Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Office of Small Business

Be an Environmental Steward!

Information presented in this publication is intended to provide a general understanding of the statutory and regulatory requirements for small businesses. This information is not intended to replace, limit or expand upon the complete statutory and regulatory requirements found in the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and Title 35 of the Illinois Administrative Code.

What is an Environmental Steward?

Environmental stewards strive to sustain natural resources and our environment for future generations. People depend on natural resources for their livelihood. However, pressures on the environment resulting from development are steadily increasing. Therefore, it is necessary for citizens and the business community to ensure that their activities and operations are environmentally responsible.

Small businesses play a large role in protecting and preserving the environment in many communities. Small businesses can fulfill this role while still maintaining their competitiveness. As a member of a community, a small business can assume a leadership role by becoming more environmentally friendly and volunteering to work on local environmental projects. Becoming an environmental steward in your community may improve your image, lower costs, and result in a safer workplace.

What Environmental Stewardship Activities Can My Business Participate In?

Maintain environmental compliance - Ensure that your business is in compliance with all applicable environmental regulations. Conduct a self-assessment to determine any deficiencies.

Use natural resources responsibly - Conserve resources such as water, minerals and wood by using them efficiently and recycling when appropriate. Protect any wildlife habitats around your business.

Reduce waste generation - Use less toxic materials to limit the amount of hazardous wastes produced, and improve the efficiency of your operations to reduce the amount of waste generated.

Become involved in your community - Participate in local environmental projects such as neighborhood recycling, abandoned lot cleanups, community gardens and watershed restoration projects. Encourage employees to become involved.

Let the community know what you are doing - Send out press releases of successful environmental projects implemented by your business.

What are Some Volunteer Environmental Stewardship Programs in Illinois?

The following programs represent just a few of the environmental stewardship activities going on in Illinois. Contact your local conservation agencies for more information on these and other opportunities.

Partners for Clean Air, sponsored by the Illinois EPA, is a coalition of regional businesses, transportation organizations, health advocacy groups and local governments committed to cleaning our air. Its goal is to improve overall air quality and public health by advocating voluntary actions in metropolitan Chicago and northwestern Indiana. Partners for Clean Air administers a voluntary ozone reduction program called “Ozone Action Days.” Businesses, industries, local governments and other organizations can become Partners for Clean Air by signing the Partners’ Pledge and voluntarily taking actions to reduce ozone. You can receive information about joining by calling toll-free at (800) 451-5983.

The Resource Watch Program is sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to protect Illinois natural resources and promote environmental stewardship. The volunteer program encourages citizens and businesses to adopt and monitor wildlife and conservation areas in the state. Resource Watch program participants can assist in certain wildlife management efforts and in the monitoring of specific areas at least twice a month to report any activity that threatens wildlife and the environment. For more information, contact your local conservation police officer or IDNR at (217)782-6431.

The EcoWatch Network is a statewide network of volunteer monitoring programs coordinated through IDNR. Adult volunteers and high school science teachers and students monitor rivers, forests, prairies, wetlands and other environments through programs such as the Illinois RiverWatch, ForestWatch, PrairieWatch, WetlandWatch and UrbanWatch. The programs goals are high-quality environmental data collection, increased public awareness and environmental stewardship. For more information, contact IDNR at (217)782-6431.

The Annual Illinois Governor’s Pollution Prevention Awards is sponsored by the Illinois Waste Management and Research Center (WMRC) and IDNR. This award honors industrial facilities, vendors, trade organizations, community groups, educational institutions, government and service institutions for their pollution prevention efforts. Organizations that focus on source reduction techniques rather than traditional treatment, control, and disposal methods are honored through this awards program. For more information, contact WMRC at (217) 244-8901 or visit the WMRC web page at wmrc.hazard.uiuc.edu.

Where can I go for more information?

For information on regulatory issues related to environmental stewardship, call the Illinois EPA Office of Small Business Helpline at (888) EPA-1996 or the DCCA Small Business Environmental Assistance Helpline at (800) 252-3998. All calls are considered confidential and the caller can remain anonymous. For other information about environmental issues, see the Illinois EPA web page at www.epa.state.il.us.

TOGETHER WE CAN PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE ENVIRONMENT OF ILLINOIS