



**South Suburban**  
PARKS AND RECREATION

# **Sustainability Charter**

Adopted June 2012

## ***Sustainability Charter***

The South Suburban Park and Recreation District always has been committed to providing the best services for its customers and employees. In the past, this desire to give good value has been sufficient reason for striving to be efficient in our use of resources. Meanwhile the growing global understanding that everything and everyone is connected and that all of our choices have impacts compels us to become more intentional with those choices. The District has been having many conversations around the issues of sustainability over the past several years and now feels the need to make those efforts more specific and measureable. The National Recreation and Park Association has an Ethics of Stewardship statement that addresses the principles and practices specific to sustainable green infrastructure—that portion of the local community for which we at South Suburban are directly responsible. The NRPA statement is attached at the end of this Charter (“The Ethics of Stewardship” page 5) and is incorporated for reference with this charter.

## ***Committee Mission Statement***

The South Suburban Parks and Recreation Mission Statement is

*“... To foster healthy living through stewardship of the environment, parks, trails and open space, and by providing recreational services and programs.”*

The Sustainability Committee’s broad goal is to help the District meet current needs in a manner that makes the best, most environmentally and fiscally sound use of available resources, while preserving the ability to meet those needs in the future. With that goal in mind,

The Sustainability Committee Mission is:

*“Continuously to improve our stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by our community by identifying and applying sustainable practices in design, construction, operations, and maintenance throughout the District.”*

## ***Goals and Priorities***

In the near term, the Committee’s goal is to identify what sustainable practices have already been incorporated by District employees, and then to identify future practices and prioritize them. With the understanding that goals and priorities will likely change as the committee learns more about sustainability issues and practices and how they may fit into the existing organization, we expect the following broad outline:

- Spend some time identifying what our employees have already been doing that we can publicize, celebrate, and perhaps duplicate in other departments.
- Look at what has already been developed in other park and recreation agencies and integrate what is appropriate for us.

- Research local government agencies with sustainability programs and/or statements and incorporate where possible (GreenprintDenver, DRCOG, EPA GreenScapes, etc)
- Develop a multi-year program for phasing in more sustainable practices, with the initial focus being environmental, e.g. water and energy use. Create mechanisms for measuring progress.
- Develop the long-term program to expand the focus to other sustainability issues, e.g. financial and/or social (“sweat-free” tee shirts for athletic teams?). Again, incorporate mechanisms for measuring progress.
- At the end of the first year, revisit the Charter and make appropriate changes.

## ***Committee Structure and Membership***

The Sustainability Committee is ideally comprised from a variety of facilities, programs and employment levels, with at least one department manager. The preferred number of members is 8 to 10. The Human Resources Director will facilitate the first few meetings. The committee may conduct informal or formal surveys of employees to help identify possible new practices and to develop priorities. A key responsibility of each committee member is to act as an ambassador for sustainability by encouraging participation in sustainable practices, bringing feedback to the committee on a regular basis, and assisting with the regular evaluation of the program.

### **Membership**

The Committee currently consists of the following:

- Brett Collins-Committee Chair (Planning)
- Deanna Heyn (Human Resources)
- Martha Turner (Parks)
- Stuart Bunt (Parks)
- Stewart Settle (Communications)
- Jon Boshart (Recreation)
- Scott Ellis (Golf)
- JoAnn Gould (Recreation)

The Committee would like to add a member from Finance, and is open to other interested persons (with supervisor’s approval).

### **Training of Committee Members**

Members of the Committee are encouraged to share resources with each other and with other employees who are in a position to immediately implement new practices.

### **Length of Membership**

Committee members are asked to make a two-year commitment beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup>. A Committee member who starts mid-year will finish the year and serve the full two

calendar year term, with their final day of service ending on a December 31<sup>st</sup>. Committee members may serve consecutive terms.

## ***Committee Logistics***

### **Committee Chair Responsibilities**

The Sustainability Committee Chair will be selected by the Committee members, with the term being two years. Chair selection will be revisited when the term ends (or sooner, as needed). The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Scheduling committee meetings.
- Developing and communicating an agenda for all meetings.
- Ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of all Committee meetings.
- Providing for distribution of communications that relate to Committee meetings.
- Updating and communicating successes and challenges to the Management Team quarterly.
- Working with the committee to establish priorities and a calendar for the year.

### **Meeting Schedule**

Committee meetings will be scheduled on an as-needed basis for a while, as the initial development process unfolds. The regular schedule is still to be determined, and the Committee's hope is to conduct as much of its business as possible by email and telephone, so as to set a sustainable example. Any Committee member who believes an unscheduled meeting is necessary may ask the Chair to schedule such meetings. The Committee meetings are open to other District employees and management is always welcome to participate. If deemed necessary, the Chair may elect to specifically invite other District employees and outside guests to discuss items of relevance.

## ***Decision Process***

All members of the Committee shall participate in open communication, whether in person, by email, or other methods, prior to any recommended action. When practical, decision-making should be made with the objective of creating high levels of support by the majority. This means that decisions will be discussed openly and fairly, finding the best solution at the time.

Decisions/recommendations made by the Committee will be forwarded to the management team, and if approved, will be implemented by the relevant department.

## ***Ground Rules***

Members of the Committee have a special responsibility in serving as positive examples for all employees. Committee members influence employee attitudes by the way they

participate in meetings. Guiding principles help the Committee be productive and create a rewarding experience for its members. The following should be considered:

- All members will treat each other with respect.
- Meetings will start on time.
- All members will take responsibility for the success of the meeting.
- Members should notify the Chair of any known absence. The absent member may submit written comments on the topic that will be discussed at the meeting.
- Members that miss three consecutive meetings will be asked to re-evaluate their ability to commit to the Committee or recommend a replacement.

### ***Budgetary Authority***

The Committee does not have any specific budgetary authority. Incorporation of new practices that involve an up-front cost will be handled through the relevant department.

### ***Communicating with the Organization***

When new sustainable practices are decided upon and approved, communication to the organization from the Committee will include discussion in management meetings, Tuesday News, emails to employees, newsletters, notices in the facilities, the Staffer, employee intranet, and other appropriate vehicles. The Chair will primarily work with the Communications department, with input from the Committee, to implement such communication.

### ***Employee Feedback and Suggestions***

Any individual within South Suburban Parks & Recreation District can submit ideas, feedback, problems, and solutions related to sustainable practices. Such requests should be forwarded to the Committee Chair. Each request will be reviewed by the Committee to determine appropriate action and response.

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### ***The Ethics of Stewardship***

NRPA's National Environmental Stewardship Ethic was created through the collaborative efforts of NRPA staff and members, with the National Society for Park Resources (NSPR) taking a lead role in the development. The Ethic was adopted by the NRPA Board of Trustees as a policy statement on May 15, 2009. Environmental Stewardship is a fundamental component of parks and recreation and holds an important place in NRPA's mission, values and vision. We are very excited about this Ethic and are proud to serve as leaders in supporting and promoting environmental stewardship.

Parks and outdoor recreation lands are the essential green infrastructure of our communities and nation. From the first public commons in colonial American villages to

the vast national parks and forests of the American West, our nation's health, wealth and heritage are tied to the acquisition and wise management of parks and public recreation lands and programs. Parks and public recreation lands are carbon-reducing landscapes which help clean our air and waters, recharge aquifers, and reduce stormwater runoff. They darken our night skies, quiet our communities and provide vital contact with nature for our mental and physical health. They instill a heightened sense of community by serving people of all income levels, all races, all beliefs and all abilities – parks embrace the very essence of our democracy. Parks make communities livable and desirable and are integral to viable economic development and responsible growth policies.

The National Recreation and Park Association, through its national network of park and recreation agencies, professionals, partners and engaged citizens, seeks to serve as a national leader for a revitalized national environmental stewardship ethic. Our embodiment of this ethic includes adhering to the following principles and practices.

## **Principles**

We believe:

Parks and public lands contain many of our communities' best natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources and thereby preserve our heritage.

As national leaders, we have the responsibility to create and continuously promote an enhanced awareness of the critical role parks and public lands play in protecting our global environment and cultural heritage, as well as their value as living laboratories for educating the citizens of this nation, particularly our children.

Parks of all sizes build and enhance a sense of community cohesion and social bonding; as such, park lands must be accessible as amenities and common space for all.

Public policy must focus on promoting parks, green space and outdoor recreation lands and services that make communities more livable and desirable and serve as a primary driver of effective economic development strategies in that they attract businesses, tourists and the creative workforce.

As engaged agencies, organizations and citizens, we must advocate for adequate funding and support to protect, restore and expand these resources and establish innovative strategies for developing a new generation of environmental stewards.

We have the responsibility to develop sustainable practices in land use and facility design, maintenance, and management that serve as models for other organizations and individuals.

## **Practices**

We are resolved that park and recreation professionals, citizen volunteers, supporters, advocates and community leaders must work collaboratively to:

***Practice 1: Promote Sustainable Landscapes***

Protect open space, public lands, wildlife habitat, air and water quality, and provide special protections to ecologically and culturally sensitive land and water resources.

Develop and promote healthy outdoor recreation activities that build a sense of personal responsibility on the part of those individuals using and enjoying our natural and cultural resources.

Ensure that as stewards of our public lands and parks we uphold the responsibility for measuring and monitoring the health and heritage of these resources and ensuring their long-term sustainability.

Monitor parks and recreation lands so decision makers and the general public are knowledgeable of when there is a need for expansion or modifications to protect resource values, safety and enjoyment of participants, and quality of life.

***Practice 2: Foster the Next Generation of Stewards***

Make connecting to nature possible for citizens of all ages and abilities by providing safe access to public lands, parks, and conservation areas close-to-home.

Help eliminate the “nature deficit” condition in America’s youth through programs and nature discovery opportunities in parks.

Provide the resources and knowledge to parents and guardians that will enable them to help their children connect with and enjoy the natural world.

Provide leadership and mentoring for youth to instill in them a sense of hope and joy, a love of nature, and a commitment to stewardship.

Teach outdoor ethics, recreation skills and practices to reduce impacts to natural, cultural and scenic resources.

Work collaboratively with young people and educators to determine and implement new environmental stewardship practices.

Involve local communities, including children and teenagers, in the planning and design of new parks.

Recruit people of all ages, but especially the younger generation, to volunteer in parks.

***Practice 3: Provide Leadership for Sustainable Communities***

Advance sustainability goals beyond parks, recreation and public lands, by modeling sustainable practices in land use, facility design, maintenance, and management, and by engaging with other government, civic, business and education organizations.

Build new and non-traditional partnerships to foster sustainable lifestyles, responsible energy use, and innovative solutions for community support networks and infrastructure.

Support the adoption of policies at all levels of government that will advance environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Use outdoor recreation programs to teach gardening, recycling, food preservation and other sustainable, lifestyle practices that build, support and enhance a personal environmental ethic.

Support, undertake and apply rigorous scientific research in order to advance our understanding of social, environmental and ecological systems.

/June 2012