and the destruction of natural communities of plants and animals. Educated product selection in the workplace and at home can mean the difference between an environment safe for all living things, including people, and a planet contaminated with toxic pollutants.*

Purchase products with recycled content wherever possible for use in recreation programs, offices, park maintenance and development projects.

Encourage the conservative use of paper and wood in place of plastics and other non-biodegradable and non-renewable products.

Eliminate the use of Styrofoam products by staff, concessionaires and park/facility users. Include this specification in bidding documents.

Minimize the use of petroleum-based products such as inks, stains and plastics.

Reduce the use of disposable products by staff, concessionaires and park/facility users.

Make use of electronic mail resources such as phone or computer message systems in place of paper memos.

Inventory all hazardous materials including cleaners, paints, solvents, sealants, wood preservatives, and office products, and investigate environmentally sensitive alternatives.

Avoid the use of chlorine-bleached paper products.

Reduce indoor air pollutants such as fluorocarbons from spray cans and fumes from cleaning solutions, sealants and paints by using less harmful alternatives.

Minimize or eliminate indoor pesticide use by incorporating integrated pest management within all facilities.

Avoid using products harvested from the rainforests or other endangered natural communities.

Develop an agency environmental policy statement for use in bidding documents.

### **Wise Use and Protection of Air, Water, Soil and Wildlife**

*All life on earth is dependent upon clean and reliable sources of air, water and soil. Without these basic life-support systems, the quality of life declines and the diversity of plants and animals on the planet is diminished.*

Reduce vehicle emissions through regularly scheduled tune-ups and other applicable vehicle maintenance.

Identify sources of indoor air pollution and implement a prevention program.

Adopt a resolution which reduces or prohibits second-hand tobacco smoke within facilities and vehicles.

Develop a program to monitor and remove or manage asbestos.

Conduct an inventory of toxic air emissions and implement an action plan to reduce emission levels.

Retrofit all facilities with water conservation hardware, and develop a leak detection and correction program.

Develop a water conservation plan for swimming pools, skating rinks and other special facilities.

Evaluate the impact of current cleaners, solvents and other products on the water source and investigate environmentally sensitive alternatives.

Comply with safety standards regarding hazardous materials data sheets.

Use drought resistant and preferably native species for landscaping.

Investigate alternative snow melt products, using those which have the least impact upon the surrounding soil, water and plant life. Reduce the use of road salt.

Establish a comprehensive integrated pest management program for park grounds, including selection of plant species, preventative maintenance, early detection of problems, natural control methods, and minimized use of pesticides.

Ensure that underground storage tanks do not leak and are registered, and remove or replace any defective equipment.

Practice soil management and appropriate landscaping to prevent erosion.

Incorporate environmental impact considerations in the design process of facilities and parks.

Ban the release of balloons in parks.

### **Wise Use of Energy Resources**

*The majority of energy produced in the United States is derived from non-renewable or limited resources such as oil and coal and from nuclear sources, releasing large amounts of pollutants into the air and/or creating other toxins. Careful conservation of energy resources will minimize pollution while prolonging the lifespan of the non-renewable resources until other alternative and less harmful energy technologies are readily available.*

Plant shade trees near buildings to reduce energy consumption due to summer air conditioning.

Plant evergreens and shrubs as windbreaks along building foundations and walls to reduce energy consumption due to heating.

Design and build energy efficient buildings, giving consideration to insulation and energy-efficient appliances and incorporating alternative, renewable technologies such as solar and wind energy.

Conduct energy audits and retrofit buildings with energy saving devices.

Improve the efficiency of existing lighting by retrofitting outdoor and indoor lighting with energy efficient bulbs and requiring all new lighting to be energy efficient.

Consider solar light fixtures in parks and parking lots and as exterior building lighting.

Properly maintain refrigerators and air conditioners for more energy efficient cooling.

Establish minimum and maximum thermostat temperature settings for all facilities, and reduce heating and cooling usage when buildings are unoccupied, utilizing energy

management systems.

Insulate hot water heaters and pipes and set thermostats at energy efficient temperatures.

Consider alternative fuels such as propane and natural gas and alternative energy technologies such as electrically powered vehicles.

Maintain vehicles to reduce fuel consumption and implement energy saving fleet operation procedures.

Support the use of transportation alternatives such as bicycles, mass transit, car pooling and walking and provide incentives for staff and park/facility users.

### **Reduction and Handling of Waste**

*Americans produce over 154 million tons of garbage every year. Most of this so-called trash could have been reused, recycled or reduced at the source. Simple steps taken at the agency level to eliminate waste in the workplace, reuse materials and recycle discards could result in a net waste reduction of 80% or more!*

Investigate source reduction of waste, including purchasing in bulk, minimizing packaging, reducing excess use of paper, and choosing reusable and recyclable products.

Reduce paper use by sharing subscriptions, making double-sided reports, reducing junk mail, using memo routing slips and keeping mailing lists current.

Investigate ways to reuse office, recreation program, and maintenance/construction materials that are typically discarded.

Compost or otherwise reuse all landscape waste.

Develop and implement a comprehensive in-house and parks recycling program including metals, glass, plastics, paper, cardboard, magazines and other recyclables.

Recycle batteries, antifreeze, motor oil, freon and other automotive by-products.

Train staff in the proper handling, use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials.

## **Open Space Planning and Preservation**

*Open spaces and green places are essential to the health and happiness of all human beings, providing solitude, beauty and inspiration. Maintaining native natural areas is also imperative to the health, diversity and balance of all life on this fragile planet Earth.*

Develop and implement plans for the re-establishment and/or restoration of native grassland and woodland ecosystems.

Re-establish and protect river corridors, wetlands and other wildlife habitats.

Provide appropriate recreational access to and enhance public awareness of such restored and protected natural sites.

Support local efforts to establish greenways.

Work with commercial or private land owners in an effort to acquire or otherwise ensure the use of these lands for open space.

Develop relationships with land trusts and preservation/ conservation organizations to assist in open space and natural habitat preservation.

Develop a plan to balance appropriate recreational use of environmentally sensitive lands with preservation goals.

Utilize native species for park landscaping.

Eliminate or control exotic and invasive plant and animal species that inhibit ecological diversity and integrity.

Abide by existing laws to protect rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

Develop a tree planting and replacement program to reforest park areas in the community.

Organize a volunteer tree planting and maintenance program.

Identify heritage trees in the community and work with the Village on a resolution to protect these trees.

## **Environmental Education and Interpretation**

*As leaders in park management and recreation programming, park and recreation agencies have a responsibility to educate staff and patrons alike about environmentally sensitive lifestyles, helping people renew connections with and heighten feelings for the natural world. An individual's actions on the earth really do make a difference, but "unless we know, we can not care."*

Organize an environmental committee consisting of agency staff from all facilities and/or departments.

Involve agency staff in an environmental education program which explains the commitment of the agency to the environment, provides information about environmentally-conscious lifestyle and workplace choices and habits, and stresses the need for staff input and involvement.

Develop and implement an energy awareness program for employees and park/facility users.

Develop and implement a water conservation education program for employees and park/facility users.

Develop plans for dealing with environmental disasters such as chemical spills and floods.

Ensure that contractors and vendors comply with the agency's adopted environmental policies. Include specifications in bidding documents and contracts.

Promote leisure activities that minimize environmental impact and energy use.

Develop a public relations program to inform the public about the agency's environmental efforts, provide community leadership, and serve as a role-model.

Include environmental lifestyle information in materials distributed to the public.

Develop and present public programs which enhance the public's relationship with the natural world and teach environmentally responsible lifestyles.

Interpret the natural resources specific to the community via programs, presentations, signage or brochures.

Use Earth Day as a vehicle to educate the public about the environment.

Work with other community agencies and organizations to develop and enhance a strong environmental ethic.

The Skokie Park District gratefully acknowledges the work of the Illinois Parks and Recreation Environmental Committee which developed the original "Model Environmental Policy" after which this policy was modeled.EARTH