

National Park Service
2011 Environmental Achievement Awards

Honorable Mention

Xanterra Parks & Resorts, Concessioner
Yellowstone National Park
Sustainability Index and Scorecard

Xanterra Parks & Resorts has implemented an aggressive sustainability program at Yellowstone National Park with an ambitious set of vision goals. Environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP) is an integral component of this program. Although Xanterra possessed an existing EPP policy and guidelines, they had no effective or efficient tool for evaluating the products and services they utilized. In order to make real gains in the program, Xanterra needed a comprehensive tool for evaluating their purchases.

Xanterra developed a sustainability index, complete with a visual key and scorecard - an approach new to both the hospitality industry and national park concessioners. The system was the result of six months of research and testing, and the first phase was rolled out in the Xanterra retail store, For Future Generations, in December of 2009.

The index measures 16 sustainable attributes of both the vendor and the products they sell including: organic, recycled content, recyclable, rapidly renewable materials, biodegradable, compostable, locally made, made in the USA, made with renewable energy, sustainable packaging, cruelty free, fair trade certified, socially responsible practices, supports non-profit organizations, conventional and other sustainable attribute. In addition to the product attributes and product origination information, the scorecard rates product environmental impacts on a scale of one to 10, with one being the lowest impact and 10 the highest. The scorecards also include additional information about the product's manufacturer.

Gathering the information was achieved in part by sending a six-page survey to each vendor, which was completed for each product sold to Xanterra in Yellowstone. Vendors also had to certify that the information was accurate and truthful. Xanterra rigorously screened each survey response and followed up with the company for clarification. The information was entered into a database and once the data was analyzed, the scorecards were developed.

After witnessing the success of the scorecards in the retail store, and recognizing the immense benefits the sustainability index provided in improving environmentally sustainable purchasing, Xanterra decided to expand the program to include all vendors and their products at Yellowstone.

The sustainability index has been easily adopted and integrated at Xanterra retail stores at Grand Canyon and Crater Lake National Parks, and demonstrates to other concessioners how EPP programs can be improved through development of rigorous and transparent product evaluation tools.