

ReEnvision Waste at SRP

Executive Summary

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Waste management within the office represents a major sustainability problem for many corporations. Salt River Project (SRP) faces unique challenges at Coronado Generating Station (CGS) and the employee recreation facility, Project Employee Recreation Facility (PERA). Sustainability efforts at CGS, located in remote St. Johns, Arizona, have been halted by the lack of local recycling companies in the area and the 200-mile distance from SRP's core facilities. Employees at CGS are environmentally minded, yet these same employees do not see the connection between environmental stewardship and sustainability. The PERA club posed a dramatically different issue, as the facility hosts various events that include both SRP employees and thousands of visitors. The Skills Training Center facility opened on March 1st but renovations continue at PERA with a new major facility opening in November. The opening of the new Skills Training Center presented an opportune time to install new programs and infrastructure.

SRP has, in the past, rolled out a simple solution: the installation of recycling containers with signs indicating what goes in each container. However, an overall reluctance to change behavior organizationally is leading to underutilized and contaminated recycling streams. To address overall sustainability, SRP has developed a comprehensive set of sustainability goals including waste reduction goals that call for at least a 50% reduction in office waste. There is even discussion of increasing the goal to 75% waste reduction in the coming years. Finding a solution to the reluctance of corporate change will require flexibility and repetition. My vision was to establish new waste management practices, community collaboration, and excitement in order to help reach or surpass the SRP 2035 goal of 50% waste reduction.

Employee engagement at both sites was based on the evidence based 6 step approach to implementing sustainable practices, including sparking initial engagement, forming working sustainability teams (Green Teams) and communicating effectively (Russo & Hoffman, 2008). These efforts will help bring sustainable initiatives and efforts to sites that are otherwise overlooked by SRP sustainability and employee engagement efforts.

Discussions with CGS and PERA employees helped to guide my work at the beginning of the project. Extending these conversations and engaging the with various facilities allowed me to determine what specific adaptations on current infrastructure would be valuable for each site. For PERA this meant implementing composting to better deal with the food centered waste at the site. In the meantime, I contacted recycling vendors about servicing CGS and chose Waste Management as an appropriate vendor that provided service and future flexibility.

Various and repeated meetings with internal groups within SRP helped to secure permissions and coordinate installation of infrastructure and garner excitement for upcoming changes to each respective site. A formal proposal was written for each site then underwent multiple rounds of revisions in response to insights from various managers and stakeholders. I leveraged the expertise from my coworkers to get each infrastructure, sites, as well as vendors coordinated and ready for on time installation. Assessment of each site's progress and interaction with new infrastructure was conducted through visual inspection as well as via an employee survey. Results showed that overall the program has been well received by employees but continued communication and engagement will be necessary throughout the life of the program.

Motivated and passionate individuals were self-selected to be trained as Green Team members and formed onsite Green Team (sustainability advocates) for each respective facility. Importantly, onsite Green Teams were given endorsement from site managers, allowing them become an asset to get programs started both with infrastructure and employee education. Continued engagement of the Green Team during and after waste management implementation will help keep sustainable progress alive and thriving into the future.

Finally, the Sustainability Policy and Programs group dedicated to maintain the installed infrastructure as well as continue to work with both sites to reduce overall waste. By committing to recycling, composting, and reducing the amount of waste produced at each site, SRP is making strides toward becoming a more sustainable company.

This project addressed waste from a new perspective at SRP. Instead of following previous methods, common waste at each site was evaluated through conversations, and appropriate methods of addressing that waste was implemented. In addition, I worked closely with on-site employees to ensure that engagement and materials provided were appropriate for the audience. The methods employed in this project can be used as a model for implementing new waste strategies at other peripheral SRP facilities and will help SRP reach their 2035 sustainability goals.

Continuing work on the project will include leveraging the Green Team members to engage employees and reinforcing education on sorting properly. Additionally, evaluation of waste can be used to identify solutions to reduce the total amount of waste produced at each facility in addition to shifting toward compostable or recyclable options.