

# NREL releases report card on environmental efforts

October 28 2015

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The Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) continued to improve its environmental protection efforts at its South Table Mountain and National Wind Technology Center sites during 2014 by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adding bird-safety features to campus structures, and assessing environmental impacts of potential laboratory development.

NREL annually reports on the environmental performance and sustainability efforts conducted at the research laboratory. The newly released Annual Site Environmental Report provides details how NREL:

- Completed site-wide environmental assessments for both sites that identify impacts associated with development, allowing the Energy Department to make informed decisions as the laboratory continues to grow.
- Added a window film on the Energy Systems Integration Facility to deter birds from colliding with the glass, and shared the laboratory's experience in reducing harm to migratory birds with other federal agencies.
- Decreased stormwater runoff at the South Table Mountain site by replacing a 15,000 square foot asphalt parking lot with native grasses, which promotes infiltration and provides habitat for wildlife.
- Collaborated with the Jefferson County State Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Rocky Flats Refuge, Jefferson County Open Space, and the Jefferson County

Nature Association to reduce noxious weeds in open space areas. Various control methods were used including mowing or hand pulling, revegetation of disturbed soils using suitable grass and shrub materials, and application of herbicides where necessary.

NREL is best known for developing and advancing renewable energy and efficiency technologies, but equally important is the lab's long-standing tradition of translating that commitment into sustainable practices.

"NREL has been proactively reporting our sustainability metrics for over a decade," said NREL's Sustainability Director Frank Rukavina, "Operating the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in the most sustainable manner possible is a key part of the mission of the laboratory. NREL's contribution to the nation drives a more sustainable energy future, and as [energy](#) is one of the most important factors our nation's economy, national security and environment, sustainability is a critical element of NREL's mission."

The newly released Annual Sustainability Report reveals that NREL saw an increase in the number of employees using vehicles powered by alternative fuels or taking public transit, and a decrease in the number of people driving to work alone.

The report also notes:

- Reduced [greenhouse gas emissions](#) through the increase in employee use of mass transit, ride sharing, and infrastructure modifications for bike and pedestrian access; the installation of E85 fueling station for use by NREL's fleet vehicles, 62 percent of which are powered by alternative fuels.
- As part of NREL's commitment to environmentally preferable and sustainable purchasing, 96 percent of the computers,

monitors, tablets, imaging equipment, and televisions bought by the lab were EPEAT (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool) certified.

- As an upgrade to the insulation in the Research Support Facility, NREL used 90 percent postconsumer cotton material made from used jeans having excellent thermal insulation properties, acoustic insulation, and fire-resistant properties.

**More information:** [www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/64208.pdf](http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/64208.pdf)

Provided by National Renewable Energy Laboratory

Citation: NREL releases report card on environmental efforts (2015, October 28) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-10-nrel-card-environmental-efforts.html>

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