

For further information:
Shirley Barnes
608-623-2109
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IOWA COUNTY WORKING TO IMPROVE ENERGY USE AND RECYCLING EFFORTS

County employees are now getting into the act of improving energy efficiency and recycling efforts in Iowa County. An on-line survey was recently distributed to all employees asking about energy use and recycling efforts in their departments, in an effort to cut costs and improve the environmental health of their buildings.

"We're hoping the survey will act as a catalyst to enact changes in energy use and recycling within the county's operation by acting as an incentive to consider a countywide purchasing/procurement policy," says Scott Godfrey, co-chair of the Eco-County Steering Committee of Iowa County, which was created as the result of Iowa County becoming one of the state's first eco-counties. The County Board passed the Eco-County Resolution in October, 2008.

In addition to the online survey, the Eco-County Steering Committee has several other projects in the works. Committee member Amber Westerman is creating a "yellow pages" of green builders and contractors in the area. To be included, contact Westerman at amberwesterman@verizon.net or call 935-9030. The committee is also developing a resource library of green and healthy ideas.

But the best way for Iowa county residents to learn more is to mark their calendars now for the family friendly 2nd Annual Sustain Iowa County Fair, Saturday, April 26 at the Dodgeville High School. Participants will learn about Solar Hot Water; Photovoltaic and Wind Systems; Low Cash Lifestyles for Young Families; Eating Local Foods Year Round; Building Your Own Low-Cost Home; Homeowners' Real Experiences with Solar, Wind and Clean Wood Burning; How to Get Cash Grants for Clean Living; the benefits of an Energy Audit; Protecting Iowa County's Water; and Fostering the Land Ethic of Aldo Leopold, among other topics. Child care and lunch will be provided at this free event. Donations will be welcome.

All the Eco-County Steering Committee efforts are focused on figuring out "the best actions that are doable and affordable -- both within the county government and in the wider community," says Paul Ohlrogge, community resource development agent for UW Extension. "Everything doesn't have to be done at once, but if we have lots of people putting their heads together we can come up with innovative, cost effective ways to protect Iowa County."

The Iowa County Board of Supervisors passed the Eco-County Resolution in October, 2008, to promote energy efficiency and environmentally friendly action by local governments, the business community and private citizens through community education, community engagement and public policy,

According to the resolution, "The willingness of Iowa County to move in the direction of eco-county designation can serve as a model for our residents, encouraging economic development and industrial initiatives while protecting the ecosystems in which they raise their families. Even before it became an official Eco-County, Iowa County was protecting its environment by sponsoring programs such as "Where Water Matters" and an on-going Groundwater Quantity and Quality Study. The Planning and Zoning Committee was working on zoning ordinances for wind and solar installations. An energy audit of major county facilities with high energy use was underway as was the design of the proposed LEED certified Health and Human Services building in Dodgeville.

For more information about the work of the Eco-County Steering Committee, contact Scott Godfrey at scott.godfrey@iowacounty.org.

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