



SUSTAINABILITY HANDBOOK 2015

The policies in this handbook support Walking Mountains Science Center staff and volunteers in creating an organizational culture of sustainability and stewardship while fulfilling the criteria of the *Actively Green* business eco-certification program.

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Mission Statement and Business Code of Conduct:

Mission Statement: The mission of Walking Mountains Science Center is to awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education.

Organization Values: (S.C.I.L.L.)

Stewardship: We seek to understand, honor, and live in harmony with the ecological processes by which nature sustains all life, shifting our perceptions from parts to wholes and from objects to relationships. We serve as responsible role models of sustainability and stewardship in our community. Our programs are designed to foster stewardship behaviors in participants while enhancing human-nature relationships and increasing socio-ecological resilience.

Community: We seek to engage all people living in our community. We collaborate respectfully with all stakeholders, first listening and seeking to understand their needs, and then engaging in dialogue to find common ground and create constructive solutions. Our programs are designed to create enriching interactions and positive experiences for community members. We believe we are all connected to each other, our environment, and the greater web of life.

Innovation: We believe innovation and creativity are essential to envisioning and creating a sustainable future. We are passionate about developing solutions and striving towards best practices in all of our programs. We pride ourselves in valuing individual and collective innovation within our organization and also through our partnerships with stakeholders. We are leaders and social entrepreneurs in the fields of environmental science education and sustainability. We actively incubate and empower an innovative organizational culture.

Learning: The world is continually changing and therefore we strive to acquire and promote new knowledge, experiences and understanding. We value scientific inquiry and critical thinking and we strive to awaken a sense of wonder and curiosity in all learners. We design and facilitate learning experiences that are place-based and that draw upon the unique ecological and social attributes of our community while encouraging broader systems thinking to help solve local and global challenges. We evaluate the outcomes of our programs and projects so that we can deliberately adapt and improve.

Leadership: We lead our community in efforts that enhance environmental knowledge, stewardship and sustainability. We are proactive and we understand that true leadership is transformative and sometimes unpopular. Our leadership is thoughtful, patient, and constructive. We lead to change hearts and minds in ways people will understand and embrace. We follow and support the leadership of others with common goals.

Vision Statement:

Walking Mountains Science Center is a national model for place-based natural science and sustainability education. The Science Center Campus in Avon, Colorado is a gathering place for environmental learning and stewardship in our community. Through program offerings and initiatives, Walking Mountains ensures that:

- People of all ages and walks of life develop a life-long connection to the natural world through participation in Walking Mountains programs and projects;
- Natural science education and environmental sustainability are priorities in our community;
- Walking Mountains is an integral part of local schools' curriculum wherein every child in the Eagle Valley participates in our programs throughout their academic career; students throughout the state and country also participate in our year-round programs.
- As a leader in training environmental and natural science educators and sustainability leaders, Walking Mountains is sought after for its internships, graduate fellowships and professional development for teachers and others;
- Walking Mountains is a role model in sustainable best practices and design, always striving to make ecologically informed decisions.

Strategic Plan Organizational Objectives:

The work of Walking Mountains Board of Directors and Staff is guided by a Strategic Plan. Each year the Board of Directors update and adopt the Plan and each full-time year-round staff members creates an individual Annual Plan that is aligned with the Strategic Plan. Walking Mountains is internally organized by four organizational divisions: Youth Programs, Community Programs, Sustainability & Stewardship Programs, and Administration and Governance. The major objectives of the 2014 Strategic Plan include:

- *School Programs Objective*—To positively impact the education of Eagle County students by providing exceptional environmental education experiences that improve science literacy while fostering stewardship. Serve all K-8 and select high school students by 2018, once a year throughout their academic career.
- *Community Programs Objective*—To promote environmental knowledge and stewardship by providing exceptional informal education experiences to the residents and visitors of our community at our three integrated facilities, Science Center Campus, Nature Discovery Center, and Vail Nature Center, by 2017.
- *Sustainability & Stewardship Programs Objective*—Double the overall impact of Sustainability and Stewardship Programs from the 2013 baseline. Programs include: Energy Smart, Zero Waste, Landscape Stewardship, and Sustainability Education.
- *Organizational Greatness Objective*—To be a great non-profit organization recognized for fulfilling our mission and our highly qualified Board and staff, broad community awareness, and fiscal sustainability.

Each of the above Organizational Objectives is supported by multiple Strategies which are supported by individual staff members' Annual Plans. Please refer to the Walking Mountains Science Center 2014 Strategic Plan for additional information. Each year Walking Mountains' staff and board of directors develop an organizational financial budget that is in alignment with the organization's Strategic Plan.

Sustainability Policy Statement: Walking Mountains is committed to sustainability of the Eagle Valley and surrounding mountain environment. We value the ecological, economic, and cultural health of our community and our valley. Therefore we strive to engage our participants, visitors, and employees in environmental stewardship and learning about the surrounding mountain environment. We also encourage our participants, visitors, and employees to participate in local cultural and educational opportunities that enrich our community's sense of well-being. Walking Mountains uses a Sustainability Action Plan to set goals and guide our progress and we create an Annual Sustainability Report to communicate and celebrate our successes.

Sustainability Code of Conduct Pledge: At Walking Mountains we are committed to sustainability and the "triple bottom line" approach including: environmental sustainability, financial sustainability, and social equity. We integrate sustainability into our management and facility operations and our programming for youth and adult participants. We are a socially and environmentally responsible organization and therefore we address what we can control through our operations, and we influence what we can't control by considering the extended supply chain when we purchase from and contract with vendors. For additional information please refer to Walking Mountains' Sustainability Action Plan See Appendix A).

Green Team Roles and Responsibilities: Walking Mountains has a staff Green Team with two co-chairs and other staff represented from each of the organization's departments. The Green Team meets monthly and is responsible for coordinating the organization's sustainability management and initiatives and maintaining Actively Green eco-certification using the Quickbase sustainability management system.

Specific Responsibilities:

- Record and monitor water usage and make recommendations
- Record and monitor greenhouse gas emissions and make recommendations
- Record and monitor waste production and recycling and make recommendations
- Record and monitor energy usage and make recommendations
- Coordinate with Office and Finance Manager to record and monitor purchasing of paper, recycled paper, and responsible (sustainable) products and make recommendations.

Waste Reduction Pledge: Walking Mountains Science Center is committed to limiting our environmental impact by reducing waste through recycling and composting. Staff members are familiar with recycling policies and procedures and are capable of instructing guests and visitors about how to use our recycling system.

Recycling Policies and Procedures: Recycling bins are accessible and well labeled in all exhibit and rental spaces and are emptied into the larger, 96 gallon recycling bins on the west side of the Field Studies Base Camp. WMSC staff will monitor the amount and type of waste in our sorted containers to track our waste and recycling production and maximize the amount of waste diverted from landfills.

The following describes how we dispose of specific types of recyclable materials:

Paper: Paper recycling containers are the only recycling bins available in the upstairs office space. Most paper products can be recycled but those that cannot be are listed on laminated sheets on each recycling container.

Cardboard: Cardboard is broken down and tape and staples are removed before it is placed neatly in the recycling area near the staff entrance for Green Team members to transport to a recycling collection center.

Plastic, Glass, and Aluminum: Our comingled recycling can include all recyclable plastic, glass, and aluminum containers marked with a recycling symbol. Staff members rinse out containers to prevent both a dirty recycling stream and odor in our indoor recycling bins

Composting: Some staff food waste can be composted using our worm bin. Compost is placed in the large container in the FSBC refrigerator and added to the worm bin regularly by members of the Green Team.

Water Use Policy: The Walking Mountains core campus is a LEED platinum certified facility and the organization is dedicated to the efficient use of water, both indoors and for irrigation.

Water Use Monitoring Plan Objective: A Walking Mountains staff member tracks and records water use on a monthly basis. With a baseline established, Walking Mountains determines and enacts the best procedures to reduce water consumption.

Procedure:

1. Water utility bills are used to determine monthly water usage and establish seasonal trends related to irrigation.

2. Green Team members work with irrigation contractors to find ways to adjust the system to sustainably use water, while ensuring all landscapes are cared for properly.
3. Energy Programs staff work with Conundrum Technologies to explore the possibility of outdoor moisture sensors to eliminate unnecessary watering.
4. Staff are encouraged to use water from low-flow, indoor fixtures responsibly.

Responsible person or functional area: Green Team member

Energy Reduction & Renewables Policy: Walking Mountains is dedicated to efficient use of energy resources and on-site renewable energy generation.

Energy reduction Plan Objective: Walking Mountains tracks and records energy use and renewable generation and record on a monthly basis. WMSC will continually aim to reduce energy use thereby decreasing the non-renewable portion of energy consumption.

Procedure:

1. Walking Mountains' Building Dashboard system is used to compile total energy usage, total monthly renewable generation, and cross checked with utility bills to ensure monthly recording accuracy.
2. Energy Programs staff meet with building designers and maintenance team to ensure proper functioning of green building design features and explore opportunities for adjustments.
3. Energy Programs staff explore additional efficiency projects (i.e. indoor lighting) to reduce peak electrical loads.
4. All staff are encouraged to make behavioral changes to reduce energy use, such as lower thermostat set points and turning off lights when there is plentiful natural light.
5. Responsible person or functional area: Energy Programs staff

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy: Walking Mountains is dedicated to the accounting and reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions related to operations.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Plan Objective: Walking Mountains will total the emissions equivalent from all non-renewable energy sources, employee

commuting, and company vehicle operation. Action plans are created to reduce total emissions.

Procedure:

1. Total greenhouse gas emissions equivalents related to non-renewable energy use is totaled on an annual basis. Reduction procedures outlined in the Energy Reduction and Renewables Policy Statement will be used to reduce this total.
2. Employee commuting mileage and frequency was totaled to establish a baseline. Staff are encourage to carpool, bike, and use public transportation to reduce commuting mileage via incentives and planning facilitation. Commuting mileage is recorded on a monthly basis to track progress.
3. Mileage on fleet vehicles is tracked on a monthly basis. Employees are encouraged to use fuel in these vehicles responsibly.

Responsible person or functional area: Green Team member

Pollution Prevention—Vehicles: Walking Mountains reduces air pollution and vehicle traffic by encouraging our participants, visitors, and employees to carpool and use public transportation whenever possible. Our employees are rewarded for using alternative and public transportation to get to work including: carpooling, walking, biking, and using local Eco-Transit buses. Whenever possible, we choose fuel efficient vehicles to support our operations.

Chemical Use and Purchasing Pledge: Walking Mountains strives to minimize the amount of harmful chemicals it introduces into the environment by using organic and biodegradable cleaning products and employing Organic Housekeepers, an eco-friendly cleaning service, to clean its buildings. Most cleaning is done with a solution of white vinegar and water.

Responsible Purchasing Pledge: Walking Mountains strives to support sustainable community economic development through the support of local businesses and the purchasing of recycled, fair trade, local and organic products when possible.

Responsible Purchasing Plan Objective: Walking Mountains track our purchasing of recycled, fair-trade, local and organic products purchased on a quarterly basis. Walking Mountains calculates the amount of eco-friendly products purchased as a percentage of the total products purchased each quarter.

Procedure to Follow:

1. A policy to purchase 30 – 100 % recycled copy paper was implemented in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.
2. Staff are encouraged to purchase products locally when available, (within a 100-mile radius of the organization), over importing from outside the region.
3. A new receipt coding strategy will be implemented in the 2014-'15 fiscal year in order to track responsible purchasing within the organization.
4. A list of preferred and local vendors has been made available to support staff responsible purchasing goals.

Responsible person or functional area: Office and Financial Manager

Paper Reduction Pledge: Walking Mountains pledges to reduce our paper usage. We commit to use recycled copy paper we report the amount of paper we use on a quarterly basis.

Paper Reduction Plan Objective: Walking Mountains purchases paper for our copier(s) and printer(s) that is, at a minimum, 30% post-consumer recycled. We have committed to reducing our use of copy paper 10% annually from the 2014 baseline.

Procedures to follow:

1. Walking Mountains will only purchase 30% – 100% recycled copy paper.
2. Tracking and documentation of overall volume of copy paper purchased is maintained on a quarterly basis
3. Copy paper with print on one side must be reused in Tray 2 of the HP laser printer, or made into note paper for employee desks.

Responsible person or functional area: Office and Financial Manager

Community Impacts—Good Neighbor Policy: Walking Mountains recognizes that the overall well-being of the Eagle Valley community depends upon people living in neighborhoods throughout the Valley and surrounding communities. Walking Mountains operations do not jeopardize the well-being or access to basic provisions or services of any person or neighboring community.

Giving Back to Our Community Pledge: As a nonprofit educational organization in the Eagle Valley, Walking Mountains is engaged in “giving back” to our community on a daily basis with our mission “to awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education.”

We provide opportunities for our employees and participants to volunteer in the Eagle Valley community to “give back” to the people in need and the natural environment. Announcements with opportunities to “give back” are posted on bulletin board and through email and social media.

Walking Mountains monitors and tracks the number of volunteer hours that our staff members contribute to other non-profit organizations in the community.

Person responsible for tracking staff volunteer hours: Office and Finance Manager

Customer Feedback Policy: Walking Mountains is an educational organization with a mission “to awaken a sense of wonder and inspire environmental stewardship and sustainability through natural science education.” We provide over 50 types of program experiences year-round to our customers (students and other participants) at various indoor and outdoor venues and locations throughout the Eagle Valley.

Below is a summary of how we collect feedback in: 1) multi-day **youth programs**, 2) informal interpretive **community programs**, and 3) in our **sustainability and stewardship programs**.

Youth Programs: uses a grade-level and curriculum specific pre and post-test assessment forms to systematically measure the effectiveness of programs toward increasing students’ understanding and interest in sustainability and related environmental topics. Walking Mountains has Youth Programs Evaluation Plan that provides staff with guidance to conduct assessments of short and long term program outcomes, both for the purposes of refining program content and/or implementation and to validate program expansion and continued funding. In addition, program evaluation forms are collected from teachers and youth chaperones in order to understand the benefits these stakeholders perceive from participation in Walking Mountains’ programs. In addition, our instructors conduct debriefs at the end of each program and specifically address whether or not the program’s goals were met.

Community Programs: Walking Mountains collects customer feedback forms (surveys) from visitors at our Science Center campus. The data from these forms is collected and entered into a customer database on a quarterly basis. A sustainability specific survey question was added to the survey to better track whether or not the visitor’s experience made an impact on their understanding of sustainability. In addition, seasonal interns who provide many of the community programs are evaluated regularly and they also complete an evaluation at the end of their employment.

Sustainability and Stewardship Programs: There are several types of programs within the sustainability and stewardship programs department that include customer feedback: high school students participate in a 12 week paid Natural Resource Internship and they complete an evaluation at the end of the internship. Zero Waste sustainability interns

gather survey data about the general public's impressions of recycling and composting while they are working at public events. These surveys are evaluated by the intern's supervisor. In addition, each intern completes an end-of-season evaluation form. Participants in the Actively Green sustainable business training program complete an evaluation form at the end of the training sessions to help staff continuously improve program delivery. Energy Smart participants are given a customer feedback form to rate the satisfaction of their home energy assessment experience.

Participant & Visitor Education Regarding Sustainability Policy: Walking Mountains promotes the principles of sustainability and stewardship to our participants and visitors in the following ways: through their interactions with our employees, our marketing and internal and external communications, our printed collateral, and our advertisements and website.

Participant & Visitor Education—Do No Harm/Responsible Travel Policy: Walking Mountains values and protects our surrounding mountain landscape and watershed. Our organization benefits from local ecosystem services such as clean air and water and natural open spaces for our participants, visitors, and employees to recreate and rejuvenate. We are surrounded by the 2.3 million acre White River National Forest including federally designated Wilderness Areas. Walking Mountains helps sustain local natural resources and protects the public lands around us by promoting the following sustainable behaviors in our participants, visitors, and employees: disposing of waste properly; respecting and not feeding wildlife; and preventing erosion by traveling on designated trails and obeying trail closures and special use restrictions.

Participant and Visitor Education—Economic Development Policy: Walking Mountains supports long-term economic vitality in the Eagle Valley by encouraging participants, visitors, and employees to purchase products and services from local vendors whenever possible.

If you would like more information or have suggestions to help continuously improve sustainability at Walking Mountains please contact the Director of Sustainability and Stewardship Programs or the Sustainability Programs Coordinator.