

National Park Service
2006 Environmental Achievement Awards

Honorable Mention

Yellowstone National Park Team
“Unique Partnership Advances Solid Waste Diversion”

Yellowstone National Park partnered with concessions employees, the Montana and Wyoming Departments of Environmental Quality, and Region 8 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency to create and implement the Park’s environmental management system (EMS). One of the goals of the EMS team is a 90 percent solid waste diversion rate by 2008.

In 2005, the team conducted surveys within the park, asking more than 200 Park and concession employees to provide input on the most crucial environmental issues facing the Park. The results of the survey identified solid waste management as the most important environmental issue facing the Park. This result was driven by the concern that mismanagement of solid waste would lead to grizzly bear habituation and the desire for ensuring the success of the Park’s newly constructed compost facility.

To address this issue, the team designed and implemented a program to manage the Park’s solid waste and promote point source separation of recyclable materials and hazardous waste. Since this program was implemented, there have been a number of processes developed to reduce or divert solid waste from the landfill. Noteworthy achievements of this program include, but are not limited to:

- Sixty-three recycling bins are now located in the Park. Between 2003 and 2005, there has been an estimated 70 percent increase in the amount of recyclable materials collected;
- Through a partnership with Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone and Grand Teton concessioners, the Yellowstone Park Foundation, and several private entities, there is now a program for collecting and recycling propane cylinders in the greater Yellowstone area;
- A focused education campaign was implemented with the surrounding communities to promote a regional glass recycling program. In 2005, a glass recycler processed more than 1,000 tons of collected glass from within the region and the Park;
- Beginning in 2005, all used tires were diverted from the landfill to be recycled. In 2005 more than 4,000 tires were recycled.

Recycling combined with composting, and other pre-sorting processes have resulted in the Park diverting 65 percent of its solid waste from the landfill waste stream in 2005.

In addition, the team continued use of alternative fuels (i.e., biodiesel) and soy-based lubricants; purchased over 500 gallons of environmentally friendly cleaning products; and ran a successful employee ride-share program.