

Land, Water and People

Walk the Talk

By Lynn DiFiore

It ain't easy being green. - Kermit the Frog

As has been mentioned before in this column, The San Luis Valley Public Lands Center (SLVPLC), is composed of the Rio Grande National Forest and SLV Bureau of Land Management, which are charged with managing a diversity of natural resources on over 2.3 million acres of land. The agencies provide sustainable resource management in areas such as timber, range and water.

However, effectively managing natural resources goes beyond determining how many cattle can be run on an allotment or the number of trees to be cut in a area. Managing natural resources also needs to occur on the consumption side of the equation.

In January 2007, Executive Order 13423, *Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management* was issued by President Bush. This order institutes new guidance for energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, and reduction of environmental impact throughout the federal government. The key focus areas covered include energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction/recycling and “green” purchasing.

The SLVPLC responded to this direction by organizing an employee Sustainable Operations Committee, or “Green Team.” The Green Team charter states:

There are finite resources on the planet to sustain an ever-growing and ever-consuming population. The concept of sustainability is striking a balance among commercial interests, ecological impacts and social / cultural activities for all communities.

Already the SLVPLC has begun downsizing the class of vehicles used in order improve gas efficiency including replacing three SUVs with hybrid vehicles. Recycling efforts have expanded beyond office paper and aluminum cans to now include mixed paper, steel cans, glass, newspaper and #1 and #2 plastic bottles. Well over 1,500 pounds of materials have been recycled since November 2007.

The SLVPLC is also considering using an energy savings performance contract to improve energy efficiency without incurring up-front capital costs. An energy savings performance contract is a partnership contract in which a company identifies, designs, and installs systems to reduce energy consumption at a federal facility. The company is paid for their work with all or part of the energy cost savings resulting from the project. Currently, the SLVPLC has plans for lighting retrofits for Saguache, Del Norte & Creede offices and installation of a photovoltaic system at the Monte Vista administration site.

All the efforts mentioned above are just the beginning of a sustained effort to reduce consumption, improve energy efficiency and purchase environmentally friendly products.

The SLVPLC will continue to provide a sustainable flow of natural resources for those products that most of us use everyday. The San Luis Valley Bureau of Land Management and the Rio Grande National Forest also pledge to be a model for how to reduce our environmental footprint.

For more information check out the Region 2 sustainable operations webpage at http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sustainable_operations/

Lynn DiFiore is the Forest Engineer for the SLVPLC. In her spare time, Lynn likes to strap on her running shoes and run our local mountain trails.