

Summary

Delta Institute and Sustainable Research Group (SRG) spearhead the West Michigan Sustainable Purchasing Consortium (WMSPC) in 2006. Their first cooperative purchasing project organized a contract that would save its members money on recycled content copy paper. Between October 2008 and May 2009, members purchased 103,705 pounds of recycled content paper. These purchases helped to save hundreds of trees and kept tens of thousands of pounds of emissions and solid waste out of the environment.

Purpose of the WMSPC

WMSPC provides West Michigan businesses the opportunities to easily purchase environmentally preferable products at cost-competitive prices, as compared to traditional products. Its key goals include improving regional environmental quality and stewardship, growing local economies, and increasing social responsibility particularly for the lower Grand River watershed area.

WMSPC Players

Its interdisciplinary advisory committee includes:

- Cascade Engineering
- Center for Sustainability at Aquinas College
- City of Grand Rapids
- Delta Institute
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Grand Valley State University
- Local First
- Steelcase
- Sustainable Research Group
- Van Andel Institute
- Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality

Click [here](#) to see all the WMSPC members.

Key Contract Specifications

- ✓ Cut sheet paper
- ✓ Green Seal attributes including:
 - Minimum 30% post-consumer
 - Chlorine-free

- ✓ Jam-free guarantee
- ✓ Locally sourced
- ✓ Fixed price for 1 year

Total Purchase Volume

Between October 1, 2008 and May 12, 2009, WMSPC members purchased
89,505 lbs of 30% PCW paper
14,200 lbs of 100% PCW paper

103,705 lbs of recycled content paper total

Not eligible to join WMSPC? Join Delta Institute's other [regional purchasing consortiums](#) in the Great Lakes region OR get competitive group purchasing prices on RPN recommended greener paper through [US Communities Office Depot contract](#)

Environmental Benefits

Using the [Paper Calculator](#) and figures from the EPA, compared to the same purchase volume made from virgin forest resources, WMSPC purchases saved:

- ✓ 70 tons of wood = 531 trees
- ✓ 192,934 gallons of water = 6890 loads of laundry in a high efficiency washing machine
- ✓ 371,000,000 BTUs energy = 4 American homes powered for a year
- ✓ 42,652 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions = 13 cars off the road for a year
- ✓ 22,498 lbs solid waste = one garbage truck full of trash

Obstacles

Because the structures, policies, procedures and timelines of purchasing departments vary, cooperation and dedication are essential to

getting a consortium off the ground. Fortunately, the green initiatives have a strong momentum in West Michigan, and many WMSPC members already work together through the Community Sustainability Partnership.

“Cooperative green purchasing saves money and reduces environmental impacts. We are proud of the action WMSPC members are taking to improve our local watershed!”

~Mary Ellen Mika, Steelcase,
WMSPC co-chair

Conclusion

Paper was a successful product to launch the consortium because it is relatively simple to swap one kind of paper for another. Other products – like janitorial supplies and de-icing chemicals – will require more collaboration between end-users and purchasing departments as the environmentally preferable products in these categories may involve application techniques that differ from conventional products.

With challenge comes opportunity, though: WMSPC can leverage the experience and purchasing power of its members to garner

competitive pricing as well as training and education.

About the Responsible Purchasing Network

www.ResponsiblePurchasing.org

RPN is a program at the Center for a New American Dream designed to promote and practice responsible purchasing by identifying best practices, developing effective purchasing tools, educating the market, and using collective purchasing power to maximize environmental stewardship, protect human health, and support local and global sustainability. We work with buyers to identify and utilize standards and practices that minimize environmental impacts while emphasizing product performance or cost-effectiveness.

About Delta Institute

www.delta-institute.org

Delta creates, funds and implements programs that promote a healthy environment, a strong economy and thriving, vibrant communities. The Delta Institute works with diverse partners from across the Great Lakes Region, on a range of initiatives that will move the region toward a greener economy. We are reducing pollution by working with cities, towns, and private companies to implement green purchasing practices. We are creating jobs by removing carbon from the atmosphere. We are helping businesses cut their costs by adopting green best practices, and we are transforming urban wastelands into vibrant, profitable marketplaces.