

# CRC's GREEN SCENE

A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College

Photo by Jim West

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*In This Issue:*

- 1 **Sustainability 101**
- 2 **SSF Update**
- 2 **Student Profile:**  
Rosalia Adams
- 3 **Pre-Packaged Meal Kits: At What Cost Convenience?**
- 4 **Ensuring Your Retirement Dollars Work for the Environment**
- 4 **CRC Tiny House Ready for Competition**
- 5 **Making Those Disposal Decisions**
- 6 **Solar Regatta**

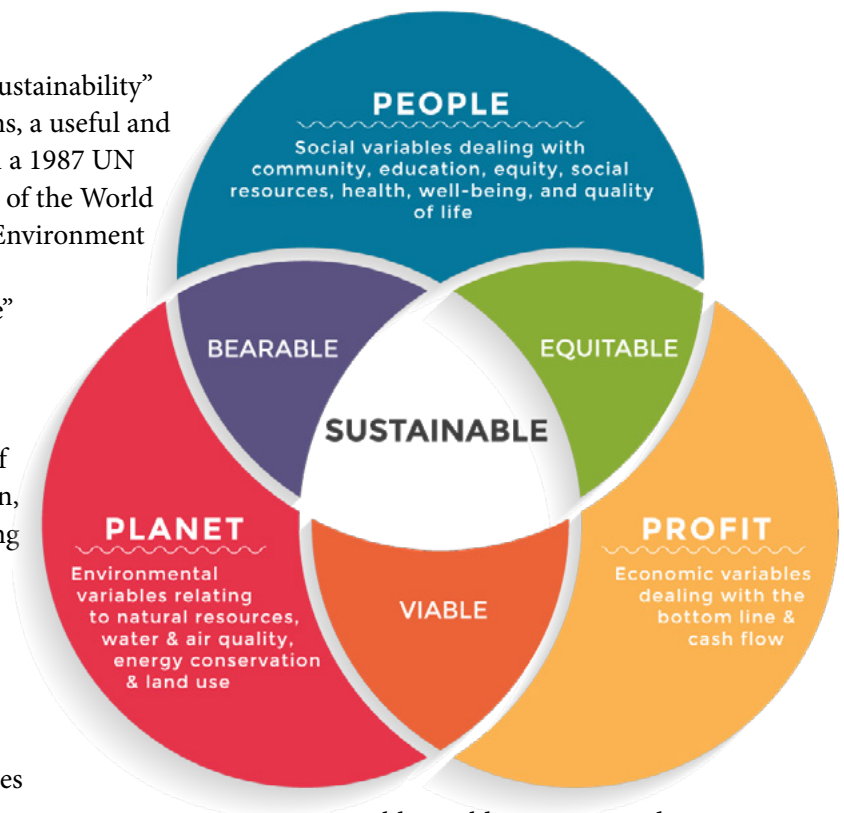
## Sustainability 101

If you've ever found yourself wondering what the word "sustainability" means, read on...

*Andi Salmi reports...*

Although the term "sustainability" has various definitions, a useful and clear one comes from a 1987 UN Report titled "Report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development: Our Common Future" (also known as the Brundtland Report). It goes like this—"Meeting the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

As the graphic to the right shows, sustainability embraces environmental, social, and economic spheres, or more simply, the planet, people, and profit. A sustainable world includes healthy, natural environments, healthy communities where social justice is the norm, and economic vitality for all people on the planet. In a



sustainable world, we create and maintain the conditions for humans and nature to thrive now and into the future, supporting the right of future generations to live on this planet. Isn't this what we all want for our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and beyond? ♦



## SSF Update

Rosalia Adams reports...

Students for a Sustainable Future (SSF) is up to new and exciting things this semester! Since the Tap-A-Palooza win in Spring 2015, the club has been working toward making CRC the first college campus in the Sacramento area to eliminate the sale of plastic one-time-use water bottles. It is currently building support among its constituents on campus with a view to making a presentation before President Bush and other administrators.

SSF has also started a new campaign called "We Are Rafiki," through which members will be selling handmade bracelets to help Kenyan artisans create a better future for themselves as well as their families. You can take the "Me to We" pledge and get more information about the campaign on

<http://www.we.org>

To get more information about SSF and what it is doing this semester and to learn how you can get involved, check the SSF website at

<http://www.crcssfclub.com>

or SSF's D2L page. To be added to the D2L class list, email your student ID number to Prof. Debra Sharkey (sharked@crc.losrios.edu) or to SSF Club President Rosalia Adams (adams.r.rosalia@gmail.com). ♦

# Student Profile

## Rosalia Adams Discovers Her Passion for Environmental Biology



Rosalia represents SSF at last year's ShareFair.

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

Growing up in the small rural town of Kelseyville, CA in close proximity to nature and to good camping and hiking spots, Rosalia Adams had a very outdoorsy childhood. Rosalia's love of nature and appreciation for the environment grew with her introduction to the idea of sustainability through a presentation at her high school and has grown still more since transitioning into college and adulthood.

When Rosalia started at CRC in Spring 2015, she was planning on transferring to UC Davis to study in the veterinary program. During Fall 2015, however, she joined Students for a Sustainable Future

(SSF) after coming across its table at the club rush. After learning more about environmental issues such as deforestation and ocean acidification, and with the help and guidance of SSF club members Jaime Gonzalez and Cesar Aguirre, Rosalia now has a new educational goal of studying environmental biology with an emphasis on conservation. She hopes one day to be able to help with ocean conservation efforts.

Rosalia is currently working toward transferring to CSU Sacramento to study environmental biology. Serving as SSF president this semester, she looks forward to helping with the campus's current and future sustainability initiatives in order to transform CRC into a more sustainable campus. ♦

## Pre-Packaged Meal Kits: At What Cost Convenience?

*Amanda Walker reports...*

Not so long ago, Purple Carrot, Blue Apron, and Green Chef were just words to describe items found in a kitchen. These days, they are businesses sharing in a 400 million dollar meal-kit market that is growing steadily nationwide, promising fancy, fresh food, delivered to your door—and screaming convenience to those of us with long work days and children to take care of. But at what cost?

Blue Apron, reportedly the most successful of these companies, delivers a whopping 1.5 million meals a week. Intrigued, I placed an order to find out what all the buzz was about. One week later, a single box, approximately 30x30 inches, filled with a plethora of ingredients (enough to make 3 meals for 2) was delivered to my front porch. I had selected the pescetarian option (fish and vegetarian): eggplant pitas, crispy salmon with orzo, and a mushroom gnocchi.

Unfortunately, only one thing about my first delivery really stood out, and that was the unbelievable amount of packaging. Everything is pre-portioned, wrapped separately in hard plastic, brown paper, cardboard, foil, etc. I was disappointed by the two plastic packages of thyme for two different recipes and the amount of energy and packaging that went into shipping a single egg. In addition, some ingredients came in little knick-knack sacks wrapped in paper bags—to create an element of surprise, I guess.

But the real surprise, it turned out, was the two massive gel-filled ice bags lining the bottom of the box, way too large to keep in my freezer for reuse. As I searched the Blue Apron website



*Typical meal-kit packaging looks like this.*

to find out how to properly dispose of these enormous freezer bags, I kept replaying the company rep in my head: 1.5 million meal boxes delivered each week. If three meals fill one box, that's 500,000 boxes a week, which means 52 million of these gel-filled freezer bags are being shipped nationwide annually. And this is just Blue Apron! What if I added all the other meal-kit companies cashing in on this multi-million dollar business idea?

Just as I was getting overwhelmed by the numbers, I found some good news. Blue Apron claims that all packaging is biodegradable or recyclable (and customers may even return materials if no recycling center is available

nearby). To recycle the freezer bags, according to the website, I would need to defrost the bag, cut off a corner, empty the “biodegradable” gel contents into a garbage can, and recycle the outer plastic lining locally. You are probably wondering, as I was, how many of these 52 million gel-filled bags actually get recycled. My guess is not many because this process seems less than convenient—not to mention questionable ecologically.

It took me about an hour to cook my first meal, which tasted decent, but not that incredible given the \$20 (and time) I had spent on it. Truth is, I could have made a much better meal myself. Plus, I had no leftovers for lunch, a mound of dishes waiting to be washed, and those ever-present freezer bags to deal with. Would going out to dinner have been more convenient? At least they would have done the cooking and the dishes.

One week and three meals later, I can kind of see the rage for meal service companies like Blue Apron, but I think the kits are best suited to people who are not creative in the kitchen. I personally did not find them convenient: I still had to shop for groceries for breakfast, lunches, snacks, and additional dinners and dispose of the excessive packaging, with its associated environmental issues, of course. The price of \$60 a week I think most people can afford, yet I could surely have bought a lot more food for the same amount of money and found equally creative recipes with a little research online. Hence, I cancelled my subscription to Blue Apron—and, in case anyone is interested, I'm still looking for a home for two oversized freezer bags. ♦



## Ensuring Your Retirement Dollars Work for the Environment

*Ann Rothschild reports...*

As people nationwide are stepping back from investment in coal, Fossil Free California and 350.org are focusing their lobbying efforts at CalSTRS, the State Teachers' Retirement System. In June, my church environmental group joined forces with Fossil Free California and 350.org to lobby the CalSTRS Investment Committee to divest from fossil fuels (oil, coal, and natural gas: fracking). We rallied at an Investment Committee meeting and the experience was empowering: we met super people, equally committed to working for the planet, were treated cordially by CalSTRS Investment



Committee members, and learned that lobbying is a powerful tool. I experienced yet another good side effect: personal satisfaction that I was actually doing something rather than sitting at home getting depressed by the news.

I urge you to take a few minutes to view Divest CalSTRS' call-to-action video (<https://youtu.be/QcU4uRfRdDk>) and to sign the petition on [www.fossilfreeca.org](http://www.fossilfreeca.org), where you can also join this friendly and active group. ♦

## CRC Tiny House Ready for Competition

*Carlos Carrasco reports...*

We are proud and excited to reveal the completed CRC tiny house, the culmination of two years of planning and construction. This 208 sq.ft, net zero house (it produces as much energy as it uses) includes a rear deck as well as a seating area on the roof. In addition, it has some other pretty cool green aspects, such as charred siding, a composting toilet, and a new solar thermal technology that increases the efficiency of the solar panels on the roof, making it possible to heat water while cooling the solar panels, thus increasing their voltage output.

Since the tiny house was designed with a young urban professional couple in mind, it will also charge a Pedego (an electric bicycle) during the competition. With this electric-assist bicycle charging at night, the residents won't need to drive a car to work. Thus, our net zero energy house not only zeroes out the home's carbon footprint but also the transportation carbon footprint.

We hope to see you at the SMUD Tiny House Competition on October 15!

### Come see how you can live big and spend small!

The SMUD Tiny House Competition will be held here at Cosumnes River College on October 15th from 9am to 4pm. The Tiny House Village will be in parking lot E, just south of the new parking structure. In addition to the competition, there will also be music, prizes, food trucks, and a vendor fair. For more information, you can visit [smud.org/tinyhouse](http://smud.org/tinyhouse).



# Making Those Disposal Decisions



*The Green Sleuth (aka Cath Hooper) helps out...*

Ever find yourself at odds with your spouse/family/roommate concerning the disposal of certain items: into the trash—or into the recycling? As an optimist, I tend to go with the latter. My husband, on the other hand, is much more likely to follow the pessimist's road all the way to the landfill.

So I was delighted when the September/October 2016 Elk Grove City newsletter provided the information I needed to settle these minor (but nonetheless significant)

household disputes. In Elk Grove, it turns out, we can recycle all plastics labeled 1-7 as well as plastic bags (including cereal box liners, bread bags, and dry cleaning bags)—provided they are placed into a larger plastic bag that is tied at the top. (I was right!) Plastic silverware, however, and wax-coated milk cartons belong in the trash. (He was right.)

The City of Sacramento's guidelines are virtually identical (although I did notice that Elk Grove does not recycle styrofoam while the City of Sacramento does, provided it is placed in a clear plastic bag). Both Elk Grove and the City of Sacramento provide extensive (and easily accessible) information on their respective

websites (see below) regarding the disposal of almost anything.

Elk Grove residents should also check out Elk Grove's Special Waste Collection Center (just south of Grantline and east of Hwy 99), where they can recycle—for free—all kinds of hazardous waste items from the house, yard, or garage, including batteries, fluorescent bulbs, electronics, and even used markers. With zero waste its ultimate goal, the Center also offers a Re-Use Room where residents can pick up someone else's disposed items—from paint to solvents to home improvement materials—also at no cost. Keeping things out of the landfill has truly never been easier! ♦

<p><b>RECYCLE</b></p>	<p><b>1</b> PET Polyethylene terephthalate</p>	<p><b>02</b> PE-HD Polyethylene (high density)</p>	<p><b>03</b> PVC Polyvinyl chloride</p>	<p><b>04</b> PE-LD Polyethylene (low density)</p>	<p><b>IN CITY OF SACRAMENTO</b></p>	<p><b>TRASH</b></p>
	<p><b>05</b> PP Polypropylene</p>	<p><b>06</b> PS Polystyrene</p>	<p><b>07</b> O Bisphenol A and others</p>			

**City of Elk Grove recycling:**

[http://www.elkgrovecity.org/city\\_hall/departments\\_divisions/garbage\\_recycling/](http://www.elkgrovecity.org/city_hall/departments_divisions/garbage_recycling/)

**Special Collection Center:**

[http://www.elkgrovecity.org/city\\_hall/departments\\_divisions/garbage\\_recycling/special\\_waste\\_collection\\_center/](http://www.elkgrovecity.org/city_hall/departments_divisions/garbage_recycling/special_waste_collection_center/)

**City of Sacramento recycling:**

<http://www.cityofsacramento.org/General-Services/RSW/Collection-Services/Recycling>



## CRC Students Compete in California Solar Regatta

*Efrain Lopez reports...*

For the past three years, I have supervised CRC's engineering students as they have designed and built a solar-powered boat to compete with other colleges and universities from California in SMUD's California Solar Regatta. In the process, students have learned how to program an engineering project from start to finish while also learning about solar power. The design and planning takes place during the fall semester, while the

construction and testing of the boat takes place during spring. Prof. Ryan Connally (construction) and his students have raced a second CRC boat in two previous regattas, and the two groups have even combined forces to race one boat when necessary. In this year's regatta, CRC won first place in the slalom and sprint categories and also took home the Student Choice award.

The CRC Foundation has generously provided funding for this project,

recognizing that participation in events like these makes for a well-rounded CRC experience.

The 2017 regatta will take place May 6 at the Rancho Seco Recreational Area. ♦



*Top: Gera Groshev and Eduardo Orozco preparing the solar boat for its first race.*



*Bottom: Michelle Kwan, Jason Guan, Riana and Tiana Menezes, Gera Groshev, Eduardo Orozco, and others celebrate their first-place trophies at the 2015 SMUD California Solar Regatta.*

### Cosumnes River College Sustainability Committee

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Cindy Erickson  
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Cath Hooper  
Christina Ocrant  
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#### Student Members:

Rosalia Adams  
Natalie Guerra

#### Newsletter:

Cindy Erickson  
Cath Hooper  
Christina Ocrant



*We're on the web!*

*Look for archived issues of the*

**GREEN SCENE**

*on the CRC Homepage*

### Share your story!

Do you do something green in your life? Whether it be an RT story, an environmentally responsible practice in your classroom or office, growing your own food, energy efficiency tips you'd like to share, or anything else... we want to hear from you! Send your ideas to the *Green Scene* newsletter team:

Cath Hooper (hooperc@crc.losrios.edu) & Christina Ocrant (ocrantc@crc.losrios.edu)