



# CRC's GREEN SCENE

*A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College*

## Teachers Across Campus Infuse Their Courses with Sustainability

Looking for ways to promote green thinking in your students? In this article, professors from around the campus share ideas for how to encourage sustainable living—whether you teach in the English, communications, geography, or math departments.

### Service-Learning Projects

Colette Harris-Mathews,  
Communication Studies

For the past three years, I have included service-learning projects in my COMM 331 Group Discussion class. Go Green/Sustainability is one of six topics for which students can design an on-campus project to address the college's efforts in going green. This semester, Communication Studies students contributed more than 100 service-learning hours toward sustainability efforts at CRC.



In the past, students have worked with the Sustainability Committee at Earth Day, and with Torence Powell, Director of GreenForce Projects, to learn about green jobs and to promote the Green Scene.

This semester, three groups have completed green-minded projects in conjunction with CRC's Sustainability Committee, Math/Science Faculty, CRC Social Responsibility Committee, and the CRC College Foundation. One group picked up and disposed of more than 2,700 cigarette butts (see photo above) and instructed classmates about appropriate ways to dispose of cigarettes on campus. They also collected bottles and cans, placing them in the appropriate receptacles.

(SEE STUDENTS, PAGE 2)

### In This Issue:

**A New Era in Textbooks** 3

**Do You Know Where Your Trash Goes?** 4

**Greendex Rates Countries' Consumption** 5

**Students Start Sustainability Club** 5

**Reader Reviews:**  
*Movie: The Greening of Southie, Andy's Switches Take-Out Boxes* 6

**Greenhouse Gas Inventory Complete** 7

**Gift Bags Keep Giving** 7

**News In Brief:**  
*SB70 Puts the Community in Community College, Sharkey Joins Conference Steering Committee, Green Scene Awards* 8

*Students Kiran Boparai, Alison Edinger, Ryan Ramirez, and AJ Arth, from Colette Harris-Mathews' COMM 331 class, sort recyclable items from trash cans around campus as part of a service-learning project.*





## Students Get Involved Through Class Projects

(FROM PAGE 1)

Another group, under the supervision of Brenda Buckner, is building a new recycling bin for batteries, printer cartridges, and cell phones. The sturdy wooden bin, which will be placed on campus by December 15, will replace a battered old cardboard bin currently in use. Look for the bin in the Library Building under the stairway.



A third group worked at the Sharefair with Heather Hutcheson and the Social Responsibility Committee, in coordination with Kenneth Cooper and the CRC Foundation and SMUD's Greenergy Program, exchanging more than 100 incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent light bulbs and raising almost \$100 toward scholarships on campus.

### Learning to Think Globally [1] Cindy Erickson, Mathematics

In my algebra classes next semester, I plan to use a project I found in an on-line collection called PUMAS (Practical Uses of Math and Science)—brief

examples written by scientists and engineers to show how math and science can be used in interesting ways.

For this assignment, I'll ask students to think about what it might mean to "think globally" (as the bumper sticker suggests). They will be required to make a rough estimate of the global consequences of a simple everyday action like turning off a light or a dripping faucet. To do so, they'll assume that roughly one billion people worldwide have living standards close to ours in the US. Then they'll calculate the effect of one billion people doing that action once a week for a year.

I hope students will think about the global consequences of small actions even as they are learning about estimation, significant figures, and unit analysis.

[1] Frolking, Steve, and Rosentrater, Lynn, "Learning to Think Globally", 04\_25\_99\_1, The PUMAS Collection, <http://pumas.nasa.gov>, 1999.

### Goldman Awards Give Meaning to Sustainability for Basic Writers

Cath Hooper, English

In my Writing Skills class (three levels below transfer), students learn basic research skills while becoming acquainted with Earth Day and related issues. The Goldman Prize, awarded each April for excellence in protecting the

environment, provides the perfect medium.

In class, I introduce students to the Goldman Prize website, and each one chooses a specific environmentalist to investigate. Students use the site to learn about their prize winner and then create a poster presenting information (in their own words) about the winner's past, environmental motivation, and prize-winning work. (You may have seen their posters displayed at past Earth Day celebrations.)

In the course of the project, students—often for the first time—consider their own attitudes to sustainable living (and learn the meaning of the word 'sustainable') and get inspired by the often extraordinary activism shown by prize recipients.



### Sustainability-minded music in Brazil

Steven Coughran, Music

While exploring the music tradition of Brazil, my World Music classes have been

(SEE MUSIC, PAGE 3)



## Music, Math, and English Find Ways to Address Sustainability

(FROM PAGE 2)

introduced to the singer/songwriting movement known as *Tropicalia*. Musicians such as Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Milton Nascimento, and Chico Barque were imprisoned and/or forced into exile during the late 1960's for

their socially conscious lyrics.

Along with addressing cultural submersion, oppression, and poverty, these songwriters romanticized Brazil's natural beauty. In their music, they mourned environmental

destruction and industrial pollution taking place as the dictatorial regime allowed greed and the interests of multi-national corporations to take precedence over the quality of life for the average Brazilian.

## A New Era in College Textbooks

Heather Downing reports...

The largest expense in a student's college career, aside from tuition, is textbooks. Not only do they put an enormous dent in our pocketbooks, they put an even greater dent in the health of the world's forests. According to the website Environmental Paper Network, about 70% of the world's paper is made from timber harvested from regions with ecologically valuable and biologically diverse habitats that are essential for many of the world's plant and animal species to survive.

These trees provide not only a major carbon offset but also the precious oxygen we need to survive. According to Raina Kelly's article, "How We Can Stop Being Eco-Hypocrites," "by 2030 humanity will need the capacity of two Earths to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> waste and keep up with natural resource consumption." So what can we do about this looming threat?

Now is the time to become a little greener—and it's as

simple as sitting at home in pajamas and clicking a button. Voilà, books at a much cheaper price and with a smaller impact on the environment! One option that saves money and trees is used books. Another is textbook rentals, offered by many online stores for about half the cost of a new book. Again, out-of-pocket costs are reduced as well as demand for paper and trees.



But my personal favorite by far, as well as the best bang for hard-earned (or borrowed) college dollars, is

e-books, which are beneficial on many levels: 1) a \$100 textbook can cost as little as \$40 as an e-book; 2) e-books leave a much reduced carbon footprint; 3) used with one of those nifty new book readers, e-text is searchable; 4) e-text is printable (on your 100% post-consumer recycled paper, of course); and—guess what?—5) e-books save trees!

So next semester, students need to remember that, when buying textbooks, the first choice is not always the eco-friendly choice. Where we put our dollars is a powerful statement to manufacturers, letting them know that it's time to move in a new direction—to used books, rentals, or e-books. Doing so could save a tree.

### Newsweek:

<http://www.newsweek.com/2010/11/10/how-not-to-be-an-eco-hypocrite.html>

### Environmental Paper Network:

<http://www.environmentalpaper.org/PAPER-statistics.html>



## Do You Know Where Your Trash Goes?

Students in CRC's Environmental Studies & Sustainability class do!

Debra Sharkey reports...

In mid-November, a group of CRC students joined me for a field trip to the Sacramento Recycling & Transfer Station (SRTS), located near Fruitridge Rd. & 84th St. There, we witnessed firsthand what happens to the majority of residential and commercial waste generated by city residents.

At SRTS, city garbage and recycling trucks arrive throughout the day to dump their loads on the main floor. From there, the material is pushed by fork-lift operators toward conveyor belts that take it to two assembly lines of workers who attempt to remove by hand (assisted by blowers, metal detectors, screens, and the like) the majority of recyclable commodities, such as paper, glass, cardboard, plastics (mainly PETE and HDPE), and tin or aluminum cans—processing up to 23 tons of material per hour.

Once the recyclable commodities are separated, they are compacted and shipped—to wherever the current highest bidder



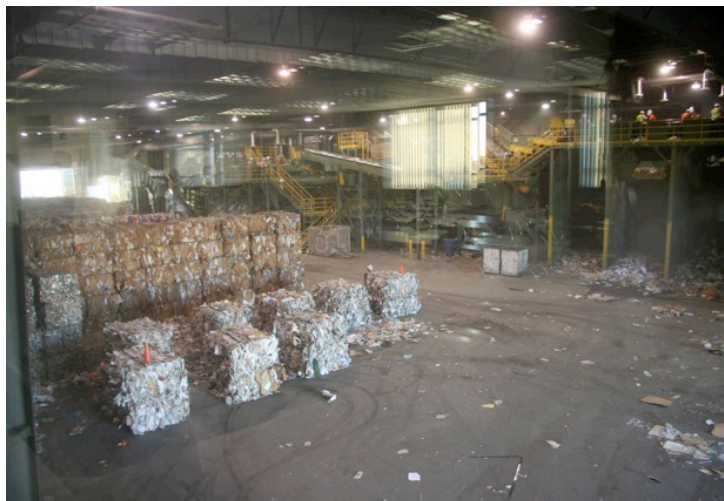
is located. We learned that approximately 50% of trash sorted by SRTS is paper and another 20% is corrugated cardboard. The majority of paper recovered by SRTS workers is compressed into bails and shipped to China, where it is remanufactured into recycled paper products (such as cardboard boxes, many of which are used for packaging manufactured goods shipped back to us).

Some students were

surprised to learn that the 'residual' trash is loaded daily into trucks and driven 154 miles over the Sierra Nevada mountains to a landfill site in Sparks, Nevada that charges substantially lower tipping fees than Sacramento County's Kiefer landfill.

However, due to a recent deal signed by the City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, and SRTS, the 12-year old practice of sending our garbage to Nevada is thankfully about to end. Instead, it will once again be transferred to the local Kiefer landfill. According to a recent Sacramento Bee editorial (8 Nov 2010), this change is expected to save the city the equivalent of 1.7 million truck miles and over 7 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions every year and to result in an annual increase in county revenues of between \$2.5 million and \$8 million.

*Above: Debra's students learn how trash is processed at a presentation by Kurt Standen, a manager at SRTS. Right: After they are sorted, recyclables are compressed and bundled for shipping—often over great distances.*



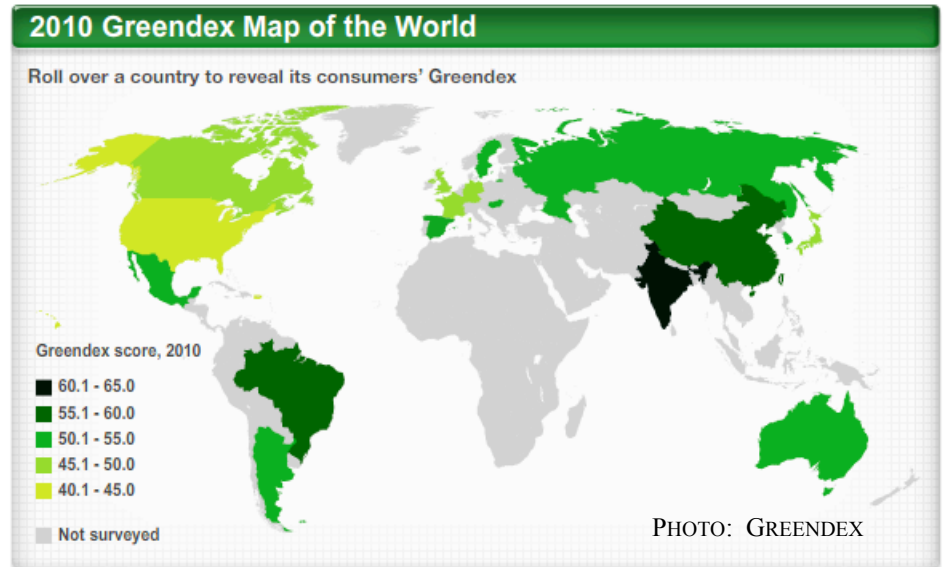
## National Geographic's Greendex Rates Countries on Consumption

*From the editors...*

Greendex is an index that seeks to inform us about global consumption—the kind that is environmentally sustainable, that is. National Geographic and Globe Scan are working together to monitor and measure consumer activity in 17 countries that take steps to preserve the planet. Here are this year's results.

1. “Environmentally friendly behavior—transportation patterns, household energy and resource use, consumption of food and everyday consumer goods, and what consumers are doing to minimize the impact these activities have on the environment—among consumers in 10 out of 17 countries has increased over the past year.”
2. Top scorers are in the developing economies of India, Brazil, and China (in that order). Lowest of the 17 is the United States (with Canada, France, and Britain not far behind).
3. Over the last two years, the greatest increase in positive environmental behaviors has occurred in India, Russia, and the US. Most other countries have also shown increases, but slight slippage was seen in Germany, Spain, Sweden and South Korea.

The general message seems to be a positive one, with the majority of the 17 countries showing improvement trends. Alas, the US score, while showing steady improvement, still lags behind that of the Canadians two years ago.



At the Greendex's informative website, you can

- find out how sustainable your own behaviour is by calculating your personal Greendex.
- take a Knowledge Quiz to see how savvy you are about the environment.
- learn more about the Greendex study and read the results from 2008 and 2009.

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/greendex/>

### CRC Students Start Sustainability Club

Inspired by a field trip to the Butte College/CSU Chico Sustainability Conference in November, Environmental Studies and Sustainability major Jon Conibear, along with several other students, has started a Sustainability Club at CRC. The club's first goal is to reduce the use of plastic water bottles on campus.

Interested students should contact Prof. Debra Sharkey, [sharked@crclosrios.edu](mailto:sharked@crclosrios.edu)



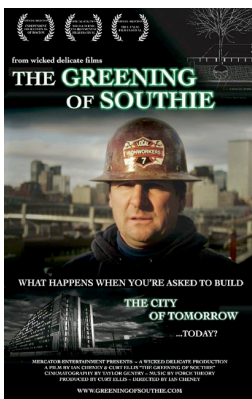
## Reader Reviews

### Movie Review:

#### *The Greening of Southie*

A film by Ian Cheney & Curt Ellis

While in essence *The Greening of Southie* is a documentary film about what it takes to 'green' a building in South Boston, it is actually much more: an unvarnished portrayal of the challenges of development like the social impact of change, the problems of gentrification, as well as the success and failures of trying to be green. However, the best part of the film is its funny and heart-warming look at the people who are part of the process and at the building's impact on the neighborhood.



Over the next two years, we will get to witness our own *Greening of Southie* as the new Winn Center for Construction and Architecture becomes part of CRC and South Sacramento. The new building is slated to be LEED Platinum, but what does that mean? This film helps provide the answer.

Be prepared: the language in this film is raw but real, and

it makes you smile. At an early meeting, a project superintendent tries to explain to his crew, "You don't understand. This is a green building!" Members of the crew announce, "You're right. I don't understand," or "What do you do with all these points? What does it give you?" My favorite line arrives when the superintendent explains that being green means recycling, not smoking on the job site, and using double-flush toilets. One worker, clearly the crew comedian, jokes in his South Boston accent, "I use that a lot actually. One flush never seems to do the job!"

As one would expect on a leading edge project, things go wrong and mistakes are made, but the joy of the film is observing the human spirit, the transformation and the pride of the people who make it happen. The bottom line is summarized aptly by one of the workers: "I feel good about doing it, but I'll never see it...but it's nice to build something that people enjoy. A few years down the road, when I'm driving by this place on 93 over there...hey, I was part of that building over there." *The Greening of Southie* is thought-provoking, a big slice of life that will tug at your heart, make you laugh, and hopefully help you get a better grasp of what it means to be green.

--John Ellis, Architecture

### Andy Nguyen's Switches to Recyclable Take-Out Boxes

*In the March/April 2010 Issue of the Green Scene, Julie Hawthorne wrote a review of Andy Nguyen's Vietnamese Restaurant. This month, Julie provides an update.*



I recently was reminded that sometimes it helps to talk with a business owner about the benefits of environmentally friendly practices.

In the course of my chat last September with Andy Nguyen's owner Lien Nguyen for a restaurant review for the Green Scene, I mentioned that many people prefer non-Styrofoam containers. Lien explained that she had used cardboard in the past, but customers complained that the food didn't look as inviting or plentiful as it did in the flat, shallow, foam containers. Talking about environmentally friendly containers, however, made her want to try again.

Now she is using two different kinds of container, cardboard and starch-based. She also encourages people to bring their own containers.

--Julie Hawthorne,  
Communication/English, SCC



## Greenhouse Gas Inventory Complete

Heather Downing reports ...

In December of 2008, I was granted a fellowship of \$2000 through the National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program to conduct research that would help our campus become greener. As of December 1, 2010, my project is officially—and successfully—complete.

Over the last two years, I have been able to distribute into classrooms more than 130 41-quart blue recycling bins, each with a laminated 11" x 17" color poster above detailing what should and should not be placed in the bins.

At Earth Day 2009, 100 CFL bulbs, donated by a local company named *Light Bulbs*

*Plus*, were given away free to students. For Earth Day 2010, 200 CFL bulbs, donated by *Greenlite Lighting Corporation USA*, and another 400 bought at a discounted rate, were distributed.

The biggest endeavor of the last two years was the greenhouse gas inventory, which called for such information as the school's budget, energy budget, energy consumption, commuting habits, student population, faculty/staff population, solid waste distribution, and fuel usage—as far back as 1990. Since much of the data had not been kept back that far, this was quite a chore; however, I filled in the spreadsheet as best I could.

Now comes the long process of determining the meaning of all the graphs and charts and then deciding on the next step—all to be reported in a future edition of the Green Scene.

Thanks to all on campus who have helped with the project: my advisor, Debra Sharkey, for getting the word out; CRC student Lizz Gaylord for gathering data, amongst other things; the Sustainability Committee and other faculty and staff on campus for distributing recycle bins, putting up posters, sending me data, conducting the transportation surveys, and ensuring their students follow the recycling bin guidelines. I could not have successfully completed the project without your support.

### Homemade Gift Bags Keep on Giving

Susan Scott reports ...

Tired of tossing all that paper after the presents have been opened? I've switched to fabric bags, which are easy to make and useable year after year. Fabric stores have a great assortment of cotton fabrics in a wide array of colors and patterns. One yard of 44" fabric will make one large 18" x 20" bag, one 10" x 18" bag and two 9" x 10" bags—at a cost of less than \$10. I give a lot of books as gifts, so these bag sizes

work well for me. Cut your pieces, sew a 1/2" hem along the edge that will become the opening of the bag, fold, and sew into a bag. I finish the seams with another row of stitching just to keep the inside neat.

Wrapping presents is the best part—no more sticky tape, no more corners to fiddle with, no more worry about oddly shaped packages. Just choose a bag, and pop in the gift! I keep the bags closed and control the excess fabric with reusable French ribbon (the kind with the small wires along the side).





**Cosumnes River College  
Sustainability Committee**

**Members:**

- Steven Coughran
- Julie Elliott
- John Ellis
- Cindy Erickson
- Cath Hooper
- Christina Ocrant
- Julie Oliver
- Torence Powell
- Andrea Salmi (Chair)
- Susan Scott
- Debra Sharkey
- Linn Violett

**Student Members:**

- Chrystia Cabral
- Elizabeth Gaylord
- Jesse Rodriguez
- Veronica Vogan

**Newsletter:**

- Cindy Erickson
- Cath Hooper

*We're on the Web!*  
 Look for archived issues  
 of the  
**GREEN SCENE**  
 on the CRC homepage.

**News In Brief...**

**Putting the Community in  
Community College**

Lizz Gaylord reports...

This summer, the North State Building Industry Association (BIA) partnered with the Los Rios Community College District to provide middle- and high-school teachers and counselors with a minimum of 40 hours work experience on a green building project. Educators spent time observing and participating in a variety of activities at construction companies and on job sites.

Educators then developed academic lessons and projects based on their summer work experience and brought those lessons back to their classrooms. Some included building models of energy efficient structures, building and fitting models of solar panel, and participating in the bidding process.

The project is funded by the California Community College Chancellor's Office using SB70 CTE Career Pathway funds. The Los Rios Community College District is committed to developing relationships and curricula between middle- and high-school educators to better assist students in selecting and preparing for high wage/high demand careers.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, over 150 students and teachers celebrated with the partners who helped facilitate these amazing projects, including Teichert Construction, Beutler Corporation, Granite Construction, Wood Rogers Construction, SMUD,

and many more local companies. What a great opportunity these companies and educators are offering our local students!



**Geography Professor Named to  
Sustainability Conference**

Debra Sharkey was recently invited to join the steering committee of the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference. The committee consists of about 25 faculty, staff, and administrators representing UC's, CSU's and CCC's.

The goals of the conference are to highlight faculty research and share best practices in campus sustainability projects and the infusion of sustainability into curriculum, addressing such diverse topics as Curriculum, Green Building, Energy, Water, Food Systems, Purchasing, Institutionalizing Sustainability, Student Affairs, Transportation, Emerging Technologies, and more.

**Green Scene Awards:**



**Kudos to...**

- Pres. Debbie Travis and the President's Office for saving paper by sending their holiday greeting card via email.
- All those who have worked on SB70 (see story, this page), the initiative to improve career and technical education, particularly in green building areas.