



The Natural Laboratory Podcast Transcript: Sustainability at Point Reyes National Seashore

Introduction

This is the Natural Laboratory, a podcast exploring science for Bay Area National Parks. I'm Daniel Strain.

[loading laundry into a washing machine]

Every week, I run my smelly clothes through the washing machine gauntlet. But this week, I'm switching the dial from hot water to cold. [Dial clicking] With help from the website doyourpartparks.org, I've pledged to save cash and reduce my impact on climate change at the same time.

In the washing machine or on the road, we emit billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air annually. These gases contribute to the planet heating a little more each day, which could spur floods, droughts, and forest fires in California. It's hard to imagine that one washing machine chugging along on cold could help. But it can.

John Dell'Osso Interview

John Dell'Osso: You can do things that are at a smaller level, for example, changing out light bulbs or, better yet, even turning them off in a room you've just left. Little things like that can make a difference.

Daniel Strain: John Dell'Osso is Chief of Interpretation and Resource Education at Point Reyes National Seashore. In 2007, Point Reyes joined the Climate Friendly Parks Network—a coalition of 49 parks that have pledged to make small carbon cuts count.

JD: The Climate Friendly Program is a program put together by the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. And the idea behind it is to allow parks in the national park system to have the tools to, first of all, look at their carbon footprint to see where they are, what they're generating right now, and give them the actual tools to reduce that carbon footprint.

Sara Hammond Interview

DS: Energy Manager Sara Hammond is in charge of greenhouse gas slashing, but not burning, at Point Reyes. To meet the park's energy goals—a 15 percent drop in emissions by 2015—she's targeting excess carbon from four sources: waste, building, transportation, and other.

Sara Hammond: And our biggest category here at Point Reyes National Seashore is other. It's the methane that's emitted from the cattle that are part of the dairy ranching communities.

**Sara Hammond
Interview
(continued)**

DS: Hammond isn't looking to get rid of the seashore's cows—they're important park residents—she just wants to limit their carbon hoof-prints. Methane digesters—devices that turn cow pies into power—could fill that need.

SH: So, we're looking at a couple of ranches where cows are being fed and milked in one central area where you could flush that waste into a lagoon and cover it, and, through the magic of chemistry, it breaks down into methane.

DS: And methane, also known as natural gas, is a clean-burning fuel. Cows, however, aren't the only sources of waste at Point Reyes. Field biologists, trail crews, and office workers make their dent, too. To target this waste, Hammond installed low-flow urinals in park bathrooms to save water, and started a recycling program to save paper, plastic, and aluminum trash. The park also put solar panels on six buildings, and Hammond plans to add them to seven more soon.

SH: We're really ramping up our solar here, and I've calculated that through

the solar on those buildings, we'll be producing close to 30 percent of our load.

[electric car sounds]

DS: Point Reyes scientists can ride to study sites in style in five all-electric Toyota RAV4s. These plug-in cars get 80 miles per charge and run quietly. Louder vehicles like backhoes and bobcats refuel at the park's diesel blending pump, which mixes biodiesel with traditional diesel gas. These overhauls have made Point Reyes a greener place to work or explore.

But climate change is a global problem, one the National Park Service can't address on its own. As climate change education grows across the parks, Hammond hopes that Point Reyes' two million annual visitors will take away more than just photos during their stay.

SH: It's not park service employees alone that are causing global climate change. And we get so many visitors a year, and we have this really wonderful captive audience to say, "This is what we're doing at Point Reyes, and we real do care."

Conclusion

Lowering carbon emissions doesn't require a big government budget, Hammond says. Park-goers can trim waste, at a profit, in any number of ways, whether it's by driving less, recycling more, or turning down the thermostat.

[washing machine running]

I not only pledged to wash my clothes in cold water, I also reset my

laptop's sleep function and switched from paper to electronic mail. According to doyourpartparks.org, in 15 days, I've saved almost \$4 and 71 pounds of carbon dioxide—equal to half the energy the average American consumes each year watching TV. And, at least, now I know my new jeans won't shrink.

For the Pacific Coast Science and Learning Center, I'm Daniel Strain.